

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

SHEILA GOODGALL

Interviewed by: Dan Whitman
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Background

Born in Randfontein, South Africa September 10, 1946

BA in Social Work, University of the Western Cape, South Africa 1964–1968

MA in Political Science, University of Pretoria, South Africa 1986–1987

Johannesburg, South Africa—Social Worker/Mental Health Society

Johannesburg, South Africa—Social Worker/Department of Coloured Affairs
1980s

Began working at the U.S. Consulate General in Johannesburg, South Africa
1989

Johannesburg, South Africa—FSN (Foreign Service National) Cultural Assistant
1989–2009

International cultural boycott
Nelson Mandela’s release from prison
Voting rights expansion

INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Ms. Goodgall.]

Q: This is Dan Whitman. We are interviewing Sheila Goodgall. We are in the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria, South Africa. It is March 6, 2009.

Sheila Goodgall, you have been working at the U.S. Embassy for how long?

GOODGALL: Twenty-one years.

Q: Twenty-one years.

GOODGALL: Almost. Twenty years so, far; going for twenty-one.

Q: We are going to move up to the point when you started your career. Twenty-one years mean 1989, I guess.

GOODGALL: Absolutely.

Q: This was a key period in the history of your country. Nelson Mandela was released the year after, and elections four years after that. Obviously, enormous changes.

Before we get into the historical narrative, I want to know more about you. Could you tell us a little bit about the family you came from, the society you belonged to, and the education you had?

GOODGALL: I was born in Randfontein, which is in the west end of Johannesburg, a mining type area.

Q: Sorry. When you mention the name of a place, could you spell it?

GOODGALL: Okay.

Randfontein. That's on the west end of Johannesburg. It was 1946. On September 10, I was born.

Q: Was it a beautiful day? Do you remember?

GOODGALL: Nonetheless. I was born to a teenage mother and a teacher father, who soon after I was born, defected from the education profession. That's when Bantu education was introduced, and he refused to work under those circumstances and subscribe to those philosophies.

Q: Please explain the context for people not familiar with the concept of Bantu education.

First, not to be American and obsessive about this, but we have to talk about race at the very beginning. South Africa was divided and everybody knows that. Where did your family fit into the South African system?

GOODGALL: My family is like the member nation itself. My father's family came from Limpopo, a place where predominantly the Pedi people come from. My mother was from mixed descent. Her parents were even more mixed. My great-grandfather came from Russia. He was a Russian Jew. He came here and met my grandmother who was a Botswana woman. From there on, that line of the family was extremely mixed.

Q: The system classified your family as what?

GOODGALL: My mother was classified as colored and so was my grandmother, but not from the word go. From the word go, she was just a person, but eventually she became colored.

Q: And your father?

GOODGALL: My father was what we know as African, and we are black.

Q: Let's go back to what you said about your father's refusal to be part of the Bantu education system.

GOODGALL: My father was a very well-known journalist. He became a well-known journalist.

Q: His name?

GOODGALL: His name was Stanley Motjuwadi. He came from a family of teachers, except of course grandfather; he was not educated.

Bantu education was mainly introduced to subject black people to an inferior type of education. The philosophy at that time was, don't educate them too much. Give them just enough education to be able to be subservient. Up until then...

Q: I'm sorry. The timeframe, when was Bantu education officially introduced? The 1960s?

GOODGALL: I was born in the 1950s, so this was more or less in the 1960s. The late 1950s or early 1960s.

Q: I think it was a de facto (true in fact) practice that perhaps became de jure (in accordance with the law) in the 1960s.

GOODGALL: Actually not. Prior to that Dan, we were a dependant. Remember this was a British colony. So basically, British education was imported into South Africa. Besides that, we also had all these missionaries: Catholic missionaries, Methodist missionaries, who established schools. Up to this day, some of those schools still exist. They have changed form. They have changed management styles. But those schools were primarily responsible. In fact, my father's teacher was a man called Trevor Huddleston, who was a renowned teacher-minister, as well as an anti-apartheid activist.

Q: Are you saying that previous to the Bantu education policy, education was in fact more available and of higher quality?

GOODGALL: I wouldn't go to the more available, but I would definitely say higher quality. My mother, for example, had(the recording was garbled but most likely the reference is to the British education system's O level), which is just like entry-

level high school. Her knowledge of history, she was well read. A lot of people compare the to today's matric (matriculation) basically. So, the standard of education was extremely high.

Q: And your father was part of that system?

GOODGALL: My father was educated in that system. Then he came to Pretoria to study as a teacher. His best friend was named Desmond Tutu. Together they acquired their matric certificates. Desmond Tutu went on to do whatever.

Q: Sheila, I worked with you for four years and you never told me these things.

GOODGALL: Ask me these things.

Q: Moreover, we have something in common. My grandfather was also a Russian Jew. So, we are probably related.

GOODGALL: We might be. I've got one great-auntie left from that family tree: the Sutu Botswana mother and my great-grandfather. My dream, when I stop working, is to write her life story. She is still up and about. We are trying to collect documents.

Q: Her name?

GOODGALL: Her name is Shana Goodgall. She is using the surname that I am using. That's where Goodgall comes from.

Q: This is your aunt?

GOODGALL: This is my great-aunt from my mother's side.

Q: Still alive?

GOODGALL: Yes, still alive. In my culture, she is my grandmother. We don't use the term great-aunt. It's a line of grandmothers. She is the youngest.

Q: More than interesting.

GOODGALL: Very interesting.

Q: I am very cross that you never mentioned this before.

GOODGALL: Desmond Tutu's son, his name is Trevor, so is my younger brother's. He is Dr. Trevor Motjuwadi. Trevor Huddleston: if you go back and look it up, he's from South Africa. If you read some books, you will find Trevor Huddleston.

Q: Was Tutu's son named after Trevor Huddleston?

GOODGALL: Yes, and so was my younger brother. In European terms, my half-brother, because my mother and my father never got married.

Q: A half-brother, but a whole person.

GOODGALL: So, my mother, on the other hand, was uneducated. She was uneducated in terms of formal education, but extremely educated.

Q: Please explain. In other words, she did not have...

GOODGALL: My father was much older than my mother. So, when he was a teacher trainee, we were born, my older sister and I. My mother on the other hand was a high school girl who became pregnant. It was the end of her school career.

The two of them eventually matured into different directions I guess. They never got married, but they remained very good friends. I wouldn't say they remained friends at that time. By the time I knew who I was, they were quite civil. We knew that we had these two families.

Q: This would be in the 1960s.

GOODGALL: Yes. By that time, they were civil. We would get on the bus and visit my dad for the weekend and that kind of thing. We got to know my stepmother, who is the only surviving parent at the moment. We still have that wonderful relationship, which I appreciate. It's the one good thing that they did.

Q: Let's go back to your father's reaction when Bantu education became an official policy.

GOODGALL: He stopped teaching. He became a journalist.

Q: I think you implied, but tell me why he stopped teaching.

GOODGALL: When you teach under Bantu education, then you officially start to work for the South African government, number one. First of all, you ascribe to the teaching policies of the day. So, they knew that they were going to teach what they objected to, what they don't want to know. They would be breeding a new inferior type of student. My dad didn't want to do that.

Q: So, he left teaching entirely?

GOODGALL: He left teaching.

Q: And he did what?

GOODGALL: He went to work for a very old newspaper called The Rand Daily Mail.

Q: Looking back, I know you were a child, but do you think that he felt he was contributing more to South Africa's future as a journalist than as a teacher?

GOODGALL: I don't know how he felt at the time. I never spoke to him about it. I think he was making a statement.

Q: What sorts of stories did he do at The Rand Daily Mail? Local stories?

GOODGALL: Local stories. I think he probably started off as a junior reporter doing the crime stuff. At the time, there was a lot going on. People being taken from Sophiatown, from Pretoria, from Witwatersrand. There was always a story.

