Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Program

MICHAEL ROSS GANNETT SR

Interviewed by: Jack Zetkulic

INTERVIEW

Michael's first day with the State Department was December 8th, 1941. Imagine the thoughts swirling in the mind of a newly-minted diplomat the day after the United States was dragged into the Century's second World War. Just 22 years old and a recent Harvard graduate, Michael embarked on a career adventure that would span 33 years and four continents. He served at a time when the United States assumed the mantle of a superpower and became engaged in the affairs of every nation on the planet, no matter how small or faraway. Michael had a front row seat as history unfolded, and he was personally involved in the implementation of several important diplomatic initiatives during the postwar years and in the Cold War. He also played an important role in the development of training for professional diplomats.

This overview of Michael's career is based on an interview conducted soon after Michael's 90th birthday, as well as on several follow-up conversations. In addition, several former colleagues and students of Michael's were interviewed, and research was conducted in unclassified archives. Wherever possible, we let Michael speak for himself, with direct quotes printed **in bold**.

Beginnings: Family and Education:

I was born in Paris on July 13th, 1919. My parents were in France serving with the Quaker Foreign Service Corps, as conscientious objectors doing refugee relief work. My father, Lewis Gannett, was working with the Quakers and my mother, Mary Ross Gannett, was a secretary with the Red Cross. We only spent eight weeks in Paris after my birth, so I guess this didn't help my French very much.

My father had attended the Paris Peace Conference as a reporter for a string of journals, mainly The Nation. My mother was a valiant mother, concerned mainly with baby care, for about a year. She then went to work for a magazine that's since become defunct called the Survey Graphic, which was mainly for people engaged in social work.

Back in the U.S., we moved to 49 Barrow Street in Greenwich Village and lived there for a year. Then we moved to Brooklyn, where my parents bought a four-story

house at 64 Poplar Street. They occupied two of the four floors and the others were rented out.

I have a baby sister, by four years: Ruth Stiles Gannett.

In 1925, my family bought a summer house in Cornwall. I spent the school year in New York – in Brooklyn and later in Manhattan. For schooling, I went for one year to the Ethical Cultural School. I haven't the foggiest idea why it was considered ethical or cultural. I just remember that we had no pencils for the first half of the year. We just stood in front of the blackboard with our left hands stiffly behind our backs and our right hands sporting pieces of chalk, practicing graceful curves. I guess you'd call it chalkmanship rather than penmanship. In the fall of 1933 I started attending George School in Newtown, Pennsylvania, from which I graduated in 1937. Then I went off to Harvard, where I studied American Government and graduated in 1941.

I took the Foreign Service exam in the summer of 1941. I thought this would be the best way to help the United States. I was idealistic.

Ed Note: At the time of this interview, Michael still had in his possession the State Department booklet designed to prepare applicants for the written exam. It included sample questions, most of which required essay responses. The subject matter was much more focused than the current test, concentrating mainly on American and European history, government, and economics. It also included a mandatory section on one of three chosen foreign languages: German, French, or Spanish. Michael contributed this booklet to the collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, for eventual inclusion in the State Department's Museum of Diplomacy.

In my senior year I started zeroing in on the Foreign Service as a career. I knew only one person already in the State Department, and that was Alger Hiss. His sister and her family occupied one of those four floors at 64 Poplar Street. So I went down to see Alger and I told him that I wanted to join the State Department. He recommended that I subscribe to the State Department Bulletin, which I did for several years. I visited him in his office.

Ed Note: Hiss was accused of being a Soviet spy in 1948 and was eventually convicted of perjury in connection with these charges in 1950.

As far as preparation for the Foreign Service, my studies at Harvard were the usual requirements for a B.A. degree. But of course at Harvard they call it an "A.B." I guess they just want to be different. And I had elective courses, too, in Mexican History, in Philosophy, in Cartography. I studied French, but I never became -- in the eyes of the State Department -- a really competent French language student.

I did the oral exam in Washington. There were four or five Foreign Service worthies with George Shaw in the center. I had spent several summers with an organization

called the Experiment in International Living. In my naivete, I put some stress on that experience. I was an assistant leader of a group in France and I had conducted a group to Peru in the summer of 1938. In the summer of 1939, I conducted a group of German students on a one-week trip around the Eastern United States. I borrowed two cars and we made a little tour starting from Poughkeepsie, New York down to Washington, Charlottesville, and along Skyline Drive, where we heard the news that the Germans had concluded the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with the Soviet Union. At that point we got on the highway and we buzzed to New York, where I dumped the group at the German Consulate General. Interestingly, years later I saw Walter Gaupp, the leader of the German group, when I was in Bonn. I never saw any other members of the group.

I had passed the exam, but I was still awaiting appointment as an officer. I was hired as a Foreign Service clerk and was sent to Santiago de Chile to do codework.

