

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

**HELENA KANE FINN**

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy*

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*These interviews were conducted between January 2016 and August 2017*

*Q: Today is the 11<sup>th</sup> of January 2016 with Helena Finn. This oral history is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Alright, well. Let's have at it. Could you tell me when and where you were born?*

FINN: Yes, thank you. I was born in New York City in 1946.

*Q: Okay. And could you tell me a bit about- let's talk about the family first. Do you know on your father's side where they came from?*

FINN: Well, in terms of my family my father was a surgeon. My mother's father was also a surgeon. My father was born in Greenwich Village. My mother grew up in New York, but her father had come down from Buffalo and her mother came from Marlborough in Massachusetts.

*Q: Okay. Do you know where the families came from originally?*

FINN: My maiden name is Kane. I'm Helena Kane Finn and our first, very first ancestors on my father's side would have come to the United States at the time of the American Revolution from Ireland and they intermarried over the years with other people, mostly from Ireland although I have a grandfather's grandfather who was from the Alsace, from Strasbourg. My husband's four grandparents were born in Ireland. My mother's family, the Lavelle's, emigrated from Ireland in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Grandpa Lavelle was born in Scranton, but the family moved to Buffalo. His father was in politics. On my mother's side, my Grandma Kate's father and grandfather were pharmacists in Marlborough, Massachusetts.

*Q: So, medicine ran in the family?*

FINN: Yes, that's true. On my mother's side, her father was a surgeon. As for my father, as a young boy growing up first in Greenwich Village and then later in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, he had a great admiration for doctors so he decided to pursue a medical career.

*Q: Where did he go to school?*

FINN: My father went to St. Francis College in Brooklyn and then he went to the Long Island College of Medicine. My Grandfather Lavelle went to the University of Buffalo Medical School before he came down to New York.

*Q: Well then, where did he practice medicine, your father?*

FINN: Actually, my Grandfather Lavelle was the chief surgeon at St. John's Hospital in Queens. And my father then joined the staff there after World War II so they were both at the same hospital.

*Q: And where did he meet your mother? I mean-*

FINN: How did my parents meet? My parents met because his brother, my Uncle Arthur, was a Roman Catholic priest affiliated with the hospital. He knew my grandfather, and they introduced my parents to one another, as I guess was quite often the case back in those days. They went out on a few dates and I think my father proposed very quickly to my mother. My mother, I must say, was very beautiful. She was compared to Ingrid Bergman and Hedy Lamar. She was a college graduate. She had graduated from college in 1938.

*Q: Where did she go to college?*

FINN: She went to the College of New Rochelle. And when she graduated she was only 19. In 1938, it was still the Depression. It was not so easy to find work, but my mother had a lot of initiative. She went to Macy's Department Store and instead of going to the place where they hired staff, she took the elevator right up to the executive personnel department. In those days they didn't hire women as executives, but my mother walked in and was greeted by one of the young men from the Straus family, the owners of Macy's. And sure enough, she was hired. She was the first of only two women executives at Macy's Department Store.

*Q: Wow.*

FINN: Yes.

*Q: What was she doing at Macy's?*

FINN: She supervised the seventh and eighth floors of Macy's, which was a big job to give a 19-year-old girl back then.

*Q: What were the seventh and eighth floors about?*

FINN: Oh, gosh, I don't have all the details of what products were sold. We'd have to do some research and sadly my mother's no longer living. We had her until she was 95, but she's not around anymore. So, I'm not sure in those days what was sold on those floors, but she was responsible for the overall management of everything, for supervising the personnel on those two floors. It was a management job. But she enjoyed it, and she had that job from '38 until she got married after the war in 1945.

*Q: Well, your father was in the Army?*

FINN: Yes. My father graduated from college in '38, as did my mother, and then he graduated from medical school in '41. When the war broke out, he knew that he would be drafted as an enlisted man, so he volunteered so that he would go in as an officer. He went in as a lieutenant and came out as a captain in the medical corps. He spent those war years in North Africa and in Italy. He was in a medical corps group with British doctors and he had wonderful experiences with them. Among other things, he became a good bridge player. He also had devastating, shocking experiences, of course, in the war. And my brother, Edwin, also a surgeon, has his letters, the letters he wrote home; they're quite touching. And then he went up through Italy and he told us often about what a terrible slog that was. But when he got to Milano, he went to La Scala and fell in love with opera. He loved all kinds of music, but he particularly adored opera.

*Q: Well, did he pass that on to you all?*

FINN: Oh, yes, yes, yes, he did.

*Q: You grew up in New York?*

FINN: Yes. When my parents married they bought a house in Queens. They decided not to live in Manhattan because they wanted to have a house and a garden. They planned to have a large family. My father was working at St. John's Hospital in Queens. The neighborhood was Jackson Heights, which is now the neighborhood perhaps in the entire world with the most ethnic diversity. When I was growing up, it was even then very diverse. There were Asians and African-Americans from the Caribbean and people from Russia. On my street alone, we had people of every religion and ethnicity imaginable, but the majority of them were people who had left Europe. In fact, in many families the language spoken at home was one of the European languages.

*Q: What was it like growing up there? Let's take when you were a kid.*

FINN: Oh, it was wonderful. Jackson Heights was one of the first planned neighborhoods. It was planned as a garden neighborhood although what happened later on was that the gardens at the ends of the streets were sold off and businesses opened or apartments were built there. But when I was growing up - it was very pretty, tree-lined streets with brick townhouses. People didn't lock their doors. On Friday afternoons, my friends and I would go roller skating to the park. And, as I said, our neighbors were mostly Europeans. On one side they were Belgians, on the other side they were Germans

who had emigrated at the turn of the century. There were a lot of Germans: German Lutherans, German Catholics and German Jews. And on down the block, quite a mix of people. And it was a very friendly neighborhood.

*Q: As a kid what did you- did you sort of- it's the wrong term to use in these days but were there sort of gangs of kids that get out to play in the streets and all?*

FINN: Well, we played after school in the yard with our school friends and our next-door neighbor, Gregory Benz, and his friends. There was a playground within a few blocks and we would go there. But everything was very strict. Everyone was in at dinnertime or in before dark in the winter months. And of course, we took piano lessons. And when I was very small, I took both ballet and elocution lessons. My sister Mary studied piano and violin. And we sang a lot. Someone would play the piano and everybody would sing. Sometimes, we all danced in the living room. On Sunday afternoons we listened to the opera. Dinner was a formal affair. The family always ate together. We came home for lunch from school and the family ate both lunch and dinner together. And on Sunday afternoon, everyone dressed for dinner and each child was asked to recite a poem or sing a song at the dinner table.

*Q: Well, what religion did your family observe?*

FINN: My parents were both from Roman Catholic families. On my father's side, the first immigrants who came from Ireland at the time of the American Revolution were Irish Protestants. They married at some point with Irish Catholics. So, the family was Roman Catholic. There were some rumors on my Grandfather Lavelle's side that we had Jewish ancestry. Grandpa sent a Jesuit priest to Ireland to research the family, and he said that there was a very remote line of Sephardic Jews, so we can say that among our ancestors, we probably cover at least two of the three great monotheistic faiths.

*Q: How important was religion in your family?*

FINN: Well, religion was, I think, important in the same way it was to most Americans in those days, which is to say we went to church on Sunday; our neighbors were Lutheran, they went to church on Sunday. Our Jewish neighbors went to synagogue on Saturday. And there was a lot of social activity involved in our church; St. Joan of Arc had an auditorium so there were plays and recitals and I danced on the stage in the ballet company when I was a little tiny tot. There were lots of performances and activities and that was true of the Lutherans and all the others as well. We went with Gregory Benz sometimes to events in the Lutheran community hall. My father was also doctor to the priest, L. Roper Shamhart, at the Episcopal church, St. Mark's, in the neighborhood.

*Q: Well, were you much of a reader?*

FINN: Oh yes, I read voraciously throughout my childhood. Yes, I loved to read.

*Q: Do you recall any books that particularly appealed to you?*

FINN: Well, what I did when I was a child was get a card from the public library, which was probably a little over a half a mile from the house and I would go there every Saturday. I just read through the books, A to Z, in the children's section of the library. And so, I read a mix of fiction and a lot of biographies of historic figures and these of course were biographies that were adjusted for children. I was fascinated by France and one of the biographies I read that I recall quite clearly was of Lafayette. When I was a little older, I loved the Brontë's and all the classics – Charles Dickens, Jane Austin, George Eliot. I did a lot of reading of novels. By the time I was in high school, I was reading my way through Hemingway and Fitzgerald and other great American writers, such as Twain and Faulkner. So, yes, I always read voraciously.

*Q: Where did you go to school?*

FINN: I went to the St. Joan of Arc Grammar School. It was rather nice to have a woman saint as a model and she was quite a heroic figure. I thought that was a very good thing for little girls. Our teachers were the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart, a French-Canadian order. I went to a high school called The Mary Louis Academy run by the Sisters of St. Joseph, also a French order. I lost touch with my high school for a long time when I was overseas, but they found me again; now with the internet it's so much easier to find people. And I've been out there to lecture to the girls about -- it's still a girls' school -- about the possibility of going into the diplomatic service. It was really very rewarding. I mentor girls from that school. I mentor a lot of young people, but particularly girls; every year they contact me and ask me to mentor a girl from the high school.

*Q: Well, where did your family fall politically?*

FINN: Where did my family fall politically? That's a good question. My father as a young man, and he's been written up in books, although we've lost our copies - we had one of these books in our family library, but after he died and the house was sold, I don't know what happened. No one seems to know where it is. But anyway, he was an active advocate for civil rights, and he was particularly active in trying to make more spaces for African-Americans in the Catholic colleges in New York. So, he was part of a group that was activist. He made some speeches in lower Manhattan on behalf of civil rights for African-Americans. I don't think it's easy to put him in a box, but on that kind of thing I would say that he was liberal. I guess that is the word we would use nowadays. He was also a strong advocate for universal medical care which was not a very popular position back then. It was called disparagingly, "socialized medicine." Well, he was always glad to say that he supported socialized medicine.

*Q: Well, where did you go to school?*

FINN: My high school was The Mary Louis Academy. That was a school run by the Sisters of St. Joseph, who had also educated my mother. She boarded at their convent school out on Long Island, in Brentwood. The principle of Mary Louis had been my mother's math teacher at Brentwood when she was a young nun. So, there was a lot of

continuity there. And then, like many graduates in those days, the choice was to go to Fordham or St. John's and I went to St. John's because that was an easier commute from where we lived in Queens.

*Q: Well, let's stick with both grammar school and high school. What about extracurricular work?*

FINN: Throughout grammar school, I sang in the church choir. My friends and I often went ice skating in winter. In high school, I belonged to the French Club, and of course I took piano lessons and performed in recitals, not as a soloist, but we had duets, and I performed in those. And I also sang in the chorus in our musical shows. So, I was involved in theatrical and musical events at the school. And otherwise, because we had over an hour commute each way on the subway to go from home to high school, I didn't stay late for too many other things, but that was enough.

*Q: In high school, did you do the equivalent to major in something?*

FINN: Well, in high school I took the standard New York State Regents Program, which in those days was pretty strict. So, I had three years of Latin and three years of French, English literature, American and World history, but I also had the sciences; I had biology and chemistry, and of course math. So, it was the basic curriculum, the New York State curriculum.

*Q: Yes, I know. I used to- my school used the Regents exam as our exams.*

FINN: Yes, we took the Regents exams and I got a Regents scholarship for college. In fact, my school in those days was very competitive since the majority of the Catholic kids went to Catholic school and the places were limited. My school was really the top school in Queens, so we had a lot of very smart girls there and I think all but three of us in my graduating class had Regents scholarships.

*Q: Was there much connection with say the Jewish element in your area?*

FINN: Well, let's roll back here. My grandfather and grandmother got married in 1915. In those days it was very difficult for Jewish doctors to work in the hospitals in New York. Many of the hospitals were run very much on religious lines. So, many of the Jewish doctors went to work at the Catholic hospitals. Most of my grandfather's closest friends were Jewish; they were his colleagues from the office, but they were his personal friends. And even when my grandparents bought property on a lake up in the Catskills, his closest friend, Abe Braunstein, was one of three or four doctors who bought up one side of the lake. Another friend who was a Jewish doctor often came over to my grandparents' house often to play showtunes on the piano. My grandparents had a Steinway baby grand. I think his name was Leo or Leon Feinstein. He was a brilliant pianist and he would come over and entertain everybody playing the piano. He would play and everyone would sing. They also had a lot of Italian friends. It was a very mixed- it was just New York. And also, my grandfather became a spokesman for Jewish-Catholic friendship and so on. And

my grandmother was the president of the women's auxiliary of the New York State medical society. My grandmother had been a nurse. She came down to New York to go to nursing school and that's how she met my grandfather.

*Q: Well, did the prejudice against Jews- were you aware of it?*

FINN: Well, as a child growing up in the '50s I certainly was not made to feel it by my family. Quite the contrary. I loved these friends of my grandfather's, Abe Braunstein and Eddie Steiner and Teddy Fuchs and the others. My mother's best friend as a little girl was a Jewish girl and one of her treasured wedding gifts was from that family. So, it was just perfectly normal to have Jewish friends. It just was a normal part of life. Now, as for the Holocaust, yes, of course, growing up as I did in the '50s and the '60s, there were lots of television programs; everyone in New York knew all about it. And of course, in the subways or on the buses, one saw people who had those horrible marks on their arms from the concentration camps. But in terms of sentiment about Jews we were up there in the Catskills with them in the summers. And Grandma and Grandpa had dinner parties. It was just part of life; they were part of the scene.

*Q: Well, what about with Protestants? And that was sort of an era where still there were still, I won't say prohibitions, but families wanted their children either to marry in the Catholic faith or not to marry in the Catholic faith.*

FINN: Well, basically, Stu, in those days everyone was encouraged to marry within their religion, whether Jewish or Catholic. That didn't bar people from being friends. However, up in the Catskills my grandmother went to the same church as the wife of Irving Berlin; she was a Catholic, the wife of the famous songwriter Irving Berlin. So, these marriages happened, they had other friends. Dr. Braunstein's wife was Catholic. There was a lot of Jewish-Irish marriage in New York way back then because these two groups were pretty much cut out of the WASP world and they, at least the educated people in these two groups, really had good relations. At least, that's my personal experience, maybe because my family profession was medicine. Did you know, for example, that J.D. Salinger's mother was Irish? As for Protestants, we grew up with the Benz family who were Lutheran. Our neighbors across the street, the Robinsons, went to the Episcopal church. They were my father's patients and they sent us a lovely basket of cheese and fruits at Christmas.

*Q: Yes, it's interesting that sort of the Catholic-Jewish combination seemed to work more than- the Protestants seemed to have more of a hang-up.*

FINN: Well, exclusive country clubs were closed to both Catholics and Jews. And in fact, in Jackson Heights, when I was growing up, there was a very snobby club called the College Women's Club, which was all WASP. My mother was the first Catholic who was invited to join that club and she brought in the first Jewish lady. So, you break these prejudices down.

*Q: Well, you must have been then brought up in sort of a- both a very liberal area, but at a time when liberalism was not an accepted thing.*

FINN: Well, we did not think of it as liberal. We just thought of it as normal. It was in the world we lived in. I can only tell you about my own formative experience. Surely, you could get a thousand different stories. New York is a huge city; you could get a thousand different stories from different people, but this is my experience. Grandfather always was a defender of getting Jews into this, that or the other, but he was sticking up for the Catholics as well because at his hospital there were also Italian immigrant doctors who were Catholic. So, he was there for everybody.

*Q: Well, telling a very healthy environment in which to grow up.*

FINN: Listen, it's New York. This is what's so wonderful about it. I don't know where you're from Stu, but I would not trade the great city of New York for anything in the world.

*Q: Southern California.*

FINN: California is also a wonderful place. But this is New York; this is what makes New York what it is. And I'm not saying that since recent events, that there has not been a tick up, a rise in hate crimes, which appalls me, but this is New York. It's an inclusive society. And as I said, the neighborhood I grew up in is now the one considered the most diverse in the nation, if not possibly the world. You can look it up. Somebody just made a documentary about that neighborhood, Jackson Heights.

*Q: Ah. Well, in school, what was your elementary school like and how did you find it?*

FINN: Oh, I always loved school. I was always the top or second in my class. I was in competition with another girl, Kathleen Masterson, to see who would get the first marks on every test. And sometimes we had some very- because we were in New York - we had some very interesting people in the class. There were some kids in my class who were Jewish. The girls from Jamaica were Anglican. There were girls in my school who were Protestant and there were kids from various religions who for one reason or another went to the Catholic school. There was one boy who was a brilliant musician, and he was going to go to Julliard, but he was not paying attention, so I was asked to help him with his math homework. And I did those things, and I liked school. I really enjoyed school.

*Q: Was there any particular field in school, say at elementary school that you particularly enjoyed?*

FINN: I liked everything. I enjoyed all the subjects. I enjoyed the math. And I remember that the teacher would ask me to go up to the board, put fractions on the board and so on. But I loved geography. I was asked to draw- I liked to draw very much, and we had so many panels on the blackboard and I was asked to draw the states so I did the northeastern states in one and the middle Atlantic and the southern states and the



Midwest and so on through the West Coast, in different colored chalk. You know, this is the kind of thing you do when you're a kid in, I don't know, sixth or seventh grade.

*Q: Did the world outside the United States interest you at an early age?*

FINN: Of course. That's why I joined the Foreign Service. My father would drive across the 59<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge and point out the UN and tell us that it was an incredibly important symbol of peace. And in my neighborhood, there were people from around the world. When they built the apartment buildings, people from all over the world who worked at the UN lived in Jackson Heights. So, from my childhood I saw women in saris and African costumes. When I wrote my application letter to the Foreign Service, I remember saying one of the inspirations for me was seeing these people from all over the world in their national dress -- and back in those days they did wear their national dress -- and every skin color imaginable, and thinking that I wanted to see the world. So, that was very important.

*Q: So, what about high school? What sort of extracurricular things were you involved in?*

FINN: Well, I mentioned before that I was in theatrical productions and I took piano lessons and played the piano. I also loved the arts so I very much enjoyed my art classes. And French class after school. So, those were the extracurricular activities. One of my art teachers really encouraged me to draw and paint.

*Q: Did you put on plays or musicals?*

FINN: Yes, we put on musicals, and I would sing in the chorus usually. Oh yes, we had a very active program in terms of musicals and piano recitals.

*Q: Well, how were they- I take it you were being taught by nuns.*

FINN: Yes. We had the Sisters of St. Joseph.

*Q: How were they?*

FINN: They were lovely. I remember them with great fondness, my art teacher in particular. And we had a wonderful literature teacher, Sister Dorothy Mercedes. We studied Chaucer and Shakespeare with her. She would encourage us to enjoy the "vicarious experience" of literature. No, I liked them very much. They were really marvelous. And we had some lay teachers, too. Miss Lucas was my history teacher; I took two years with her of American history and world history. And we had another wonderful teacher, a young woman whose name I have forgotten, who taught biology. I thought biology was fascinating.

*Q: It sounds like you had a, I don't know if you want to call it idyllic, but a very solid educational experience.*

FINN: I had a very happy, happy childhood. I'm the first of seven children, five girls and two boys. All of us went to the same elementary school, St. Joan of Arc, and then we girls all went to the same high school, The Mary Louis Academy. Two of my sisters went into business, and my sister Mary, like my brother Edwin, became a doctor. And so, yes, we had a lot of music in our house; we had a lot of friends in our house; and we had lots of discussions about history and literature over dinner. It was just a wonderful. I loved my family dearly. My siblings are all still living and they now have children and grandchildren and I'm in touch with them. Yes.

*Q: Well, what about the delights of New York as far as museums and-*

FINN: You know, everything was so safe when I was growing up. I used to go to the theater with my friends and the parents would just meet us at the subway station. And we went to the museums all the time. When we were little, my parents took us, and then we went with our friends. My father, when he got a little older, started taking Wednesdays off. Instead of taking a Saturday, he and my mother went into New York all the time to different museums. The Frick Museum was their favorite. And they went to the Broadway shows and sometimes we went. We certainly got to see "The Sound of Music" because that was a family of seven children just like ours. We sat in the front row. One time, when I was in college, I actually met my parents unexpectedly at the Broadway show, "A Man for All Seasons."

*Q: Oh, yes.*

FINN: Yes. So, of course we were very involved in the cultural world of New York. My parents loved the arts.

*Q: Did your father get involved, your mother get involved in New York politics?*

FINN: No. My mother got involved in the College Women's Club and that was really more social. But she also got involved in historic preservation. Ada Louise Huxtable was a lady who fought to protect certain neighborhoods at a time when they were threatened by developers. The cultural preservation of neighborhoods in New York was important to all of us. She was a very influential figure. My mother volunteered to work with her to have a certain part of our neighborhood designated for historic preservation. My mother also cared a great deal about good manners. Amy Vanderbilt called her to consult on protocol at Catholic weddings. My mother had been very athletic as a young woman. She always had her own horse and she grew up doing a lot of horseback riding. When she was a child, they used to keep the horse in their large yard in Queens. Her parents had bought what would be a city block of land in Astoria when it was all still potato farms. We're going back to 1915 or '18. And she had her own horse there, and then when the city

didn't allow that anymore, they kept the horse up in the country house, in the Catskills. But she was very active in that way. But after she got married she focused on other things. She never got particularly involved in politics, although both her parents had been active in the Democratic Party. The Queens Borough President, Jim Clancy, lived in our neighborhood when I was growing up. The Clancy family were friends of my grandparents. There was a general atmosphere of consensus.

My parents, my father in particular, liked to play bridge. We children would fill in from time to time if somebody couldn't make it, or had to drop out for some reason. My father always had a boat. That was his hobby. He loved going out on the boat on a summer evening and a lot of time was spent repairing and maintaining these boats. But that was his hobby. And of course, he read a lot and he loved music. As for politics, there simply did not seem much to quarrel about in those days, at least at the local level.

*Q: Well, I'll tell you the Catskills were a real source of pleasure.*

FINN: Oh yes, yes. That was a lot of fun. Hunter Lake was the name of the lake that, where as I said, my grandfather and a group of his friends had bought property. And yes, that was fun. Of course, we had cousins by the dozens. They also had a big farm house on the Willowemoc Creek which they later gave to my Uncle Frank and his family. He married a girl from the country and wanted to live up there all year round.

*Q: Where did you go to college?*

FINN: Catholic girls went to Catholic colleges. The choice was to go to Fordham or St. John's. I went to St. John's because it was commuting distance. Fordham was too, but a much longer commute. In those days it was very much the way it is in Europe; young people lived their families and commuted to college. So, that's what I did. And the other choice would have been Queens College, but my family felt it was important to go to a Catholic college and so that's what I did. And I enjoyed that very much as well.

*Q: What was- it was St. John's?*

FINN: Yes.

*Q: What was it like when you went there?*

FINN: What was it like? There were quite a few young people, young women, young men, from families like mine, the father being a doctor or a lawyer. Most of them were from Garden City or other places on Long Island. And then there were a lot of young people in the school who came from working class families who might have been the first generation to go to college. But when you look back on school in those days, the boys got dressed up, the girls always wore dresses or skirts. It was a very different world from today. And people worked hard. And I met my husband there. He had a scholarship. He was from the Bronx and, as you know, he also went into the diplomatic service and was our ambassador to Afghanistan.

*Q: Well, what courses did you take at St. John?*

FINN: I took the basic curriculum, but I majored in literature so I took a lot of classes in British and American literature, but I also took French literature. There was a core curriculum that included history, science, philosophy, math, politics and the arts. That's pretty much what I did.

*Q: Did the outside world intrude in your- as you-*

FINN: You mean what was going on in the world?

*Q: Yes. The war and all that.*

FINN: I finished college in '67 so the late '60s were a tumultuous time. St. John's University actually had one of the first protests, as well as those at Berkeley and Columbia, so there was a lot of agitation on campus and sometimes I was called in to comment before panels discussing students who had been protesting, and I protested sometimes. If you're from California, you must know about this; that was the atmosphere of the time. Students were against the Vietnam War.

*Q: Well, how much were you sort of looking over what was happening at Columbia and all?*

FINN: Oh, of course I did, of course I did. My sister Katherine, who was right after me, went to St. John's, to the business school, and really had a very successful business career; my sister Mary was exceptionally gifted and I made the case to my parents that she should be allowed to go to Barnard College at Columbia. They relented and she did. And she's now a doctor. She's actually a full professor of medicine at Stanford. While she was at Barnard, I followed events at Columbia closely.

*Q: Huh. Well, what- in your studies at St. John's what were you looking- were you particularly concerned with any foreign countries?*

FINN: Well, of course, you know, it was the Vietnam War and young boys were getting drafted so everybody was very involved in thinking about all of that. And so yes, everyone was talking about these things all the time.

*Q: How did you feel about the Vietnam War?*

FINN: Well, my parents were against it, and I agreed with them. I think initially people didn't really believe that it would develop the way it did. Of course, there were some people who realized from the start that it was not a good thing for the United States. But

it was tragic, and I think it was terrible that so many of our young men were lost in that war, but I also think it's very sad that they felt that they had done something that was pointless because it is very, very important to honor our veterans. And I certainly knew boys who went. The brother of one of my best friends in college came back blind from Vietnam. And I remember another guy who came back telling me about the things that happened and he just started crying. It was just so painful and awful.

*Q: Did you take part in any protests?*

FINN: Yes. I marched as did many students in New York in protest against the war. I thought it was important to demonstrate that people felt that it was wrong.

*Q: Well, what about the UN? Did you go there often or-?*

FINN: Well, yes, I went to the UN from time to time. Much later, when I was in Washington in diplomatic service, when I was the State Department's Acting Assistant Secretary in ECA (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs), I did a lot of things at the UN. Even more recently, I've done a panel at the UN during International Women's Week where we've discussed women in politics and women in economics and so on. These panels included women parliamentarians and elected officials from around the world.

*Q: While you were in college or even before had you been able to go to Europe?*

FINN: I didn't make a trip to Europe until I graduated and I had a teaching assistantship for a year and I was able to save enough money to travel. The year after I graduated, with a group of my friends, I did make my first trip to Europe. The airfares were proportionately more expensive in terms of what people earned than they are today. So, nowadays people just hop on a plane without a second thought. But it was something we planned carefully and we traveled all over. We went to England and Ireland and Italy and Switzerland and Germany. My husband was in the Peace Corps -- he was my fiancé at the time -- in Turkey, so I went there as well. The others didn't come with me to Turkey, but I went. It was a fantastic trip.

*Q: Well, how did you meet your husband?*

FINN: He was also a student at St. John's. I met him at a party in my freshman year.

*Q: Had you done much dating?*

FINN: No, no. At my girls' high school, we had a junior prom and a senior prom and those two proms I invited the sons of friends of my parents, other doctors' sons, and it was very nice. And of course, I was invited to proms as well. And I'll tell you one funny thing I remember; one of these boys was at a high school in the Bronx, and this takes you back to, I guess this would have been 1962 or '63; we went to the prom on the subway, and it was a long subway trip. I was wearing a white eyelet dress and I had a corsage, and

he was wearing a suit. This is how you did things back then. We went to the prom on the subway.

*Q: I assume that you-*

FINN: Stu, what is the purpose of this? You're just compiling the life history of people who served in the diplomatic service?

*Q: Essentially, yes. And we're picking up how our people lived and got around in those days and who these people were. And we're picking up sort of social history while we're at it.*

FINN: Right, yes.

*Q: You know, you'll never get under the microphone again, probably. And so, we're making this available to the public, we'll be putting it on a website and the Library of Congress.*

FINN: Well, I interviewed my grandmother, and one of my nieces interviewed my mother, and it is very important to have these recordings because I can tell you, I know a lot about the life of my grandparents in the 1920s and '30s when they were a young couple in New York. I also know about the life of my father growing up in Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn. And then, of course, my own experiences, so it does go back to the early part of the previous century.

*Q: Well, this is what we're doing. I recommend you go to the website and look at some of these. Well, while you were in college were you thinking about the Foreign Service?*

FINN: Oh, that's an interesting story. When I was a senior in college in 1967, there was an article in "The New York Times" about how the State Department, which had always taken in women in as secretaries, was trying to recruit more women to become Foreign Service officers. So, I looked into it further, but I found out that you were not allowed to join if you were planning to marry, and I was engaged. I was very disappointed because I wanted to do it even then. But I was engaged, and so I said to myself, okay, this door is closed to me. Remember, if you were a woman back then, a lot of doors were closed.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

FINN: Since this door was closed to me, I decided I would get my PhD instead and that's what I did. And I put the diplomatic service out of my mind. Then Robert came home from the Peace Corps and we got married. We both got our PhDs and by that time we were thinking about an academic career. My field was easy, it was British and American literature, but his field was Turkish literature, so much harder; there were only five or six jobs in the entire country in his field. So, we were finally offered jobs together at the American University in Beirut, but of course Beirut was torn apart by a war at that point and our families were worried about our going there. Then amazingly, just before the

contracts arrived from Beirut, as we were just packing up our graduate student apartment in Princeton, the phone rang. In those days there were no cell phones or anything of that sort, so the ground line phone rang. It was the State Department. They invited Robert to come down to Washington. He had taken the written and oral exams, so they invited him to come down and to join the diplomatic service, to join one of the training classes. So, we said okay. And our parents, of course, were immensely relieved that we were not going to Beirut. So, we did that, and through one of my professors at St. John's, I got a job teaching in Washington at Catholic University and that's what happened. He went in and I was planning to pursue a teaching career, but when I got out to Istanbul - we wound up going to Istanbul as his first tour - I realized that they didn't want the wives to work. Since I had taught previously in Turkey, I just went back to my old job teaching at Bosphorus University. There was a bit of a flap about it, and I said to myself okay, I'll just take the foreign service exam myself. It was given once a year, so I took the exam at the Consulate in Istanbul with one other person who turned out to be, subsequently, one of my husband's closest friends. And that's how it happened.

*Q: Alright, let's talk about- what job did you have before you were married?*

FINN: Well, before I was married, I was married when I was 23, so I graduated from college and then I pursued my Master's degree. And I had a teaching assistantship and lived with my family, so that was the job I had then. And I got my Master's and then I got married, and then after I was married, I had various jobs. Robert and I were both pursuing our doctoral degrees at the same time. I taught in the New York City schools, and then I got a job at Manhattan College in Riverdale and I taught there. They were academic jobs, essentially.

*Q: Did you see yourself as this was where you wanted to progress up the sort of academic field?*

FINN: Well, I initially was interested in the Foreign Service and then I thought that I would pursue an academic career. But when they changed the rules, and women could enter even if they were married, I decided to take the test in Istanbul and I joined the diplomatic service, which had been my first idea.

*Q: Your first post was with your husband as a wife in Istanbul, is that correct?*

FINN: That's right. I was a spouse briefly, and that wasn't really my cup of tea, to be honest.

*Q: What was Istanbul like at the time?*

FINN: Well, I had first seen Istanbul even earlier. I first went to Turkey in 1968 when Robert was in the Peace Corps. Istanbul, it's hard to believe this, Istanbul was a city, a very magnificent and mysterious city, but a city of perhaps a million and half or two million people. Now it's probably between 16 and 20 million. And it was poor and shabby, but it had a lot of elegance because, of course, it had been the center of a great

civilization. It had been the center of one of the world's largest empires. So, it was a fascinating place.

*Q: Well, what were you doing as a wife?*

FINN: I was teaching at the university. When I finished my PhD in '76, Robert was still working on his; he had a Fulbright year, so we went for a year to Istanbul so that he could do his research on the Turkish novel. And I, through a very dear friend in New York, was put in touch with the president of Bosphorus University. I went to see him with the letter from our friend, and I was hired in the literature department. So, I spent that year teaching literature. Then after Robert completed his PhD and we went into the diplomatic service, I went back into my former position, but I realized that the consul general and others were not happy with that. They did not like the idea of my having a job. So, I thought okay, that's it, if it doesn't work here in Istanbul, it's not going to work anywhere. It's not going to work for me to be a roving professor as a spouse. Besides my first goal was always to go in the Foreign Service, so I took the test and did it.

*Q: Why was the consul general unhappy with the situation?*

FINN: In those days, the ladies were all supposed to be at the beck and call of the head lady, pretty much the way they would be in the military to the wife of the general, and they were supposed to be doing tea parties and other social things, and I was busy at the university. So, they weren't happy. But they also, I think, felt it was rather subversive of me to be working. If I had a job, then maybe others would want to have a job. Other wives might do what I had done.

*Q: You were probably quite right.*

FINN: Oh, yes, yes. And then when I took the test, imagine, the consul general was my husband's boss, and here my husband was in his first year and the consul general said to me, "you can't take the test." I said, "oh yes I can," and I did. I took it. And Robert stood by me. His immediate boss, the consul, ostracized me after that. I was not invited to any social functions. He only invited Robert to his home for receptions and dinners and parties when I was out of the country or away somewhere. I was never invited to his home.