One of the stories that he like to tell was at that time black people were not allowed to enter a liquor store. The first crime would be that you had a bottle of whiskey on you. The second would be how did you obtain it? He used to like to tell stories about how they...

Q: Did they publish these stories in the newspaper?

GOODGALL: No. It just became part of what he was saying. I remember The Rand Daily Mail, but I can't remember being old enough to really realize what went inside. Telling the South African story was a part of the psyche. It was a part of the operation of the day. It was not something you could get away from.

Q: It was a very famous newspaper and I certainly heard about it before I knew anything about South Africa. Did it have relative or complete freedom to publish whatever it wanted to? You just said that you were not old enough to analyze, but is your sense that it was left, center?

GOODGALL: I think it was left.

Q: Do you have any knowledge that there was any self-censorship? Was there any scrutiny? Were they under observation?

GOODGALL: Everything was under observation. There was just nothing that wasn't. But sometimes, some people had a little bit more room to move, for one reason or another. Trevor Huddleston, for example, because I think he was English, a teacher, and a minister, he had a little bit more room to move. Just like Tutu had more room to move in criticizing in terms of saying things that other normal people were not able to say.

Q: Let's completely break the chronology for a moment.

Earlier this week, Desmond Tutu said that he was delighted that the International Criminal Court indicted President Bashir of Sudan. Have you had any recent contact with Desmond Tutu?

GOODGALL: No. He doesn't really know us well. If I would come up to him and I would say, "I am Jimmy's child," which was the known name for my dad. He was never called by his formal name, Stanley. For example, when my dad died, Tutu was then Archbishop in Cape Town. He came down from Cape Town. We were all at my dad's house. He greeted my then husband and said, "Hello Trevor."

We had to then point out that was not Trevor; the one over there was Trevor. So, he knew...

Q: He knew who it was.

GOODGALL: He knew how it all came together. I think as he moved on in his work and my dad moved on in his life, my dad stayed in Randfontein all his life until he passed. Desmond Tutu obviously became a very well-known public figure. We knew that they were friends.

Q: So, they went to school together?

GOODGALL: They went to teachers' college together, I think. That's the connection. Desmond Tutu was actually the man who came to give the eulogy for my dad. It was only then that I heard some of the stories, at my dad's funeral. Then, I realized how close the relationship really was.

Q: What year was that?

GOODGALL: My dad died in 1989. No, my dad died before we could vote, so he died in 1990.

Q: In 1990, the year of Mandela's release?

GOODGALL: The year of Mandela's release, that is when my dad died.

Q: And Tutu gave the eulogy?

GOODGALL: Yes, he did. They used to call one another. They were both very fragile, very small-boned men. They used to call one another, "Brittle Bones."

Q: Wonderful!

Okay, let's return to your own personal chronology.

Your dad went off to work at The Rand Daily Mail. You were still living in Johannesburg at this time?

GOODGALL: It was Randfontein, which is west of Johannesburg. People from Johannesburg, like Soweto, would call us like, a little bit more out of the mainstream.

Q: I know it was very stratified. Soweto, on the one hand, world famous; Johannesburg Central Business District, the wealthy elite...

GOODGALL: It's not actually in terms of those perceptions, but in terms of social perceptions that somebody coming from Pretoria North, is more conservative and would be regarded as less than it was than Johannesburg.

Q: More provincial?

GOODGALL: Yes.

Q: The West Rand? So, you were considered like country people?

GOODGALL: More country-ish. I think there was quite a difference when I went to Johannesburg Park Station for the first time. I remember that it was a train ride with my mother. I was going to stay with my mother then in Soweto. I was staying with this great-aunt, the one surviving person from the Russian connection.

Q: The Rainbow Nation?

GOODGALL: Yes.

Q: So, your first trip on the train with your mother to Johannesburg. Do you remember it vividly?

GOODGALL: I was coming from Potchefstroom, where I started my high school. My mother and my great-aunt, being the youngest of this line, had a very good relationship. My great-aunt taught her everything there is to know, from handbags to makeup and sewing. They were very good friends. At one point, they stayed together. I was taken from Potchefstroom, where I was going to school, to stay with them in Soweto.

On this trip, by the time we got to Perfenny Station, it was like...

First, we got to Johannesburg Station, which is called Park Station. When we got there, all the lights were on. I was like somebody who if you take them from a little place and put them in the middle of New York.

Q: Another planet?

GOODGALL: Yes. I was just on another planet. I couldn't speak English. I wasn't well spoken. My mother had been a city girl for so long. She had us very young. She was in her prime, a city girl. She was extremely disgusted because she met, I remember, a very handsome man who was her friend. He asked, "How are you?" I couldn't answer.

Q: What was the language in your family?

GOODGALL: I grew up speaking Setswana and Afrikaans, both as first languages.

Q: And no English at this point. When you were 10? Fifteen?

GOODGALL: I was 13 at the time when I set foot for the first time in this bright city, Johannesburg.

Q: What was your first impression? Was it a voyage of discovery? Or was it a forbidden world?

GOODGALL: I loved it! All these lights! I grew up with candle light in Bekkersdal, which is 50 minutes from Randfontein, but more rural or remote. Those people were much more conservative. I grew up in a conservative center with a grandmother and a grandfather.

Q: Was it conservative politically or socially?

GOODGALL: Socially. It was much more culturally entrenched with the man of the house, and that kind of thing. The girls were not streetwise.

Q: Conservative has two meanings. Were the political and the social conservatism completely separate?

GOODGALL: My impression is that South Africans generally were never politically conservative. I think the stresses of the day made everybody extremely alert to their own personal circumstances. Maybe it was more conservative in that you wouldn't find as much defiance as perhaps you would in the city. When things really heated up, it was those remote areas where there was a lot of rebellion, much more than what you would find in the city, and a lot of political violence.

There was a lot of political violence also in Natal, which is not all city. There was a lot of political violence in Bekkersdal.

So, I don't want to leave my mother out of the equation. I had these two families. My mum, my sister and I stayed together until I was about two years old. Then my mum got married to somebody. My dad got married to my stepmother. My grandmother's sister – the other grandmother – at that point did not have any grandchildren. They just said, okay, you will have Sheila.

Q: So, you were raised neither by your biological nor by your stepmother?

GOODGALL: I was raised by everybody.

Q: It takes a village.

GOODGALL: At various intervals, but I never stayed with my father. I would never say that my father raised me. I would not say that.

Q: But he was married to this person you call your stepmother?

GOODGALL: Absolutely.

Q: Was she involved in your upbringing?

GOODGALL: No, if upbringing means people who were involved in my day-to-day growing, then no. They were people who were important others, people I knew. That relationship went through a variety of different phases.

Q: So, your main connection was with your biological mother and the maternal side of the family?

GOODGALL: With her maternal aunt.

Q: You said you went through phases. Did you live in different places, different homes?

GOODGALL: Yes, different homes and different people. A little bit with my mum, until I became the grandchild they didn't have, and moved over.

When her own grandchildren arrived maybe five or six years after that, the relationship changed. I was no longer the cherry on the cake. I didn't like that.

Q: You were jealous of the younger ones.

GOODGALL: I wouldn't say I was jealous of the younger ones. I think sometimes it is just difficult. Your own grandchildren come and so your loyalties shift. Those were things that people never spoke about. It was like you are a child and you accept that. I noted that suddenly I was different; I was the other in the whole equation. I was not a direct descendant in that family. I won't get the shoes as fast as those two.

The good thing was I was always the one who always had a little bit more tenacity than the rest. I loved reading.

Q: You had more tenacity because circumstances made you be more independent?

GOODGALL: I don't know.

Q: Or is it your own natural born character? We are not going to talk about your stubbornness.