I flew to Santiago on Pan-Agra, which was a subsidiary of PanAm that flew to all countries in South America. The planes only flew by daylight. I would fly the first day to Panama, the second day to Cali, the third day to Lima, and finally the fourth day to Santiago.

Our ambassador was Claude G. Bowers. He wrote books about his tours as ambassador in Spain and in Chile.

A clerk, technically, is assigned to post as something like a Civil Service clerk, at a low grade, so everyone else outranks him. When an Inspector General's team came to Santiago and found that I was doing codework even after I was appointed as an FSO, I was suddenly transferred to the Consular Section as a Vice Consul. There was a son-of-a-bitch Consul General named Dale C. McDonough who was my nemesis.

A funny story:

One day I met in the Embassy elevator Lowell Thomas (Ed Note: the famous journalist and broadcaster), w**ho was on one of his travels. I refreshed his memory that I had been to lunch at his house in Brewster. Lowell Thomas immediately took charge of the conversation: "Oh, yes I remember it well!" And, "You can do me a great favor. Come with me!" He didn't tell me what he wanted me to do for him, but it turned out that he had an appointment with the President of Chile, and he expected me to interpret for him. Now I had been in Chile only a month or two and I knew no Spanish. We went over to "the Mint," their equivalent of the White House. Thomas was met at the front door by someone who would guide him into the Palace, and the official said to me, "Follow me." Well, the next thing I knew we were meeting the President in his office, and I was dreadfully embarrassed because the President was obviously flabbergasted by all this. Before we entered the President's office, I saw nearby a senior member of the Embassy staff, Brooks, and I said to him, "Help me here! Take over!" And he said, "Oh, no. You go ahead. Not me." The**

bastard was highly amused. When I got back to the Embassy, I went to Donald Heath and told him what had befallen me. He was amused, too, and he asked me to write a dispatch about the conversation. The only problem was, I could only talk about what Thomas had said, because I never understood what the President had said. The two just sort of fumble-bumbled through the discussion.

In 1943, my wife had returned home from Chile ahead of me and I had sold everything I owned to pay for the trip because I didn't qualify for a return trip. I hadn't been in the Foreign Service long enough as an officer so they wouldn't cover my travel expenses.

Back in the Department I was assigned to a special division. Dale C. McDonough also was assigned to the division. I was concerned with matching up data on American citizens interned in the San Marco internment center. I got all the tough cases. The main part of this work was matching up data with family members in the United States. A team from the State Department had gone to Goa, in India, to interview all the Americans on the boat. A second trip was arranged with the Japanese so we could work on hard-to-identify internees. After several months of work I succeeded in matching up all these people. After this, the Selective Service got a hold of me. I had expected to be transferred to Madras, India, but my number came up.

From "Miscellaneous Government Worker" to Buck Private:

I was the first Foreign Service Officer drafted. I was the test case. The matter went all the way to the White House and was decided there by Judge Roseman, in the Office of the President.

I wasn't a party to the negotiations, but this was a test of wills between the State Department and the War Department. The State Department was arguing that all Foreign Service Officers should be exempt from the draft. A few other FSOs had gone into the military before me. They had wangled transfer appointments as officers in the Navy or Army and a lot of them had joined the O.S.S. But I was drafted as a plain old G.I.

I still remember the Corporal at the induction center. He asked me what my profession was. I said "Foreign Service Officer." He asked, "What's a Foreign Service Officer?" and he tried to look it up in his Labor Department handbook of occupational specialties and couldn't find it. So he said, "What we do in this situation, is we assign you as a 'miscellaneous government worker' and secondarily as a 'skilled travel guide.'" And I became a Buck Private.

I went to Basic Training for the Infantry. At the induction center I was assigned to the infantry because the corporal thought that's where I belonged. My battalion was given slots to send GIs direct to OCS, and I got one. When commissioned, I was assigned to Camp McClellan in Alabama. I was a tactical officer for cycles of

training by draftees. The guys I had, if they had stayed out of the Army somehow for one week longer, they would never have been drafted. The draft age at that time was dropped from 38 to 35, and so these inductees were all between 35 and 38 and they were pissed off as hell.

I was assigned to conduct 200 men overseas, carrying two boxes of personnel records. We took eleven or twelve days to make the crossing to Le Havre. Then we crossed France in box cars. I had these 200 men scattered in five box cars in a French train, with a French engineer running the train. He would stop every now and then for a pee break. When he thought we'd all had a sufficient interval to pee, he'd blow his whistle, whereupon there was a mad scramble to get back on the train. And not all the 200 men got in the same box car they were first in. So I had a system of counting off by numbers. And sometimes I was missing a man in a particular car, but I didn't lose any and I got all of them through.

After that I went to a "Repo Depot" -- a redeployment depot. I spent a couple of days there. And was then assigned to the 63rd Infantry Division as a platoon leader.