*Q: Good god.*

FINN: Yes. Those were the days. Because they were very threatened by the idea; if one wife did it, then all the wives might want to do it, and that would rock the whole boat.

*Q: Well, how about Mrs. Consul General?*

FINN: She didn't like me. Many years later I got my FBI report just for fun, maybe 20 years later, and it was crossed out, but there was only one negative comment in the whole thing and I know that that was from her.



*Q: Oh, boy.*

FINN: Yes.

*Q: Oh yes, I remember the- Well, I came in in '55 and it was going full blast at the time.*

FINN: Yes, yes. It was a different world. It was a world in which a man's salary alone would be enough to support the family comfortably. When my mother got married, even though she had had a very successful career in the business world, she stopped working and dedicated herself to my father and the children. And she had, of course, many other interests, but she did not go back to work. It was just the way things were in the 1950s.

*Q: Well, I read somewhere in the early '70s where it no longer was viable for a family to have only one member of the family working. You really needed both to be working.*

FINN: Right. So, that's how it happened, but of course, my mother always encouraged us girls to pursue careers. My sister Katherine was very successful in business and my sister Mary became a full professor and I think she's probably one of only one or two or three women who are full professors of medicine at Stanford. And my sister Joan, a gifted athlete, went into physical education. My youngest sister was in publishing. I mean, the girls in our family, as well as the boys, got a lot of encouragement from our parents. One brother is a surgeon and the other is president of an insurance company.

*Q: Well, did you feel you were sort of at odds with your colleagues, other girls? I mean, were they marching to a different drummer?*

FINN: No. You know, I went out to Ankara. First of all, teaching at Bosphorus University for two years before I joined the Foreign Service, I had acquired a fluency in Turkish. So, I was assigned to Turkey in my first tour. The officers at the embassy and in my office were all men, but the women in the office were Turkish. There was one American secretary, but in public diplomacy, all the other women were Turkish. I got along with them famously, and I- because in public diplomacy you spent all your time- I spent all my time with the Turks. That was my job. I was going to the university all the time, I gave lectures in Turkish all over the country on American literature and history. I showed films at universities and schools. I was out all the time. In fact, in one of my OERs, the rating officer said that I was the best-known person there after the ambassador because everyone remembered this American woman who spoke Turkish and was willing to go out to the back of beyond. And I went many places where they hadn't met an American before; the students hadn't heard an American speak to them before. It was wonderfully rewarding. So, I didn't spend a lot of time worrying about what other people thought.

*Q: Well, did you find that particularly Turkish women were interested in American women and what made them tick and all that?*

FINN: I found, going back to my days Bosphorus University, that in terms of gender equality, Turkey was way ahead of us. When I taught at the university, the heads of a number of departments including hard, not just the soft topics like literature, but the hard subjects like science and math were women, which was unheard of in the U.S. You know the United States; the Ivies had only recently allowed women in as undergraduates. Bosphorus University had a creche (nursery) on campus so those women could bring infants and small children to school and be in very close proximity to them and see them during the lunch break and so on. So, I thought this is way ahead of where we were; this is a battle still going on in this country, to provide that kind of child care in the workplace. There was also a generous, fully paid maternity leave. Atatürk was a very fierce supporter of women's rights. Women had the right to vote in Turkey before they did in France, and long before they did in Switzerland. And he made women legally equal. And granted, that may not have filtered down to the village level, but among educated people, women were equal, and women certainly in the academic sphere played an equal role in the universities; they had a very powerful role. It's true they didn't do politics as much as men because that is, especially in Turkey, very rough and tumble, but women had an enormous role in the society. Do you know that Atatürk had women flying around in the air force in the 1930s?

*Q: No.*

FINN: Yes. Now granted, this is talking about the elites, the upper crust, but these people- I had so many women friends who were professors and doctors - it was way ahead of the United States in that respect.

So, were they interested in America? Yes. First of all, when I was teaching at Boğaziçi, or Bosphorus University as it's called in English, many of the faculty were educated in the United States because it is an English language institution. It was the successor to the old American Robert College which was the counterpoint to the American University in Cairo and the American University in Beirut.

*Q: Yes. Did these women see the United States as lagging?*

FINN: No, because they were much more concerned about the other ways in which their own country was lagging. Those who had traveled to the United States to study, and many of my colleagues had their doctoral degrees, or even their undergraduate degrees from American universities, they saw how much more developed the United States was and how wealthy the United States was. So, they wanted to implement changes in their own country that would increase prosperity. They would be more concerned about that, about modernizing their country, than about feminist issues. That battle had been won for them. Ironically, sometimes it takes a man to liberate women in the way it might take a white person like Abraham Lincoln to free the enslaved African-Americans. So, in that respect they were much more concerned about modernizing Turkey.

*Q: Well, my wife taught English in- when we were in Yugoslavia, for example. She used to remark to me about how, I'm not sure it's the right term, but it's called patriotic, how*

*the students, male and female were; I mean, they really felt about their country, they weren't just to get ahead for themselves but-*

FINN: Yes, Turks love their country and I can give you one strong example. I served in other countries, for instance, I was in Pakistan for two tours, and one of the concerns we had on the Fulbright Commission was that the people we sent on the exchanges would come back because that expertise was so much needed in Pakistan. It was a very serious concern. The Turks always came back. They wanted to come back, and they became leaders in their academic departments across the country.

*Q: Did you have any problems being a woman and traveling around Turkey?*

FINN: No. No. If you speak the language - I don't think I would have anyway, but if you speak the language there are no problems. I got on airplanes and flew around the country and I went to provincial cities and I met with the university faculty and no, I didn't have any trouble ever. Once Edward's nanny was ill, so I had to take him with me on a flight to Izmir. He would have been about a year and a half old. I was the only woman on the flight. All the Turkish business men took turns playing with him, dangling their keys and jouncing him on their knees. It really helped that Turks love children.

*Q: After you passed the exam what happened?*

FINN: Well, after I passed- that's a funny story too. In those days you- the next thing, of course, is the interview. So, I was in Istanbul, and a telegram came under the door directing me to show up in Washington on such and such a date for the oral exam. And they knew that I was overseas, obviously, so they gave me two options. They said I could come now, meaning in January, or I could come in June when Robert's tour was over. And I thought that I had better go now because what they didn't know was that I was pregnant with our son, Edward. I didn't want them to know I was pregnant because I knew that would be the kiss of death. It was hard enough for them to deal with the idea of a woman officer who was married, a married woman officer was a new idea. A woman officer who was married and had a child would really be beyond the beyond. So, I said, okay, I'll come now. I didn't know if I'd pass the oral exam or not, but I felt I should go and take it before the pregnancy showed.

So, I flew to Washington, and I went in, and there was a panel, and remember, it was USIA, so there were two USIA men, and one State Department woman on the panel, The State Department woman was an economics officer. They asked me a lot of questions- in those days, Euro Communism was a big thing. They asked me if the communists would gain in the upcoming Italian elections. They asked me questions about the arts and culture because of course I had chosen USIA on part two of the exam, press and culture. But it was a very good discussion and it was a very nice thing in those days, when you finished the exam, you went outside and waited while they deliberated, and then they came out and told you if you passed or failed and I passed it.

*Q: I was giving the exam in those days.*

FINN: Oh, were you?

*Q: A delight.*

FINN: Yes, yes. I was young and I was going to do what I was going to do, and do my best at it. And I remember I was very good on Euro Communism and patronage for the arts and then the economics lady asked me a question about the gold standard and I said you know, I'm very sorry, but I would have to look that information up because I don't have that expertise, but please give me the next question. And essentially, they wanted to see if you're polished enough to deal with a situation like that; they wanted to see the depth of your knowledge, but they also wanted to see how you're going to handle questions, what your demeanor is and how articulate you are. So, when they called me back, they said you did really well on everything, but you have to study more economics.

*Q: Well, good for you.*

FINN: I'll tell you the rest of this story. Then I went in to take the in-basket written test after I passed the oral. I was wearing a wool suit and it was very warm in the room, so I took my jacket off. And of course, because I was pregnant, the waist was too tight. I had some kind of a safety pin or something and the African-American secretary came in and she looked at me and she started laughing, and I said don't tell them. And she didn't. The essay I had to write was on the influence of lobbies. Luckily, I had considerable knowledge about the activities of the Greek and Turkish lobbies in Washington, so I was able to deal with that. I did very well on that language test they used to give you. And then I had to go for the medical. When I went for the medical, of course the doctor knew right away I was pregnant, and he wrote down "admission deferred due to abnormal condition." That's what he wrote on my form. And I thought that was great because I went back to Turkey. I finished teaching the term at Boğaziçi and took my seven weeks maternity leave. I flew back to New York just a few weeks before the baby was born. I was sworn in when Edward was eight weeks old.

*Q: Wow.*

FINN: Yes. We had the christening in New York and then I put him in the car, in the car seat, and I drove to Washington and I was sworn in.

*Q: Okay. Well, talk about- you came in when?*

FINN: I'm sorry, talk about what?

*Q: Let's talk about-*

FINN: The year, I came into the service in August of 1980.

*Q: Alright. What was your training like?*

FINN: Actually, because I came in at an odd time because of the pregnancy and so on, what happened was that they put me immediately into language training because they needed me for a position in Ankara. I spoke Turkish fluently, but being self-taught, my grammar needed polishing. They put me into an intensive language program at a private school near Dupont Circle. It was one-on-one, and the teacher and I quickly agreed we'd skip lunch and coffee breaks; we condensed the timing so that I was not away from the baby for too long. Also, the location was much closer to my home than FSI. So, instead of being at FSI (Foreign Service Institute) for five or six hours, we condensed it to an hour less than that by cutting out the other stuff. So, I went right into language training and then I made one mistake. The Turkish teacher asked are you ready to pass the test, and I said sure, if I pass that's great, not understanding that once I passed the test, they would pull me out of language training. I thought I could continue to a higher level. But I got the 3/3 after, I think Turkish is 44 weeks, I got it after 16 weeks so then I had a real dilemma because I had to figure out what to do about the baby. But anyway, that was another story.

And then I went into wonderful class; it was cultural communication. They brought down the most incredible lecturers for that program. Joseph Campbell spoke about mythology and Alan Lomax spoke about music. It was really quite marvelous. And then I had area studies. They just kind of filled it up until it was time for me to go overseas.

*Q: And your husband was back in Turkey?*

FINN: Robert's tour was over in the summer, so we both were back. The same consul general did not want to let him go for the birth of the baby; he said "my wife had the babies by herself." But he relented at the last minute, so Robert was able to come back in time for Edward's birth on June 18. And then, as I said, we had the christening. Robert went down to Washington right away, but I went down when Edward was eight weeks old and got sworn in.

And they were so nice to me. USIA was so wonderful. They were so thoughtful about my circumstances. I just went into a room somewhere and a very nice person wearing a safari suit swore me in and then they put me right into language class. And Robert was working in INR (Intelligence and Research Bureau). He had a job in INR, which meant he was working two nights and two days and then two days off or something like that, a very crazy schedule.

*Q: Well, what language were you taking?*

FINN: I had taught myself Turkish, but I had a lot of grammatical mistakes, so they smoothed it out. It was the Turkish language because I was going to my assignment at the embassy in Ankara.

*Q: But you weren't going back to Istanbul?*

FINN: No, no. No, the position they wanted me for was assistant cultural affairs officer in Ankara. But they all knew me - the people at the consulate knew me, and the people at the embassy knew me. They knew I was fluent in Turkish and they wanted me. In those days they really put a lot of emphasis on language facility.

*Q: Well, you were in Turkey at this point from when to when?*

FINN: Edward was born in '80, and I was in Turkey from '81 to '84 at U.S. Embassy Ankara.

*Q: And what was your husband doing?*

FINN: Well. The State Department disliked the idea of having husband and wife couples in the Foreign Service, so they told him that they could not find him a job in Turkey, and that he had to look elsewhere. However, USIA came to the rescue. There was a vacancy for the PAO (Public Affairs Officer) position in Izmir, so they gave him that job. It wasn't ideal, but it was a lot better than his being in another country. And that gave me time to get to know Ambassador Robert Strausz-Hupé and tell him all about Robert and the fact that Turkish literature and history were his academic fields. The ambassador was from the University of Pennsylvania. He was a very cultured man, so of course he immediately arranged to transfer Robert. Well, it wasn't immediate, it took about three or four months, but he brought Robert up to Ankara. He served there for a year in a political/consular position before the ambassador finally was able to get him as his staff aide.

*Q: Frank Turka was DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), wasn't he?*

FINN: No, it was Richard Boehm. It was Dick Boehm who was the DCM.

*Q: Did you find the embassy much more welcoming than the consul general?*

FINN: Well, it was different because when I showed up at the embassy, I was a foreign service officer in my own right. The ambassador liked me, and the DCM and I got along very well. I liked him a lot, Dick Boehm. He died a few years ago, a wonderful guy. And my boss was Marshall Berg; he was very enlightened. He was a wonderful guy too and he was very good to me and taught me the ropes. I had him for a year and then Arthur Bardos replaced him. Arthur was an extremely cultured man of Hungarian origin, fluent in many languages - a very charming, lovely man. He was wonderful to me. So, no, it was fine.

*Q: What were you doing?*

FINN: I was the assistant cultural affairs officer which meant that my responsibilities were first and foremost for our exchange programs - Fulbright, and the International Visitor Program - which I really did with my Turkish assistant. In addition, I had extensive contacts with academics at universities throughout the country. I also

programmed our American speakers around the country. So, I was programming speakers at the universities and giving lectures myself. I also wrote speeches for the ambassador.

*Q: Well, you must have- the candidates must have been quite impressive, weren't they?*

FINN: The Fulbright candidates in those days? Yes, yes, they were good. The Fulbright candidates I think everywhere I've been have been good. Fulbright is one of the most remarkable, marvelous programs run by the Department of State. Senator Fulbright did such a good thing in creating it.

*Q: Did we have other programs, visitors' programs and all?*

FINN: Well, we had the International Visitor Program. I was responsible for that. And that meant collecting the nominations from all the sections, the major sections of the embassy, coordinating the meetings and the selection process. This is before we had computers, so my wonderful assistant, Bahar Gunal, who had excellent secretarial skills, had to type all these things up. Yes, it was a lot of work. We did have photocopying machines, but yes, we just did it.

*Q: Well, I'm just fishing stories that you want to tell. You know, I'm picking up a lot about the Foreign Service in that era.*

FINN: Yes, yes. It was a wonderful life, Stu. It was absolutely 30 marvelous years that flew by like 30 seconds.

*Q: Well, this is going very well.*

*Alright. Today is the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2017, with Helena Finn. And Helena, where did we leave off? Do you remember?*

FINN: Well, you asked me quite a lot of questions about my family history going back to my grandparents' generation and then you asked me a lot of questions about my educational experience. And then we talked about my going into the Foreign Service and my first tour at Embassy Ankara. I think that's more or less where we left off.

*Q: Alright. Why don't we start with your initial- we may have covered this, but it doesn't make any difference; you came in at an A-100 course, did you not?*

FINN: No, no I didn't because I entered under rather unusual circumstance. My entrance into the Foreign Service was delayed due to the birth of my son in June 1980. I flew to Washington from Istanbul to take the oral exam when I was pregnant. Then I came home to New York in June and Edward was born there. Terry Catherman was the head of the European Bureau of USIA at that time and he wanted me very much to go to Turkey because I had learned the language. And so, they made a special arrangement for me to go directly into language training to iron out any grammatical issues. So, when Edward was eight weeks old, I put him in the car seat and I drove down to Washington and I

began my language training program. My husband was a State Department officer and he had secured a job in the State Department as well. We found a lovely Haitian baby nurse, Monique, so that's how we managed it for the first few months.

And what happened was, I had learned Turkish, I was self-taught, but I needed some polishing. USIA also sent people to private language training, so I had a one-on-one arrangement with the language teacher.

*Q: Well, just for somebody who doesn't know the business, where does Turkish fit in?*

FINN: Well, I can tell you. Turkish is considered one of the most difficult languages for English speakers and that is because it's not Indo-European. Turkish is Ural-Altaic. That means that it's related to the Turkic languages of Central Asia, and then at the other end to Hungarian and Finnish. And its origins, some linguists believe, are in Mongolia. It is very distantly related to Japanese. So, Turkish is essentially an Asian language. It was written until Atatürk appeared on the scene in the Arabic script, although the language was not related to Arabic. It was grammatically an Asian language with a considerable Persian and Arabic vocabulary. Atatürk introduced the Roman script. So, since the 1920s it's been written in the Roman script. There was also a language reform eliminating many of the Persian and Arabic words and replacing them with Turkic vocabulary.

*Q: Is it a tonal language?*

FINN: It does have something called vowel harmony, yes. Before I joined the Foreign Service, I was teaching at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, which was founded by Americans back in the 1860s. While I was there, linguists came from all over the world to study Turkish because it is extremely orderly and logical. It's agglutinative as is Hungarian, which means that you keep attaching syllables and you have to have certain buffer letters in between the syllables. But it has vowel harmony, very much the way you would in music if you start in a certain key, you continue in that key.

*Q: Would you say you're good at languages?*

FINN: Well, I got a good score. In those days we took the language exam and the top score was 80. I got 76. My husband got a perfect 80 so he's better than I am. But yes, I enjoy languages. Anyone who got over 70 qualified to be trained in one of the more difficult languages.

*Q: It's called the MLAT (Modern Languages Admissions Test) exam.*

FINN: That's right.

*Q: Modern language testing or something.*

FINN: Yes, yes. And I took it right after the orals. They told me after conferring for 20 minutes or half an hour that I had passed. And then I went in to do a written test, an essay. I



took the MLAT right after that. It included aural recognition as well as written. I believe the language they used for the exam was Kurdish. It is not related to Turkish, so that did not help. It was thought then to be a language that nobody knew.

*Q: Well, how long were you taking the language?*

FINN: What happened was they put me in language class. I had baby Edward at home and my teacher, Saynur Gören was very demanding, but extremely helpful. The head of the Turkish program in those days was a very strict lady called Guzin Dino and they knew that I could speak with fluency, but because I was self-taught, I had to do a lot of work on my grammar. Turkish is a 44-week language and that would have worked out perfectly with my assignment to Ankara; what I didn't know was that if you take the test and pass it, then you can't keep studying. So, I took the test after 16 weeks and I got 3/3 and that was the end of that. And then they put me into a cultural training course. It was a marvelous course. We had Alan Lomax, who was the scholar of music and many, many interesting people came to speak to us in that class. So, I really enjoyed that. And then they sent me to area studies to fill out the time for all those weeks before I was due in Ankara.

*Q: Did you get a feeling for the structure of Washington? It can be kind of complicated.*

FINN: What do you mean by the structure of Washington? I'm from New York City so what do you mean by the structure of Washington? You mean the bureaucracy?

*Q: The bureaucracy, yes.*

FINN: Well, no, again, USIA was such a friendly little organization I quickly got to know people. I had been interviewed while I was in Istanbul, when I was eight months pregnant by Terry Catherman and one or two other people came through and they interviewed me. Also, I knew the public affairs officer in Istanbul, Dan Garcia, so a lot of people in USIA knew me and I felt very comfortable right away. I met Len Baldyga in Washington. He the deputy European area director. Catherman was the director and he was the deputy director. And they treated me with great respect. They asked me a lot of serious questions about what was going on in Turkey and what we should do, and I felt really very much at home in USIA.

*Q: How did you feel about developments at the time in Turkey?*

FINN: Well, back then Turkey was in very bad shape. When I was teaching at the university, the second year that I was at the university, which would have been '79-'80, there was the oil shortage and the gasoline crisis in the United States. Well, you can imagine in a country like that what the circumstances were. There was no heating oil and there were shortages of everything imaginable. It was a bitterly cold winter. Normally Istanbul doesn't have much snow, it's a temperate climate, but it was a very bitter winter with heavy snow and ice that year. And fortunately, our apartment building was heated with coal, so we were okay, but it was a very tough winter. And there was a terrible

internal conflict in Turkey. There were battles going on between right wing and left-wing students and many students died. Had it happened in a Western European country, it would have been on the front page of the American newspapers, but it was barely noticed in the international media, which was a lesson to me about the difference between what happens in other parts of the world. Of course, I think that's changed now that we have BBC World and CNN going everywhere. But back then, I saw how little reporting and coverage there was of a NATO ally in a state of virtual civil war.

*Q: Were you apprehensive about going back there?*

FINN: No. I guess it's good to be young. No, no, no. I was in Pakistan as well. More Americans were killed in Turkey that particular year when I was teaching at the university than in any other country. And of course, since then things have changed considerably. When I was in Pakistan, I worked in buildings that had been overtaken by mobs. And no, I just always forged ahead, so to speak. Don't ask me why. I just did.

*Q: So, you went to Istanbul?*

FINN: No. I was referring to the period when I lived in Istanbul prior to joining the foreign service. I was living in Istanbul at two different times, two years teaching at the university. I was admitted to the foreign service subsequently and went for language training and then I was posted to Ankara. The State Department couldn't assign my husband to the same country even though we had a little baby. So, USIA was wonderful and they found a job for him in Izmir.

*Q: Did you know what was the thinking behind the non-assignment?*

FINN: Oh, they just didn't like the idea of wives joining. Remember, this was only a few years after they allowed married women to join. Married women were not allowed to join the diplomatic service. So, these were ways to discourage them. But I always thought that USIA was much more progressive and they were very friendly. I was in Ankara with the baby, and I had brought a young lady from New Jersey over with me to be with the baby as a nanny during the day. I got to know the ambassador, Strausz-Hupé, who was a Reagan appointee. He was a very charming man, very scholarly, born in Vienna. I told him about Robert's qualifications, and when he realized that Robert was fluent in Turkish and had done his PhD in Turkish Studies at Princeton, of course he got him up to Ankara, eventually to be his staff aide.

*Q: Did you feel that you were sort of fighting the State Department? I mean, did this do something to you vis-à-vis your attitude towards the State Department?*

FINN: No, no. USIA I considered to be more progressive. The State Department was more conservative and traditional. And the reason I took the exam for USIA in the first place was that I knew it would be very difficult if I tried to go into the State Department. We did have friends, we knew couples -- it was just beginning then that wives were allowed in -- we knew one or two other couples where both went into the State

Department and it was just much more difficult. With me in USIA, we were in completely separate offices. And we were junior enough that it wasn't as though one would be the boss of the other.

My State Department colleagues always treated me with great respect. Ambassador Strausz-Hupé was wonderful. The deputy chief of mission, Dick Boehm, who later became an ambassador, was marvelous. And so no, I held them in high esteem. I just realized that it would take them a little bit of catch up to realize that women were moving into the workforce.

*Q: Well, did you feel, I mean, I'll be sampling this from time to time, but at this point did you feel there was what came to be known as the glass ceiling and that you were-?*

FINN: Well, you know, I was given tremendous encouragement and I did move up the ranks. And I did get to be the rank of minister counselor. So, I've never felt that I was being blocked. And also, I was very much at home in public diplomacy. I always had a huge network of friends and public diplomacy is not about collecting information, it's not about a meeting with politicians and going back to the office and writing a cable report; it's much more about representing America. And I had been a university teacher before, so I really enjoyed flying around the country and going to universities and lecturing to the students and working with the faculty and promoting the study of the United States, which was one of our most important goals back then, and working on our exchange programs, recruiting good people to go on the exchange programs. So, all around I was very comfortable in my job.

*Q: And you were in Turkey from when to when?*

FINN: I was in Turkey from 1981 to '84.

*Q: What was going on when you arrived there?*

FINN: Well, what happened in Turkey was that the situation, the civil strife, had become so severe that the military stepped in. As you know in Turkish history a number of times the military has stepped in. And Kenan Evren then became the military dictator and the situation calmed down. And I have to say that I knew people, I knew Turks from all parts of the political spectrum, and for the most part people were relieved because so many students had died; they were killing one another. And this was put a stop to. Now, of course people who were dissidents, some of them went to other countries and came back years later on. And there would be people who would tell other stories about this, but in terms of Turkey and stability and its being a very important NATO ally, it was just part of the larger Cold War period. Eventually elections were held and the country returned to elected government.

*Q: Well, what were you doing?*

FINN: As assistant cultural affairs officer, I was in the most junior position at the embassy. My first ambassador there was James Spain. He was there the first year, and then Strausz-Hupé came. I ran the exchange programs, the International Visitor Program and I worked on the Fulbright program. And my job was to maintain contact with a wide range of academics and journalists; that's basically what I did, that's what we did in USIA.

*Q: I would have thought that sort of your appearing there, speaking Turkish and all, you would have been sort of a novelty, wouldn't you?*

FINN: Well, yes. Everyone knew who I was, that's right. They did. And especially when I went outside to the provincial universities, yes. But it was in a positive way. People were thrilled. So, few foreigners learn Turkish that if you went somewhere and you were speaking Turkish with people, they were immensely pleased.

*Q: How were Turkish women treated?*

FINN: You can't generalize, but if you speak of the educated classes, the Turkish women were extremely independent. Turkish women were heads of the departments at the universities, and they had many prestigious positions in the society. They were very respected. Many of the judges were women. Turkey was a very secular society. For instance, marriages would be performed by a judge and that judge would be a woman in almost all cases that I witnessed. There were many women who had positions of influence and importance in professional spheres such as law, medicine and academia.

*Q: Did you find that- how about on the campuses?*

FINN: Well, I had taught on the campus of Boğaziçi and when I was in Ankara I had very close ties with the Middle East Technical University. I knew many faculty members, as well as the president and the vice president. That was true of Hacettepe University as well. I actually taught a graduate course there in American Literature. And I had ties as well with Ankara University, and also with the academic community throughout the country, extensive ties.

*Q. How did you find the faculty?*

FINN: The language of instruction at Boğaziçi in Istanbul and at Middle East Technical and Hacettepe in Ankara was English. So, the faculty had for the most part been trained, educated in the United States, or Great Britain, or perhaps somewhere else in Europe, but they were fluent in English.

*Q: So, you weren't particularly challenging the order by appearing as a woman?*

FINN: No. In those days, all educated women dressed in Western dress just as any woman in Paris or London or Rome or New York would dress. The head scarves in those days were worn by women from the villages who were in many cases uneducated, barely

literate, if literate at all. The ladies with head scarves were the cleaning personnel at the big offices; these would-be ladies wearing kerchiefs on their heads, but not this Persian style or Arab style wraparound that they wear today. It was usually just a little head scarf or a kerchief like a babushka. They were extremely likable and not particularly interested in politics.

*Q: Ah ha.*

FINN: The less educated women generally wore raincoats, but they wore stockings and shoes; they did not look so different from rural women across Europe earlier in the last century. When I first traveled as a student in the late '60s in Europe, all across Europe I saw women in villages who were dressed in similar fashion with kerchiefs or babushkas. It's gone now, but that was just the way they dressed. In Russia, it was the same thing. It was not so different; it wasn't as if people would look at one of these women and think, oh, this woman's a Muslim, because she might be a Bulgarian Christian.

*Q: Yes, it was really more- almost a social thing.*

FINN: Well, no. For those women, covering the head was a religious requirement, but it was done for cultural reasons, sometimes it was just a scarf tied under the chin. It was just the way they dressed. And considering that these women worked in the fields, just as a practical matter, it provided good protection against the sun and the dust. But if they did do it, they did do it also for religious reasons in the same way Jackie Kenney wore a mantilla when she went to church.

*Q: Speaking of that time, how was the United States viewed in Turkey?*

FINN: Well, the country was torn apart so there was some anti-American sentiment, certainly, but among the people, the educated people that I dealt with, while they might be critical of this or that U.S. policy, for the most part they were very happy that Turkey was in NATO and they very much aspired to join the European Union, which is, a policy the United States has always supported.

And you have to remember something else, that there were many American military in Turkey in those days, and for the most part, the American military liked being there, and they lived pretty much with the people. And the people liked them. It was really not the way things are now at all. American military families had for the most part very good relations with their Turkish neighbors. When they left, they had good memories of their years of service there.

*Q: While you were there at this particular time was the military a respected institution?*

FINN: You mean the Turkish military?

*Q: Yes.*

FINN: The Turkish military was always the most highly trusted and respected institution in the country. Every single male went into the military. And it was also a great way to educate those from rural areas who were illiterate because in the military they taught them to read and write. And they also had a policy of sending the city kids to the countryside, and the country kids to the cities, so they got exposure to the rest of the country because there were radical differences in the standard of living between people in the rural areas and the urban population.

*Q: Did you get out into the countryside much?*

FINN: Oh yes, I traveled all over the place, yes. Even before I joined the diplomatic service. In fact, Robert and I had traveled by bus pretty much all over the country. While we were in Ankara, we rented a house outside Ankara in a place called Erkeksu so that we could get out little son out of the pollution. We would go there on weekends. Edward had a little pony to ride there and there were turkeys and other poultry in the garden.

*Q: No particular problems traveling there?*

FINN: Well, no. In the earliest days, before I joined the foreign service, I had not yet acquired fluency in the language, but Robert had it from his time in the Peace Corps and his academic studies. And people were incredibly nice. Turks are extremely hospitable, extremely hospitable. If you went into a village, they'd kill their last chicken for you because they wanted to entertain the guests graciously.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the Turkish form of Islam and was that sort of divided or-?*

FINN: Here's the way I would put it. Back then, if you went into small towns and villages, on the wall of the home, they would have cut out from the newspaper a picture of Atatürk and they might also have something from the Koran. There was no conflict between their admiration for Atatürk as a national hero, and their feelings of religious devotion. The division between these loyalties is something that came later.

*Q: Did you find some of your work explaining America, did you find yourself getting into the religion, religious aspect?*

FINN: No, I didn't. No, because I was talking about the United States. The United States is a country where we have separation of church and state, but this wasn't really what interested people. They were interested the modernization of their own country and they very much wanted to be more like the United States. They very much admired the United States. This whole business of religion moving to the forefront came after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was something that happened after the end of the Cold War.

*Q: Well, how about the Soviet Union in that particular period?*

FINN: The Turks have had their differences with the Russians, so during the Cold War they were very happy to be in NATO. They had also sent a lot of young men to Korea,

Many Turks died in Korea, no question. So, they were very much counting on our support for their security. Now, of course there were some segments that objected to NATO. These were Russian backed, but for the most part, the population was strongly supportive of NATO and happy to be in it. And Turkey was the southern flank of NATO and highly valued by the United States for that reason.

*Q: Yes. I served in Korea during the war-*

FINN: Oh, did you?

*Q: -and the Turks had a tremendous reputation there.*

FINN: That's right. Actually, Korean is another language like Japanese that is very distantly related to Turkish, not Chinese, but Korean and Japanese.

*Q: Again, it's a difficult one because it's sort of a situational language, depending on who you are and who the person you're talking to is.*

FINN: Well, I wouldn't say that about Turkish. Turkish is a very egalitarian language. Of course, as in all languages, the more educated people have a much larger vocabulary and may use more complex grammatical formulations, but that's something I think would be characteristic of any language in any society. Turkish is a language that has no gender and that's the case in Hungarian also.

*Q: Did you deal at all with the press?*

FINN: I was the assistant cultural affairs officer, but I did deal with the press because I had friends who were journalists and also because we sent bright young journalists on the international visitor programs to the United States so I certainly had contact with the media, yes.

*Q: How did we find the press there?*

FINN: Well, the Turkish press, these days is in a difficult situation. There are a high number of journalists in jail. The Turkish press was always fairly reserved, but I have to say that the journalists I knew were able to express many views including critical views of the government. And they also had a sense of humor about some of their politicians and government leaders. There were satirical magazines that poked fun at the political leadership. So, I would not describe it as an absolutely free press, but it was a press that was more open than it would have been in most other countries at that level of development.

*Q: Do you feel that the United States was fairly well presented by the press, the Turkish press to the people?*

FINN: Yes. This was not a major issue back then. Of course, there were the struggles between those segments of the intelligentsia that were pro-Russian as opposed to those who were pro-American, but this was all carried on at a fairly subtle level. There were not the kind of misleading news stories that one might encounter nowadays. And of course, you have to remember something else; this is a country where you have an educated class reading the newspapers and there were newspapers of different stripes; there was the left-wing newspaper “Cumhuriyet,” and the mainstream papers “Hürriyet” and “Milliyet,” and then “Tercuman” on the right. When I went there for my first tour, there was only one black and white TV station that was on only a few hours in the evening. Remember, TV was very new there. And there just wasn’t the proliferation of information that we have today. Most people back then got their information from the radio.

*Q: Did you deal with the radio?*

FINN: My colleagues certainly in the press office did. By the way, Ankara was so safe back then that the Police Radio Station actually broadcast messages about wallets and change purses left accidentally in taxis so that the owners could claim them.

*Q: Did you lecture at universities?*

FINN: Yes. Yes, I spoke at the universities around the country. VCRs, films on tape, were something very new, and we actually ordered a large collection of them which we housed in the Middle East Technical University so that faculty and students could have access to American films. And I also would show American films, followed by a discussion with the students about American society. We had a screening room in the USIS building so we could invite people to see films and discuss them with us.