GOODGALL: I am not going to go that far. I always had that. I am very much a dreamer. Contradictory to what people think, I love to spend time alone. I love friends. I fit in both ways. I can remove myself and be perfectly okay with that. I used to spend a lot of time thinking about things. I am very much somebody who always analyzed situations.

Q: Sorry. Is there a link at all that you were not with your biological mother? You referred to yourself as, "The Other." So, you weren't exactly the central part of the home. Is this why you became more reliant on yourself for private thinking, dreaming and reading?

GOODGALL: No, I cannot say how that came about. For example, I would outplay anybody. If there was a game to play, I would be the last one to get tired of it. If I didn't want to play, if I wanted to spend time by myself, I would do that.

For example, I remember, I never forget that I would read so much. At the beginning of each year, we would get reading books, one book for the year. There were a whole lot of children of course. I would read mine and go through everybody else's books. When that was done, then it was "stop" and my library for the year was closed.

I would pick up papers. Sometimes the paper would have had a little bit of rain and it would form like a layer. I remember very vividly cleaning this newspaper and reading it at that point.

I loved my grandmother and my grandfather, but I didn't want to be treated differently. It wasn't entirely their fault because those children always had parents around us. So, they were just getting the attention that was perhaps due to them. But I didn't want to be different. I wanted to be just like them.

I started defecting to my mother. I have got a history of defection.

Q: Aha, I see the trip has come up three or four times now. Soon, you will run out of things to defect from.

GOODGALL: I always warn my children that I have done this before and to just be warned.

That was quite a major crime in the way we were brought up. It wasn't like now. A parent was a parent. They had the ultimate say. I was the one child who could remove myself.

Q: A crime because of the conservative setting. A child must be obedient.

GOODGALL: I child must not be heard, that kind of thing. For some reason, it was odd making a conscious decision. I would go to my mother. She would take me back until they could take me back no longer. I remained very good friends with my grandmother who brought me up. I still loved them. I am told they understood what I wanted. I kept on doing it.

I would go to school and after school, I would not go back to them. After school, I would go straight to my mother. When my mother came home from work, it was too late to take me back. They had to wait for a weekend. They grew tired. I stayed with my mother for a while again.

When I reached high school, I didn't want to go to the local high school. That's how I got to Potchefstroom. I didn't ask for Potchefstroom, but I told my mother that I didn't feel like I fit in. The reason for that was that the children in Randfontein were a little bit more streetwise than I was. You must remember that I grew up in conservative Bekkersdal, where you do your chores and then you come in.

These kids already were extremely outgoing in a different way. They were going out to clubs. One thing I remember distinctly was many of the girls fell pregnant by the third year of high school. These were my reasons why I didn't think I fit in this particular high school.

They took me to Potchefstroom, which really fit in well with me at the time. It too was a conservative community.

Q: Going to Potchefstroom, did that mean paying extra money? Was it private? Did you have an easy choice?

GOODGALL: I think they had a harder choice, because here is this child who wants this school and what are we going to do with her? So, there was a family member in Potchefstroom, my mum's cousin who I could visit over weekends. I would go to school in a colored township and come to my aunt's home on the weekends, which was in an African township. I went to a colored school, coming from this mixed family. These two worlds were adjacent, but apart.

Q: The mechanics of leaving a school district in Bekkersdal and going some distance to Potchefstroom how did this work with the Education Ministry? Or did you just choose where you wanted to go to school?

GOODGALL: You just choose where you want to go to school, get a transfer card, and you get accepted in the other school. It was simple. It was not like moving from that school to a white school. It was fairly simple, provided you did it on time and you got a space.

Q: So, we call it a transfer.

In the terminology of that time, you transferred from a colored school to a colored school.

GOODGALL: Yes. The same arrangement existed between Bekkersdal and Randfontein. Bekkersdal was where my grandparents were and who I stayed with. Randfontein had the colored school and that is where I went to school. I would take a bus from one township to another. I lived in these two worlds: colored, African; school, come home.

Randfontein is different from any other place that I know. In Randfontein, everybody could speak all the languages. The division was not as stark as it would be between Mitchells Plain and Khayelitsha. It was more similar, despite whatever it was the apartheid regime wanted to do. The families were all so intermingled.

There were certain things that made it different, like the school. We would all be together, but we would go to different schools. So, the Potchefstroom arrangement wasn't that different for me. I lived with a family in Promosa, and then went to my aunt's house on the weekends in Ikageng. My mother would then give boarding fees.

I lived with a lovely family, a single mother with three kids, her sister, and her brother who was at the time older than me. He was three classes ahead of me. The other girls were all younger than me. That's where I started my high school career.

Q: So, it was your decision to leave Bekkersdal and go to Potchefstroom? Did you feel you had a greater chance of success?

GOODGALL: Yes. Success was extremely important to me, not living the way I see people around me live. I always wanted to be somebody, for as long as I can remember. That school just looked like a place where I could become somebody.

Q: Were you correct that Potchefstroom was a better opportunity?

GOODGALL: It was a better opportunity. It wasn't the best. Sooner or later, it got contaminated with the same things that I feared. You start to realize that it is about you and the environment.

Q: I don't understand "contaminated."

GOODGALL: I am using bad words.

What I am saying is the same problems that occurred at Krugersdorp High School where I didn't want to go. It was a high school only for the children coming from Randfontein. I didn't go to school in Bekkersdal. I went to school in Randfontein where my mother lived, because that's where my grandmother was. From finishing primary school, the elders – my mother, my grandmother – said that in that case, they would send me to Potchefstroom.

One thing about my mother was that if you told her that you wanted to go to school in the moon, she would make that happen. School to her was the most important thing.

Q: You went to Potchefstroom, and it was a better opportunity, but you say in later years that something went wrong.

GOODGALL: Some of the same social problems I saw surfaced: the teenage pregnancies, the drinking, and that kind of thing, but to a much lesser extent than Krugersdorp.

I was 14. My first entry was in a good home. The woman who ran it was a genius. She worked in a furniture shop. She raised her three kids, took care of her sister and her brother, and she took me in. Also, she was selling alcohol. And there was law and order. This was all in one person.

Q: So, this was the work of five people?

GOODGALL: Yes. To this day, I respect her.

I stayed with her for a while. Meanwhile, there was a lot of abuse of power in the old conservative system by parents and grandparents, because these people were never questioned. They were inherently good. The world just saw good in them.

My aunt, my mum's cousin in Potchefstroom, was a really evil woman; like a storybook evil. During Standard Six, that was entry level high school, I stayed with this family. My mum would send the boarding and the pocket money, but it never made its way to the people. The people started to question it. I started to question my mother. Then, we realized that we were being taken for a ride. At one point, in order for her to pocket that money, she took me from those people. I stayed with them all year. They were all in that house.

I remember that at the end of Standard Six, I got two books at the year-end prize giving. I didn't like her, as I realized as I grew older; but that's politics for another day.

I was extremely proud at that time. I got these two books for being hard-working. That was the first time that I saw the word, "conscientious."

Q: So, you were learning English in Potchefstroom.

GOODGALL: You do English as a second language. Afrikaans was my first language. Also, in Potchefstroom, I noted for the first time that I had some creative writing ability. We had a poetry writing competition. I wrote a poem. They disqualified my poem because it was apparently copied; I could not have written it. That's what they said. I am so sorry that I don't have a copy. I never kept a copy. I think I was so disgusted. Nonetheless...

Q: Now we can say it.

GOODGALL: Nonetheless, after that, my aunt told my grandmother, the one who brought me up, that this was not a good place for the child. Those people sell alcohol, so she must stay with my aunt. So, I started travelling between the two.

It didn't work well. She overworked me. I worked like a slave. I never got time to study. I was very, very unhappy, but remained strong. When she went home to have a baby, her husband tried to molest me. I never told them, but that's when I decided to defect, while she was having the baby.