This was very late in the war. The 63rd Division's companies of riflemen were all walking through the woods, looking for holed up Germans. I had one moment of glory. A squad from my platoon, with me as their leader, was detailed to screen several miles of woods. Whereupon we took as prisoner one hundred some Germans who were very relieved that their war was over. They didn't exactly put up a fight.

At one point we came up on four or five German soldiers, one of whom was drunk. I understood him to be saying, "There are many more of us over there." So I took him and pointed a gun at his back, and marched out of the woods into a meadow and said, "Tell them to come down with their hands up." And they did come down with their hands up, except for two or three of them who decided to run out of this wooded copse on the top of the hill, to the other side. But I had sent a runner back to battalion headquarters, saying that I was getting these men, and they had sent a machine gun team, which gunned them down as they were trying to escape.

Soon after, I was transferred as personnel officer for the regiment -- which was a position normally held by a Captain, but I was still a Second Lieutenant. I think the 255th regiment commander was impressed that he now had a Harvard graduate on his staff. But as personnel officer of the regiment, I had myself transferred -- I arranged -- to have myself assigned to Ike's (Supreme Allied Commander Dwight Eisenhower's**) headquarters.**

I knew Donald Heath, who was the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) **in Chile when I was in Chile. And I had made the acquaintance of Freddy Reinhardt, Jake Beam, and several other ex-ambassadors who were on Robert Murphy's team** (Ambassador Murphy was the senior U.S. diplomat attached to the Allied Command).

At Ike's headquarters, I was supposed to give an aura of "military" experience to this group of ex-Ambassadors. I was in uniform. During my time there I also arranged, because I wanted to, to be sent to Berlin, and while there I visited Hitler's hole in the ground. It was dark. No lights.

In the end, when I was transferred away from the headquarters team, Murphy gave me a very nice letter.

In June of 1945, the State Department started trying to get back those of us who had been drafted. I wrote a dispatch to the Honorable Secretary of State "noting with interest" the Department's efforts. My dispatch went first to Assistant Secretary Byrnes and then it was referred to the Secretary of War. After that, it was referred by "first endorsement" to the Supreme Allied Commander in Frankfurt, where I was working, so it came back around to me. And it came like a bullet. I was raced to Le Havre to go home on the first available ship. But after racing to Le Havre, I waited for ten days. The first ship I was booked on was sent to a different port. The second ship hit a sandbar somewhere. I went home on the third ship.

Back to the Department:

I returned to the State Department after the expiration of my accumulated Army leave, which was something like 26 days. Then I was transferred to a special division in the State Department, where I found the class of Foreign Service officers who entered the Service in 1940.

We were basically typists. In 1938, aliens in the United States were required to register for the first time. The FSOs were employed by this "special" division to copy forms that had been submitted by aliens (non-U.S. citizens) **to the Visa Division. This menial work quickly inspired a revolt by the Class of 1940. The forms had been filled out in just one single copy, but an interagency committee in Washington had to review the forms of each alien -- a committee made up of intelligence officers from the War Department, from the Army, from the Navy, from Immigration and Naturalization, from the State Department, from the FBI. Someone had to make typed carbon copies of all the original forms. A typing job. As a result of the revolt, the Class of 1940 guys were transferred elsewhere. I wasn't even yet officially an FSO again, so I was stuck typing. But after a while, I was put in a unit that responded to correspondence to the Secretary of State. It was still boring as hell.**

Dominican Interlude:

In 1946, I was sent on a temporary assignment to the Dominican Republic for six months. The Ambassador had left precipitously. The Embassy in Ciudad Trujillo (as the capital was then called)**, was a small post. With the Ambassador gone, everyone had to step up one notch, including the Charge d'Affaires, and so there was need for someone at the bottom. That's where I came in. I was the administrative officer.**

Vienna:

After the Dominican Republic I was transferred to Vienna in the fall of 1946.

Vienna was a choice assignment. I think maybe I was being rewarded for the supposedly unwanted experience of being drafted into the Army. But I should explain. I wanted to get into the (military) **Service. I wanted to share the experience that every young man my age was having at that time. I remember when Bill Burdette came back to Service – in his Marine Corps uniform. He also just barely got into the fight, like me. There were others, too. Like Horace Greene, who was repatriated from internment in Tokyo. He worked for Joseph Clark Grew, and he eventually moved on to become ambassador to Indonesia.**

I roomed in Vienna (I had nine years between marriages) with two people who took the first exam after the war. One was very able. Ben Kemple. He was drummed out of the Service because he was gay. He was forced to leave. Another one was Andy Olson. Another one was Martin Herz.

We were assigned to a house, which was requisitioned by the Army. The Army was our landlord. Working in Vienna at that time was like working for the Army. I was liaison to the Air Division.