*Q: As in so many other places, did a lot of the younger people have the idea that the way America’s depicted on the silver screen, the Hollywood thing was a real world?*

FINN: Well, I can tell you a funny story from when I was in Istanbul; this is before I joined the Foreign Service. Do you remember the American television program, “House on the Prairie?”

*Q: Oh, yes.*

FINN: Many people in Turkey and even some people who traveled to the United States, thought the television program “House on the Prairie” took place now, not back then, because in Turkey there was still such a dramatic divide between the rural areas where people were getting around with horse drawn vehicles, and the cities. Some of our visitors were very surprised to see that there were highways all over the United States, and people were driving cars everywhere. It was extremely expensive to import first-rate American films, so, making these films available via VCR tapes was a great breakthrough. And, for the most part you have to remember the general population didn’t know English. Foreign films were not dubbed or subtitled, so most people were just



going to see their own Turkish movies. It would only be in the universities where you'd have students who were fluent in English and those students would watch the films. Aside from providing a window into our society, the films were very useful because they helped them improve their English.

*Q: Did you find- was there- within the cities was there much sort of class rivalry and all?*

FINN: No, no, no. The cities were very predominantly middle-class although you did have people pouring in from the countryside and living in what were called "gecekondu." These were shanty towns outside the cities, literally "built by night." Villagers who migrated from the countryside would settle on public land and recreate the life of the village. These shanty towns didn't have electricity or sewer systems. But no one stopped this from happening. In terms of the way people treated one another, there wasn't the kind of class definition that one encounters in Western European society. It was a mobile society, more like the United States, in the sense that people could and did rise from humble origins. For instance, most of the people who became generals in the army, or even leading politicians, came from modest backgrounds. So, it was really a meritocracy in that sense. The university exams were not corrupted as in many other developing countries. The university exams provided an opportunity for students from rural areas all over the country. Those who worked hard and studied hard had the chance to be admitted to the universities.

*Q: How did Turkish students who went to the United States do?*

FINN: Well, there weren't as many then as there are now, of course. The students who went to the United States were from relatively more affluent backgrounds, urban families who could afford such a thing - or they were very, very bright students who got scholarships, especially in the sciences or engineering. And those students did extremely well. For the most part, educated Turks who went to the United States just fit in and did nicely. As I mentioned before, they for the most part would go back to Turkey to pursue their careers if they were on a Fulbright scholarship. Of course, you have a fair number of Turkish doctors who have settled here. There are a lot of Turks nowadays in New York and certainly there's another generation of Turks, a large number of young people, in our universities. I never felt that Turks had trouble living in the United States. Columbia University has always had a fair number of Turkish students.

*Q: Well now, the situation on Cyprus- did it impact on your work?*

FINN: I was teaching at the university in Istanbul when Ecevit went into Cyprus. And of course, that's a whole long story. The military junta in Greece wanted to take Cyprus and make it part of Greece. There was a radical nationalist on Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios. The Greek government in Athens installed their representative Nikos Sampson. The Turks invaded because they believed that if they took no action, Cyprus would be annexed to Greece.

*Q: Sampson, yes.*

FINN: Yes, so this is what prompted it. And then Ecevit went in with troops, which was enormously popular in Turkey, ostensibly to secure and safeguard the Turkish population on the Turkish part of the island. But I think Cyprus is a sad story and I do hope eventually that they find a way to have a successful federation. The Turkish Cypriots I knew always considered themselves to be Cypriots first and foremost.

*Q: Yes, I was consul general in Athens and it just leapt when Cyprus blew up.*

FINN: Yes, yes, yes.

*Q: The Greeks- I never was very sympathetic to the Greek cause. They talked a big game, but they really were not very nice people to their minorities.*

FINN: Well, the military- yes, yes. It's such a complicated history. Greece itself had such a bitter history. Their horrible civil war tore the country apart. Of course, during the Second World War, the Nazis starved them to death. They have a very, very bitter history. So many of them emigrated to the United States and Europe and Australia. There are more Greeks in New York than Athens. Their population today it's probably still barely 10 million. And yes, always a very difficult, complicated relationship with Turkey even though they are both in NATO.

*Q: At country team meetings in Athens, they had the military attachés talking about what would happen if there was a war between these two NATO powers.*

FINN: Right. When I went back to Washington after my first tour in Turkey, I was the desk officer for Turkey, Greece and Cyprus at USIA. Parker Hart, a very senior retired foreign service officer, used to come and see me because he was writing a book entitled "Two NATO Allies at the Threshold of War" about the conflict between Greece and Turkey. Of course, Cyprus was at the center of the conflict.

*Q: Yes.*

FINN: Yes, there were some close calls over the years and it's an ongoing saga. During my second tour in Turkey in the late '90s, the PKK leader Öcalan was captured in Africa under Greek auspices; that was really something. That was one of the lowest points in the relationship.

*Q: Well, we'll come to that but is there anything about your job that particularly- because this time, doing cultural affairs, how about the sort of cultural presentations that we would send over; how did they-*

FINN: Oh, that was wonderful. Oh gosh, in those days, yes. During the Cold War there was lots of money for cultural diplomacy. For the Istanbul Festival, we had every major American dance company. Some of them came to Ankara as well. These were sponsored by public-private partnerships under the auspices of USIA's Arts America division. I

remember going to Istanbul to help out with the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company. They then came to Ankara. It was hard to find a stage large enough for the company. There were small, elegant theaters in Ankara, but to find a stage suitable for a large American dance company was something of a challenge. We wound up doing the performance at Hacettepe University which was newer and did have a big stage. But yes, that was a lot of fun. And we also had an active speaker program, so professors and authors from across the United States were sent out to Turkey. I sent them around the country to speak because we had the consulate in Izmir with an American cultural center there and we had a presence in Adana, and so that was really a lot of fun; I enjoyed that very much.

*Q: When a speaker came would you include an interpreter?*

FINN: No, because we had really significant English-speaking audiences. We were running English language programs; we had a lot of young people who were studying in the English language. I could take a speaker to Middle East Technical or to Hacettepe or the other universities in Ankara and program them. No, we didn't use interpreters. One of the wonderful things about the libraries, the libraries and cultural centers, was that in the library in Ankara and the libraries in Izmir and in Istanbul, we ran programs so that all the people from all the universities and research organizations, as well as the journalists who were interested in learning about the United States could attend. Perhaps most importantly, they all met one another, enabling them to form networks across many institutions and organizations interested in the study of the U.S. I was strongly opposed to the closure of the libraries.

*Q: Yes, I think we shot ourselves in the foot.*

FINN: Oh yes, absolutely. It was a terrible mistake, a terrible mistake. We closed the library in Belgrade during the Bosnian war. Where else could people go at that time to get information? In those days before the advances in technology, our drivers used to deliver the USIA policy statements from our senior officials and American press summaries to all the leading politicians, military officials, members of the parliament, and other influential leaders. These same people would come to our library for the speaker programs. It was a marvelous thing. I don't think it was ever understood, really, in Washington what we were losing.

*Q: It was sort of local egos, Senator Helms and all, trying to-*

FINN: Oh yes, that's right, that's exactly what happened.

*Q: Nothing to do with-*

FINN: They didn't understand the impact this had in terms of getting our message out. And actually, sometimes the support for cultural affairs outreach, and I use cultural in the broadest sense, because we're including all the speakers on foreign policy and economic policy issues, not just cultural topics. These programs often got support from the conservative Republican internationalists as much as from the Democratic Party, which

was more focused on domestic issues in the U.S. So, yes, back then there was a consensus, especially during the Cold War years, there was just a consensus that this was the right thing to do.

*Q: So, what happened after you- Is there anything else we should cover?*

FINN: In Turkey? No, unless you have more questions. It was a fantastic three years - a great introduction to the diplomatic service. And then, my husband and I both were assigned to Lahore in Pakistan.

*Q: Certainly. Okay, shall we-*

FINN: We can pick up with Pakistan next time.

*Q: I'm going to be gone; my kids are taking me to Pasadena for my 89<sup>th</sup> birthday.*

FINN: Oh, my goodness gracious. You're 89? Oh, that's wonderful. Well listen, you have a happy birthday.

*Q: Okay. Today is the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2017 with Helena Finn. And we're off to Pakistan.*

*Q: You were in Pakistan from when to when and where?*

FINN: I was in Lahore from '84 to '86 at the American Cultural Center. And then I was in Islamabad from '86 to '89, again at the American Cultural Center. And I have to say, in those days, we had magnificent centers. They were so beautiful. We had a very large auditorium with a Steinway grand piano. It was really very wonderful.

*Q: Okay, well, let's deal with Lahore.*

FINN: Okay.

*Q: What was the situation like when you got there?*

FINN: When I arrived in Lahore, I faced an office and a staff that had been traumatized because the facility we worked in had been attacked in 1979. Following a false radio report that the U.S. had bombed Masjid al-Haram, Islam's holy site in Mecca, the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad had been stormed and burned to the ground. The American Center in Lahore experienced the same fate. Although this happened five years before my arrival, the staff had not fully recovered from the shock.

When I got to Lahore, we had a really beautiful, centrally located building. It was separate from the consulate and it had easy access. We had security, of course, but relatively easy access. The library was full all the time with students. And we had programs several times a week, evening programs. We had a diverse array of speakers

sent out from the United States on many different topics - foreign affairs, economics, social issues, and even agriculture, that were important to Pakistan. It was an extremely active program. I was busy all the time.

In terms of the history of Lahore, when the Indian subcontinent was divided all the very cultured people, the Urdu-speaking people from Muslim North India, and particularly from centers of culture, historic centers like Lucknow, had come to Lahore. They were called “muhajirs” (Muslim immigrants to Pakistan from India) and they spoke an elegant Urdu. So, Lahore had a thriving cultural scene. I was invited probably several times a week to art exhibit openings, poetry readings, sitar concerts -- and those concerts were usually held in people’s homes -- dance performances, again held in people’s homes, so it was a very active cultural scene. This was going on during the reign of President Zia-ul-Haq who was bent on a policy of Islamization. Music and dance performances were held privately because they couldn’t be done publicly. The art exhibits, however, were public exhibits held in galleries. The art work on display was not offensive to people with conservative views or interpretations of Islam. For the most part, there were no depictions of human beings. They were either representational paintings, cityscapes and countryscapes or landscapes or they were decorative painting. But it was a very vibrant art scene.

*Q: How did Islamization work with your work? I mean, how did they mesh and not mesh?*

FINN: Well, the thing is that everyone in Pakistan, virtually everyone, is Muslim. There is a Christian minority, and there’s even a small Hindu minority, people who did not go across the border at the time of partition, but virtually everyone else adheres to Islam. There are people who are more at the secular end of the spectrum, and people who were at the other end. I dealt mostly with the English-speaking educated classes, people who had studied abroad, the men in particular had gone to Oxford or Cambridge. Their children were going to our best universities in the United States. So, they were very well aware of what was going on in the world and very sophisticated. At the same time, it was a feudal society so within their own society they made many adaptations. The best example I can give you is that when people were hosting parties in the privacy of their homes, their parties would be similar to those held in Europe or the United States in terms of food and alcohol being served and very convivial gatherings, sometimes with entertainment from a singer or dancer. But when these same people went out in public, they might behave in a more conservative manner and be more observant of Islamic restrictions.

So, a lot of things were going on at once and I noticed that women in particular had to make more adaptations than men did because women were expected always to wear some sort of head covering, a *dupatta* it’s called; it’s a kind of scarf that drapes around the head. So, when these women went outside, that’s how they would be attired. When they were indoors, that scarf would just be around their necks the way an American or a European woman would wear such a scarf. When they went to the villages, they might adapt even more conservative covering. An American or a European woman will dress as she dresses no matter where she goes, but women in Pakistan were making adaptations in

accordance with the circumstances. And these same women, for instance, when they went abroad with their husbands, might go swimming on the Riviera and think nothing of it, but they certainly would not do anything like that at home, nor would there be a possibility for it, really.

*Q: When you went out how did you dress?*

FINN: Well, I wore American business clothes to the office. In other words, I would normally have worn a skirt and a jacket and a blouse, a suit, to the office, and I dressed exactly as I would in the United States and I told people that it was important that just as an Indian or Pakistani lady would wear her national costume at the UN, I would wear my national costume at the consulate. But I did have a large collection of salwar kameez and saris that I wore to dinner parties in the evenings. I really enjoyed that; it was a lot of fun.

*Q: Let's talk a little bit about the lectures.*

FINN: Okay.

*Q: Did you have problems with the lecturers coming and maybe talking on subjects that were inappropriate or a little-*

FINN: No. Although we were offered a wide range of topics by Washington, I didn't pick up the lecturers who were going to talk about Islam. I thought that was something that the Pakistanis could discuss among themselves. I brought in lecturers who would talk about economic issues. They'd talk about development strategies for a country like Pakistan, or they'd talk about international relations and U.S. policy issues, and also cultural and literary topics. I wanted to broaden people's horizons and let them understand the whole range of American policy decisions. I didn't have any problems. And people at the consulate and embassy lectures were eager to hear the speakers. I'll tell you one thing that was rather funny. The biggest issue between India and Pakistan then, now and forever is Kashmir. And at the beginning, no matter what the speaker's topic, it didn't matter what the speaker was going to talk about, he could be talking about water conservation or investment or education, at the beginning of the presentation, the very first question invariably would be "what do you think about Kashmir?" and then we would move on to the actual subject. But that was because people were just so obsessed with that issue.

*Q: Did any of your speakers respond to it?*

FINN: Actually, the best speaker I had was our wonderful ambassador, Arnie Raphel. He's the one who died in the plane crash with Zia. He was a fantastic speaker and I invited him over every few months to speak. The auditorium would be jampacked, absolutely full of people. He was exceptionally skilled. He would start off by saying that the United States and Pakistan are very good friends. We are close allies, but we disagree on a lot of issues. And then he would run down the list and say these are things that we don't agree upon, but then these are things that we do agree upon, and we're working

together. And that was a very good way of deflecting criticism. And of course, if he were asked something specifically about Kashmir, he would be well aware of exactly the right wording in terms of U.S. policy at the time. And audiences would accept it. They more or less knew what the answer was. I think they were more interested in trying to catch someone who was there to talk about something completely different to see if they would say something that deviated from official policy. First of all, I would always warn the speakers in advance and they for the most part knew how to deflect questions just by saying this is not really why I'm here today, it's not my area of expertise or something like that.

*Q: Well now, what about music and dance? You said much of it has moved to homes. Could you put on performances?*

FINN: Oh, we had lots of American musicians come and perform in our auditorium. People loved it. Dance was a little trickier. I didn't do dance presentation, but the Pakistanis themselves did. After all, the Mogul tradition was quite alive in Lahore. The Moguls were Muslims. The Mogul court of India had very wonderful dance and music traditions. So, people carried these on in their homes when this more Islamic regime came in. But the other thing to understand is that these people lived in huge mansions amongst extended families. Not only their own extended families, but the extended families of their servants- people who might also have been working for that same family on that same estate for generations. The whole culture was essentially feudal. Many of the people I knew had farms and lands outside the city, and all the food was fresh from the farms. So, there was much more a tradition of home entertainment. People didn't really go to restaurants in the way we do here or in Europe.

*Q: Did you find among the youth as they talk about- you say the system is basically feudal.*

FINN: Yes.

*Q: Was there a revolution within the youth culture? Or maybe you better just talk about the youth culture there.*

FINN: Well, most of the young people I dealt with were the children of these same feudal families. These were the educated people. Their offspring were bound to go to university. They understood how things worked. For instance, these families had been educated for generations in the United Kingdom and anyone who's watched "Downtown Abby" can see that there's a British aristocratic tradition. This was still alive in Pakistan, at least in the last century. These young people understood the workings of real democracy, which they were exposed to in England of the U.S., and many of them went into politics and sat in parliament for different parties. In the same family, you might have one young person from each branch of the family sitting in a seat held by each of the major parties. They liked the trappings of democracy, but they were also disinclined to rock the boat. So, when it came to revolution, there wasn't too much of that. The revolutionary side of things was much more a question of people from underprivileged backgrounds, and

people working on the land or the lower middle-class people in the cities becoming more vulnerable to Islamization.

*Q: Well, did that manifest itself in audiences and all?*

FINN: No, no, because the people who came to our program were people who wanted to identify with the West. I did a lot of interesting conferences on our constitution and the rule of law as well as social and cultural topics, and I can't think of a time when anyone stood up at a conference and said oh, but this is against Islam or something like that. No.

Remember, this is in the 1980s. It's very different from what I think an officer doing cultural affairs would experience today.

*Q: Did you have any lectures or presentations that got out of line and were a problem for you?*

FINN: No, not really. And in fact, I lectured all over the country. My own doctoral studies were in British and American literature. For example, I was asked to lecture at Karachi University. There was also huge, beautiful, magnificent library in Lahore; the national library was in Lahore at that time. The director was actually an extremely devout Muslim man, a senior retired Air Force officer, and because he was a devout Muslim, I knew he would never shake hands. Shaking hands is a European custom, anyway; it's not a custom of the subcontinent. But although he would never shake hands, he knew our customs, so he would always make some polite excuse. On one occasion, he claimed to have injured his hand and he had bandages on it. And I just smiled and went along with this. I was actually rather touched that he had gone to such great ends to be polite. But he invited me to come and speak about any American writer I wanted to talk about and audiences came and filled this lovely library and I talked about American writers, including some controversial people such as Lillian Hellman.

*Q: How did Faulkner go over with the people?*

FINN: Well, I didn't do Faulkner. Aside from Lillian Hellman, I did Eugene O'Neill. The people who came to these lectures were people who had been educated abroad and they enjoyed them. It was interesting for them, and it was interesting for me.

You know, the thing was, my husband was there as the political officer, so he had a very different experience. He was working with the rough and tumble politicians, several of whom were highly educated, but more of whom were not terribly well educated. It was a very different world. The world I traveled in doing cultural affairs in those days was a very sophisticated world of people who wanted to have strong ties with the United States and the UK (United Kingdom), even when they disagreed with specific policies.

*Q: Was there any attempt on your part, I mean of our cultural centers, to get to the kids?*



FINN: Oh, our libraries were packed with the students, yes. And they would come to these lectures and to the events, yes. And most of them were aspiring to compete for exams to study in the United States. Unfortunately, some time before I entered the foreign service, the library programs for children had been eliminated. There were people in countries like Afghanistan and Iran, to say nothing of Germany, who had started having stories read to them and borrowing books from the American Library when they were quite young children.

*Q: What were the college students studying?*

FINN: Well, you know, and this would be true in Pakistan, but also in Egypt, even to some extent in a country like Turkey; in developing countries, often even the talented musician doesn't study music. They study engineering, medicine, architecture; architecture is a great Islamic art form. They are interested in building things, and they're interested in modernizing their countries. Also, they don't have the strong tradition of intellectual exploration and dialogue in the same way we do in the West. They don't have a dialectical or Socratic tradition in education. It's much more a question of learning facts and being able to accomplish very concrete things.

*Q: Did you get involved with training, you know, accustoming these young people to go into the United States and participating in university discussions and all that?*

FINN: Well, we tried to do that. We did that through the programs with the speakers at the center. And of course, when I went around and lectured at universities, I engaged with both faculty and students. I did a lot of that in Turkey, and I also did it in Pakistan.

*Q: You know, I've interviewed Beth Jones and her family is Foreign Service and she went to school in Moscow and in Germany. And so, when she finally went to, I'm not sure if it was Oberlin or one of the-*

FINN: Beth went to Swarthmore.

*Q: Swarthmore, yes.*

FINN: I know Beth, yes.

*Q: And I was saying that one of the first classes she got to they said- the professor said what do you think, Miss Jones? She said it was the first time anybody had ever asked her that.*

FINN: Of course, of course, that's right, that's right. Everything about the education in a country like Pakistan is very different. When I went to the universities, I was teaching, or I was giving classes to students who were not in the wealthy group that could afford to send their children to the United States. These were the young people who might be upper middle-class or middle-class, but they were at the local university in Karachi, for example. And so, one thing I will never forget, I was asked to give lectures on "The

Scarlet Letter,” the Hawthorne novel. For the students in that class, that novel had a contemporary reality that it could never, ever, never have for American students. The idea of a woman being scorned because her behavior wasn’t considered proper is something that was very much a part of their culture and so they responded to it very strongly.

*Q: Yes, I know. My wife taught English as a second language and when she came back here, to Fairfax County, she was talking about students - they were all foreign students because they were studying English as a second language and there was a section of the high school where pregnant women went, pregnant girls. They weren’t married. I think it was one of her Thai girls said in my country, they would have been stoned.*

FINN: That’s very interesting to me, too, because in my generation, if a girl became pregnant, she just disappeared somewhere to have the baby. That the high school would have a section for pregnant girls, my gosh. Yes. See, I have a lot to learn about my own country.

*Q: What about the Indian connection? Did you get involved- there must have been- I mean, here is sort of, I won’t say a mirror, I mean, different things but these are people who have been together for thousands of years.*

FINN: Yes, right.

*Q: And there has to be an awful lot of intellectual curiosity and all.*

FINN: Yes. Go ahead.

*Q: No, I just want to know how did that play out in your field?*

FINN: Well, first of all I did a lot of work in conflict resolution so I did bring Indians across, and I think I told you about that in one of the earlier conversations. I included Indians in a major conference I organized in Lahore. It was very complicated getting people back and forth, but at the end of the day I succeeded.

On the cultural level, the people in Lahore and Islamabad that I dealt with, their customs were not so different from those in India. Of course, there is a huge difference between Islam and Hinduism, the religions, but in terms of the marriage customs and many other things, the bride, whether it’s a Hindu wedding or a Muslim wedding, the bride is wearing red, sitting on a platform with a thin veil over her face and a lot of jewelry. In both cases, the marriage would have been arranged by the families. A lot of these things are really quite similar. And you can see that it was one civilization. Also, historically, in the time of Akbar, the great visionary leader, there was a syncretic blending of Islam and Hinduism. It’s inevitable when people with the same essential ethnic background are living together in close proximity that there will be some blending of the religions and that was the case in the subcontinent too.

In terms of the arts, first of all, when I was in Lahore, everyone watched television out of Amritsar because they showed a lot of great, old Indian movies. Amritsar was right over the border in the big Sikh community of East Punjab on the Indian side. And the language, the Punjabi language, is written in a different script in India; in Pakistan it's written in the Arabic script, but in India it's written in Sanskrit script. But in fact, on the street, people communicate easily, it's absolutely mutually intelligible; people have no problem whatsoever understanding one another. It was a very complicated relationship, but you know, when I visited India, I met older people who had gone to school together with Pakistanis before partition. Then they grew up, and in these horrible wars, they were fighting against their own former classmates.

*Q: Oh boy.*

FINN: Yes, yes.

*Q: Absolutely.*

*Did you find yourself, talking about differences in customs, a consultant to young women, young girls about America and compare and contrast and all that?*

FINN: Wherever I've been, women have always asked me lots of questions. Usually it's about what's it like to be in the Foreign Service. But I'm trying to think; I had many, many women friends, but they were women who had traveled a great deal themselves and knew a lot - if not so much about America, they had traveled often to Britain and to Europe. This would be different now because this younger generation has much closer ties with the United States. All of their children went to school in America even though they themselves might have been educated in the UK. You know, I think more than anything, they spent a lot of time explaining their customs to me. They knew a great deal about America and there wasn't so much negative propaganda as now. Pakistan was in the American sphere of influence. So, they basically had good impressions and a good image of the United States and were really very anxious to go there, despite objections to some policies.

*Q: Alright. Well, we'll pick this up the next time and I'd like to ask you and then we can-we'll go on but you were there after our embassy had been sacked, is that right? After our embassy had been burnt and all.*

FINN: Yes, I was there after that. That occurred in 1979 before I arrived, but there were still demonstrations and protests from time to time.

*Q: Yes, I would like to ask you about these and all.*

*Next Session*

*Q: Hello. Ready to have at it?*

FINN: I'm ready.

*Q: Okay. I just want to tell you I've got three interns here who are sitting in and listening to how I conduct these interviews.*

FINN: I see.

*Q: Your name and what school are you from?*

INTERN #1: I'm Caroline, and I'm from South Carolina.

*Q: South Carolina, alright. And-?*

INTERN #2: I'm Bridget from Davidson College.

*Q: Davidson. And-?*

INTERN #3: I'm Josh Barnes and I go to UNC Chapel Hill.

FINN: Okay. So, you're from the Carolinas all three of you?

*Q: Yes.*

FINN: Yes. I do know one professor at Davidson, Scott Dennison, who does German history.

INTERN #2: Yes.

FINN: See? Small world.

INTERN #2: Very.

*Q: I told them that at the end of this session if they have any questions I'll let them have at you.*

FINN: Oh, that's fine. That would be absolutely okay. I'm ready to go any time you are.

*Q: Okay. And we've got one more intern who just came in. Could you just say your name and where you're from?*

INTERN #4: Hi. I'm Danny from Los Angeles and I go to Dartmouth College.

*Q: Okay.*

FINN: Well, very nice to meet you.

*Q: So, we're in Lahore.*

FINN: Yes.

*Q: You were in Lahore from when to when?*

FINN: I was in Lahore, Pakistan, from 1984 to 1986.

*Q: Alright. And did you make any notes about what we might cover?*

FINN: Well, we were just talking generally about Pakistan. In Lahore, I was doing cultural affairs. I had an enormous amount of contact with the cultural community and it was a very, very rich and rewarding experience. When the Indian subcontinent was partitioned, many of the most cultured Muslims from Delhi and Lucknow and other cities in North India came across. They settled in Lahore and they kept the Urdu language alive, and they also kept its literature, its poetry alive. It was a very wonderful experience. I was invited to private poetry readings; there were many art exhibits, especially painting and ceramic exhibits. The National Academy there was founded by Rudyard Kipling's father. Kipling was the great English poet. His father had founded the Academy in Lahore and it had a wonderful art school. Punjab University also had a very fine arts academy. So, I quickly came to know all the leading artists, the painters and the writers and the poets. And there were many musical performances, sitar concerts, mostly in people's homes. So, it was quite a marvelous experience. and rather surprising. I hadn't realized how very cultured society in Lahore was going to be.

*Q: What about, I mean, in Islam, what about art there? Because usually representations of people particularly are sort of forbidden I thought in Islam.*

FINN: Well, the great art form of the Islamic civilization, of course, is architecture. And the architecture in Lahore, both the Mogul architecture and the British was spectacular. The British adapted many of the Mogul motifs. They also built extremely beautiful buildings. So, it was a wonderful city from that aspect.

In terms of painting, it's true that devout Sunni Muslims do not paint the human form and not even animal forms. The exception is in Shiite Islam where, for instance, there will even be depictions of the prophet. For the Shiites, there is no restriction and, in the carpets, and the paintings, one sees depictions of humans and animals. But in predominantly Sunni Pakistan, the painters were painting very much along the lines of the French impressionists. The paintings depicted landscapes for the most part. You're right that usually there would not be human figures in those paintings although in some of the smaller exhibits, you would even see paintings that included human figures. At the National Academy however, the great Mughal miniature tradition was flourishing. These paintings often told stories or depicted court scenes. They were filled with human and

animal images. The painters used the original techniques – grinding lapis lazuli, for example, to create the color blue.

*Q: What sort of things -- it's a strong term to use -- what were you pushing in the arts?*

FINN: Well, basically our job was to present the United States because in cultural diplomacy what you're doing is communicating things about your own society. And when we refer to a cultural attaché or a cultural affairs department in an embassy or consulate, it involves many different things. It's not just exhibitions or musical performances, although we did do those; it also includes the exchange programs, the academic exchanges, the professional exchanges, I oversaw those. We had two kinds of exchanges; Fulbright, of course, is very well-known. It's the most important official American academic exchange program of the U.S. government. And also, we had a professional exchange program called International Visitor. So, that was all part of the cultural department. And we had, in addition, the third segment, the speaker program. So, speakers recruited from across the country by Washington came out to talk about foreign policy, economic policy, and many other topics of interest, social policy, and I presented those speakers. We had a beautiful American Center so they were programmed there.

But on the exhibit side, because of the hot climate and because of the risk of political instability, we did not do exhibitions of original works. In those days, USIA actually had a unit dedicated to exhibitions and people there who curated exhibitions and sent them out to the embassies. They did not send exhibitions of paintings to Pakistan because it would just have been so complicated to protect and insure them. So, instead we had something called paper shows. In Manila, in the Philippines, there was a huge operation that produced paper- in other words posters - of famous works of art, American works of art. I remember I had a major poster show, a paper show, in our center in Lahore and people were incredibly enthusiastic; it was about American impressionist paintings and people were so excited by this they lined up, despite the blazing heat outside to come in and see it. It was hugely popular because remember, this is the 1980s; there was no internet, so there was no way for people there to see these paintings. And I did have the experience later on when people from that part of the world would come to New York and I would take them to a museum and they'd say oh, are these real? Because in their experience, their exposure and knowledge of these paintings came from the paper shows. And of course, this had an influence on the artists because they saw what the American impressionist painters had been doing. So, that was an example of a painting exhibition.

In terms of music, the public affairs officer had a Steinway baby grand; it was standard to have a Steinway baby grand in the home of the senior USIA officer. And so, we had artists come out, young people from Julliard would come, or other American performers. The public affairs officer, Kent Obee, was a music lover himself, so he liked to host these concerts. We also had blues and jazz groups. These performances were held in larger venues, but if it were just a pianist or a single violinist, they would perform in the home of the public affairs officer. We also had concerts in the cultural center auditorium. And when we had a very popular, big group, we would go and rent a space in one of the hotels and invite a large audience. I remember that Washington sent us Charlie Byrd and Kevin

Eubanks. These were very famous groups at the time; we went to larger venues. So, we did do musical presentations as well as painting. That's the fine arts category, let's say.

And then, would you like me to talk about the exchange programs and the other things we did?

*Q: Oh, yes.*

FINN: Okay. Let's move to the next category, Fulbright. I sat on the Fulbright Commission, it was part of my job to do so. I worked very closely with the director of the Fulbright Commission. And we selected people to go to the United States for academic exchange. We also were responsible for looking after the people who were sent out by the Fulbright Commission in Washington to be professors at universities through the country. Fulbright is a two-way exchange program and it was very interesting to sit on the board because I realized that in a country like Pakistan, there were many people who wanted to use their Fulbright scholarship as an opportunity to emigrate. We tried very hard to make sure that our investment in that talented young academic would result in a positive contribution to the intellectual life of Pakistan. We would hope that that person would come back and become an intellectual leader. It was difficult, but we did our best to make sure that they really intended to come back and that there would be a place for them on the university faculty when they did so. But that was challenging.

And the professional exchange is called International Visitors. There was a committee at the embassy in Islamabad and while I was in Lahore, I would submit names of people I'd nominated. It was nomination only by American officers; all the senior American officers, whether political or economic or public diplomacy, could nominate and then the committee would select the best ones. Fulbright and International Visitor were two fantastic exchange programs.

Another thing that I didn't explain, is that I organized conferences. While I was in Lahore, I organized a major conference on post-modernism. We brought scholars from India across the border, very difficult to do, but we managed it, and had a huge conference that covered architecture, literature, dance, music, the fine arts, all the different art forms that were impacted by the post-modern movement, which was more or less at its peak at the time when I was in Lahore in the '80s.

*Q Well now, what about developments in the technological field? Because so often now we see people with Indian or Pakistani last names in the forefront of many of the technological developments in the United States.*

FINN: Yes, that is very true. Although Steve Jobs father was from the Middle East; he was from Syria. Well, when I was in Lahore, we still had electric typewriters and that was the most advanced technology. And believe me, if you'd grown up as I did, typing on an old-fashioned manual typewriter, the electric typewriter was a big jump ahead. It wasn't until I got to Islamabad that we got word processors; we got WANG word processors so that was a year or two later.

Everyone wanted to work at the American consulate or the American embassy. We had a very talented staff. And because it's a very poor country, the salaries were affordable. We always paid staff whatever would be a reasonable salary for a person with those capabilities, but the salaries were so low that we could afford to maintain quite a large staff. I didn't really have to type things myself. I had a wonderful secretary; his name was Mr. Henry Harry. Our staff in Lahore was, with one exception, male. He took care of everything for me. So, yes, this was a long time ago and probably sounds quite extraordinary to young people, but this is what it was like before all the developments in communications. We did have air conditioning, thank goodness. We kept it around 80 degrees Fahrenheit because otherwise the staff would have become ill from the cold. The contrast with their unairconditioned homes and the office would have been too great. We did not have technology as we know it today.

*Q: Well, I practically go back to using the quill pen. Not quite.*

FINN: Surely not. Fountain pen, perhaps.