I was going to school. First of all, I told them that I was going to scream the roof off. Secondly, I was smaller than the rest of the other girls. I told some of the bigger girls who were my friends and protectors. It was a good strategy to have friends, big and bold. They told me what was going to happen to me. They told me you are not going back. Then I defected to my friend's house. That is where I stayed for the rest of the year.

Q: You defected. Someone took you into their house?

GOODGALL: Yes, I took a bus to school. This uncle tried to molest me, his wife's little niece. Then I went to school the next day, but never came back. It was too late to save my year. I had already done so badly and lost so much that I failed the year. That's when my mother decided to pick me up.

They were so trusting of one another. My mother never contacted, never questioned, anything.

My great aunt was staying with my mother. To this day, she tells people about this letter that I wrote. I told my mum and my aunt that they were too trusting, too lax, and these people thought I was hatched out of a chicken, but I could see exactly what they were doing.

Q: So, just to get it straight: you left your mother's aunt's house...

GOODGALL: No, my mother's cousin's house, my aunt's.

Q: Okay. You went to school and did not come back. Where was it that you went?

GOODGALL: School was in the adjacent township, in Promosa. I used to commute up and down. Then I just went to my friend's house. My friend said to her big poor family, "Here's another mouth. Here's my friend."

Q: And they took you in.

GOODGALL: Yes. I stayed there until the end of the year. I had a great time. We were very, very poor, but very, very happy. I instantly got an older brother and was very proud.

I admired him. He was very talented, very handsome. My friend became my family for the rest of the year.

Q: Do you think this was unique? Was this the normal thing in that community; that a family with children would accept to take another child, just like that? Was that unusual?

GOODGALL: Not

End of S Goodgall 1

Start S Goodgall 2

Q: Okay, we have just flipped the mike.

I was just asking if the practice of taking a child into a family already with children was unusual?

GOODGALL: No, just look how flexible and commutable I was. It wasn't all that unusual. There were variations of good people. These people would be at the top of the list of the very best.

Q: So, you were very flexible and you were also very lucky.

GOODGALL: I was extremely lucky to find this family. I think I learned some lessons in life.

I didn't come from a very rich background myself, so I knew what poverty was, but not to the extent that I saw it there. For example, our treat was on Friday nights when we would have scrambled eggs. I could not drink white tea anymore because I was used to drinking black coffee, but milk was a luxury. Where I came from, my grandmother had cows and chickens in Bekkersdal. Eggs were something you just went in and got.

Q: Economically, you moved down.

GOODGALL: Way down.

Q: You learned life lessons. Could you articulate some of the lessons, or could we get to that later?

GOODGALL: Maybe we'll get to that later. I have learned a lot of things. Let me continue so we can get to the end of my thing.

At the end of the year, my mum came to fetch me. She didn't know how trusting she was. She went to look for me where she left me, at my aunt's house. When my aunt came back from maternity leave and found out that this child had defected, she didn't even bother to go and look for me. When my mum asked my auntie, "How are you all? I have come to fetch my child."

Q: Where is the child?

GOODGALL: "Don't know. Your child left here. When I came back after maternity leave, your child was gone."

So, my mum goes on to this detective. The first shop she enters in this township, she asked if they had heard of the child Sheila Goodgall. "Yes Auntie, we can take you."

My mum came in. She was a city girl, working in Johannesburg town, a beautiful woman. She was well-dressed, with English manners. She was brought up by my aunt and they all had this air about them.

My mother looked so down on my family. I did not like it. She didn't say anything, but she didn't need to say anything. She just didn't understand the dynamics at play here. I remember distinctly hours of dirty playing, and baking a big cake for a party on Sunday. And happy.

Q: And so, you had no contact at all with your mother for several months.

GOODGALL: Telephones were not a given. You just didn't have a telephone in the house. You wrote letters. I had written them a letter to tell them that I was not a stupid girl, that they should check the scene out. And they didn't. Oh well, I told you.

So, my mother was extremely proper and spoke to these people nicely...

Q: But condescendingly?

GOODGALL: Kind of. I would be lying if I said I didn't notice that. I will always remember it. She felt sorry afterwards when we could speak like mother and daughter, like two women.

Q: She felt her daughter had been déclassé.

GOODGALL: She couldn't figure it out. This house was baking. The kids were running around. My mother was extremely neat and picky. She stayed with another woman that way. They were making it in Soweto. They had a little garden, a house. They went to classes. They had educated friends, even if they were not educated. They were on a different level. I couldn't care less. I was happy.

I would say she discovered me one day too early. There was a party the next day.

Q: You missed the party.

GOODGALL: I missed the party! I missed the rest of the baking. After all greetings, niceties and formalities, I was ordered to wash and put on a brand-new dress. I was really the poorest child on the block, wearing funny shoes. She had everything in a bag. When I walked out of that house, I was very sad. I made sure that my mother understood that these were my people.

This is another thing that I remember distinctly. She understood that these were smart people. When we walked down the lane, I was talking about the separation, not impressed with her behavior at all.

Q: At the age of 13, you had just...

GOODGALL: I think by then I was 14. I saw Johannesburg much later than 13.

I was all dressed up and waving to my friends along the street. I was just a girl. She brought me this overdress, printed and beautiful. I was leaving with mixed feelings. It was nice for people to see me in a different light.

Q: And the occasion for leaving was the end of the school year?

GOODGALL: It was the end of the school year and she came to fetch me.

Q: For the summer?

GOODGALL: I only learned later that my mother was very, very sick. She was extremely sick. She had an ectopic pregnancy, but she didn't know it at that time. She could hardly walk. I cannot explain to you the distance to my aunt's house and the transport. She got off to get me in the transport, and we were taking the train and the bus, etcetera, to get to Soweto.

She eventually had the full picture. She could not keep on doing this and had to keep me with her.

Come January, the doctors could not find out what was wrong. She was sick, and she was looking for a school for me. That picture of this sick woman looking for a school for me made me extremely hard working. Besides, I already loved the idea of education. They didn't have to force me. It made me extremely competent.

I repeated my second year of high school. Fortunately for my mum, a doctor friend of ours came to visit from Swaziland. My great-aunt told him that this woman had been sick. It took him less than five minutes to tell my mum the situation. He had friends at Baragwaneth Hospital and he took my mother there. She was operated on and her life was spared.

She not only did the trip, we walked to look for a high school. Now, I am in Johannesburg. I am still commuting. I love living in these two communities, which are classified as an African and a colored community. I am staying with my aunt and my mum in Soweto. My great-aunt looks like you and she has been in Soweto all her life.

Q: Light skinned?

GOODGALL: Yes, her father was a white man, a Russian guy.

Q: I am certain that we are related.

GOODGALL: So, I finished my high school. I failed one more year. I failed Standard Nine. So, I failed throughout high school. I failed Standard Nine because like other children who get their sense of “I am a girl and I am having fun.” Early on, those Krugersdorp kids I was scared of. So instead of Nine, I discovered all of the fun.

I went camping. I went dancing. I also tried to study, but it just wasn’t enough of a high standard and I failed.

Q: You said you were very committed to education.

GOODGALL: I was. But there was a switch. I came to the city and I have grown. Then I discovered these other things, but I was not mature enough to handle it. I couldn’t balance homework and fun. I tried.

Q: You were the introverted reflective reader. Actually, it doesn’t work in school two years in a row.

GOODGALL: No, the first year was not by choice. That year was certainly not by choice. That was someone deprived completed. I came from school and worked like a slave.

Q: Molested by the husband.

GOODGALL: He tried to. Fortunately, I had a big mouth. I was very reflective. I was a little big woman. I had a son who showed those tendencies, and I wanted to kill everybody who wanted to wake him up. I said, “He is clearly awake. He is enjoying his life. Let him be.”

He had elements of that dreaminess. People would say, “You’ve got this child?”