Ed Note: Vienna in 1950 was still an occupied city, controlled by the Four Powers and divided into zones, just as Berlin was for much longer.

One day, Ben got a car, and we had an expedition out to Burgenland on the Hungarian border. We pulled over to picnic. We heard airplanes. Only then did we realize that we were cheek by jowl with an unmapped Soviet airport. We got the hell out of there. Once we drove to Warsaw, across the Soviet Zone and communist Czechoslovakia. We had a pre-war roadmap. I said, "We're gonna come to an intersection, and we'll go left." But we came up right behind a platoon of marching Soviet soldiers. I said, "Keep going!" and we drove right behind the troops and with them, behind them, into their camp. I figured, if they let us in one end they'd let us out the other. When we got to the gate, it was down, so I said, "Lean on the horn!" and the guard raised the gate. You can imagine how the Soviets loved to wag a finger at us in those days. But in this case I didn't become a headline.

At first, in Vienna I was in citizenship work, then in economic work. It was the routine stuff. In that section were Eleanor Dulles and Sydney Mellon. It was all disorganized. They insisted on being independent. Eleanor Dulles would write learned pieces on the Austrian economy, and she'd come over and try them out on me. She was having wars with other people in the section -- also with our Ambassador, John G. Earhardt. He was a "Minister," actually, because it was a Legation, called a "Political Division" for the purposes of the Occupation, not an Embassy.

Ben Kemple taught himself Russian – enough to serve as the American member of the Occupation's Political Division. He came back to the State Department on assignment as the Austria Desk officer. But he was beaten up one night in Washington, and he resigned that same night. There was a gay association with the event.

My post of assignment remained the Embassy in Vienna until 1950, but actually I was transferred as secretary to the U.S. delegation for the negotiation of the Austrian Treaty, which set the terms of Austrian independence. In that connection, the conference's negotiating site was officially Vienna, but it changed from time to time. I was in London for almost a year. Then back to Vienna with the Austrian Treaty Commission for a time. I attended the Council of Foreign Ministers in Paris in 1948, when the negotiating teams of the Four Powers were there, primarily focused on what was called the "German Question," but they simultaneously met on the Austrian Treaty. That was fascinating. That was where the Soviet Union threw overboard the Yugoslavs.

The CIA in Paris got a hold of the intention of the Russians to disassociate themselves from Yugoslavia for a piece of Austria to go to the Soviet Union. I sat behind George Marshall, taking notes. In London I ran courier between Dean Acheson and the Austrian Ambassador, Gruber. I had moments of excitement, but they were what you'd call routine. Routine excitement. And I didn't work at all on the German Question. I shared an office with Paul Nitze, (Ed Note: Nitze became the preeminent expert on nuclear weapons and worked in senior positions in several administrations) **who was working on this, but most of my work was getting information back and forth and taking notes and reporting.**

Back to the Department -- Yugoslavia Desk and EUR:

In 1950, I was transferred back to the Department of State, to the Bureau of European Affairs. In EUR, I was to give special attention to Yugoslav affairs, as well as Albania.

This was an exciting time. We instantly had to create an aid program for Yugoslavia so that they wouldn't starve without Soviet support. As Desk Officer, I did everything that desk officers do. I also wrote an agreement between the United States and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for the aid program. This was necessary to make it all official. This wasn't as impressive as it sounds. Basically, I just copied similar agreements with other countries.

After the Yugoslavia Desk, I moved into the EUR Front Office as Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, George Perkins. That was one year.

Iran:

After EUR, I was transferred to Iran. In 1953, I took my car on the boat to Beirut. Then I drove: through Syria, to Baghdad. I spent two nights driving through Iran to Tehran. I never saw more potholes. When I got to Tehran, I got a hotel room and I sent a cable to my wife Charlotte, who I had left at a hotel in Beirut, and told her to fly to Tehran. I had re-married in 1950, after meeting her in the State Department. We were married 28 years, until she died in my arms.

I had a dual-hatted job. On the one hand, I was deputy chief of the Political Section, and on the other hand I was the liaison between the Embassy and the Point Four assistance program.

Mosaddegh was the Prime Minister. Of course the CIA and Kermit Roosevelt were enmeshed in all that. (Ed Note: Kermit "Kim" Roosevelt was the grandson of Theodore Roosevelt and a senior official in the CIA's Middle East Division. He was in charge of "Operation Ajax," the CIA plot to oust Prime Minister Mosaddegh). **They were toppling Mosaddegh's government. Their office was down the end of my corridor. I remember at one point one of the case officers ran down the hall and shouted out to us, "We need a Minister of Agriculture. We need a Minister of Agriculture. Give me a name!" They were slapping together a Cabinet after they ousted Mosaddegh.**

About my reporting sources: The Point Four assistance program people had field offices. I visited them. I drove down almost to the Pakistani border to the Helmand River. I visited Qum. But most important, the field directors would periodically have meetings in Tehran. I would interview these fellows from the field and I would write dispatches back to Washington. I was down at the Tehran office of the aid program when the CIA's plot was sprung. I hailed a cab and quickly got back to the Embassy.