*Q: But now, what about the role, as you saw it, of women in the workforce?*

FINN: Well, basically the staff at the consulate was made up entirely of men. Very few women went to work and it would be only a woman from a very liberal upper crust family who would be working in an office. And we did have one woman like that who was a very progressive person, a very modern person. Saeeda Ajmeri was her name. And she and I, naturally became friends because our American staff was all male, too, except for me. So, in that huge sea of men, she and I were the only women. In addition to a professional friendship, we became friends socially. We had tea together and I visited her family and she and I sometimes went on weekend excursions together with my little son whom she spoiled terribly. She was a remarkable, independent, bright lady. I saw her many, many years later when I was at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York; she was participating in one of our staff development exchange programs. She was in New York, so I had a chance to have dinner with her many years after I left Pakistan. She was a great asset our office, and a great lady.

*Q: Was there a program to reach out and maybe change this use of mostly males into a more mixed one by our embassy?*

FINN: No, not really. Not while I was at a consulate in Lahore. When I get up to the embassy on my next assignment, I had two or three women on the staff. There were more women overall holding professional jobs and participating in public life in Islamabad. Islamabad was a new city, and very beautiful I might add. Remember, Karachi had been the capital of Pakistan and Islamabad was the new capital. The Parliament building was designed by the architect who designed the Kennedy Center in Washington, Edward Durell Stone, and it looked, actually, a lot like Washington. Islamabad had beautiful streets, all paved nicely, and in the center of each street were trees and flowering plants. People there were very proud of their magnificent gardens. It was quite a social



competition. It was a very contemporary atmosphere in Islamabad, and I think in that city it was more comfortable for women to be employed.

*Q: Well now, with the various exchange programs, did we make a special effort to get women to go to the United States and come back?*

FINN: Yes, we did. Yes, we did. In fact, in Lahore two of my very close friends were leading women activists, Asma Jahangir, and her sister Hina Jilani. They were both lawyers. Hina Jilani actually developed centers for women who were fleeing persecution. You know, in a place like Pakistan, there are honor killings and women who for any reason were truly or falsely accused by their family of what they believed to be misbehavior, would have to flee. These women often ran away to escape death. There were safe houses for these women so that they had a place to go. The other sister, Asma Jahangir, was a leading human rights activist, a very, very courageous woman. She was indeed just about the bravest person I have ever known. She has received many international awards for her work. She took many cases to the high court, defending women's rights. Both these sisters were trying very hard to move things forward.

Once I got to Islamabad, I did actually invite Asma to go on an exchange program, but she had three young children; she couldn't go because of that. She said please send my sister, Hina. And actually, it's rather a poignant story; I wrote a note to our ambassador, Arnie Raphel, and said please do approve this, we'd like to send either Asma Jahangir or Hina Jilani on an exchange. It was a program, if I recall correctly, at Columbia University. And he wrote a note back to me saying yes, approved, very happy to do this or something to that effect. And the sad thing is, before I received the note he had died in the plane crash with General Zia. I got that note a day or two later through the inter-office mail, because I was in a different building. The note arrived a day or two after he died.

*Q: That must have been a terrible shock.*

FINN: It was. Oh, yes, yes, it was a terrible, terrible shock, yes.

*Q: What was the general feeling, that this was an airplane accident or deliberate sabotage or what?*

FINN: No one believed for a moment that it was an airplane accident because it was a very sturdy cargo plane that is considered to be extremely safe and reliable. There were a large number of senior Pakistani military on the plane. Nothing was ever proved. We did send out forensic teams from Washington, but there were no public explanations of the crash. Farmers on the ground saw that the plane simply exploded in mid-air and the theory was that somebody put a crate of mangos on the plane just before it took off, and that crate must have had a bomb in it. It was Zia's official plane that he had used to fly down to the military exercises. He had, at the last minute, invited our ambassador, Arnie Raphel, and our defense attaché, Herbert Wassom, to join him on the return flight. They had arrived in one of our planes, but he invited them to fly back with him.

*Q: How was your work different in Islamabad than it was in Lahore?*

FINN: Well, there's always a difference between being in a consulate and being in an embassy. Because in the embassy, one's looking after the entire country. In Lahore I was very involved locally in the Punjab. I was responsible for outreach to universities and cultural organizations in that area. When I got to Islamabad, and that was a big promotion for me because I became the country cultural affairs officer, I was responsible for the exchange, cultural and speaker programs for the entire country. So, it was a big jump. And that happened because the public affairs officer was a woman who had served as ambassador to Togo. Her name was Marilyn Johnson. I had only met her once or twice, but she liked the work I was doing in Lahore so she asked me - it's very unusual to have two tours in a row in the same country- to come up to Islamabad to take countrywide responsibility for cultural affairs, and that's how it happened. Islamabad was different in many ways. For example, it was a city full of foreign embassies, so it was much more international. Lahore in those days was a highly cultured city, but a city that was predominantly Pakistani, whereas when I got to Islamabad, it was an international mix of people. It was a modern city laid out on a grid, very easy to find one's way around, not like Lahore; the old parts of Lahore were a labyrinth. So, there were many ways in which it was quite different.

*Q: What was the effect of the burning of that embassy? It had not been too far in the past, had it?*

FINN: Those things happened before I got there. They had built the new embassy as a compound for security reasons. It was a very handsome embassy with nice apartments and a beautiful recreational center with an outdoor swimming pool and cabanas. And there was a food service there, so one could invite friends for a swim and have hamburgers and French fries for lunch. So, it was a very nice embassy. I actually did not live on the embassy compound. I had a house on the Margalla Road; it was a house looking across at the Margalla Hills which are a lovely purplish color. It was a very beautiful house with a huge garden in the back. It was a house actually that had at one point been the USIS (United States Information Service) library. But the reason for that was that my job was to do a lot of entertaining and reaching out to people. It was important for me to be in a place that was accessible. Considering that our embassy and our consulate in Lahore had been attacked, I was very lucky to be able to live "off campus." There was a guard posted outside my house at all times, but it was still a much more relaxed atmosphere than I'm sure it is now.

I was friendly with quite a few members of parliament. Everyone in Pakistan in the educated class that I dealt with had a staff of servants, so people would drop in at any time unannounced and the bearer would bring them a cup of tea or a glass or lemonade even if I happened not to be home. They often came in the early evening. I would go down and sit with them and have a chat about politics for half an hour. They never stayed long. They would just drop by. People would drive around in the evening, I suppose also because it was cooler, they would drive around in the evening visiting various friends and that's how people shared all the latest news.

*Q: What were you picking up about the politics?*

FINN: Oh, what positions people were taking on the issues of the moment. And of course, it was a period when there was a military dictator, Zia-ul-Haq, but in spite of that, there were people who were agitating for greater latitude in expression. In the English language press, there was an extraordinary level of freedom despite this being a dictatorship. That was because the English language press wasn't threatening to the government. Only the most educated people could read English, and they had often been educated abroad, or travelled abroad. And in fact, the population was largely illiterate, or barely literate at that point. So, the Urdu press was under much greater control. But people talked about everything that was going on and what cases were being tried in the high court and all the same kinds of things that people would talk about in Washington. Conversations in private homes were quite free and highly opinionated. The government was criticized, as were we, for some of our policies.

*Q: Was there an effort on our part, not through your office, but to do something about literacy for the great majority of the population?*

FINN: What I did was to emphasize the importance of literacy to all the government officials I dealt with and the importance of a modern education. And let me tell you, there were not enough schools. One of the things that happens when population grows rapidly in a poor country is that it simply can't keep up. In fact, a rich country couldn't keep up. And unfortunately, some of our policies had put a damper on the women's health and family planning programs, and as a result of that the population just was exploding. I had a cook who had three children. His quarters were attached to my home because that was the custom there, that the servants lived next to the house. We wouldn't call them servants today, but that's how they called themselves in Pakistan. And I really put up a fight to get his children into school. It could not be assumed that a child would get into a school.

*Q: What about was family planning at all an issue there?*

FINN: Well, people were pretty unenlightened and I'm referring to senior government officials. It simply was not on their radar screen. And I used to talk to them about it; I used to talk to them about how important it was. And I knew a lot of women who were activists, educated women who went out to the villages and tried to help provide these services. But of course, when our government decided to cut out the funding for this all of a sudden, overnight hundreds of these little clinics closed. And this is something that's not well understood in the United States; what happens in a circumstance like that is not well understood.

So, anyway, that was a big problem, but there were lots of women working as volunteers in this field to fill the gap. The Pakistani and the Indian women often knew one another and worked together even though the two countries were not on the best terms because that shared interest superseded other considerations.

*Q: Did you feel that your work reached out say to the villages or was it pretty much focused on the already-educated classes?*

FINN: My work was with the educated classes including the rising middle-class people who aspired to study in the United States who would come to our libraries seeking information about opportunities, or come to our programs to learn about our policy agenda. And we were very open to students. As I think I mentioned earlier, I would go around and lecture in the universities, so I met a lot of students and the students were not all from wealthy families by any means; they were from middle-class families. Students from a very poor family would simply not have been literate, so they wouldn't be in any university, or even in a high school or elementary school class. But remember, this was in the '80s. I believe that situation is better today. World literacy is better today than it was back then. There has been big improvement.

My husband, because he was a political officer, was traveling all the time. He went to small towns and villages and had more contact with local small-time politicians and activists.

Another interesting thing I'll tell you about Lahore is that in a traditional home, there would be two sections. One section is the men's section and the other section is for the family. So, we had two dining rooms. We had a dining room where my husband might be entertaining for lunch some politicians - rough and tumble characters - and I on the other side would have some ladies to lunch who were educators or NGO leaders or activists. And they would be there with me and perhaps they'd have one or two of their children around. It was a kind of garden room and it was very pretty. And so, these two things would be going on at once.

*Q: I think I would have preferred to have lunch with you than the-*

FINN: I think mine were more fun.

*Q: Was there any connection still with England, Great Britain as far as education?*

FINN: The imprint of Britain in Pakistan is profound. And I have to say, unlike, for instance in North Africa where the Algerians are so bitter towards the French, there was a lot of affection for Great Britain. People were glad that they were independent. And I encountered this among Indians and Pakistanis; they were glad to be independent. But they also recognized that the British had put in a canal system that helped them to irrigate the Punjab; they had put in hospitals; they had made many improvements and upgrades; they had modernized the rail system. There were so many things. And people knew that and they appreciated that, but they felt it was time for them to be free of British rule. The educated classes speak English as a mother tongue; it is a mother tongue along with Urdu, Punjabi or one of the others.

*Q: Well, often it's the one language that disparate groups have in common, isn't it?*

FINN: Well, yes, you can say that Urdu or Hindi, which are really the same language written in different script, in India in Sanskritic and in Pakistan in Arabic script. But those are a kind of lingua franca or the most widely spoken as a means of communication. When I was there, the percentage of people who actually knew English was very small. It was probably just one percent, one to three percent. But those are the people who ran everything. India had reformed the feudal system. Nehru had put in reforms and broken down the feudal system, but in Pakistan that had not happened.

*Q: Well did you see, I mean, was the feudal system beginning to dissipate or not?*

FINN: Yes. You know, it's something like what happened when plantations were sold off in the American South or when, in Britain when, after the First World War huge taxes were brought to bear and a lot of the stately homes were sold off or turned into hotels and that kind of thing. So, to some extent that was going on and people who needed money would break up the farm and sell parcels because the population was growing rapidly and land was needed for agriculture and housing. So, that was going on.

But the other thing that was happening was that with the rise of technology, it was just really starting then, young people in Pakistan would perhaps be less interested in carrying on this way of life because they would see that there were many other things they could do in urban centers using technology. So, it's a country where you might see a medieval way of life in the rural areas, and an 18<sup>th</sup>, or 19<sup>th</sup> century way of life on the big feudal estates, and then a 21<sup>st</sup> century way of life in the cities, all co-existing. You know, in America pretty much everybody is living in our century, but in a country like that, you have people who are still living in villages with no schools or health care. They are scraping along pretty much as they would have hundreds and hundreds of years ago. Different segments of the society are living in different historic time zones.

*Q: Did you find that you were- whatever group you were dealing with - were you sort of carrying on what was happening in India too? I mean, acting as something of a bridge between these two really similar, but at the same disparate cultures?*

FINN: Yes. People in the arts loved India because they were very interested in Indian music and dance and film. When I lived in Lahore, everyone watched the Indian movies on television because we got them from Amritsar. So, yes, there was a lot of exchange, informal cultural exchange. Indian performing artists somehow or other would find their way into Pakistan. There were private performances. Musicians and other artists were not so overtly involved in politics. They were much more involved in creativity and imagination and human expression. So, in terms of the culture, you know, India is predominantly Hindu, and Pakistan is predominantly Muslim, but there are enormous cultural similarities.

*Q: What about the dance? I mean, I always think of Indian dance as being one of the most intriguing art forms that I can think of.*

FINN: Well, you have to remember that some of these art forms developed in the Mogul court and the Moguls, of course, were Muslim. The Moguls were highly cultivated people; their miniature paintings were magnificent. The miniature paintings, by the way, depict human beings. You can see them in the Metropolitan Museum here in New York, or the Sackler Gallery in Washington. So, it's a very complicated thing. But in terms of dance, the performances I saw were mostly in people's homes. There were Pakistanis who were superb dancers who were doing the dances that are done in India, whether the origin happened to be Muslim or Hindu or some syncretic combination of the two.

*Q: What about movies?*

FINN: Well, the Pakistanis did have a movie industry, and I saw many Pakistani movies. The Indian movies from Bollywood were extremely popular. There were very few foreign films, but at the time I was there, tapes were just beginning. This was a new thing. It started, actually, when I was in Turkey in the early '80s and by the time I got to Pakistan, these were widely seen. There were stores that would have hundreds of tapes and people would take them home and watch them at home. I'm sorry to say a lot of them were really what we call B movies; they were not good films. They were action films, or they were really not terribly good. But it was possible to get some good films from these stores, or to request them. People would have to be well enough off to have the proper equipment and afford to be able to borrow these movies. But yes, there were stores that made them available.

*Q: Did we show films?*

FINN: Yes, we showed films. I did so more in Turkey because it was easier to have them shipped from Europe. They were on reels back then and we were permitted to show them only once. In Pakistan, one always has to keep in mind the climate and the many other complications, including distance. It was not a country where you can count on something actually reaching you. It theoretically has a postal system set up by the British, but I found that letters frequently did not get to where they were sent. So, it was rather arbitrary.

So, we did show movies, but mostly the programs we had at the cultural centers in Lahore and in Islamabad were Americans who came out and did speaking tours, or we presented Fulbright professors resident in the country. The ambassador, Arnie Raphael, spoke to our audiences. I had musicians perform. We had many, many different programs, but film was not a major component.

*Q: Of the various performers who came which one sort of in your mind stood out as far as reception?*

FINN: Well, jazz and blues were very popular as they are around the world. We had Charlie Byrd and Kevin Eubanks perform to very large audiences. These major groups were sent out by Washington and toured the whole country.

*Q: Did you have particular programs that were designed to capture the college student or the young students and all?*

FINN: Young people were interested in whatever we did and they came to our programs. We had a lot of students come. And again, these were all the same families. The parents might come, the college aged kids might come, but yes, we had a cross section of people of different ages. Students also packed the library every day.

*Q: Helena, looking at this, were there any crises or humorous incidents or things that stick in your mind that happened when you were either in Lahore or Islamabad?*

FINN: Well, of course in terms of crisis, the biggest incident that happened was the plane crash and the death of our ambassador, Arnie Raphel, and the military dictator, Zia-ul-Haq and the others. In Lahore, there were regular protests outside the American Center. There was one that I think I described in an earlier conversation when they came right up to the gate. The police always alerted us because these groups would arrive on motorcycles, so we'd get only a few minutes notice. I just went out and talked to them, and it turned out that on one occasion, the leader of the protest was someone I knew. I knew his family and his relatives. And so, I talked with him, and he said will you take our letter and I said yes, of course. I took their letter. And they were protesting, I forget what action abroad by the United States they were protesting, but that ended peacefully. They went away quietly. Nothing happened. But my staff was very panicked because in the past, protestors had jumped the gates and come in and burned down the building.

*Q: Were there any places where you found that our programs really didn't work very well in this society?*

FINN: I think Pakistanis were extremely open to whatever we did. I never had people saying oh, I didn't like that or why did you have that speaker. They were gobbling up everything. First of all, we invited people, so if someone wasn't interested in hearing a classical piano concert, they wouldn't come. But people were very interested in the whole range of programs that we presented. The very first program I had, was with the American poet Michael Lynch who lived in Paris. He's a lovely poet and I got him through our embassy in London when I was in Turkey. He was so good that I arranged with the person who preceded me, for him to go to Pakistan. And when I got to Lahore, the very first day, he was already there; he was reading poetry to a small group in one of the rooms in our cultural center. And the men in this group were weeping because they thought the poems were so beautiful. It was a very extraordinary experience.

If the students want to ask questions you let me know, Stu, when you're ready, please turn it over to them if they have any questions.

*Q: Okay, let me turn it over now.*

FINN: Okay. That's your call.

*Q: Do you have anything?*

INTERN #1: You may have talked about this before, but did people-

*Q: Why don't you, when you start, say your name and say your school again, and then ask the question. But if you can, get closer to the instrument that's projecting this.*

INTERN #1: Okay, my name is Caroline and I go to Furman University in South Carolina.

FINN: Hi, Caroline.

INTERN #1: You may have talked about this a little bit, but for all the programs that you put on, did people in Lahore and Islamabad like kind of do their own kind of based off of that, like going off of those programs, that they like kind of led their own eventually?

*Q: I'm sorry, Caroline, but I must ask you to repeat the question. The connection just isn't that good. Go slowly and clearly.*

INTERN #1: Okay.

FINN: You're asking me about people who came to programs in Lahore and Islamabad and then what was the question?

INTERN #1: Did they, going off of y'all's programs, did they put on their own programs?

FINN: Oh, thank you. There was a very rich cultural life generated by Pakistanis. The difference is that I was presenting American culture.

INTERN #1: Okay.

FINN: And because my job in public diplomacy was to tell the story of the United States in all its aspects: American culture, American history, American literature, American politics, American constitution; these are the things we were doing. We were explaining who we are as a people and what we do. Their programs were about them, so they had lots of poetry readings, they had exhibitions of architectural projects, but they would have been doing them anyway. They were doing them when I arrived and so they were eager to learn about us and I loved learning about them.

INTERN #1: Okay. Thank you.

FINN: You're welcome.

INTERN #2: My name is Bridget and I went to Davidson College. I was hoping you could speak a little bit more about sort of the relationships that you developed and this



person-to-person interaction. You talk a lot about small groups of people or being at individuals' homes, and I was hoping you could expand on how that improves national relationships as well.

FINN: Okay, Bridget, thank you. That's a very good question. Well, I think diplomats, and particularly diplomats who do cultural or public diplomacy, have to acquire a true understanding of the context in which they are working. If you want to communicate your values, our universal values, our political values, the value we place on democracy and human rights, if you want to communicate those things, you have to understand who the other people are, and where they're coming from, and what their perspectives are, and how they look at the world. So, it's always a two-way street; it's always an exchange. And Pakistanis are extremely hospitable. So, I was in literally hundreds of homes in Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi, and Peshawar because people invited me to their homes. I went to their homes, and I met their families and I saw how they lived and what food they ate and what their political views were. I engaged with them and saw all of that. And understanding them enabled me to find ways to frame our way of life, and our view of the world, and what we think is important in a way so that I could effectively communicate that.

Does that answer your question, Bridget?

INTERN #2: Yes, that was very helpful. If I could just ask a follow-up-

FINN: Sure.

INTERN #2: I was also curious about how you shared these- or if it was part of your job - how you shared this understanding that you gained from these personal relationships with others, either in the embassy, or on Fulbright programs, or back home at all.

FINN: Okay. Well, first of all, that knowledge - and of course, for every country I went to I did a tremendous amount of reading about the country, its history, its literature before I went, and I continued to read while I was at post, because I wanted to understand as much as I could about the country. So, I invited my embassy colleagues to come to these programs, the many programs we had at the cultural centers in Lahore and Islamabad. They were most welcome. And also, I had many events in my own home to which I invited them. We had a rule that more than 50 percent of the guests should be from a host country, so more than 50 percent, and in my case, I would say usually 75 percent, of the guests, would be Pakistanis. And the other 25 percent I invited would be colleagues from the embassy who would then have a chance to meet them in a relaxed social setting and get to know them as I did.

INTERN #2: Thank you.

FINN: You're welcome.

INTERN #3: Hello, my name is Josh and I go to UNC Chapel Hill.

FINN: Hi, Josh.

INTERN #3: Hey. So, my question is pertaining to the relationship between India and Pakistan and any kind of differences that you noticed in- whether there were underlying tensions, whether those were different in each of the posts, Karachi, Islamabad, the different cities you were in, how kind of the atmosphere and the tension was there, if there was any at the time.

FINN: Oh, that's an interesting question. Karachi's a huge city. It's now probably 20 million people. It wasn't that many then, but it was very big; it was, I'm sure, over 10 million. I don't remember the exact number in the '80s, but it was a huge city. And in Karachi you have a lot of people who emigrated from India. And those people, they're called muhajirs; they're the people who came across the border at the time of partition from India. So, on the cultural level they have a deep understanding of India.

Let me put this another way. I don't think it has to do so much with which city you're talking about; I think it has to do with who the people are. And the people who are progressive and global in their outlook are more likely to have an interest in things that are going on in India and follow what's going on in India and to see the commonalities, even if they disagree on some points. The people who are at the other end of the spectrum, who are inward looking, deeply involved with religion, those people would either not be interested at all, or they would look at India predominantly as a country of another religion and therefore feel that they had very little in common with people from India. And you have to remember that in a city like Lahore, you'd have a lot of people who had relatives in India because not all the Muslims left. So, there are people in Lahore, even though it was very complicated to cross the border, who would wait hours on one side, wait hours on the other side, fly across and spend a lot time waiting, but they would go from time to time to visit their relatives in India. So, people recognized that they had, until the time of partition, been one large country called India and then they broke off and became Pakistan. And then, of course, there's the whole question of Bangladesh, which had been East Pakistan. And that's on the other side of India. Can you perhaps make your question a little more specific?

INTERN #3: Yes. I guess the way I was trying to frame it, well, should have framed it, is more how people interacted with each other, especially close to the border, because so many people were affected by partition that had family on the other side. Just, what did that kind of look like on the ground and you answered that with saying that they would wait in line to go see their family on the other side and some had an inward versus outward-looking view.

FINN: Yes. Well, crossing the border was complicated. So, whether people crossed on land or crossed by air, it was always complicated. But it was complicated to cross from Turkey into Greece when I first lived in Turkey, and they're both NATO allies. You know, borders had perhaps a different meaning a few decades ago. It was a more complicated thing. If tensions between the two countries flared up, people might have

been on edge, but for the most part people were occupied with going about their daily lives. The only issue that they were obsessed with was Kashmir, and I mentioned that to Stu in an earlier conversation. Everyone in Pakistan was obsessed with the Kashmir issue because it was disputed and unresolved.

INTERN #3: Thank you.

FINN: Did they find it worthwhile?

*Q: Oh, yes. They were talking about it afterwards. Yes.*

FINN: Oh, good, good. Yes, I was surprised; they didn't seem to have that many questions, but perhaps they wanted to have some time to think about it. And of course, a lot of what I discussed happened before they were born. It's a world far away for them.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

*Let's see. I think we finished with Pakistan.*

FINN: Yes, yes. So, yes, that's right. And I described what happened. Well, let me finish off. I told you about the plane crash with Zia and Arnie Raphel, our ambassador. And then what happened was that, although there was a military intervention, Aslam Beg was the military figure who survived. It was a short intervention, and he decided actually to allow elections to take place. Benazir Bhutto came to power, the young Benazir for the first time, came to power. And that was an extraordinary moment of hope in Pakistan. There was a sense that here was a young leader, a Western-educated, Oxford and Harvard-educated young leader, who would really take the country in a new direction. That happened all in the fall of 1989, and I was there for the first few months and it was rather euphoric. And then I left in the summer of '90 to return to Washington.

*Q: Okay. I wonder, could you talk about what the embassy went through just after the plane crash.*

FINN: Well, it was handled masterfully. The most remarkable thing was that Arnie Raphel's wife, Nancy Ely, who was a Foreign Service Officer in her own right, despite the shock and grief, exhibited great dignity. Nancy was a lawyer with the State Department, and she was one of the first ambassadorial spouses to actually work. She had a job at USAID (United States Agency for International Development) while she was in Islamabad. She and the wife of our military attaché who had also lost her husband, behaved with extraordinary grace. They called on Mrs. Zia to condole; Mrs. Zia was very hysterical, blaming the American embassy. Can you imagine that we would want something to happen to our own ambassador? But she was quite hysterical, and really ranting and out of control. And they were so gracious; they called on her; they were very kind to her. All this was filmed and they displayed enormous composure. I had so much admiration for the way they behaved.

In terms of the embassy, in that part of the world, our embassy and our consulates were used to shocks, although this was a much more profound shock than some of the others. The embassy responded in a very calm and organized manner to the whole thing. Shortly after that, Secretary of State George Shultz came out to reassure everyone that we would be able to carry on. And I think he provided a certain amount of comfort to the diplomatic community.

*Q: Well now, I mean, your program, always being somewhat festive, I mean, you had to curtail what you were doing.*

FINN: Well, no, actually we decided to carry on. Years later, I was in the State Department when 9/11 happened, and I saw the instant reaction of all my colleagues, all the Foreign Service Officers. Even before everyone knew what had caused the catastrophe, everyone said oh, we have to carry on. There was just that kind of spirit we had, to carry on. And I think with the embassy it was the same thing; there was a sense that we had to carry on. And Arnie Raphael had asked Beth Jones -- that's how I first got to know Beth -- to come out and be the DCM. Back then it was still rather extraordinary for a woman who was probably just about 40 years old, late 30s, early 40s, to be DCM in such an important, strategic country as Pakistan. So, she was really breaking a glass ceiling. She is a superb diplomat and a person of great composure; she just stepped in and managed things with tremendous calmness. And in terms of our programs, as I mentioned to you, I was hosting a musical program when the news broke. I got the news right in the middle of the program. We certainly didn't do anything that would appear to be celebratory or insensitive, but we did continue with our planned events. We had speaker programs; we did not interrupt the flow of exchange participants. We kept everything moving - the international visitor exchanges and the Fulbright exchanges, and everything I was in charge of; we kept everything going. I think my colleagues were in a state of shock. It was a horrible thing. But there was also a sense that it was our job to keep going.

*Q: So, what was the reaction of the Pakistanis as far as the embassy? I mean, they had their own grieving.*

FINN: Well, yes and no. A lot of the people, a lot of the highly-educated people, were not happy that their country had a military dictatorship, so there were very mixed feelings. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had been a Western-educated and a much more secular leader. Zia-ul-Haq was responsible for his execution. Zia was from a much more conservative Islamist perspective, and he was imposing all kinds of draconian rules. So, educated people, although they might have been religious, were not comfortable with Zia's Islamization. Pakistan is an Islamic republic, but this was something different, new and extreme. The military stepped in and they were waiting to see whether there would be elections. And when Aslam Beg decided that elections would take place there was a feeling of euphoria about that.

*Q: Did the embassy do anything during this election time?*

FINN: Well, embassies try to remain neutral. Individuals at our embassy certainly had different views about what would be good for the country. But for the most part, people were dutifully reporting what was going on. And back then, that's before the global media was universally accessible; BBC Radio was around and highly trusted, but it was really before there was instant visual coverage. The reporting the embassy was doing was extremely important to Washington, to enable them to know what was going on. And I think certainly in Washington, too, sometimes the professionals were split in their personal views; some think stability is the most important thing, others think well, a move towards democracy, even if it's a little rocky with a young woman like Benazir, would be the right thing. But in terms of the public face of the embassy, of course it was neutral.

*Q: When Benazir Bhutto came in were you able to change your- some of the focus and some of the things you were doing to play to her strengths and to get her included?*

FINN: Beth Jones was the chargé until Bob Oakley came out as ambassador to replace Arnie Raphael. He had contact with Benazir, and he also had very good contacts in the Pakistan parliament. And yes, I think there was an opening up. I remember New Year's Eve parties that year were particularly celebratory. There was a sense of moving forward and doing things that were progressive and more democratic. In terms of the embassy programs, we planned the speaker programs long in advance and those messages, rule of law, constitution, freedom speech, freedom of the press, all those things were the basic fabric of our message. There was never any real interference in terms of our programs from the government of Pakistan. We were just working with the educated English-speaking audience. I explained, I think, in one of the earlier conversations, that the government was not particularly threatened. They knew those people lived abroad, were educated abroad, knew what was going on in the rest of the world. The government didn't care because this was a tiny percentage of the total population.

*Q: Did anything happen particularly in sort of your area that you'd like to talk about during the period when Benazir Bhutto came in and you were still operating?*

FINN: Basically, I can say there was just a general opening up. It was a very positive time. The people in her party, the People's Party, strengthened their ties with the embassy. We saw more of them; they came to our programs and had more contact with the embassy than had the previous government. So, yes, I would say the overall contact with the government increased during that time. It was a very different kind of contact from what was going on during the days of military rule.

*Q: Well, when you left Pakistan what was your feeling about whither Pakistan?*

FINN: My feeling was always that Pakistan was a country that was created almost in the way Israel was created; after the Second World War there was a partition and it had inherent instability. And I also felt that because of the very antagonistic relationship with India, the investment in the military rather than education and other social programs to develop the society was not at all what it ought to have been. And this worked to the

detriment of the people. There should not have been so many people who were not literate. Now, the situation has improved. I was there a long time ago, decades ago, but it still troubles me. I felt that the potential of the country was not being realized. However, in the Cold War days, as you, I'm sure, well remember, other considerations, security considerations on our side outweighed those other things. I didn't feel that we were oppressing the Pakistanis. And we have to remember also that the whole situation in Afghanistan was unfolding at that time, since 1979, so Pakistan's stability was a high priority. Pakistan was of crucial importance to us.

*Q: Well then where did you go?*

FINN: After that I left Pakistan, I went back to the European Bureau to be the Greek, Turkey, Cyprus desk officer. I got back in the summer of '90. I had that job for about a year and a half and then I went into my German language training to go to Frankfurt. But I was in that job at the time of the Gulf War and so, since I was doing Turkey, as well as Greece and Cyprus, and Turkey was such a crucial player in that particular phase, I was very involved in the NEA meetings. I would walk across the hall and participate in the NEA discussions. And I think that's how I first got to know Judy Baroody.

*Q: Did you find that coming back to Washington, I mean here you've been running on the ground a large, very active program; did you find that being back at the desk, particularly USIA desk, was a letdown personally?*

FINN: No. Actually, I liked it. As I've said, I enjoyed all my postings. And what I liked was that USIA was still such a small agency in comparison with the enormous Department of State, that I could really get my views across to the leadership. I wrote the briefings for the Director anytime someone from Greece, Turkey or Cyprus came to see him. In the State Department, there's a much more elaborate hierarchy. I would never have had that kind of influence. But I was the person in the European Bureau who really knew about Turkey, so I was able to write the briefing papers and that was very gratifying. Our ambassador in Turkey was Mort Abramowitz. He and his wife Sheppie were fantastic people. Back then, you didn't have all the electronic news, so the first thing I would do in the morning would be to survey the American press, "The New York Times" in particular, and "The Washington Post" and make sure that I faxed out to the embassy for Mort Abramowitz anything important so he would have it before everyone else.

*Q: What did you think of some of the countries you had under your control? Let's take Turkey first. What was going on there from your perspective?*

FINN: Turkey was an important ally to us, particularly because of the Gulf War. Turgut Özal had a very close relationship with President Bush, the father. And in fact, while I was on the desk, President Bush and his wife went out to Turkey to visit Turgut Özal. They had almost daily telephone conversations. And so, I was sent back out to the embassy to work on the visit. It was a time when the U.S.-Turkish relationship was excellent, both at the government and at the popular level, as well. There have always

been anti-American elements in Turkey, but for the most part it was quite positive all around. Turkey had had its own military intervention with Kenan Evren a decade earlier, and this was a time when Turkey was going through a period of democratization. Turgut Özal was a firm friend of the United States, and he was a popular leader, so the people were influenced by that. So, basically it was a very good time in terms of the relationship.

*Q: How about Turkey and Cyprus? I mean, did you see any- was there anything that USIA could try to do about that?*

FINN: I went to all three countries while I was on the desk. And in Cyprus I crossed the border, and I met people in the Turkish as well as in the Greek sector, including someone who had been my student, a young man whose father was a banker. He had been my student when I taught at Boğaziçi years before. So, it was very interesting to see him again. I always thought that if the Cypriots would forget speaking Greek and Turkish, and speak English with one another, then things would have been a lot better.