That was fine.

Nonetheless, two years later, I am growing and discovering fun. My commitment was still there, but now I had to juggle growing up and having fun, and reading.

Q: Lots to do.

GOODGALL: I had too much to do. And I discovered I liked sports. So, I ran. I played netball. I got chosen for the school team. All of a sudden, my life was full.

Well, I learned my lesson, and I moved on. And being my mum’s child, education was not an option. I was going to go back to school.

Q: You mentioned in passing Baragwaneth Hospital. I think we should explain this. It sounds like an African word, but it’s not. It’s Scottish or Welsh.

GOODGALL: I don't know.

Q: I believe it was a Scotsman. I believe it was the largest hospital in the world or something?

GOODGALL: In Africa certainly. At that time, it had the best doctors. It was clean. It was in Soweto.

My mother's life was saved in that hospital by this doctor friend who came to visit. I'm not sure if he was a gynecologist. He probably was. I can't see a General Practitioner beating all those other guys.

I finished high school, and I never defected since. I did later on in life.

Q: You took a vacation from defection?

GOODGALL: I took a vacation from defection, but everybody knew I had a tendency.

I am renowned for that.

Then I went to the University of the Western Cape, which was the designated university. I graduated as a social worker from Western Cape. I met my husband in Cape Town who was then studying at the commercial technical. Soon after I qualified, I got married, and moved to Pretoria. That's how I got here.

I have to tell you that I actually defected one more time. I got married.

Q: Approximately what year was that?

GOODGALL: I got married in 1982. I moved with my then husband to Secunda where he had an apprenticeship. Sasol has just been begun. They were looking for these young colored black kids to take in, not to train in the best professions, but in some of the professions. He became an instrument mechanic, although I believe that if he put his mind to it, he had the ability to become an engineer. That was not the offer.

I had my first son. I got pregnant before I got married. I got married in May and my son was born in September. I think in my marriage I started to go through a personality change. Whereas everybody knew that I was headstrong. In fact, that's what my own father told my husband, that he was in for a hard time. Contrary to that, I became timid, or I think I never got my way in that marriage.

Q: Were you submissive?

GOODGALL: I don't think...

Q: Not the real Sheila.

GOODGALL: I am still leaving a little bit for survival. I stayed a year. I couldn't get a job. They wouldn't hire a black, or even a colored, social worker, as I was classified.

One day, my dad had a job to cover where he had to pass through Secunda. He made a stop to find out if this was now my ambition, to be cleaning and cooking. After my dad left, I did some thinking for a couple of days. I said to Burt, "I am looking for a job. I am not getting a job in this place. My mother spent all this money educating me and I am not sitting here any more. My son is now one year old. I am starting to apply for a job. I got a job and I'll see you. When you are ready, you will come."

Q: So, there were some social constraints on you. Your talents were not being used. You weren't encouraged. Was this the social setting or the individual you were married to?

GOODGALL: It was a combination. Frankly, it was more the social setting than him at that point. I think that in the social setting, I was getting comfortable. The man goes to work. I am cooking and cleaning. I am not thinking much of my own future. When my dad said this, I put my foot down and said, "I don't care what you say, I am leaving."

I got a job in Johannesburg. I didn't take the job because he negotiated with me about why didn't I stay in Pretoria where his parents were. I had a choice of two jobs then: one in Johannesburg and one in Pretoria. Why didn't you take the Pretoria job where my parents are? My mum is a housewife and she can look after the kid?

It seemed like a fair enough arrangement. I moved to his parents' house with my kid, and I started working. Less than a year later, he gave up his job and moved to Pretoria. It wasn't a requirement. I didn't say, "Give up your job." I was just going to work.

I stayed. Three kids were born from that marriage. That's a whole other dynamic. You know that he became very abusive. He was abusive from the beginning. One day, the Sheila I knew, the Sheila my parents knew, just woke up. I just came to be.

I was working here. I decided that I just wanted to do something else. I didn't want to study further in social work. I left the profession to work here at the embassy. I got a political science degree. I enrolled as an evening student at the University of Pretoria (UP). I loved it. I enjoyed myself. The lecturers loved me. I did six months. The lecturers bent over backwards to accommodate me.

The abuse now got intense. I was going to school after work and I loved it. I fed and played with the children, and I read again. I did so well. I never knew that I had that interest.

Q: So, you were a mother, working full time and you were at night school. This was the 1980s.

GOODGALL: Actually, we are now in the 1990s. My dad had passed by then.

Q: So, we have skipped a few things here.

GOODGALL: No, it was the 1980s, because Luwana was born in 1985. Luwana was about one year old when I started to study, so that was about 1986. In 1986-1987, I was enrolled at the University of Pretoria (UP) night school.

I remember that all these young people were always so concerned about me. Young women, like school leavers, would always try to see if I had done my work and if my father supported me. Then the first assignment came. It was on the board. They looked at the marks. Then they said, "What?" Then I crushed the hell out of all of them.

I thought there is something in me that I didn't know before. Now, I am going.

The repression became worse at home. I eventually gave it up. I just gave it up.

Q: Freedom at the university or repression at home?

GOODGALL: Repression at home, but more intense. It was physical and it was verbal, and in all kinds of ways. I am tough. I can hold on. I can keep things from people. I can take it. Slowly, it is just a human body and a human mind, and it started to...

Q: At UP, the language of instruction was Afrikaans.

GOODGALL: It was Afrikaans and English. Afrikaans was my first language, so that wasn't my issue, but it was for other kids. My preferred language of study is English. By the second year at the university, maybe by the middle of my first year, I thought, "I am not going to sit here all night and translate this crap."

Afrikaans is not a good study language at all. It is not a good tertiary language. It wasn't for me. Things are translated. It's just more complicated.

I started to write my stuff in English, and shrink it myself to what would say about all of this. By the third year, I was studying English as a first language with no problem at all.

Q: So, at UP, you had a choice? Anything you did could be in either language?

GOODGALL: You could present, most of the guys were Afrikaans speaking. And Theo Bekker – do you know him? I think you know him. He is one of the political science...

Q: I think I do. Yes, I do.

GOODGALL: You know him, Theo Bekker.

At the time my husband was in prison, and I couldn't go visit. I don't know what those people did to try and make me They bent the rules backward because they didn't want to lose and they didn't want me to give up.

Q: Two Afrikaner professors who helped you.

GOODGALL: Yes, one was younger. One could have studied at the University of Cape Town (UCT) because she was extremely liberal. She knew the language. She knew some of the examples that I would be making. We spoke about trade unions. She would know it not just by content, but also by context. She would know these things, so I had this rapport with her. We knew what we were talking about when we spoke.

From then on, I gave up for a while, a long while.

Q: Gave up what?

GOODGALL: Gave up studying.

Q: And stayed at home.

GOODGALL: Yes, it was just too stressful. I was still working at the embassy.

I divorced. There were a whole lot of things in between. I got out on my own. The lesson from that is to do a good job for the kids. Do an extremely good job, because whatever it is, it may come in handy at one time or another.

Then I divorced. I was extremely happy.

Q: Was this the 1980s? The 1990s?

GOODGALL: The 1990s. It became dangerous for me at home because as I came into my own, it was more provocative. It was a side of me that perhaps we had forgotten or had never got to know completely. I started to do my thing.

I went out with women. I took the kids out. I didn't spend so much time cleaning. I did a certificate course in marriage guidance, of all things. I did another certificate in women and the law. Those two things really helped me because I guided my people through my divorce. I told the lawyer this is what we can do; this is what the laws say. I knew I was moving.

In 1994, I left – no, in 1995, I left. My mum passed in 1994 after voting. In 1995, I left home, took my three kids and said, "Goodbye." In 1996, I divorced. Then I carried on with my life. I bought a house. Life was good. I was doing what I wanted. I wasn't scared of him. I was actually provocative, with a "go to hell" attitude. I was cross with myself. I thought, you took this, you did this to yourself. I can't believe that any person can love yourself so little that you would allow all this to happen to you.