One of the things that was done to try to destabilize the Mosaddegh government came after Mosaddegh sent a note to the Embassy asking for aid -- asking for millions of dollars worth of aid. We refused him aid, by a written note in reply, and then we leaked the fact that we had refused his request. Mosaddegh complained. Our refusal note was leaked and published. It was an embarrassment for Mosaddegh, who had billed himself as the only guy who could get sizeable aid from the United States, so our public refusal left him with egg on his face.

Then the Shah set Mosaddegh up. The Shah dismissed him, which the Shah maintained was his right. But then the Shah got cold feet. He climbed into his plane up at Rasht, on the Caspian Sea, and he flew off to Baghdad. He spent a night or two there, and then continued his flight to Paris. Eventually, though, he was convinced to come back to Tehran. He stayed for a bit longer, when, after a few years, in 1979, he had to flee again.

In the whole time I was in Iran, I was in an Iranian home only once. This wasn't unique. Most of the Americans in the Embassy had very little personal dealings with Iranians.

One funny story from Iran:

Twice a year, all the officers of the Embassy staff would meet at the Ambassador's residence in white tie and tails and top hats, to the extent that they possessed such equipment. Then we went down to the Gugglestan Palace, which was a sheet metal and corrugated steel structure that had a faint imitation of the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles. In turn with various other members of the Diplomatic Corps and other international professionals in the country, we would wish the Shah of Iran Happy New Year. I don't remember what the other occasion was, probably National Day.

We would line up, with the Ambassador at the head of the line, with his staff behind him, and the other ambassadors would do the same with their staffs. There was a tremendous hubbub of chatter until some member of the Court would enter and announce that His Majesty the Shah of Iran was about to enter the room. Then it would quiet down. The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps would solemnly say, "Your Majesty, I have the honor to present the Diplomatic Corps in Iran." There were about fifty Chiefs of Mission. Inevitably, the hubbub would continue as the Shah worked down the line. The Frenchman, who was the Dean, would confer with the Shah, appearing to whisper secrets in his ear as they passed down the line to give the impression of an intimate relationship. When it was our turn -- we were about third or fourth -- there would be this little conference between Henderson and the Shah. The Ambassador looked great because he had a complete set of attire. But the rest of the American staff had just so many top hats, so we had to pass them around from person to person behind our backs so that everyone got to tip his hat to the Shah.

Some of the hats were rather tattered, with holes and such, but they were a hot commodity in Tehran. At other occasions when we were expected to relinquish our top hats at the beginning of the event, we had instructions to follow Ambassador Henderson to the cloakroom, which was really just a big, long table, all of us like a string behind him. After he put down his hat, we were to pile all our hats on top of his so that he wouldn't have the unfortunate experience of having his hat pinched.

There were only two buildings used for such big events. In addition to the corrugated tin "Palace," there was the Iranian Officers' Club. These were always stand up affairs. And it was important to remember that when the food was put out on the tables, you had to maintain your position, with sharp elbows, to ensure you'd get enough to eat. In each location there was only one set of plumbing facilities, and the men monopolized them. Eventually, the women, who were in distress, would band together and invade the facilities and all the men would come scattering out, buttoning up their pants.

And another funny story:

The Ambassador's office at the Embassy was graced by a large and magnificent Persian carpet. Ambassador Henderson was intrigued by some Persian script that

had been woven into the side of the carpet, along the fringe. Henderson asked Bruce Laingen to show the passage to an Iranian guest. The two walked over and peered down at the carpet. After he read it, he made every excuse to not translate the passage. But eventually, Henderson was mortified to find out that the passage said "Property of the German Legation." Of course, we had occupied the beautiful German Embassy for a time during the war and then built our own chancery -- a typically ugly building -- thereafter. Well, the carpet was sent back that very day to the German Embassy, which was a pity. There were some of us who thought we should have kept it as the spoils of war. This is a great story, and I sure hope it's true.

Trieste:

After Iran, I was transferred directly to Trieste. I wanted to take the bus back to Europe. But instead I flew to Istanbul and took the Orient Express to Trieste. This sounds dramatic, but the Orient Express was just a parlor car hitched to the train that went from Istanbul to Paris. Not very romantic. When we crossed into Yugoslavia, the Yugoslavs came in with screwdrivers and unscrewed all the signs and plaques. They were afraid that secret messages might be underneath.

It was a beautiful country. All the flowering trees were in bloom. But that meant I was hanging out the window with hay fever.