But I was not surprised years later when the people themselves just began crossing the border. I heard many stories from people on both sides of that issue. The Turkish position was that hardliners in Greece had wanted to annex Cyprus and make it part of Greece and that this was not the correct history of Cyprus and was not as it should be. So, I think what we always tried to do in USIA was whatever conflict resolution we could, and that meant, for instance, sending people from both sides. as well as people from Greece and Turkey, on regional exchange programs so that they might have a chance to meet with one another under U.S. auspices. And usually, in my experience, when Greeks and Turks or Greek and Turkish Cypriots get together, they have so much in common that often once it's a personal encounter, although there may be a lot of baggage, especially on the Greek side, nevertheless they do manage to get together and they often like one another very much.

*Q: Well, did you find the Greek-American community had influence on what you were up to?*

FINN: Well, you know, when I entered the Foreign Service, I had to write an essay and the topic was the influence of lobbies on our foreign policy. The essay I wrote had to do with the Greek and Turkish lobbies. I was well aware of their positions and activities. I'm from New York and there is a huge community of Greek-Americans in Astoria, in Queens. So, I was very well aware of the impact and the force of that lobby. But I also observed, and I think this happens with many ethnicities, that when people emigrate to the United States, they're in a kind of time warp because in their minds, their country of origin is still as it was when they left. But in fact, things have changed in that country, and often the people in the country have moved on, but those here in the U.S. remain hardliners on whatever position it is that they think they're advocating for their ancestral homeland. So, that's an interesting phenomenon. To put it in concrete terms, if you're going to a local Greek restaurant in Astoria, it might be exactly the way a Greek restaurant in Athens was 20 years ago, rather than the way it would be now.

*Q: Did USIA have any programs that you were working on to bring these two groups together?*

FINN: I got much more involved in that later on when I had my second tour in Turkey. Then I was very, very involved in it. When I was on the desk, I was reporting and writing briefing papers and I wasn't so directly involved on the program side; I was involved instead in summarizing the policy issues, rather than the program side of things. When appropriate occasions arose, however, it was a good thing to put Greeks and Turks together. For example, let's get a Greek and a Turk to both go to a conference that's happening in some other country in Europe. Or, facilitate two important scholars in the same field getting together in neutral circumstances where they would have an academic or professional interest in common.

*Q: What was your impression of George Bush the elder and his- when he went to Turkey?*

FINN: First of all, I thought he was a wonderful president in terms of the foreign policy and international relations side of things. I may have had differences with the Republican Party on domestic issues, but the internationalist Republicans of that period were people who made a lot of sense. I thought President Bush was doing the right thing in terms of the relationship with Turgut Özal. The way in which the administration handled the relationship with Turkey at a time when things could have gone amiss was superb. And I also have to say look at what he did in Germany. This is later on in our interview, but he immediately recognized how important our relationship with Germany was and that we could support the unification. So, yes, I thought he was a very fine president. I had no criticisms whatsoever. I didn't have much direct contact with him. You know how it is when you go out to an embassy to support a visit, but I saw what nice people they were to work with, both the Bushes. They made me proud to be an American.

*Q: How did you find relations between State and USIA in Washington?*

FINN: Oh, well my husband was a State Department officer, so I knew lots of State Department people both professionally and socially. I was one of the officers who went over every week to the meetings held in the State Department by David Ransom, the Director for Turkey, Greece and Cyprus. His wife, Marjorie Ransom, was a USIA officer so I knew them both. And I went to his meetings and they were extremely informative discussions. Although I was not a political officer, I always enjoyed political discussions.

*Q: I've interviewed both of them.*

FINN: Oh, did you? Yes, yes. Yes, David died some time ago, I remember. Very sad. They were at a theatrical event and I think he died on the spot. And Marjorie Ransom is a marvelous lady.

*Q: Well then, is there anything else, any issue or incident that sticks in your mind about this time that we haven't covered?*



FINN: No. In terms of that time, I think the major thing going on was Turkish cooperation with the Bush Administration on the Gulf War. That support for our objectives was extremely important and it was there 100 percent. And given the context, given the timing of all this, it was extremely important. And my stint there was actually pretty short because then I was asked to go to Germany and to take over as the public affairs officer at our consulate in Frankfurt and as director of the America House. So, I went into German language training. I had not studied German beforehand so I needed time to learn the language.

*Q: Well then, off to Frankfurt.*

FINN: Yes, yes.

*Q: It was my first post.*

FINN: Oh, really? Was it? Well, seventh largest mission in the world and biggest consulate; it was just enormous. And I arrived there and took over as the head of the America House.

*Q: Can you give me the time period you were there.*

FINN: Yes. I was in Frankfurt from 1992 to 1995.

*Q: Okay. Go ahead.*

FINN: I had many wonderful friends in the German press. And when I went back years later to the embassy in Berlin, I got in touch with them again, and I saw them again. I stayed in touch in particular with one journalist from the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” who is really to this day, I think, the best, or one of perhaps the two-best people in Germany writing about U.S.-German relations.

And I also had the privilege of doing fantastic educational and cultural programs. And when I say cultural programs, I’m including the conferences we did on serious political issues. I also had a beautiful exhibition space. We did exhibits; I organized exhibits. My staff and I created a brochure that we put out every month with the program we were doing and photographs of recent programs, a nice glossy brochure. USIA allowed us to have sponsorship, local sponsorship. So, I had sponsorship from some American corporations for some of these programs, but also from the German banks in Frankfurt. We were allowed to take contributions, as long as we accounted for every penny and anything that was extra would go to the Treasury. But usually the sponsorship fell a little short, so we subsidized with our own resources; I had some discretionary post funds for these programs. So, it was a fantastic time.

The Frankfurt Book Fair is the biggest in the world, and at the time of the book fair every famous American writer came to Frankfurt to do a reading. They did those readings in my America House. And also, because of the close ties between German publishers and

American writers, famous writers were coming to Frankfurt all year long, not just during the book fair, although that was the peak. During the book fair every single night I would have a different prominent writer - people like Susan Sontag and Gore Vidal and Michael Creighton and Richard Ford and many, many other really, really well-known authors came through.

*Q: How was American writing treated in Germany?*

FINN: Germans have perhaps the highest readership in the world. In other words, Germans read more books per year than in any other country. And virtually everything worthwhile that was out in the United States was translated very quickly to German. So, there was a huge readership and a huge audience. At these events, the Amerika Haus was packed. It was just absolutely extraordinary. And people were thrilled to meet the American writers and have a chance to ask them questions and engage with them. So, it was a very, very positive thing. Of course, Germans were rather disappointed that we were not translating their literature into English. Only a few very famous German writers like Heinrich Böll or Günter Grass are known well in the United States, but there are many other good writers. That's a reflection of a larger balance in the world. And also, the fact that the United States is such a large country and many people simply don't look beyond our shores, or have curiosity about other countries. But basically, there was just enormous German interest.

There was also an enormous interest in American films and American music. One of my German staffers, Thomas Schaller, was an expert on American music, so we recruited all kinds of groups, everything from a classical group from Julliard, to jazz musicians, to folk groups, to Americans playing music from other parts of the world. We had music from Central Asia, and zydeco (French Cajun) music from Louisiana. We tried to cover the whole spectrum of music. And as I said, I did art exhibits. It was really a fantastic, fantastic time.

*Q: Were there any issues between the United States and Germany that caused you problems at this time?*

FINN: No, no. Well, when there were executions in Texas and elsewhere, people would come and protest in front of the America House. But these protests were always very calm and orderly, and I was never worried about them. I personally sympathized with their objections to capital punishment. We had an unarmed security guard at the front door. Security back then was minimal. Everything was so safe. At some point while I was there, the security people from Washington came in and put glass doors that were impenetrable upstairs where the staff and I sat, but not the auditorium. But really it was not a time when there were worries about security issues.

*Q: The whole Baader-Meinhof thing was long- that was ancient history.*

FINN: Yes, that's right. That's right. And in fact, some who had been on the left attended our programs. Among them was Joschka Fischer who later became Foreign Minister. At

the time I was there, he lived in Frankfurt. I remember he came to our election program. We had very interesting and prominent people come to these events, mostly, of course, bankers, German bankers. There was an emphasis on economics and culture in those days. German businesspeople are very proud of their extraordinary musical culture, almost the way American businesspeople would be of sports. Germans are interested in soccer too, but they loved their Frankfurt opera and they were very, very interested in supporting our American cultural programs. And also, there were a lot of people, especially the older people, who remembered the Marshall Plan and things that happened after the war who were extremely supportive of our efforts in every way.

*Q: Where did you live?*

FINN: I had a beautiful house on Frauenlobstrasse in Bockenheim. My home and those of the other senior officers at the consulate were subsidized by the city of Frankfurt. The consulate paid \$1 a year rent to the city. And it was a really beautiful German house with a full basement and a playroom – excellent for my young son. I had four bedrooms, including one bedroom that was in a separate wing with a separate entrance so that if I had a guest that person could stay there with privacy. It was a beautiful house. It was very close to the office. I used to ride my bicycle to the America House. It was walking distance to the America House and the consulate.

*Q: Well now, where was the consulate located?*

FINN: The consulate was on Siesmayerstrasse. The America House was on Staufenstrasse. They were both centrally located in easy walking distance. In good weather, I rode my bicycle to the office through the Grüneburgpark. The consulate has since moved to another location and the America House, of course, is no longer ours.

*Q: At some point it had gone to what used to be known as the 97<sup>th</sup> General Hospital and Military-*

FINN: That's correct. Yes, that's right. It went into the U.S. Military Hospital building.

*Q: But you went to the- you had the glass consulate?*

FINN: Oh yes, that's right, that's right. You're thinking of the architecture of the building. That's right.

It was a short walk. Pierre Shostal was the consul general. He was one of the most gracious, cultured and accomplished diplomats I worked with over all those years in the diplomatic service. A really, really marvelous man.

*Q: Who is that.*

FINN: Pierre Shostal. I haven't been in touch with him for many, many years, but I will always remember him as one of the finest diplomats I worked with. He was a music lover and particularly supportive of cultural diplomacy.

*Q: How about students?*

FINN: Well, we had a student advisor in those days. Marion Rachor was the young woman who served in this position. We lost her when she married one of the American diplomats. She wrote to me recently. It was good to be in touch again. We had a very active student advising program and of course everyone was welcome to attend the events we hosted. Our events were for the most part open to the German public, so we had many students and academics and journalists and businesspeople, a very good mix in our audiences.

*Q: Germany was still dealing with the unification, wasn't it?*

FINN: Yes. Yes, that's right. Everyone was very, very involved with that. And also, you have to remember that I was in Frankfurt at the outset of the terrible Balkan war. Germany did not want to be involved in it. I did programs on what was going on in Bosnia. I had speakers come and talk about it. That topic was a bit challenging because Germans were extremely reluctant for historic reasons. They were in a difficult position because during the Second World War, the Serbs were the good guys, and the Croats were the bad guys. Now both were attempting to carve up the country without any recognition for the Bosniaks. We were asking them to see the Serbian leader Milošević as perhaps the guiltier party in terms of revving up extreme nationalism and reviving the ancient hatreds that led to that war.

*Q: Well, maybe this is- I served five years in Yugoslavia.*

FINN: Oh, so you know all this very well.

*Q: Oh no, my point being that from afar, back here in Washington, I and maybe my colleagues saw the German foreign minister Genscher-*

FINN: Yes, yes, Genscher, yes, yes.

*Q: -as having been in some ways responsible for the unraveling of-*

FINN: I could not agree with you more. Foreign Minister Genscher encouraged Chancellor Kohl to recognize Croatia. The Chancellor did this without consulting us which came as a surprise to the administration because we had such good relations with Germany. That happened while I was still in language training, and I immediately thought that there would be a blood bath in Bosnia. Genscher is not to blame for the nationalism of Tuđman in Croatia or of Milošević in Serbia. Milošević was the major trigger, and I thought it was very, very unfortunate. I couldn't agree with you more about that.

*Q: Well, did the subject of the Balkan war come up?*

FINN: Absolutely. As I said, I programmed speakers on that topic. I remember that I had a discussion one evening at the America House about this. The Jewish community in Frankfurt were among the first to really speak out in defense of the Bosnians. They recognized the ethnic cleansing for what it was and objected very loudly, especially when the concentration camps were revealed on CNN. That's when CNN really was beginning to become influential. A journalist from New York, Roy Gutman, and a German photographer had gone into Bosnia and found the concentration camps. That German photographer took the pictures that then circulated around the world on CNN. That finally activated people because the visual evidence helped them to understand how serious the situation was. So, I invited Roy Gutman to give a talk at the America House, and I asked Daniel Cohn-Bendit to come. And Daniel Cohn-Bendit-

*Q: He was known as Danny the Red.*

FINN: Danny the Red, that's right. He opened his remarks by saying, thank you, Helena, for inviting me. This is the first time I've been here at the America House since I had to scale the roof running away from the police during a Vietnam War protest. So, that was great. He hadn't set foot in the America House since those days. I liked him very much. He lived in Frankfurt at that time. He was responsible for the multicultural department of the local government. The other speaker was Michel Friedman from the Jewish community. He and Michel Friedman came from very different perspectives, but they agreed that the genocide in Bosnia had to be stopped. They were among the first to speak out, to say wait a second, the Americans are right to want to intervene and stop this. Roy Goodman read from his book, "Witness to Genocide," and the audience was very moved. Of course, they had also seen the photographs. But there was still a lot of reluctance, I have to say.

I also talked to our own military people. The Fifth Corps was still in Frankfurt. They too seemed very reluctant. Of course, the whole Yugoslav situation was terribly confusing. People really didn't understand what it was about, and whether it was a civil war or not a civil war, and what the causes were, or what we should do about it. I found, our own military people in Frankfurt were very confused about it, who was right and who was wrong and all of that.

*Q: Did you and your husband find- was the social life all official or were you able to sort of get out and around?*

FINN: Well, first of all, when you're in public diplomacy, the people you deal with professionally and the academics and the journalists also become your friends. And we in public diplomacy had generous representational budgets because contact with the local community was such an important part of our jobs. I was the head of the office, so I entertained a lot. My husband, Robert, was actually in Azerbaijan. He had gone out and opened our embassy in Baku after Secretary of State James Baker had recognized the NIS

(Newly Independent States) and announced that we were opening embassies in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Robert would fly in whenever he could. And again, we had no telephone communications. I never knew when he was going to arrive. I would just get a message that he was coming in by air and would show up on a certain evening. Yes, we did a lot of entertaining, usually dinner parties that I would do buffet-style because the dining room was small. And I would have 20 or 30 people there. It was really a lot of fun. Those people became lifelong friends, many of those people stay in touch with me.

*Q: Something that I sort of have a feeling but I would appreciate your comment on and that is, I mean, when I was there almost every man my age, I was a young man, I served in the military there, went back- we had a huge Foreign Service representation in Germany, but I have the feeling that this has sort of dried up.*

FINN: Oh, it did, it did. The Fifth Corps was still there when I arrived in Frankfurt. And of course, during the 1990s our military presence was drawn down. The presence of the military was extremely important. Anyone who served in Germany will tell you, at least anyone of my generation will tell you, that almost every German you met had had contact and almost always positive contact, with our military. And in a lot of these military families, the children went to school with German children, or played with German children; there was just a tremendous amount of cross-cultural friendship. And of course, our military officers married German women. There were all kinds of close relations that were established and it was a very positive thing. People started, in the late '90s talking about well, what are we going to do to maintain the close ties with Germany now that the military are not there anymore.

*Q: And there's another thing too, that I have a feeling looking at trips and all, Germany no longer is very high on our tourist agenda.*

FINN: Well, again, those ties were so intense that an enormous number of Americans were going back and forth and Germans were coming to the United States. And they were maintaining those ties. But what I experienced was that they were starting to dissipate by the time I was there. Then once you start closing the cultural centers where the people interested in the United States would come together, not just with Americans, but with one another, it becomes challenging to reinforce those ties. You lose all that. It was a shame. Closing the America Houses was after I left, but that was such a terrible mistake.

*Q: Were you involved in setting up American corners in universities or-?*

FINN: That happened much later. That happened much later and yes, I was involved in that when I was in the State Department, and I was involved in it when I was in Israel. However, it must be remembered that the American Corners were initially designed for the former communist countries, and the less developed nations, not for wealthy Germany. We did open a consulate in Leipzig to deal with East Germany, but I think there was a general sense that wealthy West Germany would take care of the East. Even in Israel I had to argue the case for American Corners, but it could ultimately be justified due to the conflict resolution aspect. When I was there in Frankfurt, and from Frankfurt I

went to Vienna, at that time, the America Houses were still going strong. They were full-fledged cultural centers. Aside from the library, exhibition space and auditorium, we created a business information center. Economic and cultural ties between Germany and the United States were the top priority for our consulate in Frankfurt.

*Q: Were there any incidents or occasions that particularly affected you during the time you were in Germany?*

FINN: Well, I'm going to think about that. I happened to work for exceptional ambassadors in Bonn. I was in Frankfurt, but still the ambassador has a strong impact on the whole country program. So, I'll talk about that a little bit the next time and how effective they were and what good things they did.

*Q: Today is May 23, 2017. So, when did you go to Frankfurt?*

FINN: I went to Frankfurt in 1992.

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

FINN: I was there from 1992 to 1995. Before that, I had been on the Greece, Turkey Cyprus desk.

*Q: Okay. Let's talk about the situation there. I mean, obviously Cyprus was a major issue between those two countries.*

FINN: Yes, that's right. It was a major issue between Greece and Turkey. There had been a movement in Greece to take over Cyprus and that movement had been supported by Archbishop Makarios on the island. The movement was called *enosis* which meant taking over Cyprus and making it part of Greece. The Turks reacted by invading the island and declaring Turkish Northern Cyprus as a separate state. By the time I was on the desk, it was a divided island. I went on one trip to all three countries, and it was very difficult to cross back and forth between Northern and Southern Cyprus. However, when I went over to the Turkish side, I actually met with one of my former students. He had been a student at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul when I taught there before I joined the Foreign Service. It was extremely interesting to hear his perceptions about all of this.

The other thing that was going on while I was on the desk was the build up to the first Gulf war. I was often drawn into meetings in NEA because Turkey was such an important player. President George Bush, George Herbert Walker Bush, had a very close relationship with the Turkish president Turgut Özal; they spoke on the phone very frequently, and there was a really strong partnership. And when President Bush asked him to let us use the Incirlik air base to support our efforts in that war, he was immediately cooperative. He was very, very supportive. It was a great time, actually, in Turkish-American relations because Turkey was really working together with us closely.

*Q: What were we doing sort of from the USIA perspective in these three countries?*

FINN: Basically, I provided a lot of support to all three countries. As a desk officer, I worked with my colleagues who were doing the exchange programs and my colleagues who were doing the press and information programs, so we made sure that those three missions had everything they needed from us, including experts to talk about U.S. policy and explain it to people. When President Bush visited Turkey, I was sent out to work with the press because I could speak Turkish. He went to Ankara and I worked with the delegation and the press corps who were there. And then he went to Istanbul and President Özal and his wife hosted a huge dinner in the Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul. It was really an extraordinary experience.

And so, we did all those things that you do in public diplomacy to support that kind of effort. It was a lot of work, but we weren't challenged by a lot of objections or people opposed to it.

*Q: I would think, I mean, when you started this job you must have had to deal with the Greek, particularly the Greeks in America.*

FINN: Yes. You know, that I had to write an essay after my oral exam for the Foreign Service. The essay question had to do with lobbies in America. I had long been aware of the effectiveness of the Greek lobby. Back in those days, it was extremely influential. It was very influential and really at the center of things.

Delegations from all three countries would come to meet the director of USIA, to talk to him, and I would prepare all of the briefings for him for the meetings and for other senior colleagues. So, in that way I was directly involved in shaping our policy presentations, and keeping the USIA leadership informed about what the issues were and what the delegations might want to talk about, what they might say.

*Q: Did you have to deal with Greek-American delegations and all?*

FINN: Well, actually as a desk officer I was responsible for preparing for meetings with the delegations from those countries that came to Washington. My other main responsibility was supporting our outreach work in the field. Sometimes when these people came in to see one of the senior officials in USIA, I might be notetaker in the meeting. But I was not dealing with American citizens. You have to remember that USIA was always prohibited from in any way influencing people in the U.S. So, that wasn't part of our mission. That's something that would probably have fallen to David Ransom in the State Department and his deputies.

*Q: What were we doing on Cyprus at the time?*

FINN: I think we were trying always to promote some sort of dialogue and cooperation and openness, but basically, I think it was understood that peace between the two sides would have to involve Turkey and Greece, as well as the Greek and Turkish Cypriots in addition to American involvement. And really, it wasn't until I got to Turkey, to my



posting in the late '90s, that I worked on that topic because I did a lot of conflict resolution at that point. While on the desk, I did all I could to support Ambassador Abramowitz. In those days, we didn't have the electronic capacity we have today and what I would be doing was making sure he knew exactly what was being covered in the U.S. press every day. I also knew the U.S. ambassador in Greece; he was a political appointee, Ambassador Michael Sotirhos. I provided his public affairs officer with the same kind of support. Now, you know, you can open up the internet and read everything, but that was not the case back then.

*Q: Did you see any hope for settlement, a reasonable settlement?*

FINN: Yes. I worked for years in conflict resolution; I did India-Pakistan; I did Greece-Turkey; Turkey-Armenia; the Bosnian factions; Israelis and Palestinians. In all of these conflicts, you have hardliners on both sides who do not want a resolution because they're playing a zero sum game. Resolving a conflict invariably involves compromise on both sides. I think the best example in recent history is the Good Friday Accord brokered in Northern Ireland. Compromises were made on both sides. The situation is not perfect, but it's much better than the violence that preceded it, the "Troubles." Another example is the Dayton Accords that ended the Bosnian war. In both these conflicts, there were hardliners, but skilled mediation led them to compromise. In Cyprus, what would happen over the years is that when you had a more moderate government come to power on the Greek side, the Turks would be more extreme. If you had a more moderate leadership on the Turkish side, the Greeks would be more extreme. There was always an attempt to prevent resolution because that's not what the extremists want.

*Q: Could we do anything to point this out?*

FINN: As a desk officer, I wasn't in the thick of it. It was when I was overseas at our missions that I worked on these things. And yes, I think people who work in the field of conflict resolution come to understand first of all how important it is to have skilled and neutral mediators. That person shouldn't be a government official; that person should be a neutral person who knows the issues, knows both sides, but also knows how to put people together and to keep them on the right track. When Richard Holbrooke was working on the Balkan conflict, he would complain that they kept talking about what happened 500 years ago. They were inciting revenge for incidents in the distant past. The mediator has to keep the warring parties on track about where we are now and how we can resolve the issues that are at the basis of the conflict today, not who won which battle in the past.

*Q: I know. I spent five years in Yugoslavia.*

FINN: Oh, you know well, yes. Anyhow, that was a relatively short period of time. It was a very rich experience, but it was a short period of time. And then I was assigned to Germany. Actually, initially I thought I would be going as a PAO (Public Affairs Officer) to Oslo, but the head of the European division in USIA decided that I should go as PAO to Frankfurt instead which actually turned out to be much better for a lot of reasons. I

learned German; that's when I went into German language training. And it opened up a whole new world for me. Frankfurt was much bigger than Oslo as a mission. It was and still is, I believe, the seventh largest U.S. mission in the world even though it's a consulate.

*Q: Yes, I know. Again, my first post was Frankfurt.*

FINN: Yes, yes, so you know. And when I got there the Fifth Corps was still there. They were very present. We were drawing down, but we still had significant military presence. We had the Rhein-Main Air Base, and we worked together with our military colleagues. But essentially, I was the director of the America House in Frankfurt and that was a marvelous, wonderful job, I have to say.

*Q: Well, let's talk about that. What did the America House do there and what were you doing?*

FINN: After the Second World War, wise leaders inaugurated the Marshall Plan. Initially, we set up reading rooms, and eventually we set up cultural centers all over Germany. Some of them became America Houses. The America Houses were American cultural centers, directly governed by USIA and the State Department. We did programs for the German public to enable them to learn more about the United States. I oversaw exchange programs and speaker programs. Washington sent out American experts to do speaking tours. I was allowed to accept funding from both American and German banks, and Frankfurt is a big banking town, so I was able to do a wide range of programs. We had conferences on serious historic, political, foreign affairs and economic issues, but we also had a huge cultural program. I had a big exhibit space; I was able to mount exhibits. I had actually the nicest exhibit space in Frankfurt at the America House. And we had an auditorium, so aside from the conferences, we also had a wide range of musical and other cultural programs.

And another thing that was marvelous was the Frankfurt Book Fair, the largest in the world. Every major American author with a new book was there. And all these famous writers would come and give readings to huge audiences in our America House. So, I worked with the German publishers to organize these readings. We had a host of literary celebrities. It was really a very interesting job.

*Q: Could you think of any- let's take the people who were coming to talk. Can you think of any interesting things that happened then?*

FINN: Oh, a lot of things happened. I presented very famous American writers such as Gore Vidal, Susan Sontag, Richard Ford, Michael Crichton and many others; many well-known American writers. I had a lovely home with a garden and I usually had a dinner for them after the reading. Louis Begley was a writer from New York who became, along with his whole family, a personal friend. I hosted a buffet lunch for him in my home when he came out to read from his novel "Wartime Lies." Prominent authors actually came out all year long, they didn't just come at the time of the book fair. So, I had

dinner for them after their programs at the America House. The playwright A.R. Gurney and his wife were my houseguests. In those days, there was much less airport security so I was able to meet them at the baggage claim in the airport. I had a special badge for that purpose.

This is when the Balkan war was beginning. The Germans were reluctant; they did not want any part in it. Well, it's understandable because of their history that they felt that it was better for them to stay out of it. But we had speakers come and talk about why the United States was becoming more engaged. I presented Roy Goodman, a journalist from New York who had done a book on the Bosnian genocide. He had gone into Bosnia and found the Serb-run concentration camps. When this went on television, the whole world woke up to how serious the situation was. So, I had him speak, and I invited Daniel Cohn-Bendit to come that evening and introduce him and to comment on the situation. And when Daniel Cohn-Bendit, who was known as Danny the Red-

*Q: Oh, yes.*

FINN: Yes, you remember from 1968. In this case, he was very supportive of the American policy of intervention in the Bosnian war. So, he spoke up about that and that was very positive. That was a good thing.

So, yes, it was very thrilling to have people like Gore Vidal sitting with my guests at dinner in my garden and talking about how he knew the Kennedy family, telling stories about John Kennedy and Jackie Kennedy, both of whom were revered in Germany.

*Q: Oh, boy.*

FINN: Yes.

*Q: How about was this a period, had the Baader-Meinhof business been-?*

FINN: No, that was over by the time I was there.

*Q: How about the left in Germany? The extreme left.*

FINN: The politicians were quite moderate across the board when I was there, '92 to '95. It was not a time for extremism. You have to remember, the biggest preoccupation in Germany at the time was the reunification, the whole question of how to absorb East Germany and what they were going to do about that and what it was going to cost and how to rebuild the infrastructure. It was a time when Germany was turning inward. Although some people might have felt more or less strongly about it, basically all Germans were on the same page.

*Q: You arrived when after the unification?*

FINN: Well, I arrived in the summer of '92 so yes, it had been in place, but the unification was a long process and in it's still going on. There's a high rate of unemployment among young men in the East; young women do better. Young women also move easily to the West to find jobs. On the other hand, because the infrastructure was upgraded in the '90s, East Germany in many ways, has better railroads and roads in some places than in the West. However, there are lots of working-class men in the East who lost their jobs and have never recovered.

*Q: Were we doing anything regarding the unification or were we just sort of sitting watching it?*

FINN: No, no, no. First of all, we were extremely supportive. One reason that President Bush the father is so esteemed in Germany was that he was immediately supportive of the unification and very supportive of the German-American partnership. He's really a hero there. The presidents that Germans esteem in particular are John Kennedy because of his famous Berlin speech, and his support for the Berliners, and then Reagan because he said Mr. Gorbachev, tear down that wall, and then George Herbert Walker Bush because he was so supportive of the whole partnership between Germany and the United States and because he was very supportive of the unification. The area where there might have been some differences was that Foreign Minister Genscher and Chancellor Kohl decided, when the Bosnian situation erupted, to recognize Croatia. They got out ahead of us on that and some people say that the war might not have happened had they not done that. On the other hand, Chancellor Kohl had a very good relationship with President Clinton. They really liked one another.

*Q: I have to say that I've always felt that Genscher for his own political reasons, Croatian support or something, he really had dirty fingers.*

FINN: Yes, well, Milošević had risen up as an ultra-nationalist leader and he was inciting hatred. He was making speeches that were very extreme. So, he's ultimately to blame. And Tuđman was not much better. The two of them, actually, are supposed to have thought that they could divide former Yugoslavia between them, leaving the Bosnians out of it. And the Bosnians didn't want to get into this war at all, but there came a point where they had to because otherwise they would have been absorbed by Serbia and Croatia.

*Q: I know. It was a terrible situation. Did the situation there- was it something that you had to take into consideration?*

FINN: Well, basically I just invited experts who knew about it and who could explain the American perspective to talk to our audiences. And of course, I also worked with the press. I would talk with them and hope that I could get some distinguished journalist, some influential journalist, to convey our point of view. And gradually, it took a while, but gradually the Germans did come around.

*Q: Well, how about did you have much dealing with the press? The “Frankfurter Allgemeine” is of course a major paper.*

FINN: Yes, that’s right. In fact, one of their writers is to this day a very good friend of mine. Yes. I knew all of them; I knew the editors and writers of not only “Frankfurter Allgemeine,” but also the “Frankfurter Rundschau” and the other publications. Yes, yes, I did deal with them.

*Q: Did you find them- sort of in our perspective were they responsible papers?*

FINN: Oh, yes, yes. They were both responsible. “Frankfurter Rundschau” of course is more left-wing, but they’re both very good. German journalism is quite serious and responsible in comparison with what I experienced in other countries where you see far more outrageous and irresponsible things in the press, but you wouldn’t see that in mainstream German media. The German mainstream media is not sensationalist.

*Q: How did you find the consul general and staff of the consulate? Did they give you good support?*

FINN: Oh, yes. Well, first of all I had my own staff because I was director of the America House and my office was housed in the America House. So, in that facility we had a beautiful garden, and I had a nice big office. We had the auditorium and the exhibit space. During the time I was there, we had three consuls general. The one who was most wonderful was one of the most marvelous people I’ve worked with anywhere, a man called Pierre Shostal. He was a very cultured man and loved music and the arts, so he was particularly supportive. During my last year there, the consul general was Janet Andres. She and I became good friends.

*Q: Did you have any presidential visits?*

FINN: When I was in Frankfurt, yes, because Dick Holbrooke was the ambassador. Yes, he invited the Clintons and the Clintons came. And I was the person assigned to organize the event on our air base, a huge event with an enormous number of American military families. It was a great occasion because a lot of senior German officials were there as well. President Clinton spoke and the audience was very responsive. Then after he spoke, people were coming up with their babies to be hugged. Yes, President Clinton came to Frankfurt when I was there; he and Hillary and Chelsea came to Ankara when I was there. Later on, Hillary Clinton came to Vienna when I was there. So, yes, I was involved with a lot of these visits over the years. Hillary Clinton came as Secretary of State to my final posting at Embassy Berlin.

*Q: How would you say relations were with the Germans at the time? Particularly we still had big troops- a large number-*

FINN: We had military presence. Remember, I had served in places like Turkey and Pakistan before this. In Pakistan there were situations that were extremely dangerous.

There were situations that were truly life and death. When I got to Frankfurt, I remember one of the big public affairs issues was helicopter noise from our military exercises. Germans like things to be quiet and peaceful and our helicopters were disturbing them. So, we were always talking about how to deal with that, how to find a way to decrease the noise, and yet to help people to understand why it was necessary and so on. But it seemed a very lightweight topic in comparison to the kinds of things going on in other places.

*Q: Yes. Well, did you find- were you suffering from not enough money or were you getting good support?*

FINN: Well, in those days there was enough money. My house was subsidized as were the other houses of the senior people at the consulate by the city of Frankfurt. The America House was also subsidized by the city of Frankfurt. And I had a nice big staff and of course we had Ambassador Holbrooke in Bonn, and he was truly a dynamo. We were allowed to accept sponsorships, so for instance, for my America House programs I developed a brochure; once a month we put out a glossy brochure. The back page would be sponsored by AT&T or Telecom or some other company or bank. Then we'd have a list of the exhibits, the speaker programs, the musical evenings and all the things we were doing, the book readings, photographs of some people; it was a very nice product and there was money for that. Yes, that was not a problem. And we were allowed to be sponsored; we reported it, and if we had extra money -- we also charged for tickets on occasion -- so if we had extra money it was supposed to go to the Treasury, but usually we fell short. But I had enough post money, discretionary funds, to fill it out. So, that was not a problem. And I had a very talented staff, too.

*Q: Yes, talk about the staff. When I was there, this is 1955 to '57, we really were very fortunate because we had- working for the Americans was one of the best jobs in town.*

FINN: Right, that's right, right. Well, it was still a desirable job when I was there. My senior staffer, Dr. Wiesinger, had a doctoral degree from the States and he wrote beautifully. If I needed a speech for something, he could write me a beautiful speech in German and it would be very elegant and intelligent and wonderful. And Thomas Schaller was the press person. He had very good contacts in the media and he also was a music lover. He was constantly recruiting interesting musical groups from the States. And then I had others who handled student counseling and the whole range of activities that we oversaw.