Q: Cross at allowing...

GOODGALL: Allowing him...

Q: To repress.

GOODGALL: To repress me.

Q: Now, let the record state that in 1995-1996, I was here. I worked with you. I knew something was happening, but I never knew exactly what.

GOODGALL: What? Now today you know.

Q: The point is that your work went very consistently. I am saying this because I was a witness. Your production was magnificent. So, this thing you were going through in your personal life had an effect certainly on you, but one would never know it, working with you.

GOODGALL: Let me tell you: I've got one woman to thank and that is Rosemary Crockert. It came to a point where you could no longer keep quiet.

Q: The Cultural Affairs Officer.

GOODGALL: The Cultural Affairs Officer found this woman, who she just loved and who worked so well. All of a sudden, I was forgetting things. I was just a mess. She tried to figure this thing out. The two of us fought this battle really, more than anybody knew.

Q: Rosemary was a very high standard professional; no compromise on the work.

GOODGALL: I have never again – that's for the record – seen such excellence. Many things in terms of my work ethic, my work standards, my work professionalism, I ascribe to this woman. One thing about her that was very helpful was that she was my kind of person. She was straight forward. She tells you something and is at ease. It was becoming hard for her. She could no longer rely on me the same way. I knew that my life was in danger. There was absolutely nothing I could do about it. It was a fight.

Q: So, the fight had to do with work.

GOODGALL: The fight had to do with my preserving my sanity, my gaining my abilities, not only on a work level, but on every level of functioning. It affects your entire being.

Dan, picture yourself leaving work at 5:00 p.m. If you know real fear, not just the way it's spelled, but the experience of fear, then going home to a place that was supposed to

be a place of love and protection, rest and recuperation, and family and togetherness. And that is your greatest fear.

Q: So, what was the conflict with the Cultural Affairs officer then?

GOODGALL: She didn't have a conflict with me. We had a problem in terms of my output. I was not delivering. I was trying. I was hanging on by the last straw, you know?

Q: Did she ever know the circumstances you were in.

GOODGALL: Eventually she did. I think we had a very good relationship, because she is who she is. She is a straight forward, yet compassionate professional, and perceptive to my circumstances. That worked. And I was holding on because I didn't want to break down. Once you get into the nervous breakdown thing... I was fighting back. Rosemary understood that and we fought together. She didn't really fight by holding my hand. She made me fight.

Q: Ah, so when you said earlier you fought, in other words, you were on the same side.

GOODGALL: We were on the same side.

Q: I understand.

GOODGALL: Oh no, we were not fighting in terms of she was harassing me. She was demanding that...

Q: She was demanding that you...

GOODGALL: ... perform. That I took care of myself, that I performed.

What else was I going to say to you?

I come from a tradition of strong women. Rosemary's language was not foreign to me. I had a superb mother who only expected the best. And the best doesn't mean that you treat somebody with kid gloves.

I knew that the people who want the best from you sometimes don't necessarily do it in the kindest way. That concept was perfect for me.

Q: Just a note about Rosemary for the record: while she was here, I know she was working on her doctorate at Harvard with Henry Louis Gates. She called him, "Skip." She was herself a very determined person with very high standards for herself. She had a full-time job. She was preparing her Ph.D. thesis. The stringent standards were not just for you. She imposed them on herself.

GOODGALL: Absolutely, there was no question about it. Look Dan, I was always somebody. I told you that I wanted progress in life, but I learned early on that progress also means taking guidance, taking the example.

When I met this woman and I had aspirations and drive, I thought, “Wow!” Nobody could understand why I loved her so much, why I respected her so much, and why I was not scared of her. People would just tremble in her presence. I wouldn’t. I would take her on, and she knew that. She would let me know where she stood. I think I am so much the stronger for her. I would take her on because I was not relying on any external things, but what I was presenting to her.

When that was no longer the case, when that suffered, she rightly complained about that, but in a protective way, in a way that one woman understands another woman. We started to work through this. I came up. She did not see the best of me again before she left, but at least we tried. Afterwards she knew.

We are still in contact. We are still very good friends. I communicate milestones. She sends me one letter once a year giving me a full round-up of the year. I send little tidbits throughout the year.

Q: She has retired. Where is she now?

GOODGALL: She is in Washington. I believe she was teaching. I think she has published her book about the Tuskegee wives. I am very proud of her.

Dan, let me tell you one thing about Rosemary. This was the only officer who would go on a field trip, say to Durban for three days, or Cape Town for four days, and come back the next morning after landing the previous evening or afternoon. She would put a trip report on my desk to distribute. She was the only officer I knew like that.

The standards that were set were too high for me. They were really, really high. She is one magnificent woman. I really thank God that she came into my life.

After that, it was Amelia Broderick who brought out another part of me. Amelia was one of the few officers who understands the word diplomacy in my book. My standards have been set by Rosemary, so they are actually quite high.

Her strengths were opening up the world, understanding and engaging her environment in creative and professional ways that made our lives fun. My work was to fit in with that. I fit in perfectly. Also, to bring the organizational skills to the desk so she could fulfill this goal.

By then, I had grown into this job. I was very confident and very at ease. I was doing things outside of work, trying to support that nongovernmental organization (NGO) we started, trying to keep it afloat. We must talk about that.

During the day, we were colleagues, the subordinate and the boss in the different variations. After work, we would be the greatest of friends. My children regard her as their aunt, and her children regard me as their aunt. It was wonderful. I appreciated her, but I know certainly that she appreciated what I meant to her in the office.

I think the years between the year you were here and the year that Amelia left were just three of the most memorable years ever, in different variations. Then there were other things in between.

Q: This is a marvelous overview of Sheila Goodgall. This is tremendous context. As I said, we worked together for four years, but I knew very little of this before. I am not complaining.

GOODGALL: Sometimes we would talk.

Q: Women can talk to women in a different way.

We are getting to the end of this cassette. We are going to now turn to your career and start another segment.

End S Goodgall 2

Start S Goodgall 3

Q: This is the third segment of Dan Whitman and Sheila Goodgall. It is now the 6th of March.

GOODGALL: It is March.

Q: Is it March already?

It is the 6th of March, 2009.

Who knows? In the southern hemisphere, how can you keep anything straight? It's all backwards here: you drive on the left; summer is winter; and it is just nonsense.

GOODGALL: I'm with you on point, on the right track.

Q: At Christmas, you dress up Santa Claus in these sweats, because it is hot as blazes.

GOODGALL: We shouldn't even be cooking at Christmas, it is so hot.

Q: We've had a very rich portrait of your personal development and can certainly refer to it as we go along.

Now, moving from your educational development to your job at the U.S. Embassy, let's go to that. You went to UWC.

GOODGALL: I went to UWC (Marilyn: I have not been able to find a previous reference to UWC – clearly one of the South African universities but I do not know which one.) . I trained as a social worker. I started to work as a social worker after the entire defection from Secunda to Pretoria.

Q: We are now in the 35th defection.

GOODGALL: I am extremely proud of defections.

Anyway, I worked as a social worker. I actually left social work almost as a defection. It was very stressful. I loved social work. I love working with people. I liked what it was all about. I always tried to add a certain standard of excellence in the job that I did. I think that if I had had better mentors, I would have been a much greater social worker.

I had very positive feedback from other professionals I was working with. I can relate to anybody: young children, older people, and that kind of thing.

I worked for the South African government, which was an apartheid government. You had different departments of social work. I was paid less than the white social workers. When I discovered that, I was mad.

I first worked for the Mental Health Society in Johannesburg before I got married. I didn't exactly just qualify and then get married. Because the time span was so short, it was almost like that. I loved what I did. I did a lot of court work.