I got off the train at Trieste where Sam Simms, my new boss, met me. When Sam went on home leave, he was intercepted by the Department and never came back. Here's what happened: Apparently, I had met muster with Claire Booth Luce, the Ambassador in Rome. The previous year, she had come up to Venice to attend a movie festival. She had her nose out of joint since then because the prize went to a movie that was rough on the United States. So she had her aide telephone us to say that she would come to Trieste. She wanted a dinner to be given for her. She wanted the mayor of Trieste to be invited. There was something running between them. Sam Simms, my predecessor, had all his belongings on the high seas, and he couldn't give the dinner. So Charlotte and I hosted. We had two tables of nine. Eighteen people. Ambassador Luce with Sam; Henry Luce with me. He talked to me the whole dinner. I don't know what he told his wife, but I guess I met muster. Sam was reassigned while on home leave, and ended up as a Public Affairs Officer for one of the Bureaus. He left one bit of unfinished business. He was in Trieste when the U.S. troops left, so he inherited refrigerators and overstuffed furniture and everything from the Officers Club. When he knew he wasn't coming back, he wrote me directing me to sell it all and credit him. I never sent him a dime.

I didn't know for a couple months if I'd be asked to stay on after Simms had left. I got a call from someone in the Department who said he'd been asked to replace Simms. He wanted to come and look at the post. He came and looked, and he instead went to Vancouver or someplace in Canada. So I was a Consul in the Free Territory of Trieste.

The status of the territory had been changing and continued to do so. As an election stunt -- to help accommodate the Christian Democrats in Italy -- we transferred "Zone A" back to the Italians, back to Italian administration. An Italian prefect returned to Trieste -- a representative of the Italian Interior Ministry. Then the Italian Prime Minister came up to visit each key town in succession. Because of these visits to towns and protocol requirements, I ended up formally meeting the Prefect five times in one day. The Consular Corps ranked just after the Church in protocol order, and I met the Minister in each town after he met each town's senior Church leader.

The Peace Treaty with Italy provided -- as had the Treaty of Versailles -- for the disposition of Trieste. There were three Zones: A, B, and C. The Russians had Zone C. All three occupying powers were supposed to act in concert regarding the timing of their withdrawal. But we didn't. The UK and U.S. decided to accelerate the return of territory to Italy to bolster the Christian Democratic government in Rome. I don't know if this really helped the Italians. The U.S. and UK action was entirely extra-legal. But the Russians never complained. They left on their own eventually. The departure of the troops – British, American, and Russian – from their respective zones occurred a few months before my arrival. Trieste remained a hot issue for the Italians. They had bled over the territory.

The Consulate was doing a hot business in issuing visas to the United States. I had a staff of 200, which was fairly large as a Consular operation. In addition to local hires, we had representatives from several agencies of the U.S. Government: the Department of Labor, the Department of Health, U.S. shipping people, and others. The visa applicants mostly had left Yugoslavia. The quota for Italians wasn't handled there. In any case it was over-subscribed. We had a three-story building just for the staff. One thing about the refugee visas: we had a quota, but we were going full blast until the last visa was issued. These were mainly Italians who had become refugees who had left Yugoslavia.

I was in Trieste two years. After two years I left for home leave in the U.S.
I expected to return, and I would have loved to have stayed longer. Because we were so busy producing babies we didn't have much time to do any local travel. I would have loved to have sailed down the Adriatic coast. But I was reassigned to the State Department during home leave. I never found out who sabotaged my return to Trieste. Probably someone who wanted the job. One way or the other, John Auchincloss moved up to Trieste from Rome to replace me.

<u>Returning to "A-100</u>":

Before World War II, when the entire State Department was still housed in the Old Executive Office Building next to the White House, a spacious OEOB room numbered "A-100" was home to successive classes of newly-recruited junior officers. By the time Michael was asked to run the Department's junior officer training program, the

course, along with the Foreign Service Institute, had moved to decidedly less impressive quarters across the Potomac in Rosslyn, Virginia. But as a proof of the power of bureaucratic inertia (or perhaps nostalgia), the program maintained its numerical designation, "A-100," as it does to this day. One other consistent feature that endured through Michael's time at FSI: the program had just one instructor/director/manager (Michael) who was expected to design and teach the curriculum, arrange briefings in the Department and around town in other agencies, and recruit guest speakers -- all without any kind of budget.

One of Michael's former students, Brandon Grove (one of several students who went on to become ambassadors or senior Department officers) remembers:

"In 1959, training at the Foreign Service Institute took place in a reconfigured garage beneath the Arlington Towers apartments in Rosslyn. The many classrooms were low-ceilinged, cramped, and windowless, with thin green walls doing little to muffle noises from adjacent rooms in which students might be practicing the guttural sounds of Japanese. We were a class of twenty-five, including four future ambassadors.