*Q: It sounds like the sort of job you wouldn't like to give up.*

FINN: Well, you know, I was supposed to be there four years. In those days these postings in Europe were four years. But I was asked by Ambassador Holbrooke, who after he left Bonn had gone back to Washington to become the assistant secretary in the State Department for Europe, I was asked to go to Vienna to work with Ambassador Swanee Hunt, who was a Clinton political appointee. So, what happened was that I traded that one last year with the fellow who had been my predecessor in Frankfurt. He was in

Vienna and wanted to come back, so we just flipped, and I went there to work with Ambassador Hunt. So, next posting was Vienna, and basically one of the staffers in my office wanted to go to Vienna anyway, so he drove me and my son and our suitcases from Frankfurt to Vienna. Things were very informal back then.

*Q: You were in Vienna from when to when?*

FINN: I was in Vienna from '95 to '97. Again, I was supposed to be there for four years, but after two years, they needed me in Turkey because I speak Turkish and there are a lot of people who speak German, and a lot of people who want to go to Vienna, but not so many who know Turkish. And I was happy to do it because I had been with Swanee Hunt for two years, and she was leaving as well, so when I was asked to go to Ankara, I said okay, fine, yes, and off I went.

*Q: Okay. Well, let's talk about Vienna.*

FINN: Well, Vienna was heavenly. It's an incredibly sophisticated society with many cultured people. I had a wonderful circle of friends, people in media, people in the arts who came to my home. I had marvelous receptions. I did musical evenings presenting American pianists who performed on the Bösendorfer baby grand piano in my salon. We had a beautiful America House in Vienna on the ground floor of the Rathaus apartments. It was run by Dr. Rosita Haller, who was a brilliant woman. In Austria, we also had the benefit of the publication of American authors in German. When important new books came out, I had a stream of prominent American writers coming through Vienna. We did the presentation in the America House and then I would have a party for them in my beautiful Viennese apartment or take them out for a dinner. Those were very lovely days, lovely times.

*Q: Let's talk a bit about American books and all and the Germans, both in Germany and Austria. You say- was this a place where people really read what we were producing?*

FINN: Yes, yes. In fact, Germans, and in this case, Austrians, read more books per year than almost any other people in the world. I think the Japanese also have a high number, but Germans and Austrians have probably the highest per capita consumption of books. They treasure and value books; they talk about books; they attend readings. Every major American author was immediately translated to German. Even a few authors who couldn't get published in the United States in English were published in German; if the publisher liked the book, they published it in German. So, that was an extraordinary time. When you're living in Washington, you go to Politics and Prose for a book reading, or in New York, you go to a book evening, but it's not the same; you're just a member of the audience. When you're the public affairs officer hosting the event, you introduce the author and then you host a dinner or a lunch afterwards so that the guests are able to truly engage. You get to know these authors personally. It's very rewarding.

*Q: Can you think of any authors who were particularly favored or opposed by your audiences?*

FINN: These audiences loved American literature. It's one of our great products. That was true even in Pakistan. People from across the political spectrum loved American literature. They came to our programs. I didn't get so many writers to come out to Pakistan, of course, and there was no reason for the publishers to translate because educated Pakistanis read English anyway. I just ordered the books for our libraries in Lahore and Islamabad. But in Germany and Austria, the audiences were very enthusiastic; the America House would be packed to capacity at these book events. And sometimes we even had to do it somewhere else because so many people wanted to come. They asked questions of the writers and it was extremely enthusiastic. I think one person complained about something that Gore Vidal said because it was too controversial, but Vidal was known for being provocative. So, no, the reception of our writers was very positive. The people who came to these things had read the books; they didn't just come and buy the book and have it signed. They had read the book so they asked informed questions about the books.

*Q: That must have been rather exhilarating.*

FINN: It was great. It was wonderful. It was absolutely marvelous. It was so good for our country, Stu, because it drew people in. You know, Joe Nye writes about soft power and the power of attraction. This drew people into our society and made them feel that they could understand the United States, made them want to visit the United States.

*Q: It sounds like the Germans paid more attention to what our people were writing than our people were.*

FINN: Well, I think you're right. I think there's a very strong tradition. Americans grow up, I did myself, with a lending library and borrowing books. That's our tradition and that's wonderful. I read all the books in the children's library when I was a child. But Germans actually buy the books and they pride themselves on their bookshelves, on their book collection, and they do it very seriously and very carefully. And they just treat books with an incredible level of respect.

*Q: What were, both in Frankfurt and Austria, what were you getting about reflections on the Hitlerzeit?*

FINN: Well, one of the big things that happened was that Daniel Goldhagen, a professor at Harvard, had written a book called "Hitler's Willing Executioners" and he did a widely reported tour of Germany. It was very, very interesting because the young people had a thousand questions. In many families, people simply did not talk about history. They avoided the questions about the war. It was taught in the West, but not East Germany. In West Germany, in the schools, children were taught about the Holocaust; they were taught about the war. But people didn't talk about it at home, and so there was an enormous curiosity among the young. When Goldhagen toured Germany with his book,



huge, huge crowds of young people came out to hear him. And his thesis was rather controversial because, to put it in a nutshell, he was basically arguing that everyone in the society was responsible; even if people were not overtly involved, they were complicit; they knew what was going on. People couldn't say oh, we didn't know about it.

*Q: Well, I know here in my little organization we have an intern program and we had one young girl who was a graduate of Dachau High School and she was saying- I mean, they really walked her through at the high school.*

FINN: Oh yes, yes. It's taken very seriously. And many young people visit the concentration camps as part of a school trip. Oh, no, it's taken very seriously.

The other thing that was interesting was that the Spielberg film, "Schindler's List," opened in Frankfurt while I was there. Ambassador Holbrooke got directly involved. We had a huge event; we had a reception before because we knew the movie would be too upsetting to have a reception afterwards. Steven Spielberg came out from California. Liam Neeson, the actor who played Schindler in the film, came out with his wife Natasha Richardson, and other members of the cast. We had a panel discussion beforehand. Some of the people who were saved by being on Schindler's List were still alive in the early '90s and they attended the screening. It was really quite an extraordinary, powerful event.

*Q: I would imagine so.*

FINN: Spielberg also created materials that were distributed in schools throughout Germany so that teachers could show the film and discuss it with the students. Study books were distributed along with the film to assist the teachers in dealing with what happened. One important note about the film is that in the midst of such darkness and evil, Spielberg chose to highlight the work of one good German. Schindler was not an angel, but in this instance, he saved many lives. He made the film in such a way that it could be shown to young people.

*Q: At least, I gather, I never served or had much to do with Austria, but the Austrians sort of have the reputation of trying to hold themselves somewhat aloof from-*

FINN: Well, the Austrians said Hitler invaded us. Of course, there is documentary film coverage of crowds welcoming the Nazis. You know, there were those in Germany and Austria who did resist. There were dissenters. These things are very complex. But basically Austrians, it can be said of the Austrians that they have not dealt with the past in the same way, in the thorough way that the Germans have. They have a much more ambivalent or ambiguous relationship with it.

*Q: Right now, the name escapes me but their president was- at one point was implicated for-*

FINN: I know exactly who you mean. Kurt Waldheim. He was not only President of Austria, he had also been Secretary General of the UN. We didn't speak with him when

we encountered him at public events in Vienna, but I knew other people who did. And there were people there who simply didn't believe that he had been involved. He denied the accusations. When the story came out, he insisted that he had been on duty in the Balkans. He insisted he had never been directly involved in Holocaust activities. But there were people in the Justice Department who felt strongly otherwise.

*Q: Well, was that a sort of a subject that you got involved in?*

FINN: Well, the thing I was most involved in was the Yugoslav conflict. Vienna was a platform embassy for our embassy in Sarajevo and there are some interesting stories there. So, maybe next time we can pick up there.

#### *Next Session*

*Q: So, let's pick up with Vienna.*

FINN: So, I was in Vienna for two years, '95 to '97. Normally it would be a four-year tour, but I was transferred from there to Turkey because they needed me in Turkey. Something unexpected happened, and of course they can get lots of people to cover a German-speaking country like Austria, but not so many to become the counselor for public affairs at the embassy in Ankara. So off I went.

Anyway, I said I would talk about Bosnia. The Dayton Accords were signed shortly after I arrived in Vienna. I had worked for Ambassador Holbrooke when he was our ambassador in Germany so I knew him well. He and Ambassador Hunt had designated our embassy in Vienna as a platform for the embassy in Sarajevo. So, over the period of a year and a half, between the Dayton signing and when I left Austria, I made, I believe, 11 trips to Bosnia, to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Ten of them were to Sarajevo and one was to Tuzla where we had a commemoration for the terrible Srebrenica massacre. During that time, our ambassador, Swanee Hunt, strongly supported all these efforts. She went herself a couple of times to Sarajevo. We had a big project called "Books for Sarajevo." Essentially, we collected books from Europe and the U.S. to donate to Bosnia in an attempt to replace the collection that had been burned during the war. One of Swanee's photographs was made into a very moving poster. These posters were placed all over Sarajevo. The magnificent library had been shelled in the largest single book burning since the destruction of the great library in Alexandria. The outer frame of the library was still standing, but it had been gutted by fire. Through this project, she was creating not only an opportunity for people to donate books, but also to increase awareness of what had happened and how destructive it was. The library was reopened in the vast Tito barracks temporarily. I haven't been back to Sarajevo, so I don't know what the status is now, but we also worked with the European Union to secure the structure so it didn't collapse entirely as a result of the fire. It was a very beautiful building and important to the people of Sarajevo. And I think it's a sign of hope that at least the outside of the building was preserved. So, that was part of what I did when I was in Vienna.

*Q: What was the Austrian reaction to-*

FINN: The Austrians were really very wonderful. They took in a lot of refugees from the war and they did not discriminate according to religion. They took people who were Roman Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs; the Serbs belong to the Orthodox Church. And of course, the Muslim Bosniaks. And they also had many charitable projects. They were actively engaged and did a great deal of work to ease the suffering there. Sarajevo had been in their domain after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. They felt a special responsibility to Bosnia. The Ottoman, as well as the Austrian imprint on Sarajevo, was very strong. The older part of the city looked like parts of Istanbul and the newer part looked like Vienna. You could see the influence of these two empires in that one small, very charming city; set in the mountains, a very, very beautiful place.

The other significant thing that I did while I was in Vienna was to work on behalf of our embassy with diplomats in the Austrian foreign office and also with the vice president of Bosnia-Herzegovina to create a Center for Democracy in Vienna. We did that in the Vienna America House, which was a very magnificent location in the center of the town adjacent to the Rathaus (town hall). It was a location familiar to everyone and a place where people from the different factions could meet in neutral Austria. They could come together in Vienna in a way they could not do in Sarajevo so soon after the war.

*Q: Did you have any particular programs to deal with this unique situation?*

FINN: Oh, yes. That's what we did in the Center for Democracy. We brought people from all the Bosnian factions up to Vienna for conflict resolution sessions. In addition, we invited prominent experts familiar with conflict resolution. Richard Goldstone, the very famous judge from South Africa joined one of our conferences. He was one of the many prominent people who came and spoke to these groups. Simon Wiesenthal, the famed Nazi hunter lived in Vienna. He too joined these programs. This all really served an important purpose because people who had been at war with one another were able to sit down and restore some sort of normal relationship. So, it was very productive. And aside from serious discussions, we did musical programs and art exhibits. The artists of Sarajevo exhibited their work. So, it was really a very exhilarating thing to do in terms of dealing with the suffering that everyone had undergone in that city during the war.

*Q: Did you see any signs of either life or opposition to what was happening within Bosnia?*

FINN: Well, yes. There was still tremendous tension and anger and bitterness because of all the terrible things that had happened during the war. But I think there were also people who were able to rise above that. Sarajevo was a very cosmopolitan place. There had been, in Yugoslavia, a tremendous amount of intermarriage, so you had people who had mixed parentage. One parent might be a Serb and the other parent a Bosniak, or one a Croat and the other a Bosniak. These cosmopolitan people were quite sophisticated and very willing to enter into discussions. These people identified as Yugoslavs, rather than with one or another ethnic or religious group. They wanted to move beyond the war.

*Q: Were we concerned about young people leaving the country?*

FINN: Well, a lot of people had fled during the war and I think some efforts were made to encourage people to stay there when it was over. And of course, some of the refugees who had gone to Austria and elsewhere did come back. Others made new lives. Of course, we had Bosnians in the U.S. as well. Chicago is, I believe, the city in the United States that had the largest number of Bosnians, and many of these people were very well educated. Yugoslavia had had a good education system and some of them had done their master's and doctoral degrees in the United States so some were people who came to the U.S. with the intention of starting new lives. Some went back, but a lot of people didn't.

*Q: Now, I was an election observer there twice, once around Tuzla and another time up in the north. One certainly wishes them well.*

FINN: Yes, yes, that's right.

*Q: Did that interfere much with your regular USIA work?*

FINN: Well, the embassy in Vienna was a wonderful place to work and I had a fantastic staff, really talented people. The senior FSN who handled press affairs, Dr. Karin Czerny, was great colleague, and the senior FSN who oversaw the America House, the cultural and literary and intellectual side of things was also fantastic, Dr. Roswitha Haller. We had a very full program. As in Frankfurt, lots of American writers came through Vienna and we had programs with them; we had conferences on other policy topics; we had American speakers coming through on a whole range of policy issues. So, we were quite busy there. And I think it was possible because the senior staff were so talented.

When I made these trips to Bosnia, although I made 11 of them, they were of short duration. I would just go down there for two or three days and make sure everything was going as planned and moving forward and then I would come right back. It wasn't as though I stayed there for a long period of time.

*Q: With these various authors and lectures can you- did you have any situations funny or serious or things that-*

FINN: Oh, on the serious side, we had the great Ottoman scholar from Princeton, Bernard Lewis, and we had a number of experts discussing the U.S. political landscape. I recall one of these analysts explaining to the audience that since WWII, with the exception of JFK, our presidents had largely been born in the southern part of the U.S. On the fun side, we had the wonderful American living in Venice who writes mystery stories, very literary mystery stories, Donna Leon. Her books have been translated to German and she is extremely popular in both Germany and Austria. Readers love the endearing Venetian detective, Inspector Brunetti. Another writer who came through was Cathleen Shine whose novel "Love Letters" was widely read at the time. I gave buffet dinners or receptions for these writers.

*Q: Oh yes, I enjoy her work.*

FINN: Yes, Inspector Brunetti.

*Q: Yes.*

FINN: Yes. And Stu, we had many others. It was always a really good discussion and a pleasure to deal with these writers and such a privilege, too. I also had very good relations with the people in the two major newspapers - "Der Standard" and "Die Presse," and so I had good contacts there as well. I hosted many receptions in my beautiful apartment, and also house concerts so that my friends from the media, academia and the arts could mingle. I had a Bösendorfer baby grand piano, so I was able to invite American artists resident in Vienna and elsewhere in Europe to come and perform for my guests. It was a big apartment so we could set up 30 or 40 chairs in the living room and then have a buffet afterwards in the dining room. It was a wonderful, wonderful time. It was truly a salon.

*Q: Did you notice in your work both in Austria and Bosnia a new breed of cat, the teenagers and all? I mean, they were coming up under the internet and cell phones and all that.*

FINN: Well, I knew the children of the people I worked with in Vienna. I got to know their families, I got to know the whole family in several cases. And I have to say that yes, in spite of everything that had happened in Sarajevo during the war, some of the Bosnians had been living in exile in Austria and some not, but in spite of everything yes, they were quite normal teenagers and very aware of what was going on in the world and also very active in the cultural scene. They had a real love affair with their country and wished to show its best side. Once the Dayton Accords were signed, people were coming in from all over Europe and the United States to help get Bosnia back on its feet and these young people were really involved in a lot of these activities, so it was very positive.

*Q: Yes. One of the things that I've noted that I feel that particularly say in Germany but in other parts of Europe the young people at sort of both the elementary school, high school and all get a very strong education in the arts, painting and appreciation.*

FINN: Yes. Well, Europeans care about the arts. After all, the arts are supported in Europe to a great extent by taxpayers, unlike this country where art - the metropolitan opera, our concert halls and museums are dependent upon corporate and private donations to sustain them. They usually get some money from the city government, but in Europe it's quite the opposite. It's understood that these cultural institutions benefit the entire society, so they can count on a generous level of taxpayer support. There's a consensus on that, everyone agrees, just as they agree that schools should have art and music. Vienna is a city many consider the music capital of Europe, if not the world, at least in terms of European classical music. There's just no question that this was something important to invest in.

The Austrians had a great empire. There were many magnificent buildings in Vienna. They really invested in restoration of these buildings, making them extremely attractive to tourists not just from the region but from all over the world. It was very wise, a very wise approach to things and very successful.

*Q: Yes. I just came back from a cruise down the Danube.*

FINN: Oh, really? How lovely. Wonderful.

*Q: And we stopped off in Belgrade and a friend of ours who lives there took us around. I'd lived in Belgrade for five years. My daughter was with me and it looked like, I mean, the city was plain shabby. Of course, it no longer was the capital of a large, thriving nation and it was hit by bombing and all. And apparently there's a lot of corruption there.*

FINN: Yes, that's right, that's true. I think that's true throughout the Balkans. There is a high level of corruption, unfortunately.

*Q: But I will say, Budapest and Bucharest were really delightful. But anyway.*

FINN: Yes, and Prague, Prague is beautiful. Sarajevo, of course, I haven't been back for many years, but Sarajevo in spite of the war, was a very charming city. You saw the war damage particularly in the Austrian side because the Austrians tend to build buildings with the statues on top and the statues were missing, or missing limbs, and missing heads and so on; you could see the damage from the war. But nevertheless, the city had a great deal of charm. I don't know, since I've not been back, I don't know what it's like now.

*Q: Well then, let's move on to Turkey.*

FINN: Okay. So, then I was transferred to Ankara.

*Q: What was the situation that brought you there?*

FINN: Well, what happened was the person who was there got transferred somewhere else unexpectedly, and so they needed someone who was fluent in Turkish to become the counselor for public affairs. They had assigned a friend of mine, and then she couldn't go for a complicated personal reason. So, unexpectedly they needed someone there. And you know, in those days, they called you up and said okay, we want you to do this. And actually, the timing was fine because Ambassador Hunt was leaving, so what happened was that I left at about the same time; I left a month or two before she did. So, that worked out alright. And back in Washington, I met the fellow who became the ambassador, Mark Parris, who is just one of the most able diplomats imaginable. I know I say this about a lot of my bosses. I had the good fortune to work for so many fantastic people. I was so lucky. But he was just a remarkable man. I learned so much from him. We met in Washington, in the State Department cafeteria, and had a chat. And then off I went.

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

FINN: I was there from '97 to 2000. And I must say, I was very fortunate because those were the golden years in the Turkish-American relationship. Ambassador Parris was terrific. It was the Clinton Administration, and Washington made a real effort to be supportive of Turkey. The NATO alliance was very strong. The Turks were also working with the Israelis on the military side, and things were just clicking in place. There were issues we dealt with having to do with investment and so on, but it was not a time of terrible tensions; it was a time when it was possible to just do a tremendous amount. The Clinton administration was dedicated to multilateralism. Its support for the progressive forces in Turkey was crucial. The U.S. had been unwavering during both Democratic and Republican administrations in its support for Turkey's accession to the European Union. This inspired democratic and modernizing forces in Turkey, and held regressive forces at bay.

*Q: Talk about some of the things that you were doing.*

FINN: Well, I did the things that one does in public affairs. First of all, there were the pipeline issues which are political as much as economic; they are political and strategic. So, we had people like the Envoy for Eurasian Energy Richard Morningstar, and the Special Advisor on Caspian Basin Energy John Wolf coming through to talk about energy issues with the government and to do press conferences to get the message out to the Turkish public. We also had a visit from Secretary of Defense William Cohen. For all these occasions, my press office, under the able direction of Ian Kelly, was responsible for setting up the press conferences, so we dealt with that. I knew personally a lot of the journalists. I had meetings with the leading editors and opinion writers in both Ankara and Istanbul. I also arranged often that we would have two-on-one meetings with the ambassador over lunch. The ambassador and I would meet with the most influential journalists at his home for conversations that really shed a great deal of light on the internal workings of the society. It's was also a wonderful way to have respected media figures hear our policies directly from us. It was a way to make sure they had the story straight. They had an opportunity to ask questions in private that they might hesitate to ask in a public venue. So, they would then write about the things they learned from us in these conversations and it was very productive. They did not always support our positions, but at least they had a correct understanding of them.

Ambassador Parris and his wife Joan and a group of people from the embassy also made trips around the country. Turkey's a big country; we visited local mayors and governors and saw what the differences were in each region. It was just a time when we were able to do so much without any difficulty. At the same time, since I oversaw cultural affairs as well, we had very strong exchange programs – both the Fulbright program and the international visitor program were top notch.

During the time that I was there, we had an extended visit from President and Mrs. Clinton and several of the senior members of the cabinet, as well as their daughter

Chelsea. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Energy Secretary Bill Richardson were among them. It was a hugely successful visit intended to give Turkey a boost after the devastating earthquake that struck in the summer of 1999. After that visit, the approval rating for the U.S. shot up to 97 percent. People were just so moved that the American president went to the earthquake zone. They were so appreciative of that. Ambassador Parris and others of us at the embassy worked on the talking points for President Clinton's speech to the Turkish Parliament. Two young staffers had come out in advance of the visit – Phil Gordon and Tony Blinken – both brilliant. The Clinton visit was very complex because the official delegation was so high-level and so large, and they stayed almost a week. The only longer visit was to China. They went not only to Ankara and Istanbul and the earthquake zone, they visited the archaeological sites in Izmir and Antalya. We worked with the president's speechwriters and I worked with Hillary Clinton's speechwriter. Oversight of this visit was extremely complicated because so many sites were involved. Part of Istanbul was shut down entirely while the president was there. I had to bring in seasoned officers from nearby countries to be present at each of these sites. On the third day of the visit, there was a wonderful photo on the front page of all the major newspapers of a little Turkish boy in the earthquake zone pulling on Bill Clinton's nose. Turks love children, so the entire country immediately fell in love with both President Clinton and the little boy. So popular was this visit that the life of that boy, now a young man, has been followed by the press ever since. The approval rating for the U.S. had hovered around 85 percent during the Clinton years, but it shot up to close to 100 percent after his visit to the earthquake zone.

*Q: We're now looking at a Turkey that seems to be split, really the problems.*

FINN: Right.

*Q: Did you see the signs of this?*

FINN: Scholars chart these things, but going back to the early '80s there was a very small Islamist-leaning party. These parties mutated over time taking on different names. But the percentage of people adhering to that point of view was increasing gradually over the next decades as a proportion of the population, very gradually over a long period of time. There is an urban/rural divide as in many countries, but in Turkey, there had been an immense migration of rural people to the big cities. They brought their traditional values with them. There's a divide in Turkey, as there is in Israel, and as there is in our own country, between people who are urban and cosmopolitan and progressive, and people who feel that their identity is threatened, their way of life is threatened by globalization. They want to cling to the past. And that's pretty much the situation. People debate what happened in Turkey, but I think to some extent it was also a demographic shift because you had a very high birth rate in the rural parts of the country with the lowest levels of education, and while the general population was always religious, there was never a conflict between being devout and also being loyal to the secular values of the state. Things began to change when religion was politicized. Then a real rift developed between the people in the big cities who continued to want to be part of the European Union and support NATO, who would want to move forward in fields like technology, and the less



educated people who wanted to have religious schools and to adhere to a much more traditional way of life.

*Q: Were we doing anything to help one side or the other in this?*

FINN: The embassy tried very hard always to maintain good ties with all segments of the society and all the political factions. But the country gradually changed. And I think another thing that happened is that with the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a shift of tectonic plates around the world and you saw that people who had defined themselves in one way, suddenly began to look for other ways of defining themselves. I mean, think of what happened in Russia, and it's not so different to what happened in Turkey. People wanting to revive the past are setting the agenda. The Russians are promoting the glory days of the Russian Empire, and in Turkey there were leaders promoting the glory days of the Ottoman Empire. There was a revival of Ottoman language and vocabulary and a yearning for a mythical time in the past because if we were to go back to the real past, we would see that life wasn't so wonderful. The real past involved diseases that we now have cured, and high infant mortality rates, and all kinds of other things that were not so great. But people mythologize.

*Q: Did Erdoğan, was he a figure at all when you were there?*

FINN: Yes. When I was there, he was in jail for a while because he read a very provocative poem about using the minarets of the mosques as weapons of war. So, he was in jail for a while for inciting hatred. And then he was let out. But of course, there were people who were very sympathetic to him and people who said oh, you can't put somebody in jail because he's reciting a poem; it's a poem, it's not real life, and we believe in free speech. So, there were many different points of view even among American policymakers about what he meant, what he stood for. I think there was the idea that he was truly democratic, but he said early on that democracy was a train you rode to the stop you wanted to reach, and then you got off it.

*Q: Yes.*

FINN: Yes. That was a revealing statement.

*Q: Did you have much contact with the religious leaders?*

FINN: We tried very hard to be in touch with people of all different persuasions and certainly I did know some very lovely intellectual people who were devout and were also very interested in Islamic heritage and calligraphy and the great art forms of the Ottoman period; you know, Istanbul has some of the most magnificent architecture in the world. I knew many cultured people who were also devout, but I knew many people who were completely and utterly secular as well. You know, I grew up in New York where I had friends who were observant and others who were less so. It was a personal decision. Some of the dietary prohibitions in Islam are similar to those in Judaism; devout Muslims do not eat pork or shell fish. It was the same way in Turkey, everyone made their own

decision to eat or not eat pork. People set their own boundaries so to speak, to what extent they would be observant. This was true of alcohol as well. In the lands of the Sufis, there was always a very tolerant attitude towards wine. In Turkey some religious people abstained entirely from alcohol, but others drank the national drink “raki” (similar in flavor to anisette), claiming that only wine was prohibited.

*Q: Did we fashion our library or libraries to the various sects or-?*

FINN: Well, I certainly believed that the library should contain books on the whole range of topics. Essentially however, our libraries were dedicated to American books on politics and economics, as well as literature. There was a time when people in Washington were cutting out literature, but I challenged that. I’ve always believed that literature, whether the novel or poetry, provides some of the greatest insights to the very heart of another culture.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

FINN: And that it was one of our strongest assets. I felt this in Pakistan, and I felt this in Turkey. We wanted to have the greatest books on foreign affairs; we wanted to have the greatest books on economics; but we wanted to have our works of literature as well. Books on politics and economics often have a relatively short shelf life. Literature endures. So, yes, we managed to have a library that covered all of these things. The library was a fantastic meeting place because when we had American policymakers, speakers at the library, we had space there to set up chairs and do programs. It was wonderful because people came from all the universities and the think tanks and the other institutions to hear our speakers. All the people who were interested in American policy or American history or literature, whatever the topic was, would come together and meet one another and they would not have been able to do so if they had just remained on their respective university campuses.

*Q: Did you find that some of the other embassies like the French and the British and the German, were they doing somewhat similar work?*

FINN: Well, I was always friendly with the other diplomats. The German embassy in Ankara was right next door to us on Atatürk Boulevard. I had served in Germany, so I got to know the press and cultural officers well. I always felt we should be mutually supportive, and I think they felt the same way. They had real budgets for culture. By the time I was in Turkey the second time, they had cut out our cultural budget. It ended up with the French embassy presenting American jazz programs instead of us. I still had a little discretionary money for the Istanbul festival, so I could contribute to that so we could present some American music and dance there. But the cuts to the cultural budget were rather frustrating. This is what happened after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Washington saw no point in promoting our culture programs. This was an enormous mistake because our values are inherent in these presentations and performances. We severed a powerful connection with people around the world by closing the cultural centers.

You know, culture – visual arts, dance and music - transcend language and are extremely powerful forms of communication. The Soviet Union understood this as the Chinese do today. I do not think we are paying nearly enough attention to what the Chinese are doing in the area of soft power. American jazz played an important role among dissidents in Nazi Germany. It's enormously significant and to have given that up was a terrible mistake, especially since it is so relatively inexpensive in comparison with military hardware.

*Q: We're sort of seeing the culmination of that now with this present administration.*

FINN: Oh gosh, yes. Yes.

*Q: The Soviets had a wonderful term; when I learned Russian, a cultured collective farmer.*

FINN: That's interesting. What prompted the investment we had in culture when I was in Turkey the first time in the early '80s was actually our competition with the Soviets. When the Cold War was still on, we did have tremendous funding for cultural programs. We played a very predominant role in all the major cities in terms of cultural programming. And I saw how effective it was. The motivation for that funding was not necessarily that the people in Congress who supported it loved the ballet or loved the arts; the motivation was that the Soviets had it, so we had to show the world that we had something better. But so be it. And while one admires the Bolshoi and the magnificent Russian classical music, we were doing the innovation in music and dance. The thing is that unfortunately, with the rise now of extremism, radical extremism in so many places, we've forgotten how powerful that can be.

*Q: Yes. You were in Turkey from when to when now?*

FINN: '97 to 2000.

*Q: Did events in Iraq impact on you at that point?*

FINN: Well, we had the no-fly zone in Northern Iraq, so there was no question that Iraq was a trouble spot. Also, the Syrians were housing Turkish terrorists, so there were tensions there as well.

However, I think the main thing was the Greek-Turkish relationship which was always shaky. And then when the Kurdish PKK leader, Öcalan, was captured under Greek auspices in Africa, that created a period of extreme tension, and that's when I really got started in Greek-Turkish conflict resolution efforts. Usually, a neutral country like Sweden or Austria would host the meetings. At a time when the Greeks and Turks were not even talking with one another, we invited major journalists and newspaper and media owners for meetings under these neutral auspices in Istanbul to meet with their counterparts. Then we had meetings in Athens as well. It was a very successful program

because finally, tragically, when the terrible earthquakes happened in Turkey, there was an outpouring of sympathy from ordinary Greek people and that broke the ice and opened things up. And of course, that was expedited by sympathetic media coverage on Greek television. So, we had a hand in making that happen indirectly. We had laid the groundwork with the press. And then vice versa, when there were lesser, but still horrible earthquakes in Athens only a short time later, the Turks immediately volunteered to help. So, there was, at the people-to-people level, a real opening up and that facilitated a return to more normal relations between two countries that were NATO allies.

*Q: How did the Fulbright program work in Turkey?*

FINN: Well, Fulbright is always a bi-national program. It is a bi-national, bi-lateral program and it's a two-way street. And in fact, I was involved with it in Turkey, in Pakistan, in Israel, indeed in every country in which I served. The rules of the game for Fulbright are always the same. The commission may have a say over how many from the humanities, and how many from the sciences should be going back and forth, but in fact, the rules are the same, and it worked well. Actually, we were fortunate in having a very gifted guy as the director of the Fulbright office, Dr. Ersin Onulduran. He ran a tight ship, so it was a very, very well-organized program.

*Q: Did you get involved in students going to the United States?*

FINN: Well, yes because I sat on the Fulbright Commission and we had, yes, we had a full Fulbright program with people going to study in the U.S. and faculty and students coming to Turkey.

*Q: What about students not in the Fulbright program, but just going to the United States?*

FINN: Yes. There were many sent by the Turkish government on scholarships to study science and engineering. However, in it was nothing like Germany or some other wealthy countries, but yes, there were significant numbers of students who went to study in the U.S. It wasn't anything like the way it had been in Iran before the collapse of the shah's government; the numbers were not that high, but very they were significant numbers. Actually, if you walk around New York, you'll see that at Columbia and NYU there are, and always have been, Turkish students, both undergraduate and graduate. There are Turkish students in our universities across the country. Far more today because the country is much richer than it was then.

*Q: Well then, you say Clinton came, Mrs. Clinton. How did that trip go?*

FINN: It was fantastic. It was fantastic. The whole country fell in love with them. It really was extraordinary. It was after the earthquake, and not only did he visit the earthquake zone, they went to all the major cities; they went to Ankara, to Istanbul, to Izmir, and Hillary Clinton went down to Antalya, where there are six or seven major archeological sites. She gave a cultural speech. At one of the final dinners in Ankara, Bill

Clinton joined the band to play his saxophone. No, it was great. People were just crazy about them. It's hard to believe now, isn't it? Yes.

*Q: Well, where did you go after this obviously delightful, I mean hardworking, but at the same time-*

FINN: It was very personally rewarding to accomplish so much. After that, I was asked to go back to Washington to be the PDAS (Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary) in ECA (the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs). Everyone thought that Gore would win the election, but when he didn't, I stayed on as the Acting Assistant Secretary because the Clinton political appointee, Dr. William Bader, had been asked to step down. So, I worked briefly for Secretary Albright as the PDAS, then for Secretary Powell as the Acting Assistant Secretary, in total for about a year and a half until the Bush political appointee came in.