There was one experience that was very prominent to me in the 1980s, not so long after 1976.

Q: Was 1976 Sharpeville?

GOODGALL: No, 1976 was the Soweto Riots. Sharpeville was in the 1960s.

So, the 1970s and the 1980s were extremely volatile periods. After 1976, came all those states of emergency, if you remember.

Then I worked for a government department.

My mother was a factory worker. I studied without the government bursary, simply because I never wanted to work for the South African government as a social worker. That was not the ideal.

Q: Having the bursary means you were committed to work for them?

GOODGALL: You were committed.

I made my mother suffer through all those years, pay those school fees, and still went. She told me that I could have taken the money, but I didn't. In those circumstances, that is why I started to work for the mental health organization because it was what they called a "private welfare organization." There were government welfare organizations and private ones, like NICRO (National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders), the one that works with offenders. They are normally more innovative and less conservative.

For example, the government department I worked for had all those terrorist weapons as pictures on the wall so people could add to the fire. If you are a politically bred person, you are almost afraid to come into the government bureau organization.

Let me tell you a story. When I worked for the government, our meetings were held in Johannesburg. My father never paid for my education. He never really looked after us financially, even though I think he was 10 times better off than my mother.

When I became a young woman, I let him know it was a whole lot of nonsense. I didn't like that at all. I was trying to find my place. I was finding my relationship with him. I

think I was dealing with this anger without being rude to him, by testing him. I asked him to buy me a watch, to test him.

By then, I had my social work degree and was working. I said I wanted to register at Tomisa. That's when I did that marriage guidance and counseling course. I wanted to register at Tomisa and have my father give me the money.

My dad jumped. Between the two of us there was an unspoken thing of, "I know you didn't do your job," and "I know I didn't do my job."

We were still father and daughter, but I had that thing about me. It is one thing that we maybe should have sorted out in later years, but we didn't. I didn't think that was right, and my dad brought me the money. He just jumped to bring me the money. I don't know the right word for that kind of action, but it was almost like repentance.

After The Daily Mail, my dad worked for Drum magazine. He became the editor of the famous Drum magazine until his death.

Q: So, he was a big shot?

GOODGALL: He was not a small shot. He could have paid some of the school fees.

Q: But financially, he neglected you?

GOODGALL: Financially, he did. That was not right. I think it's a matter of how people arrange their lives. I try not to be bitter about it, and not to be bitter towards my siblings about it. I call it "First Loved Children," those who move on and survive. The children of the marriage are the children who are staring me in the face and they need to be cared for.

At one time or another, I want to start a First Loved Club, so we can make sure that these First Loved Children are getting their fair share.

Q: Children born of young people in a moment of passion get less attention than those who come along when the parents are more mature.

GOODGALL: Without a question. That does not excuse them. They are not lesser children. Inwardly, I always thought that.

I'll tell you a story. I was so proud that we visited my dad. He would give us a stipend, about five Rand, to take with us when we went home. My sister will tell you to this day that I would refuse to put my hands on that money. I wouldn't take it.

I told you I was a dreamer. I thought, what is my mother going to do with that five Rand, or what am I going to do with that five Rand? I thought that after people have eaten, they clean the table. They wanted to clean it on me, and that was not going to happen. That's just the way I felt about it.

I was relaying the story of my dad and seeing these (photographs of) these terrorist weapons. My dad was almost a terrorist in terms of the work he did, the things he said, his position via the media, magazines and newspapers, etcetera.

Q: So, your father was working perhaps for social change at the macro level. On the micro level, he didn't meet his obligations.

GOODGALL: He didn't. Whether or not his people realized it is a matter of education. What is it about? Is it a matter of... The bugger! My dad, that is. It was atrocious, very bad. Is it a matter of trying to preserve your marriage at the expense of people? Perhaps not to preserve it; perhaps the marriage is strong enough. Not rocking the boat, you want to keep things very normal. On the other hand, children are suffering.

I am fortunate that I had a mother who was hard working. Most of my family, like my cousins, think I was educated, since my mum was a nothing, because my dad was something.

Q: Not true.

GOODGALL: Absolutely false. When somebody asks me, I go to pains to explain. One of my sisters-in-law asked me. I said that no, my dad did not pay for my education. My dad and my sister had a better money relationship because my sister was somebody who claimed what was hers. She would make waves. Then they had that closer relationship.

My sister is less – I wouldn't say vindictive – but I am prouder. This is not necessarily a good thing. I don't think it is my duty to teach him his duty, period. It's just how I felt.

Nonetheless, from mental health, I came to work for these people in the department of social welfare. In fact, it was called the Department of Coloured Affairs. There comes my African father teasing me about these terrorist things. I am feeling politically uneducated, and I don't like it.

Q: Was he teasing you because you were working for the Boers?

GOODGALL: Yes.

Q: Although you didn't have many alternatives.

GOODGALL: No. It was either work for the Boers or I stay in Secunda, clean floors and put in flowers, but not exclusively. It was not my life's mission.

Q: You were working with the Department of Coloured Affairs in the 1980s.

GOODGALL: Yes, in the 1980s, until I came to work at the embassy in 1989.

Q: Why do you think you were chosen? This must have been quite competitive.

GOODGALL: I don't think it was that competitive. I think there weren't so many of us getting educated in any single year, so posts were there. They were open. It's not like in this embassy. In this embassy, I don't know. I never worked on a computer at that time. We were doing work on typewriters at Coloured Affairs.

I left Coloured Affairs because I wanted something bigger for my life. I stayed longer than I anticipated. According to me, I thought I was destined even for greater things. I wanted a different job. I wanted a different experience, a corporate experience, because I didn't have the kind of confidence that you get. It was almost like a farm girl coming to the city. There were two worlds: typewriter, walking to work as opposed to meeting other people, a closed environment with other social workers and a variety of different professionals, and not being the cherry on the cake. You know, I am the social workers in the community, that sort of thing.

I don't know why I was chosen.

Q: How did you come upon me? Was there a public announcement?

GOODGALL: This job was advertised. I knew the girl who had the job before. We were very good friends. Fiona. We met at church and we loved one another. It was obvious. We were different from the people near us. Our interests were different. We looked wider. We became church friends. Our talk of beyond our environment at church, that's how it came about.

Q: And she left?

GOODGALL: She left to get a job in Johannesburg, a higher paying job.

Q: And this made the job available.

GOODGALL: Yes, and the job became available. I saw the job in the ...

Before that, I was determined to get out of Coloured Affairs. I'll tell you why.

I was supervised by a woman for whom I had absolutely no respect. I had no respect for her work ethic. She was an Afrikaner woman. I had no respect for her professionalism. I had no respect for her job knowledge. I don't know where she trained to be a social worker. She didn't have any compassion or any ambition. She was bland, flat.

I did not like that. That was one of the reasons.

Number two, the money was very little.

Number three, I didn't know where it was taking me to. The job itself I loved. I made many good friends. I am proud to say that to this day, people respect me. I respected people and I treated them with respect. I did my best.

I wasn't the best. I could have been better, with proper mentoring. You cannot just leave someone like that.

I had a very good friend from Cape Town, and the two of us supported one another, tried different things and techniques.

There was one experience that I will never forget as a social worker. That's the story I wanted to relate to you earlier.

In the 1980s, there were a lot of states of emergency and

We went to – what was the place called? I went to the hospital. There was a woman who was terminally ill in the hospital. She was from Kimberly and was transferred to this hospital. She had three children under five. She was a farm worker or a domestic worker, what have you.

She had come to Pretoria with her children and she was living on this farm. She became ill and came to my attention when she was in the hospital. I went and visited her in the hospital. She made me promise that I would get her children from the farm so they could be returned home. Obviously, if the mother is a farm worker, those children are farm slaves too. School is not a given, probably not. I made that my life's ambition.