"The course chairman, Michael Gannett, a career diplomat prematurely white-haired with pink cheeks and a sunny disposition, made us feel welcome and set the right tone. And then our heads were crammed with organizational charts, acronyms, and neatly drawn lines of authority."

The culmination of A-100 comes when officers receive their assignments. Again, Ambassador Grove remembers:

"Near the end of the course our assignments were read aloud by Mike Gannett in one of the most gripping moments of a Foreign Service career. I felt the world lay at my feet. When my name was due, I leaned forward and stopped breathing. 'Grove,' a genial Gannett said, and then paused teasingly as he had with everyone: 'Abidjan!' Thump. Nothing precise came to mind."

Michael remembered years later:

Brandon had to scurry across the hall to the FSI library to get an atlas and confirm that Abidjan was the capital of the Ivory Coast.

Michael is remembered by the then-junior (but now long since retired) diplomats he trained as both "genial" and "disciplined." His name pops up in many of the oral histories of former diplomats. His "cheerful countenance" was the first face of the Foreign Service for more than a hundred young officers. They remember his wry, dry sense of humor and his appreciation of irony, which rubbed off on many of them.

Working without a budget, he arm-twisted and cajoled his friends and colleagues in the Department to come and speak to the class – never an easy thing to do when a trip across the Potomac from DC required a mental leap for many senior government

officials. During his time at FSI, Michael persistently pushed for an effective budget for his program. The process he began was slow, but it did eventually lead to improved standards of professional training, including study trips outside the DC area.

Michael remembers:

Everyone has a different philosophy about teaching. Loy Henderson was Deputy Under Secretary (of State for Administration) **when I went to FSI. He had been my ambassador in Iran. He told me he wanted me to have the class do problem solving, and that I should write an efficiency report on every participant. I saw the program differently. I saw it as a chance for a new entrant to better know what he was getting into. I asked several classes to raise their hands if they thought it was the State Department that was on trial, rather than them being on trial, as Henderson thought. And almost all the students raised their hands. I thought my job was to make them feel at home.**

After FSI, I did an academic program for about a year at the National War College. Then came Rome.

Rome:

I was assigned to Rome, to a good assignment. It was essentially a housekeeping job, as Political-Military Officer. I handled for the Embassy the problems you'd expect with the presence of U.S. troops in somebody else's country. I had the same job later in Bonn. The diplomatic problems included things like Status of Forces agreements, property disputes and negotiations. We had a Navy Captain who helped. There were some 10,000 U.S. troops all over Italy.

In Italy we had the same problem we had in Germany. Titan Missiles. The difference was that in Germany it was an open secret. We talked at all levels with the Germans about the missiles because we could count on them to keep the open secret secret. With the Italians, we weren't quite so open. Still, some parties, and some in the public, began to make noise about getting rid of our tactical nukes stationed there.

Another area of tension: For the troops that were in Vicenza, we had exclusive use of the most modern base in the Leghorn area. There was all sorts of pressure on the Pentagon from the shipping people -- both Italian and American -- to allow commercial shipping to use these resources. I worked many, many amendments to the shipping agreements, ultimately giving the Italians access to the ports at those times when we didn't otherwise have ships in port. Sydney Mellon was the DCM and Charge de Affaires at the time, and we had several arguments about this. I thought we shouldn't be at all accommodating, and when Ambassador Reinhardt came back from sick leave he stood right with me. I felt that our military needed these assets for their original purpose.

NATO Affairs and the Pentagon:

After Rome, I became a political-military officer in the Department in EUR/RPM (the European Bureau's Office of Regional Political-and Military Affairs). **In EUR/RPM, I was concerned mainly with NATO. That involved almost commuting every six months to Paris.** (Ed Note: This was before the French left NATO 's command structure and NATO HQ was moved to Brussels).

I felt a bit rejected because I wasn't made Office Director in RPM. I did an academic year at the National War College and then I accepted a position as POLAD (Political Advisor) in the Pentagon. I was there two years.

The military really knows how to butter up a guy. I had a parking space right next to the front door. I had an office with a window on the Fifth Ring, facing the outside (not facing a well or internal courtyard), and while I had a badge I didn't have to show it because they gave me the military equivalent rank of Major General. Most days, I had my lunch with General Wheeler in his own mess, unless he had a guest.

Ed Note: General Earle "Bus" Wheeler, USAF, was the longest-serving Chief of the Joint Staff.

At the Pentagon, my job was to comment on the papers written by the officers working in the Joint Chiefs of Staff (J-5). A project would come to J-5 and an officer would be given responsibility for the project. He would write a draft paper and he would have to clear it with all the others "Js": J-2, -3, and -4. Their goal was not to jiggle a paper after it had been cleared. So my job wasn't really a job, but it was to look pretty. I could go to the daily meeting of the Staff, and I did. I could speak on my own initiative, and I did. But I rarely had an officer come to me about how to skin the cat, how to write a paper. Because I was on the exchange program, I rarely went back over to the State Department. I felt rather cut off.