*Q: So, what were you doing?*

FINN: Well, I oversaw the global exchanges. It was a big job. We had a bureau with 300 people and a huge budget, some three quarters of a billion dollars. It included Fulbright around the world, as well as the International Visitor, and Youth Exchange programs. And aside from that, we had the FSA (Freedom Support Act) money for the former communist countries. So, it was a lot to do. But again, very rewarding. I also oversaw, the Office for Cultural Preservation. That was the office that dealt with the return of archaeological artifacts that had been stolen and sold in the U.S. illegally to the home countries.

*Q: At least you didn't have the Elgin Marbles to worry about.*

FINN: Yes, but there were many more recent and egregious offenses. Well, I wouldn't say more egregious because the Elgin Marbles are pretty substantial. However, that took place at a very different time in history. We were dealing with more recent instances because so much pilfering was going on. In the days of the European empires, there were at least official agreements made between the king or sultan or whomever and the respective European government about artifacts leaving their domain. But what was going on in the '80s and '90s and is still going on now, is just the mass pilfering of archaeological sites and sale of these artifacts. It is very difficult to secure these sites because the trafficking is so lucrative. Underpaid security personnel are so easily compromised. And so, the office that I oversaw worked closely with our customs officials to track down pieces that had been stolen. Our staff had experts who could track these artifacts on the internet and correctly identify them. The customs officials could then move in and apprehend the culprits. And there were a couple of occasions when I represented the State Department at the ceremonies when we returned these artifacts back to the embassy of the country from which they had been taken. So, that was very good thing, and a great example of effective public diplomacy. We were showing respect for the law, but also respect for the cultural property of other countries.

*Q: Were you involved at all in the return of Nazi-confiscated paintings and all?*

FINN: Well, our office dealt with items being sold illegally in the U.S., but there was a special office in the State Department dedicated specifically to Holocaust issues and that office would have dealt with Nazi-confiscated property. This was certainly a major issue when I was in Germany and Austria. I knew the people in the State Department's Holocaust office and I worked with them.

*Q: Well now, did you find a difference in, I'd say, change of attitude with the George W. Bush Administration?*

FINN: Well, everybody loved Secretary Powell. He'll probably go down in history as one of the most popular secretaries of state because he really cared about the people in the department. As a former military man, he understood about empowering people, he understood about creating a positive environment and setting goals, he understood about morale, staff morale, and he did many good things for the people of the State Department. And he was so meticulous; he knew who everyone was; he learned everybody's name; he was very supportive of everyone's efforts. And he did things for people working in the building, the Civil Service as well as the Foreign Service, upgrading the cafeteria, upgrading the technology. He was very, very interested in improved communications. So, he was someone who in terms of policy was a very moderate man, very sensible, very knowledgeable. So, that was okay, that was a very good experience. And you know, he had lived in Germany and served in Germany; he certainly supported the German Fulbright program. The Germans and the Japanese were always very anxious for us to increase our contributions and expand the programs. The Fulbright program in Germany is actually the largest in the world, but that to a great extent was due to the very generous German contributions to it.

*Q: Did you find in Congress; did you have problems with elements of Congress who didn't like this cultural stuff?*

FINN: No. The damage had already been done by Congress in the 1990's when the whole cultural outreach apparatus was eliminated. Nearly all our cultural centers around the world had already been closed. In Washington, the Arts America division of USIA was drastically reduced. There was the mistaken idea that the collapse of the Soviet Union marked, in the famous words of Francis Fukuyama, "the end of history." The need to maintain cultural ties with countries around the world is something that certainly did not end.

By the end of the Clinton Administration there was a realization that this had been a big mistake. In the fall of 2000, believing that Al Gore would win the election, Bill and Hillary Clinton and Madeleine Albright organized a conference in Washington on cultural diplomacy with artists and thinkers from around the world to discuss how we could restore our global impact. They realized that we needed this kind of representation around the world. They certainly heard it from the prominent cultural figures they invited to speak at the conference. The fact that the Soviet Union had failed didn't mean that we

weren't going to have to confront other enemy forces. Now we're faced with a vacuum in that area. The Chinese are actively engaged in soft power activities around the world because of the vacuum we created. As for Congress, I did have to defend our expenditures, but that did not pose any significant problems. The Fulbright program was and remains the blue-chip stock of the State Department. Fulbright has a very powerful lobby of supporters in the universities across the country. Its constituency is united. We were doing good things with the Freedom Support Act. Some of that went into conflict resolution in the troubled areas of the former Soviet Union, the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, for instance, but most of it was dedicated to promoting small business development, you know, capitalist market economy across the former Soviet Union.

*Q: Well then, when you left- you left that job when?*

FINN: I was in that job, I came into it in 2000, summer, when I left Turkey and I left it, it was in the late fall of 2001, after 9/11. Secretary Powell had kept a number of us who were career diplomats in those jobs even after the elections, but as soon as 9/11 happened, the White House came in and said no, no, we're sending in the political appointees. And so, at that point, I decided that I would like to do a sabbatical. I discovered that TWI (The Washington Institute) had a gap in its Turkey program. I thought that that was something useful I could do. The fellow who had been there, Alan Makovsky, had left to join the staff of Senator Tom Lantos. His designated replacement, Soner Çağaptay, was finishing his doctoral studies at Yale and wasn't able to come down to Washington for another year, so the undersecretary for political affairs said yes, good, fine, that's a good idea, go over there. So, I went to TWI for 10 months on sabbatical, and then I had another sabbatical year at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. And both of those experiences were wonderful.

*Q: Alright. Do you want to talk about the first one?*

FINN: Okay. At TWI, I had two hats; one was being the director of the Turkey program and the other was writing about public diplomacy. And of course, I had come back from Turkey only a year and a half before, so I was still very much in touch with everything there. I wrote articles; I organized programs with visiting Turkish dignitaries and politicians, and just generally engaged in the kind of activities that I would do at an embassy overseas, organizing conferences and lectures and of course writing a lot of articles for the website about what was going on in Turkey. And then from there, I went to CFR (the Council on Foreign Relations) and I pretty much did the same thing.

*Q: The CFR is- means what?*

FINN: I'm sorry; the Council on Foreign Relations in New York.

*Q: Yes.*

FINN: The Council on Foreign Relations in New York every year has one member of each of the major military services, so they'll have someone from the Army, the Navy

and the Marines, and they'll have someone from the State Department. The person from the State Department becomes the Cyrus Vance Fellow. It was the chair that was named for Secretary Cyrus Vance. And so, I was the person who was the Cyrus Vance Fellow there for a year.

*Q: How did you find the CFR?*

FINN: CFR was a marvelous experience. I did the same kinds of things; I wrote articles, particularly on the Cyprus negotiations, but also on other topics. I had a stream of speakers to talk about what was going on in those countries and particularly in Turkey. And, since it was a sabbatical fellowship, it was a learning opportunity. The fellows were also encouraged to attend the programs. So, I often attended the speaker programs and panel discussions. I had an insatiable appetite for learning about parts of the world in which I had not worked. I learned so much about what was going on in the Far East, what was going on in all parts of the world because of course CFR is global. And that was an extremely enriching experience.

*Q: And then what?*

FINN: And then the next place was Tel Aviv, Embassy Tel Aviv. So, maybe we can pick up with Tel Aviv the next time.

*Q: Okay, let me make my announcement. Today is the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2017, with Helena Finn.*

FINN: Alright. So. Embassy Tel Aviv; is there something special you'd like to know about it or-?

*Q: Well, just talk about what was the situation- how stood matters in Israel at the time?*

FINN: First of all, I had always wanted to serve in Tel Aviv and finally there was an opportunity - the right job at the right time came up so, I went there to be the counselor for public affairs at the embassy. And by this time -- this was 2003 -- by this time, the consolidation of USIA into the State Department was complete; that started in 1999. So, I was fully an officer of the State Department.

The most important thing that I did there was to oversee the Wye River grants that came down to me from the Clinton Administration. It was a \$10 million grant committed for Palestinian-Israeli reconciliation projects over a period of five to seven years. And administering that grant was really one of the most important things I was doing there. What was the situation in Israel at the time? It was at one of those periods when there had been a series of bomb attacks on buses and in restaurants. We were not allowed to go on public transport at all. That meant that everywhere I went, I had to go by car. I drove in my own car, back and forth to the office, and on my official visits, I had an embassy car. And also, we went back and forth quite a lot between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem because the



government was in Jerusalem, so I was in the embassy cars moving around quite a bit during that time.

My staff was wonderful - fantastic, hardworking, enthusiastic, interesting people. In Israel, of course, everyone you meet has a different family history story. People on my staff came from all over the world; they came from South America; they came from India; they came from North Africa; they came from Scotland and Australia and Canada. There were many who came from families that had fled Europe, so it was really a very, very interesting mix of people who shared a common religion and Jewish ethnicity, but who had come from very, very different cultural experiences. So, I found that quite enriching.

Ambassador Kurtzer is someone I admire enormously. He was one of the most knowledgeable experts about the Middle East in the government. He had also been ambassador in Egypt. He had both a scholarly and a political understanding of every element, historic and present, of the Middle East crisis, the Middle East situation, and I learned a great deal from him. The depth of his knowledge about the Middle East was extraordinary. I also learned a great deal from him about the art of diplomacy. He was a supremely skilled diplomat. Just watching him, going with him to meetings, seeing how he handled these encounters was fantastic. Because I was in charge of public affairs, I would sit in when he was being interviewed by someone from, say, "The New York Times," or one of the other influential media outlets in the United States. And again, I could see how skilled he was, how polished he was as a diplomat. So, for me that was a wonderful part of the experience. He was brilliant and he was wise; he had an extraordinary level of integrity.

We did very, very good things in terms of setting up a speaker program that Ambassador Kurtzer hosted at his residence. We recruited a series of extremely interesting people, people like Graham Allison who had been a senior official in the Pentagon and then had joined the Harvard faculty. We also had Robert Putnam, the Harvard professor who wrote "Bowling Alone," a very prescient analysis of the collapse of cohesion in small town America. But there were many others including writers and cultural figures. We had Supreme Court Justice Scalia; just a whole, enormous range of people for the speaker program and it was always very well attended. So, that for me was another rewarding part of the job. In fact, I would say everything about that job was very- was wonderful.

I did have a representational budget. I had a lovely house with a big garden and of course most of the year you can do things outdoors there. So, I would have buffets in the garden and was able to cultivate journalists and political figures and all kinds of interesting people. I also regularly hosted, at least every two or three weeks, a sit-down dinner in my dining room which was for 12 people. So, there was a tremendous amount of intellectual interaction. The conversations were always fascinating, whether they were about politics or economics or cultural values or global issues; always very, very interesting. I also got to know journalists at "Haaretz" newspaper, which is an outstanding world class paper; that was a great privilege. Friends from the BBC, Orla Guerin, or Steve Erlanger from "The New York Times," could meet with politicians and editors of the leading Israeli

publications in my home. Prominent writers such as Tom Segev sat at my table, as did Michael Oren, a Princeton graduate who later served as Israel's ambassador in Washington.

It was a rewarding experience in every way. Going back to the first point I made, the most important thing was organizing the meetings between Israelis and Palestinians. These were not conversations about the peace process, or about their political differences. Basically, we brought together people who were working on similar projects, including emergency medicine, water resources, agriculture, computer science, civil society, archaeology, and of course the big one was education. We particularly hoped to discourage the use of negative stereotypes in the textbooks. And these were very productive projects. For instance, we enabled Jewish Israelis to work with Muslim and Christian Arab Israelis on archaeological projects. That was something really remarkable and very important in terms of cohesion in the country. It enabled them to share in the discovery of both classical ancient and more recent Ottoman artifacts. So, it was really a fantastic tour.

*Q: In a way I would think that American knowledge, particularly at a place like "The New York Times" and all would be all over the place. In a way there's sort of a-American influence went on no matter what USIA and your operation did.*

FINN: Oh, I don't know about that. I think one of the most important things that our government ever did in terms of encouraging the goal of peace in the Middle East was to put together these Palestinians and Israelis. Nobody else was doing that and many people, many other people have written about this. Dennis Ross and others have endorsed the importance of people-to-people contact. This is the most important thing because when you have a conflict like this that is so profound, there is a tendency, on both sides, to demonize the other. But when people get together and talk about shared interests, and they work together cooperatively on a project, that does a tremendous amount to heal differences. And even during the worst times, when a bomb went off or some other terrible thing happened, the people in our projects stayed in touch with one another and did not give up hope. It was really quite extraordinary. So, I don't believe for a second, I don't agree with that, Stu, that it didn't make a difference. There is no question that "The New York Times," particularly with such an accomplished journalist as Steve Erlanger at the helm as bureau chief in Jerusalem, was key in enlightening readers around the world to all the nuances of the situation on the ground. However, the job of diplomats is different from that of the press. The press throws light on the complexities of the issues at hand. Diplomacy attempts to prevent and resolve conflict.

Another thing we did was to open up American Corners. You know, in the '90s, in preparation for consolidation with the State Department, we closed our cultural centers around the world. Now, one of the rare exceptions was the cultural center in Jerusalem. Thank goodness there was such an uproar that it was not closed. We had many fantastic programs there bringing together Jewish and Arab Israelis, particularly young people. It was a very, very important location. Our officer in Jerusalem, Cherrie Daniels, and her able senior staffer Linda Slutsky, organized extraordinary events in the center,

particularly for young people. But we also opened American Corners in other cities with the same idea. For instance, in Beersheba, south of Tel Aviv, we opened an American Corner. We opened one in Jaffa where the two communities live in close proximity. These again were places where the different communities could come together and experience cultural programs. We brought over the Battery Dance Company, the board of which I now chair, to work with young people from both communities and give joint performances. So, I don't agree at all with that.

*Q: No, I was just wondering about other aspects of public affairs -*

FINN: You mean in terms of the media? I think the importance of putting the ambassador together with "New York Times" and other major media was to make sure that our U.S. Government position was clearly stated. "The New York Times" even back then was read globally. We wanted to make sure that the U.S. position, the U.S. policy was clearly understood internationally I think that was a very important thing. And making sure that the ambassador was in touch with these top journalists, that was also very important. The ambassador had extensive regular contact with the Israeli media and that was important as well because it was a question of influencing and explaining our position, our policy to the people of Israel.

*Q: You know, one of the concerns, I think, of many Americans is that Israel seems to be headed towards or maybe it's already reached it, basically an apartheid system.*

FINN: Well, I know that this is much discussed on college campuses, but I would say that at the time when I was there, the decision was made to withdraw from Gaza and there was a period of some optimism about finding a solution, finding a way. Since then a lot of other things have happened; the Iraq war had a negative impact on the peace process. The Arab Spring was a short and hopeful moment, but followed by a great deal of chaos all across North Africa. So, the Middle East is now in a state of turmoil. Just look at Syria. That war's been going on for years; it's an unbelievably horrible situation. So, given the fact that there is so much instability in these neighboring Arab countries, I don't find it so surprising that Israel has become much more conservative in its approach to dealing with them. I think that's a natural result of the fact that Israel is surrounded by instability. Just imagine if things were peaceful, if economic prosperity was improving in the neighboring Arab countries, that would create a situation in which it would be more possible for the Israelis to relax a bit and say okay, we can start to try to negotiate a real peace.

*Q: How about the Gaza Strip? Did that fall under your-?*

FINN: Actually, yes. When I was at the embassy, one member of my staff was responsible for contacts with Gaza. Actually, this is a tragic story. I was supposed to go with him to meet with the presidents of the three universities in Gaza about the Fulbright program. This was only shortly after I arrived in the country. At that time, we were making regular trips into Gaza every few weeks along with other embassy colleagues. I was schedule to go with our Gaza officer on one of these trips. My secretary and I

discovered that I was inadvertently double-booked, and that I was supposed to be in Nazareth that day. So, I said okay, since this convoy goes every two weeks, I'll go to Nazareth, that's a one-time appointment, and then I'll go two weeks from now to visit Gaza and hold meetings with the universities then. So, I was in Nazareth, and I was sitting there in a meeting when my phone rang and it was my colleague, our Gaza officer. I said, I'm in a meeting, may I call you back; he said no, no, you don't understand. The convoy has been attacked. The security people had changed the order of the vehicles which was a common practice in Israel. It must actually have been the intention of those who launched the attack to strike the car with the diplomats. Instead, three security people were killed. Needless to say, my colleague was terribly shaken. Indeed, the entire embassy was shaken by this event. A plaque with their names was later placed on the wall of the embassy entrance so that all would see it and remember them.

*Q: Whoa.*

FINN: Yes, yes. It was quite tragic, and it also just makes you think, but for the grace of god, you know. It was a heartbreaking thing. The embassy, the people in the embassy were terribly, terribly upset because the security people used to come to the cafeteria, have lunch with people. They were contractors; everybody knew them; it was quite a tragedy.

*Q: Well what, I mean, what purpose was this, the attack?*

FINN: The attack? Oh, it was a terrorist attack. Extremists on both sides do not want efforts at peace. The extremists on both sides, and this is generally true for conflicts, extremists on both sides don't want the moderates to make the compromises necessary to achieve peace. That's always the case. Because they want a zero-sum game. Obviously, they didn't like the idea that we at the embassy were giving support to the professors at the university and encouraging people to apply for Fulbright scholarships. They didn't want that.

*Q: How about internally within Israel itself, excluding Gaza and the West Bank, did we have special programs dealing with the Arab-Israelis?*

FINN: Yes. We did. In every country we tried to reach out to all segments, to the whole population. Of course, we had dealings with Arab Israelis. I knew quite a few Arab-Israelis. In fact, one of the most impressive Arab-Israelis was the chief justice in the high court in Nazareth. He came from one of the old Christian families that had been there since goodness knows when. They may have been in Nazareth since Biblical times. He was very impressive, a man of great tolerance. He was the chief justice. The other justices were both Arabs and Jews, and he oversaw them all. So, yes, but that's just one example. There was a school, in fact, a whole community of Jews and Israeli-Arabs who lived together outside Jerusalem in a place called Neve Shalom. We had contacts with all these people. There were some Arab-Israelis who were professors at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem so yes, we knew these people; we were in touch with everybody.

*Q: Did you have any feeling, pressure from the Israeli government on your reaching out to the Arab community?*

FINN: No. No. No. No problems whatsoever.

*Q: Did your program feel any pressures or problems with the Jewish community in the United States?*

FINN: Well, because I was doing public diplomacy, my main responsibility was to deal with the people of Israel, be they Jewish, Arab or something else. So, that was my job. Of course, we had endless congressional delegations. Israel and Turkey are the two countries where I experienced the highest volume of visitors, of senators and congressmen visiting the country. And so, a lot of our time was taken up with that. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice came many times as well. We all moved to Jerusalem to provide support for these visits. So, we were very occupied with all of that

*Q: I was wondering whether you had complaints or problems-*

FINN: As for American groups, usually someone else from the embassy would brief the visiting American delegations. I was asked to do it once in a while if somebody else was not available because talking to Americans was not really my job. But I did gladly do it and it depended on the group. Some groups were very interested in peacemaking, other groups were much more interested in moving the capital to Jerusalem, so it just depended. And I just was always very nice to them and I said look, this is our policy, the capital is in Tel Aviv; that's the policy. Moving the capital to Jerusalem will be part of the final peace deal.

*Q: How did you find your American staff?*

FINN: Oh, you mean my Foreign Service American colleagues?

*Q: Yes.*

FINN: Oh, they were good. They were good. They were public diplomacy officers and they were good and hardworking and very imaginative. In USIA, the national staff, the FSN, Foreign Service National staff is incredibly important as well.

*Q: Oh god, yes.*

FINN: They were fabulous. They were just great. One of the finest offers I ever had the privilege to supervise was Cherrie Daniels who headed the American Cultural Center in Jerusalem. She was actually a political officer who had previously worked for my husband in Zagreb. Cherrie was brilliant and extremely hard working. But I had some very fine officers work for me in Tel Aviv as well. Paul Patin, the press officer, was outstanding, as were several others.

*Q: Well, let's talk about the Israel national staff. Any particular people you'd like to single out?*

FINN: Oh, there were so many who were so good. I don't think there was a lemon in the lot. First of all, my personal assistant, Ruth Melamed, was really a very brilliant, refined lady who spoke many languages, a very impressive person. The senior FSN in the press office, Ya'el, is just retiring now. She was knowledgeable, and well-connected with the local press. She came along in the mornings when we'd do the briefing with the ambassador. She participated, she was really the one who briefed us all on what were the highlights from the local press. And there were so many others. They were all wonderful, really. On the cultural side Ann Walter, who was from Canada, was fantastic. Also, from Canada was Linda Slutsky at the American Center in Jerusalem. I mean, they were just fantastic. And another outstanding person was Jacob Schwartz who oversaw the financial administration of the Wye River grants. He was so good that he was called to Washington to train administrative staff from the NIS (Newly Independent States) on grant management. Matty Stern, the photographer, also oversaw all the technological equipment. He was instrumental in making it possible for us to host many digital video conferences from our office. There were government officials, academics, journalists, writers and others who were unable to make a trip to Tel Aviv. Instead, we invited our audience to engage in dialogue with them from our conference room. Yes, they were all great, the Israeli staff. Many of them stay in touch with me.

*Q: How would you describe the media in Israel?*

FINN: Well, the leading newspaper, "Haaretz," is a world class paper. But there were a number of other very good papers. And of course, there was "The Jerusalem Post" in the English language, which is read internationally. At that point Brett Stevens was the editor. He went on then to "The Wall Street Journal" and now he's with "The New York Times," a very, very intelligent guy, incredibly well-read. So, it was a pleasure, really, dealing with the media. And of course, I had a press officer who was doing the day-to-day media contact, press releases and so on because I was overseeing both the press and the cultural offices as the counselor for public affairs. But in Israel, as in Turkey, just about everywhere, you have some elements of the media that are sensational and exaggerated, or that swing to extremes but overall, I have to say there were some very, high quality, reputable media outlets, as well as some very good journalists in Israel.

*Q: What about on cultural events; what things- what were the ones you got sort of the greatest feedback from?*

FINN: Well, I mentioned the speaker series at the ambassador's residence; that was hugely successful. But we also did a big concert in Jerusalem with Leon Botstein, who's the president of Bard College and a famous conductor. We did all kinds of literary events. And also, let me say on the cultural side, not every writer can travel to Israel. We used our wonderful digital video conferencing capability. We would invite faculty and students from the universities to engage in direct conversation with American writers and other experts like the novelist Richard Ford. I also had digital video conferencing

capability in my home. We did conversations with Washington on security and foreign policy topics. We would have a panel set up in Washington and a panel set up in my home, and then an audience in my home as well. These discussions were very popular. Overall, some of our programs were cultural, some were more on the press or political side, but basically it was an extremely active mission.

*Q: What about movies?*

FINN: Oh, I showed movies, yes. With the advent of DVDs, people weren't coming in to see movies in the way they did when I first started. When I first started in Ankara we used to show movies in the USIS facility and people were eager to come to them because in those days in Turkey there were very few cinemas, and if they had any foreign films, they were often really terrible films that they got very cheaply. They could not afford the big films. So, that was a big thing, to go to a movie. It wasn't as much the case by the time I got to Tel Aviv, but I did have the capacity to show films in my home. I would invite people over for an evening to watch an old American film or a documentary and then to discuss it over a buffet dinner. That was always a very nice way to entertain.

*Q: Did you find when you were entertaining at home, I assume that you would have a mixed group of both Jewish and Arab-Israelis.*

FINN: Well, at any major event, yes, of course. At a smaller event it would depend. I did different kinds of things. I did events in my home, for instance, for the Russian Jewish community with a focus just on them. So, it depended on the event, what the focus was. But for any larger event obviously people of all stripes were invited. My garden was enormous and I sometimes was able to have forty or fifty people for a reception there. I do recall that the judge from Nazareth, for the first time, met one of the leading Palestinian academics from Jerusalem in my home at one of these events.

*Q: How did you feel about the absorption or non-absorption of the Arabs in Israel?*

FINN: I think it's a long-term project. I worked in several countries that had minorities, significant minorities, and so it's always a long-term project. But I did see very positive signs in the sense that there were people of Arab background who were assuming academic positions or serving as judges and justices, and as doctors. So, this was something that was happening gradually. Yes, it's true that some of the Arab communities are not up to par in terms of education, but I felt at least- I was there from 2003 to 2007 – that there was hope for the future. During the period I was there, the overall sense I had was that things were getting better. I think the Iraq war upset the entire region, and I can't say -- I left in 2007 to go to Berlin -- I can't say that this is the case today, but during that period yes, it was a time when things seemed to be getting better. The repercussions of that war reverberated throughout the region. Initially, it seemed that things were going to go well, but the longer time went on things got worse and worse. I remember that Colin Powell is supposed to have said that if you break something, you own it. There was a reluctance to recognize that after we invaded Iraq, it would be necessary to quickly restore the infrastructure and do real democracy education.

The administration that started this “war of choice” was at the same time unwilling to accept the necessity of nation building.

*Q: Were you there when- I can't remember the timing but when scud missiles were coming in? That was earlier, wasn't it?*

FINN: Yes. Scud missiles were a constant threat, but there were so many incidents of every sort all the time.

*Q: Well now, did you have to take precautions or was it a problem, the threat of terrorism as you went about your business?*

FINN: Oh, of course. I met people for lunch in restaurants that had been blown up. Yes, bad things happened. Bad things happened and that's why we had to travel in official cars and we weren't allowed to take public transport, meaning buses, and then later even the train was banned. People had been taking the train that went between Tel Aviv and Haifa, but even that, we were told not to do anymore. So, yes, there were precautions taken and also, we had to do the usual things you do in a dangerous situation -- vary your schedule, don't leave the house at exactly the same time every day; all these things you learn in security training.

*Q: Well now, what about the West Bank?*

FINN: Yes?

*Q: Was that within your purview?*

FINN: No, no. The West Bank- the consulate in Jerusalem dealt with Arab East Jerusalem and the West Bank and we dealt with Israel. I went once, again in a convoy, only once, to the West Bank, and for a very brief stop and that was it. We had a visitor who had to be escorted. We heard briefings from several Palestinian think tanks. And I went another time to visit friends in the West Bank, but it was really complicated to do that.

*Q: Did you get involved in debates or situations concerning the settlement in the West Bank?*

FINN: No, not really. With Israelis about it?

*Q: Yes.*

FINN: Everyone talked about it all the time. If I had a dinner, everyone talked very openly about everything all the time. I have to say that Israelis are extremely forthright. It struck me that there were almost no secrets in that country. Everything came to be known and talked about almost immediately. And what people thought about it depended upon their political leanings. Very conservative Israelis thought settlement expansion was a



good thing, but I knew other Israelis who were very dedicated to the Oslo Accords. They were peace activists. They were opposed to it. I knew people with the whole range of opinions. They debated these topics in my home at my dinner table.

*Q: I'm told that an assignment to Jerusalem can be absolutely both exhilarating but exhausting.*

FINN: Well, I think that's true, yes. An assignment to Jerusalem, or an assignment to Tel Aviv, could be very demanding. I would say it's true because people there are living at a high level of stress and tension, but also there's extraordinary creativity. Israel is now a tech center; it's a world class technology center. Also, it's a world class cultural center, especially because the Russians came in. They make the joke about the only guy getting off the plane from Moscow who wasn't carrying a violin was the pianist. They put on spectacular theatrical productions. I recall seeing Bertolt Brecht's "Mother Courage" and other plays put on by the Russians. They would perform in Russian with Hebrew and English titles. They were also active in the fields of dance and music. They made a huge contribution to the cultural life of the city of Tel Aviv.

*Q: I assume that you might say personal life was completely- your job completely absorbed your personal life, didn't it?*

FINN: Well, my husband also was a Foreign Service Officer and in the early days we were assigned together. But by the time I was in Tel Aviv, he was our ambassador in Tajikistan. Then he became ambassador in Afghanistan. So, he came for visits. At Christmastime he would be there, and our son would come home from school; he was in college by then, at Princeton, so we would all be together at the Christmas holiday. But basically, I was able to work around the clock because I didn't have family there. My son was grown up and away in college.

*Q: Where did you son go to boarding school?*

FINN: He went to Groton in Massachusetts and then he went to Princeton.

*Q: Oh, yes. What did he think of- how did the Foreign Service fit him?*

FINN: He was overseas until he was nine in Turkey and Pakistan. Then I got transferred back and he went to St. Albans School in Washington. And that was a bigger adjustment than going to another foreign country because he realized that the other kids were not interested in foreign countries and only interested in their own little world. And he just had to adapt to that, but he did very well. He was always a wonderful student. So, he did adapt. He saw that that's what he had to do. After St. Albans, he came out to Frankfurt with me for one year, but then he was accepted at Groton. And he was very serious about his studies; he wanted to go somewhere where he could concentrate on his studies for five years without interruption and Groton is really the most wonderful place in the world.

*Q: Oh, yes. I know my children had the same thing; going to school in the States was the big adjustment. The international schools, that was their life.*

FINN: Right, right. I think it's hard for grown-ups, too; it's harder to come home than it is to go someplace new because when you come home, you feel a stranger in your own country. Especially with the rapid changes in technology. I first saw this when I was in Pakistan many years ago. I had never heard of a fax machine. Milo Beach, the distinguished art historian came out and asked me to fax something to the Smithsonian. I had no idea what he was talking about. When I came back, there were fax machines and computers everywhere. People were moving on from electric typewriters. These changes have occurred with increased rapidity. So, you come back, and all of a sudden you go to the supermarket and the clerk is scanning the groceries. Particularly, if you are returning from a posting in the developing world. These things might not yet have made an appearance.

*Q: Did you find you had problems with American Jews who felt that we weren't doing enough for the Israeli cause?*

FINN: No. I have to say that the Americans had diverse opinions. Their views and their reasons for visiting were as diverse as those of the Israelis themselves. You had people on the left who were interested in peace and reconciliation; you had people on the right who were much more worried about security and terror threats. There were people who just wanted a better understanding of the country. It was a broad spectrum; it was a very broad spectrum. Now, in terms of having trouble with people, no, absolutely not.

*Q: How did you find the universities?*

FINN: The universities are world class. The Hebrew University in Jerusalem is a wonderful institution; so is Tel Aviv University. And those are the two I had the most contact with. There were very fine scholars in many, many different fields. These are very, very impressive institutions. I met academics at Hebrew University with a great depth of knowledge about Iran and the Arab world, for example. At Tel Aviv University, there were academics who pursued the study of the U.S., among many other things. I had many friends in the academic community.

*Q: Is there any other area that we haven't covered? What came next?*

FINN: After Tel Aviv I went to Berlin.

#### *Next Session*

*Q: Tell me how Germany had changed since your earlier assignment.*

FINN: Well, since I was responsible for our countrywide public affairs outreach as the Minister-Counselor, I paid considerable attention to the media. One of the things I noticed immediately was that there were many more people appearing in the television

news broadcasts and situation comedies of immigrant background. This was evident in the television shows meant for the mass audience. So, that was a significant shift. There seemed to be a growing consciousness that these people were also part of the society.

*Q: Well, it's pretty remarkable to me. What about- what was the feeling that you were getting towards Russia? I mean, was Russia-*

FINN: Germans have a very complicated relationship with Russia. Germany is not by any means self-sufficient in energy. It almost depleted its coal supplies a long time ago, so what remains is lignite, the lowest grade of coal. Lignite is very polluting. People are very interested in having a clean, healthy environment. So, they're very dependent upon the Russians for gas, particularly since they began shutting down the nuclear plants. As for the Russians, even in times of political tension, Russia has never failed to deliver. Russia has held other countries like Ukraine hostage. If the Ukrainians don't do what they want, they cut off the supplies and people freeze to death in the winter. They've never done that to Germany because just as Germany needs the gas, they need the Germans' money. So, it's a two-way street. It's a balanced relationship in that respect. Having said that, there is a great deal of difference of opinion in German society about the role of Russia. There are those people who strongly condemn what they did in annexing Crimea, and certainly their involvement in instigating the problems in Ukraine, their aggressive attitude in the Baltics; there are people who severely condemn these things and are strongly opposed to these Russian actions. These people are very supportive of NATO. And then there are others who are businesspeople who have ties in Russia who say oh, no, no, we have to have a better relationship with the Russians; we really have to work with them; we have to understand them, we have to give them a little leverage. So, you've really got a very broad range of opinion there.

*Q: Did we have any- did we just keep out of the Russian-German relationship in your job, you might say?*

FINN: We had programs on everything, but our job in public diplomacy was to explain and promote U.S. policy. So, the speakers we had, whether they were academic experts or think tank people, or government officials would be basically explaining U.S. policy. Of course, if we had an academic or a scholar who was an expert on Russia, that might be a much more in-depth look at Russian history and why Russians behave a certain way. For example, we hosted a meeting in the magnificent Quadriga Room of the embassy for Angela Stent, a leading scholar of Russian history at Georgetown University. We also had Strobe Talbott come and talk at the American Academy. He too is someone who knows Russia well; he went there many times; he's been a lifelong expert on Russia who went there many times with Madeleine Albright. And he gave his point of view on what our relationship with Russia should be. He could speak to American policy issues. Of course, it must be remembered that things are different now from how they were between 2007 and '10 when I was there. The situation is much, much worse than it was then.