West Germany:

After the Pentagon I went to Bonn, Germany as the Political-Military Counselor. This was a lot like the job in Rome. It was a matter of taking care of all the diplomatic problems that need to be solved when you have lots of U.S. troops stationed in another country. And their weapons. By then the business of the stationing of nuclear missiles was a big deal. Again, it was Titan missiles. After the Cuban Missile Crisis, we wanted to remove our missiles from Europe. I handled this directly for our Ambassador and I had a lot of Foreign Ministry work.

Bonn and Bad Godesburg were small towns. When (John) **McCloy was High Commissioner, we built with counterpart funds whole blocks of apartments, two story buildings. The State Department then used them for housing for practically anyone at the Embassy.**

One of the biggest problems we had regarding the Titan missiles was different from the situation previously in Rome. The Italians wanted us to get rid of the missiles on their soil. They saw them as potential targets. But the Germans seemed to have an affection for their missiles. They were seen as a deterrent.

I was on a three-year assignment in Bonn. I knew I was facing selection out. At that time, I was an FSO-2. (Ed note: Under the old, pre-1980 personnel system; this would now be ranked as a Counselor). **I asked to be returned to the United States after two years. I had one assignment, which was squashed. It was the negotiation for the status of the former Japanese islands that they had gotten from Germany. The U.S. Navy really went to bat for a political advisor. I was appointed to the job for about three days. There was a meeting at the Pentagon attended by the Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of Defense, and others and it was decided to hold the job open for a Naval Officer, so I didn't get it.**

Winding Down:

For the next two years, I literally walked the corridors of the State Department. I was officially assigned to INR (the Intelligence and Research Bureau**), and I had a series of temporary jobs. First at the Pentagon as a political-military officer. Then I worked on a problem at Carlisle** (Pennsylvania) **at the War College. As an FSO-2, I had the military equivalent rank of one-star general. The policy problem I tackled was on the tactical use of nuclear weapons. When General Abrahms got back from Vietnam, he took one look at the report and suppressed it. I think he wanted to keep tactical nukes in the Army's kit, as a usable asset. No countries that had tactical nukes stationed on their soil actually controlled them. Rather, special U.S. Army units controlled them. These were Titan missiles. They were secret but not secret. Discussion of their existence, even at Carlisle, was seen as politically risky. Even though the Soviets knew damn well where they all were.**

I felt a bit bitter about not having a full-time assignment, about just moving from short-term project to short-term project. But I stuck it out. I knew I was facing retirement. I knew that I'd get a bigger annuity the longer I stayed in the Service. I officially retired in 1973. I was officially in the Service for 34 years, including military service, as well as service at "undesirable and unhealthy posts." That referred to just one post, the Dominican Republic, which really wasn't unhealthy or undesirable, but I went down there for six months and got credit for nine months -- time-and-a-half.

After I retired, I made a half-hearted attempt to get a job with a think tank, but I decided I didn't want it. Those jobs were really wrong for me. Someone would call for a study on something, and you know from the question what the answer is that they wanted. I didn't want to play ball. Right at that time, my mother died and I had a small inheritance. I decided that if I could stay in until the last moment, I could make it on my annuity and the small inheritance. Then an uncle died, and my

sister and I were his sole heirs, and this gave us a little more money. Then my father's widow died, and my wife died, too. So I did a lot of carpentry. And I moved up to Connecticut when I married Katie in 1980. Since moving up to Connecticut, I was President of the Cornwall Historical Society for eighteen years. I was the head of the Housatonic River Commission for a year. I did other community work as well.

What was my favorite Foreign Service job? I suppose that Trieste was the most professionally rewarding assignment. Also, I had an independent job in Rome that I liked. I didn't deign to take my problems to the head of the political section. I just did my own thing.

I look back on the Iran assignment as a particularly rewarding assignment. You see in my home bits of Iran, art and other things. But in Iran, even at that early stage, we were having rocks thrown at us, but nobody got hurt when I was there.

I think that for most people in the Foreign Service, in the final analysis, a job was a job. It was something that kept you busy and interested. You know, I never asked for an assignment. We never "bid" on jobs in my time, as they do now. I just went where I was sent. I think that my only regret is that I never learned languages well enough.

I don't think anyone will ever read this product to learn about how some diplomatic trick was solved. I was always a "briefcase handler." I was on the train of the boss. I had the background to whatever problem was the problem of the day in my briefcase. So much of what a diplomat does is just that. I guess that if you join the Foreign Service you may not make history, but you get a pretty good view of history being made. And there are moments, like when I flew into Angola once while doing POLAD work and I was greeted at the airport in Luanda by two of my A-100 students. They made me proud.

End of interview