*Q: God, yes.*

FINN: In the United States, we have government policy, but then we also have a very wide range of views among academics. And in public diplomacy, especially in a highly educated advanced society like Germany, we don't just present the policy views because people know them; they know the policy papers; they know what the government positions are. We clarify them, we distribute them, we explain them, we discuss them, but they're really curious about talking with people who might have a different angle, a different perspective, or a depth of historic knowledge. So, we also would do programs like that. Academics always have a wider range of views on things.

*Q: Well, how did you feel, by this time USIA had disappeared, right?*

FINN: Yes, right.

*Q: Did this inhibit you or what was your impression?*

FINN: I'm someone who improvises and adapts to circumstances. So, we moved into the new embassy on Pariser Platz in Berlin, a beautiful building. Unfortunately, we had closed the America Houses. Since they were historic buildings, some of them were transformed for other useful purposes. They're reminders of the past, buildings that are preserved, and still have a sign on them, but they don't belong to the American government anymore. And I find that a little problematic because people often think they do, and they are not being maintained, so they don't look the way I'd like to see them looking, but that's another whole issue.

When I saw the plans for the new embassy I realized that since we didn't have an America House anymore, we were going to need space for public diplomacy in the embassy. We needed a space where we were going to invite an audience to hear a speaker, where could we invite students from the universities, or the high schools to a discussion, a panel discussion or a program of some kind. We didn't have that. And so, I talked to the ambassador and explained to him how important this was and also that we had to have easier access for these public events. The access to the embassy involved screening and parting with your passport, being escorted, and even then, you could still only go to certain parts of the embassy if you were an outsider. If you went into the part of the embassy where the ambassador and the DCM were, even we had to give up our cell phones. You're familiar, I'm sure, with all of this. So, basically, I said of course we have to have security, but we have to have a venue for public programs. The ambassador agreed, so, they did a redesign and they created a space which would be used by us, but could be used by other embassy elements if they so wished. Guests went through security, but it wasn't as elaborate; they didn't have to hand in their passports. They came in, they went through security, and they went into a room that was on one side of the embassy and there we could have all kinds of interesting discussions and programs and I was very pleased with that solution. It was a very good thing that the ambassador did.

*Q: Did you feel- I came into the Foreign Service in 1955 and we covered the country like a blanket as far as-*

FINN: Yes, yes.

*Q: -you know, all these things and all. I mean, this was a tremendous effort. But I have now a feeling that Germany has sort of faded from- well, if nothing else tourist importance. I mean, people go to the south of France or to Italy and all; you're not getting-*

FINN: Stu, we have a very serious problem. We have an incredibly, terribly serious problem. Germany is a country of the utmost importance to the U.S. It is our most important partner in Europe. It is the powerhouse of Europe. It is a country that upholds our values. Of course, globalization is a factor in the diminished attention to Germany and the rest of Europe. The other factor, is that since the Dayton Accords were signed and we brought peace to the Balkans, there have been no fires to put out. I am thinking now of the countries of the EU. Russia is another story.

For instance, as far as globalization is concerned, I was the chair of the Fulbright program. In the past, all the students wanted to go to America. Now, they're going all over the place, but they're also going more to other parts of Europe, there's no question, and Canada. In recent months, I think the situation has become even more extreme. Having said that, there was always a positive feeling about the United States. Yes, there were periods when there were protests about things President Reagan did, but overall there was still the idea yes, America is where we want to go. We want to visit America whether as tourists or students or professionals. If you look at the Pew Report, it's a very shocking thing to see that the most negative views of the United States of all Europeans are in Germany. The United States has gone down to a very low percentage approval rating. There's a recent article in "Foreign Affairs" I'll send you.

*Q: Oh yes, I'd like that.*

FINN: Now, having said that, let me say something else that I thought was very revealing about the intensity and the trust level of the German-American relationship. When I was there, we still had summer seminars for German high school teachers. I do not know of any country in the world that would allow our embassy to be giving summer classes about American history to high school teachers so that they could then go and teach these things to their students, whether it was the American Revolution or the Constitution or the Civil War; all of these things were covered. And it was an extraordinary outreach to young people throughout Germany through their own teachers. This does not replace the America Houses, but it is still very significant.

*Q: During the time you were in Germany this time, in Berlin, was this still going on or is this a manifestation of present day politics? In other words-*

FINN: Negative feeling about the United States?

*Q: Yes.*

FINN: No. No. In the previous (Obama) administration, the approval rating was much, much higher than it is today.

*Q: \_\_Really?*

FINN: A lot has to do with the current bellicosity, the intention to withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord, wanting to withdraw from the Iran Nuclear Agreement, wanting not to pursue the T-TIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership). There are so many areas where there is profound disagreement. During the Obama years, there was profound agreement.

*Q: It's such a difficult time now. And in a way, it's beyond our world history brief. Let's stick to the time you were there.*

FINN: Okay. In terms of functioning without USIA, I was able to do that because the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs remained intact. Now it's being decimated, but it remained intact. We had a Fulbright program in Germany; when I was there, it was the largest in the world. It had many, many different kinds of subdivisions and different kinds of grants. It was fantastic. And there were many other German-American very successful exchange programs. That was all going strong. We also had the International Visitor Program. The Congress-Bundestag Exchange is another fantastic thing. What I didn't have was support for cultural outreach that I had in the earlier days. When USIA was absorbed into the State Department, the division called Arts America was reduced from over one hundred staffers working on public-private partnerships to send the best American performers abroad to just two or three people. This all happened because Washington bought into the idea that the collapse of the Soviet Union was "the end of history," and that we no longer had to tell our story through the arts. Experts who write about public and cultural diplomacy know that when it comes to reaching hearts as well as minds, there is no more effective means than cultural communication. Overt messaging can be useful in some circumstances, but subliminal messaging is infinitely more powerful. As a result of this mistaken thinking, that was the end of sending out cultural programs, performing artists, theatrical groups, musical groups, exhibitions; that was all closed down. In spite of this, I was able to do some good things. For example, I was able to work with a friend in New York who was on the board of Alvin Ailey, and we organized an Alvin Ailey tour of Germany and other countries in Europe. It opened spectacularly in Berlin; it was incredibly fantastic. Ambassador Murphy was there with his lovely family. Everyone who was anyone came to the opening. The phone rang off the hook with people who wanted to be invited. It was at the Deutsche Oper, a huge theater and just an incredible event. But those things took a lot of extra time and planning. There wasn't the infrastructure that had been there before. We didn't have the back-up in Washington that we used to have. Nevertheless, we made it happen.

*Q: People who may be reading this later on, Alvin Ailey will not ring a particular bell. Could you explain?*

FINN: Okay. Alvin Ailey is important because it was the leading predominantly African-American dance group. It is a major African-American dance group doing modern dance, founded by someone called Alvin Ailey. The German audience was wildly enthusiastic. It was a great success in every respect.

*Q: Yes. How about racism? I mean, not nationality, but just plain, ordinary racism.*

FINN: There were neo-Nazis in Dresden and in other cities. It's interesting that you find that there's more racism in places that have fewer people of other races or other backgrounds, or other religions. I think that's always the case. The people in the big cities where there were various minorities were by and large not racist. But there were neighborhoods in Berlin, in East Berlin, for instance, there were neighborhoods with neo-Nazis. And even in the western cities, there were some remote small towns that had this problem. But in terms of racism, I think Germans had really moved beyond that. And I think one of the best and most convincing examples is the enormous affection they felt for President Obama. That was not because of nor in spite of his race; it was simply because they believed in him. But race was not an obstacle to their feeling tremendous attraction to him.

*Q: What programs did you get particularly involved in in reaching out?*

FINN: Well, I was pretty busy because I was chairing two major programs, the Fulbright Commission, which is enormous, and then a smaller journalism exchange called RIAS, which means Radio in the American Sector. When the Berlin Wall went up, RIAS was broadcasting radio from the American Sector into East Germany. When the Wall came down, there was no need for that anymore so it was turned into a journalism exchange. So, I was busy with those things.

I was also busy overseeing all public diplomacy press, educational and cultural activities not just in Berlin, but at the five consulates because I had public diplomacy American officers and German staff at the consulates as well. I had very good relations with all the consuls general because I was providing the programs, the projects, the funding for the things they were doing. Their immediate supervisors were these consuls general and they were all great people. It was wonderful working with them.

*Q: Well, did you find any difference between the audiences in the different Länder?*

FINN: Yes. Of course, there are big differences. Germany is not large compared to the U.S., but by European standards, it is a very large country. Yes, the different German states, the different Länder, have different characters, personalities. It depended on the kind of program. If you do a foreign affairs or international relations or a security program, you'll have experts in all of those major cities, whether it's Munich or Stuttgart or Berlin or Hamburg or Leipzig; it doesn't really matter, these experts will be present. They'll know one another, or they'll know what the topics are, and so those audiences wouldn't be different, although they might have slightly different concerns. And then, in terms of cultural programs, you know, when we closed down the America Houses, some

of the cities decided, Heidelberg is a good example, they decided to carry on. And when I was there, there were six or seven of them and I gave them modest funding to enable them to raise further funds locally. If they had funding from the embassy, it would help them raise other money. It gave them the seal of approval, so to speak. But they had money from the cities, and they also had money from private sector contributions. And they had wonderful programs too; they were very active. So, Germans themselves carried on what had been these America Houses, not in every case, but in certain cities, yes. It was really rather touching that when we discontinued our support, the German taxpayers were willing to underwrite these endeavors locally.

*Q: What about the press? What was your impression?*

FINN: Well, I had served in countries where the press could be highly sensational and irresponsible, so the German press was a pleasure to work with. I was very fortunate in having, during the three years I was in Berlin, two superb press officers who knew what they were doing, as well as good deputy press officers. We continued to do all the things that USIA always used to do - sending in the daily press summaries and the daily opinion summaries to Washington, and that's very important work, keeping Washington informed of what's going on. We also set up a lot of press conferences because we would often have visiting dignitaries from the government in town. Attorney General Eric Holder and other senior officials would come to Berlin. We might do something with them at the American Academy, or we might do something downtown. Ambassador Holbrooke came through a number of times while he was working on Af-Pak (Afghanistan-Pakistan) to brief the German press. We had a very good press response. I found it was very smooth working with the German press. They were reputable and responsible and there were many excellent journalists. I stayed in touch with my friends from Frankfurt days in the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung," but there were also terrific people at "Tagesspiegel" in Berlin. We invited the leading anchor of the ARD television station and the editor of the magazine "Der Spiegel," two leaders in the media, for luncheon meetings in the Quadriga room at the embassy. We hosted luncheon discussions for other television anchors at the Adlon Hotel next door.

*Q: Do you feel that events in the United States were for the most part treated objectively and all?*

FINN: Yes. There are some German journalists who know the United States extremely well, and can interpret what's going on there for their local readership. And of course, some publications, like "Der Spiegel," or the "Süddeutsche Zeitung" or the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" are read across German-speaking Europe and beyond. "Handelsblatt," the business newspaper, is now sending out daily summaries in English so they're expanding their readership well beyond even German-speaking Europe. So, yes, the German press is very, very reasonable, rational and a pleasure to deal with.

*Q: What was your impression of our Fulbright program?*



FINN: Oh, it was incredibly impressive. Stu, I had seen the best. I've been in countries like Israel that had a fantastic Fulbright program. Turkey and Pakistan had fantastic Fulbright programs. I've served in countries that were strategically important to the U.S. They had strong Fulbright programs supported by the Congress. But the German program was just something beyond all imagining. And one reason for that was that the Germans cared about it so much that they were giving something between a 70 and 80 percent contribution to keep it going.

*Q: From the German perspective what was in it for them?*

FINN: Because Germans, especially the older generation of Germans, the people who grew up after World War II remember what happened in Germany. They remember the economic miracle, remember how Germany pulled itself up by its bootstraps, but with a lot of help and encouragement from the United States. Germans wanted to keep those ties strong. They were motivated to support Fulbright as the premiere academic exchange program. They also strongly supported the Congress-Bundestag program which enables young Germans to work in our Congress and young Americans to work in the Bundestag. No, these are really, really outstanding, important programs with enormous German support. Tragically, I think people on our side sometimes don't see how important these things are.

*Q: Yes, this is something that concerns me, that we say well, we've done that and let's move on to something else.*

FINN: No, no, no, no. Well, the Fulbright program is one of the greatest assets of the State Department. It has enormous support across the United States. Believe me, if someone tried to close down the Fulbright program, the president of every major university, every distinguished university in the United States of America would be immediately up in arms. No, it's something that is valued in the United States by the academics; it's just that sometimes elected officials in Washington don't appreciate it.

*Q: Yes. Did you find you had a problem with, say, congressional visitors? Did they understand-*

FINN: No, no. We did have congressional visitors, but visits to Germany were short, businesslike, well-organized. Where the embassies were inundated, the embassies I was in that were inundated with visitors were Israel and Turkey. Those were different situations. We had delegations coming and going all the time and they did occupy an enormous amount of embassy time, but it was a good cause to help our elected officials have a better understanding of our interests in those countries. That was just the reality of the situation. But no, in Germany I never felt that we had too many to handle. In Israel it was more difficult because the Israeli Knesset was in Jerusalem and we were in Tel Aviv. We were constantly racing to Jerusalem to take care of these groups.

*Q: I was just running out of questions although I find the subject-*

FINN: Well, that's okay. In terms of Germany, I would sum up by saying that it is such an important country, and it is a country that has absorbed all our most dearly held values. I think that to allow the situation to deteriorate as it has in recent months is very, very disturbing. I'm hoping that it can be rectified because I think there are still a few wise people around who might help. I see a lot of damage control going on, but it is an uphill battle.

*Q: It's a very difficult period.*

FINN: Yes. But when I was there, it was a very different set of circumstances. I happened to be there in the Obama years and that was a wonderful time. Oh, and the ambassador who replaced Ambassador Timken, the Obama political appointee, Ambassador Phil Murphy, was superb, just absolutely outstanding, and so was his wife Tammy and his whole family. He was extraordinary in terms of the outreach he did all over the country - town halls, meetings with students, art exhibits in their home; I mean, you name it. He and Tammy hosted the most wonderful dinners with leaders from every field imaginable. I would find myself sitting across from Henry Kissinger, one evening and the editor of "Der Spiegel" the next. The most distinguished people in Germany and the United States were at his table. He and Tammy were masterful hosts. And he's running now for governor of New Jersey so let's wish him luck. But what a great guy.

*Q: What was his background?*

FINN: He grew up in the Boston area and won a scholarship to Harvard. After that, he went to the Wharton School. Later, at Goldman Sachs, he rose to be the president. He is all around very impressive. He left Goldman Sachs to work for the Democratic Party. So, he had left Goldman Sachs quite a few years before he became ambassador to Germany.

*Q: How did you find social life there?*

FINN: Well, I am by nature very gregarious. Perhaps this is because I come from a very big family. Furthermore, interacting with the people of whatever country I happened to be posted to was an important part of my job. The person in charge of public diplomacy at one of our embassies is someone who's invited to many conferences, meetings, and briefings, as well as dinners and receptions. I attended many events at the American Academy, and I had a wide circle of friends. Friends from my earlier tour in Frankfurt stayed in touch and I made lots of new friends in Berlin. I had a beautiful home in Dahlem-Zehlendorf. It was really a gorgeous home intended for representational use. It was a huge house with five bedrooms, each with its own separate bathroom. It had three salons, and a baby grand piano. So, I was able to do the most wonderful entertaining. There was a huge garden that had many beautiful fruit trees in it and a little pond. It was absolutely exquisite. And I was able to entertain people from political, economic, academic, media, business, and the arts - all sectors of the society. In summer, I could entertain outdoors; in winter, I had lots of space to accommodate guest indoors. I also enjoyed being able to invite my staff for lunch or dinner. When the actor Frank Langella

came to Berlin for example, I had him do a speech at the American Academy and I gave a party in his honor at my home as well.

*Q: I was just thinking, should we have one more session on what you've been doing?*

FINN: I concluded my diplomatic career in Berlin on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010. I flew to New York the next day, and on September 7<sup>th</sup> just a few days later, I started the job I'm in now.

### *Final Session*

*Q: So, where are we?*

FINN: So, we were just going to do a quick wrap-up today.

*Q: Yes.*

FINN: You want to talk about what I've done since I left the Foreign Service, I guess.

*Q: Yes, well, okay. When did you retire and then what did you start doing?*

FINN: Well, I left in 2010 and I joined the American Council on Germany as the vice president and director of programs. And I've been here for seven years and, in fact, I am going to make it exactly seven years because I'm going to be stepping down very soon. I'm planning to go back into academia. I am going to be at Columbia University as a visiting scholar. It's been a wonderful seven years here. I've really enjoyed working on German-American transatlantic relations. It's been fantastic, but it is time to move on. I joke sometimes that this has been my longest posting!

*Q: Alright. What does your organization do?*

FINN: Well, basically it does what in the State Department we would call exchange programs. We have a young leader program. The other vice president works on that. And we have study tours. I led altogether 10 study tours to Germany on topics like immigration or climate change. Germans are very, very involved, of course, in developing new technology, clean energy technology; it is a great interest of theirs. I organized many conferences on transatlantic relations, both here and in Europe. Working with a German foundation, I organized three successive conferences in Warsaw, Brussels and Washington dealing with the Euro crisis. Most importantly, I oversee 21 Warburg chapters. Eric Warburg was one of our founders so these 21 chapters are named after him. I identify German experts and invite them to tour the chapters, so this is essentially a speaker program. I send these Germans around the country, around the United States on speaking tours.

*Q: Alright. Well, could you talk a bit about the receptivity and how this works within the United States? Because, in a way Germany at one point, you know, all our focus was on Germany right after the war.*

FINN: Of course.

*Q: But over the years I have a feeling there's been a tremendous falling off.*

FINN: Right. Well, basically we did have an enormous investment in Germany throughout the Cold War. No question. And we also had the Marshall Plan right after the war because much of Germany had been reduced to rubble. You know a great deal of this because you were there, too, and much earlier than I was. So, this was the atmosphere of the Cold War. Germany was seen as a frontline state. East Germany had fallen into the hands of the communists. And so, it was very, very important to us to support Germany. Once the Cold War ended, and Germany was united, things changed and we did begin to invest. The drawdown of U.S. presence after the Cold war ended was gradual. It was a military drawdown, although our diplomatic presence was also reduced. You are right that we did begin to move out of Germany. Many felt that Germany had become both completely democratic and remarkably prosperous. It was a success story. Germans demonstrate their democratic values all the time. Many observed that it is a very highly democratic country, and we should focus our attention elsewhere in the world. However, in recent times, because of the rise of Mr. Putin, Germany is again coming back into focus.

In the '90s when we consolidated USIA into the State Department, we closed our cultural centers around the world, including those in Germany. However, due to German efforts, some of them survived because the German citizens of those cities decided to support these centers to keep them going. In some cities, Heidelberg, for example, or Cologne or Kiel and others, the local people, the local taxpayers, and the mayor decided they wanted to keep the centers, so they became local binational German-American centers funded entirely by the Germans. They did very well, actually, but it wasn't quite the same as having cultural centers run by American officers who had support from Washington. That's pretty much what happened, and now there's no hope of bringing any of that back. However, I think that at some levels of government, there is much more attention to Germany. There are those who understand that Germany and France together are holding the European Union together. So, this is really important especially with the Brexit; that's had a devastating impact, and I think it's ultimately going to be quite hard on the British people. I think they made a serious mistake, but we'll see how it works out.

*Q: How have you responded with your work to this evolving, changing situation?*

FINN: Well, we did many programs on all issues in the transatlantic partnership. For example, Germany took in an enormous number of refugees. This was quite extraordinary. The other countries of Europe did not respond when these poor people were fleeing Syria and Iraq, but Germany did and they took them in and they're dealing with it. Of course, there are some political parties that complain, and others that are less

vociferous in their objections, but all in all, I think the country is handling this very well, but of course it is a very wealthy country.

*Q: Where do you find particularly interest in what's happening in the United States in Germany?*

FINN: I was there when Obama was running for office so I saw that Germans follow American politics very closely; they did back when I was in Frankfurt many years ago, and later when I was in Berlin. They follow the American elections very, very closely. It's almost as though they can vote in them. They're really caught up in what goes on in the United States, and they look to the United States as a global leader and a role model. Now, that has frayed somewhat in the last eight months, let's say. There's nothing we can do about that.

Now that we don't have the enormous military presence, there is less frequent contact with Americans. Many older Germans told me how they grew up with the American soldiers. The children played together; there was a very, very close relationship. Once we drew down the military, and those soldiers were not there anymore, that also changed things because they saw Americans as other countries do, more through movies rather than direct contact with ordinary people.

*Q: How about Germans coming to the United States to study? Is that still-?*

FINN: Yes. I was the chair of the Fulbright program in Berlin. It's the largest in the world; it has many, many different subdivisions with all kinds of different programs. It was fantastic. Of course, because of globalization, now young people want to go to China or the Arab world or India or any number of other destinations. In the old days, the United States was the only game in town. Another factor is that there are lots of scholarships within Europe, and European universities are much less expensive than ours, so within the European Union you'll have lots of students going to a neighboring country to study. And these Europeans, for the most part, know several languages, so that's not a barrier. So, although the Fulbright program remains extremely strong, it is competing with far flung opportunities elsewhere, as well as from European universities. Having said that, I still believe that Fulbright attracts the best and brightest. Our great research universities are unmatched elsewhere. Some Americans choose to go elsewhere, other than Europe, and some Germans choose to do the same.

*Q: Is that considered, I mean, is it a problem or a matter of concern?*

FINN: Well, I think people who care about the transatlantic relationship, and understand how very important Germany is to the United States for foreign affairs and security and economic reasons realize that it is important for our two societies to remain closely connected. I think people who understand all that realize that we have to do everything we can to support the transatlantic partnership. But there are others who don't think about those things.

*Q: What about the American Government? Are you finding much support?*

FINN: We're a non-profit, so we don't take direct government support. Our support as an organization comes from corporations and for the most part they're American corporations that do business in Germany, or German corporations that have investment here, and therefore a great interest in our country. We can accept grants for specific programs, but in terms of keeping the organization funded, including rental costs and staff salaries, we don't have grants for that. That comes from corporate donors.

*Q: Are corporations doing their share now?*

FINN: I think so. You have to remember the trade volume between Germany and the United States is enormous, so there is a lot of interest in maintaining and strengthening transatlantic ties in the business world. Of course, just as there was a proposed Asian trade agreement, nixed by the new administration, so too there is a proposed transatlantic agreement. The TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) is now very much on the back burner because this administration does not seem to believe in multilateral trade agreements. So, we'll see what happens. I think maybe more sensible people will come to the fore and direction on that may change, but for the moment that's on halt.

*Q: What has been your reaction to the- Trump coming in, the Trump Administration coming in and giving a different cast to our interests?*

FINN: Well, Trump is extraordinarily unpopular in Germany. His approval rating is only about 12 percent. He's very, very disliked. As always though, you have many different points of view. Some people think oh, this won't last, he'll be voted out, or the checks and balances will keep the situation under control while others think he'll modify his behavior and act more like a global leader. There are some people who do like him and admire him, but they're a very, very small group of people in Germany, mostly on the far-right.

*Q: Well what about, in Germany, do you see a rise in elements to the right or even to the extreme left?*

FINN: Well after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there were people in East Germany and also in other parts of Germany, who formed a new party which is a kind of successor to the Community Party; it's called Die Linke, meaning The Left. It's a left-wing party, but it's small. And on the right, there is increasing populism. There is a party called AfD (Alternative für Deutschland), and they're getting support from the Russians because they take votes away from Angela Merkel and the CDU; they take votes away from the mainstream parties and they're very xenophobic. You can imagine all the worst possible positions - they want to throw the immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers out. That's just a reality, and they are above the parliamentary threshold so it's a serious issue. But fortunately, the two mainstream parties, the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) with its sister the CSU, which is the Bavarian wing of the CDU, and the SPD (Social Democratic Party), which is moderate left; those parties still are the mainstream. And there's pretty

much a consensus in Germany; it's very different from the United States where we have very radical differences of view. The consensus is weakening, but there is still a consensus.

*Q: How about the Russians? You know, one can't help feeling that the Russians are playing a nasty game in the United States.*

FINN: Oh yes, yes. I think it's pretty well documented that they were meddling in our election. And of course, they're meddling in the German election. They want to do anything they can do damage Angela Merkel. Their goal is to sow division in both Europe and North America.

*Q: What's your feeling, I mean, Angela Merkel, from my point of view, seems to be sort of on the side of the angels but how-?*

FINN: Yes, indeed she is on the side of the angels. I just looked at the polls this morning, and I think she's got 36 or 38 percent and Schulz, the fellow from the SPD, is 24 percent, so between the two of them they're well over 50 percent and she's well ahead of him. Of course, in an election anything can happen at the last minute, and if she gets blamed for it, that may change people. And interestingly, there are a lot of people who say, in these polls, they haven't made their minds up, and that's a worrying sign. So, we have to see; we just have to see how it comes out. Germans don't like change; they like to know that things are planned and organized and that there will be no surprises. And so, they very much like the idea of Angela Merkel staying on. However, as I said, there may be surprises. Many people were very surprised that Trump won the election in the United States; many people were not prepared for it, but it happened.

*Q: How does your support- do you think your support depends on political factors?*

FINN: No, no. I think this organization has weathered other storms and there are so many people on both sides of the Atlantic who are truly committed to the German-American partnership. No. I don't think that there's going to be that kind of problem. On major foreign policy issues, moderate Republicans and moderate Democrats are not far apart.

*Q: What is your impression, this is not just today, but back when you were in Germany, of the state of knowledge of the political system and- You know, the United States, it's hard for Americans to understand how things work.*

FINN: Well, I think people in Germany have a realistic understanding of the situation. They see that in the United States, we have a very deep divide between red and blue states, and we have a deep divide between the so-called haves and the have nots. There are people in the Rust Belt who feel that they've been left behind. It is true that we have done away to a great extent with manufacturing; the Germans have kept it as nearly 20 percent of their economy. They are still producing things, and their goods have a global reputation for being tremendously reliable.

*Q: What are students who come to the United States looking at, what are they trying to get out of it?*

FINN: Well, of course I haven't sat on the commission for a couple of years, but I think they come to study in a wide variety of fields. They do science and they do humanities and social sciences and they go to many different cities- many universities across the country - so I think it's a very good distribution. Needless to say, there is a particular interest in our advances in technology and medicine.

*Q: Well, do you see support for your organization diminishing now? Is this harder or-?*

FINN: No. I think that because of the importance of the German-American trade, support will continue. I don't anticipate a sudden drop in support. Things may gradually diminish, but not in a sharp or immediate or noticeable way.

*Q: German-Americans, I come from a German-American family, but for some years now it hasn't been much of a national interest of people who belong to it. I mean, they don't put lederhosen on.*

FINN: Yes, true. There is a Steuben Parade here in New York. Most of the people involved in that are very conservative German-Americans. But you're right, Stu, a generation ago or two generations ago, there was a Germantown in Manhattan and there were lots of German restaurants and bakeries concentrated in that area. There were flourishing Lutheran churches with active communities. The large German immigration to the U.S. took place in the nineteenth century. We also have to remember that many ethnic German suppressed their identity at the time of the First World War. They anglicized their names. Erik Kirschbaum, one of our speakers, has written a book documenting this. It is called "Burning Beethoven."

*Q: Oh, yes, the German neighborhood in New York was at 86<sup>th</sup> Street, wasn't it?*

FINN: Absolutely, that's right.

*Q: Oh yes, I used to-*

FINN: But that's faded away because most of those German-Americans have been absorbed into outlying suburbs. This identity has faded away in our chapters too; some of the chapters were located in cities like St. Louis which had substantial German-American populations. We had one in Milwaukee that we ultimately closed. The membership of these chapters was predominantly German-American. As they grew older, the chapter audiences grew smaller. The next generation did not identify so strongly with their German roots. The focus now is much more on recruiting young people who have an interest in Germany regardless of their ethnicity; we also focus on corporate leaders, businesspeople who have an interest in Germany. Those are the people who make up our audiences, not German-Americans. Of course, we do have a certain number of Germans who are on long-term assignments in the United States at a company, especially in the



South. There are a lot of German companies in the South. If they live in a city with a chapter such as Charlotte, they'll get involved with the chapter and come to the programs because they're interested in seeing what's going on in Germany and also being part of the dialogue between the German visitor and the American audience.

*Q: What's happened sort of in the cultural field; something that always struck me is ever since the Hitlerzeit that taking the Jew out of the German culture was a horrible blow to German culture.*

FINN: Well, that's very true, and well documented in the Jewish Museum in Berlin which covers the over one thousand years of German-Jewish history. Indeed, some Jews were in Germany even in Roman times. More recently, when the Soviet Union collapsed, Jews from all over the Soviet Union came to Germany. Germany, because of its Holocaust history, will never say no to anyone who is even one-quarter Jewish. The Nazi regime sent people to concentration camps if they were even one-quarter Jewish. So, there has been quite an influx from the former Soviet Union. These were people who grew up in the Baltics, or they came from major cities in Russia or from Central Asia and who really, since they grew up, and were educated in the Soviet sphere, didn't really know as much about everything that happened as other Europeans would. And so, that was a wave of immigration. Germany has the fastest growing Jewish population in the world. And now, a lot of young Jewish people from the United States, from Israel, and from all over the world are going to Berlin. Many Jews are going to Germany in spite of what happened. Because of the Brexit, some Jews from the UK are going back to Germany. Young Jews are also attracted to Berlin because it is a technology hub.

*Q: Huh.*

FINN: It is interesting, isn't it?

*Q: Fascinating.*

FINN: Yes, yes.

*Q: Well, do you see a change in German culture?*

FINN: They see that Germany has made itself into a truly democratic society. Berlin is a city with lots of opportunities, so young people are going there. They're also going to Frankfurt which is a banking town. So, yes, Jews are coming back to Germany. There were a small number of Jews who came back right after the Second World War for various reasons; because they were educated and fluent in German law and German history and were able to rebuild the country as a democracy. Of course, they knew everything about what happened, but they were also aware of the immense contribution Jews had made to Germany society and they wanted to build on that. In some cases, they saw what happened in the Holocaust as a horrible, indescribable aberration.

When I was in Israel I met many people of German-Jewish background who had returned to the towns their families had come from to participate in commemorations for those lost in the Holocaust. Since Germans began going to Palestine before the creation of Israel, many institutions in Israel have a strong German stamp. The universities, especially the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, were strongly influenced by the German-Jewish academics among their founders. The way the older Israeli universities are organized has a distinctive German stamp.

*Q: I have to say that we're only touching this, but you're talking about currents that are going on in international relations, which I find absolutely fascinating.*

FINN: Yes, right. It is, it is fascinating. But the Jewish people have always managed, even after terrible things happened to them, to recover and survive. It is extraordinary that they have kept their identity intact after so many thousands of years. If you think more recently of the pogroms in Russia in the early part of this century, and how all those people came, uneducated and terribly poor, to the Lower East Side of New York. Within a generation or two they were highly educated and successful.

*Q: I know. I mean, that's-*

FINN: It's an amazing story. So, I think that young people around the world look at Germany today with admiration. They see it as a country that offers opportunities for the future. They are particularly interested in the technology industry, and Israel of course is very involved in that, so there are connections between Tel Aviv and Berlin and Silicon Valley and New York. So, there are lots of things that attract young people to Germany.

*Q: What do you plan to do? You say you want to go back to-*

FINN: Well, after I left Berlin to take this position, I did not think I would remain for seven years, but it just flew by. I am now most interested in going to Columbia University to work in the fields of conflict resolution and human rights. I want to write about the ways in which public diplomacy can promote the objectives of these fields. I did a lot of work in conflict resolution throughout my diplomatic career. I am looking forward to having an opportunity to write about that hoping that it may be helpful to the next generation of diplomats.

*Q: Will you be working on German-*

FINN: Well, it will be German to the extent that Germans have made many important contributions in this field through their foundations and their membership in international organizations. However, I served in other countries as well, so my outlook would be more global, going beyond transatlantic relations. I did a tremendous amount of work on Turkish-Greek, and Turkish-Armenian conflict resolution; I did work on Indian-Pakistani conflict resolution, to say nothing of the Bosnians, and the Middle East with Israelis and Palestinians. The time has come for me to write about these experiences.

*Q: I must say, you're certainly well qualified to talk about the state of the world.*

FINN: Well, thank you. I think that's true of most of our American diplomats. Thank you, Stu. It has been a great pleasure. I really enjoyed our conversations.

*Q: Okay. Well, take care.*

*End of interview*