I had certain powers, given by the state, to get a removal order. I had to put systems in place before I could get the order, but I got it. The day I went to fetch those little children with the order in my hand, it was the same – I can't remember the name – Broederstroom.

It was not long after that a woman called Helena somebody from the ANC (African National Congress), a white woman, caused havoc in Broederstroom. And you didn't cause havoc in Pretoria or Broederstroom and Bloemfontein in the apartheid days. Now Broederstroom is where you get shot like now.

Somebody was either ANC and she was caught there. I don't know whether she had a bomb go off or something to that effect. Big story.

I am lucky enough to follow Helena somebody to Broederstroom to pick up these kids. Those people wouldn't speak to me. They were rude. The farmer's house was big, and I was going where these children stayed. I have never feared so much for my life.

One of the inhabitants of the house was standing there with a gun, while I am negotiating my way to get these kids. In those days, you could be shot for trespassing. My only saving grace was the government vehicle. That is all that I had. I have never driven so

fast as with those kids from Broederstroom, to get them out of harm's way. Then we could say hello properly and I could tell them about their mum. She had not passed then.

Q: She was dying?

GOODGALL: She was dying. It was my proudest moment to be able to tell her that your kids were gone away; they were not on the farm.

Q: So, she lived long enough to know that you had the kids.

GOODGALL: Yes, we had saved the kids. She passed away after I was there, the next day. It was one of the last things I did. She passed away after I was there. I remember because somebody called to tell me she had passed away.

Q: Job well done.

GOODGALL: So, I came to the embassy.

Q: In 1989? What was the job?

GOODGALL: It was cultural assistant. I was supporting the programmer; I wasn't quite the programmer. There was a senior guy. I was basically a programmer, they trained me. There was a class. There was a senior guy and I came in. He was a very intelligent man, a South African, John Mojapelo. You didn't know him. That man could tell stories.

I worked with John Mojapelo. He was in education. After that, he got his law degree while at the embassy, etcetera. We worked together with a guy called Tom Delaney, who was the best star. I cut my teeth with Tom.

Q: Was he the Cultural Affairs Officer (CAO)?

GOODGALL: Yes. I was lucky. I got the right guy when he came in. He was compassionate and patient. He was patient with me because I wanted to know a lot of things. I remember one of the first things I asked him. He was so forthcoming. I said, "Look Tom. I am sitting here, pushing paper, this side to this side."

[Non-interview conversation with third party]

GOODGALL: One of the first questions I asked him – and I genuinely didn't know – what was the job of an embassy. I was a social worker. I was from a different world, from the farms. I never knew about bilateral relations and so on. Those embassy people were in the moon; they had no interest, that kind of thing.

Q: Are you suggesting that you faked your way through the interview?

GOODGALL: They didn't want me to know what an embassy was. They wanted me. I think there never was a question about it. The guy who interviewed me, the PAO (Public Affairs Officer), eventually got me Tom Delaney. I think sometimes in an interview, you are looking for a combination of things. Maybe I had just enough of each. I wasn't this experienced woman in this kind of environment.

Q: You had the knowledge of the society. You had some contacts in a part of society that the embassy needed.

GOODGALL: Yes, I think that was part of it. I think I also had the comfort of personality, of being able to present myself in a comfortable and honest way.

At that time, it was big to say, "Oh, I am staying with 's daughter."

I remember distinctly the Information Officer (IO), Bruce Hill...

Q: Bruce was 1994.

GOODGALL: Yes, that's right. Bruce went to a party with journalists and what have you. He came back and said to me, "What is your father's name?"

I said, "Why? It is Stan Motjuwadi."

He said, "This man comes up to me and asks, 'How is my daughter?'"

"Your daughter doesn't work for us."

Then my dad told them. So they were very impressed that I didn't try to impress by saying, "Oh, I am staying with 's daughter." That wasn't an issue to me.

Tom Delaney was a wonderful man that I cut my teeth with.

Q: So, you came in 1989. It was very volatile. This is one year before the release of Nelson Mandela. There was a lot of social ...

GOODGALL: There were lots of social things. One day, you could not come to work because there was something called a national strike; not a trade union strike, just a national strike. Everything black didn't move that day. Everything white and on the right side of us didn't go. There was a shut-down.

There were still lots of disappearances, killings, that kind of thing.

Under apartheid, we all came from different townships to come to work. It was almost a movement. It wasn't quite like the 1960s, or the 1970s. Things were starting to change at other levels as well. Subtle changes were evident.

Q: For example?

GOODGALL: For example, if you went to downtown Johannesburg and went around the markets, you wouldn't say that there was apartheid.

Q: So, were there certain areas known to everybody where the letter of the law was not applied?

GOODGALL: Absolutely.

Q: Laissez-faire (letting things take their own course), whatever.

GOODGALL: That kind of thing was allowed.

Q: So, this was discernable in the late 1980s. It was at this time that you came here.

What were you asked to do?

GOODGALL: I was supporting the programmer, as well as the CAO (Cultural Affairs Officer). I would do a lot of all those administrative things, like the hotel bookings and flights, seeing that everything was in place for the programs. I also assisted the programmer in setting up the programs.

Q: This was not social work. You were not doing what you were trained to do.

GOODGALL: Absolutely not. It was a shock to the system, let me tell you.

South Africans, at least at that time, as a social worker, didn't type. I would write a letter and then ask Susan to type it up on a special form. I had limited administrative capabilities. I had to learn, and learn fast. Talking to people and setting up meetings, I thought that was cool.

Q: That came later.

GOODGALL: I was a social worker and used to interacting with lawyers, magistrates, and people on different levels. The confidence level was not the same since it was a protected environment that I came from. It was not as vast. It was not like here, where one moment I would be speaking to a student leader, and in another, I would be expected to speak to a professor.

Q: When you first started in 1989, you had the potential but you had no experience in dealing with social contacts at that level. So, you had a steep learning curve.

GOODGALL: Yes. A little bit of education and a little bit of confidence helped.

[Non-interview conversation with third party]

Q: Sheila, we were talking about your beginning in 1989, and the steep learning curve you had.

GOODGALL: It was steep, but I had the right person. It was fun. It was a new environment. It was exciting.

Q: What was so exciting about making hotel reservations?

GOODGALL: It wasn't just that. I was very curious. I asked if I could sit in the library if I didn't have enough work. I tried to read as much as possible, little tidbits here and there just to try and get into this environment. In turn, the lady was too lazy to explain anything to me.

Q: Those were the days when we were allowed to use the word library. It is a forbidden word now.

So, you had a supportive environment.

GOODGALL: Yes. I was young and curious.

Q: You are young and curious.

GOODGALL: That's another book.

Nonetheless, I enjoyed it. Also, it opened up my world in a different way. I remember realizing just how many wonderful people there were in South Africa. I started to know about people doing things. It was almost like a social political education.

I learned about things that I don't think I would have picked up that quickly. We all wake up to an environment beyond our own at one point or another, but that my job shift made it come quicker because my interest was very broad: society, political, social, cultural, all those kinds of things.

Q: What sorts of people were doing what sorts of things?

GOODGALL: The kind of cultural activities that were going on at that time were those alternative education systems. I remember a guy called John Samuel at what was then the South African Higher Education Council, or something to that effect. People were just working against the stream in order to affect a better society.

Q: Were these the types of people the U.S. Embassy included?

GOODGALL: These were the people the U.S. Embassy included. The embassy was not exclusionary. They did not exclude people who adhered to politics. They tried to embrace the broad spectrum of society.

Q: I know it's one of many examples, but John – what was his last name?

GOODGALL: Samuel.

Q: So, you encountered a number of people dealing with the challenges of the social change, and working on it. The U.S. Embassy looked for these people and tried to work with them. Is that right?

GOODGALL: The embassy tried to engage them and tried to understand. There was a lot to understand at the time. It was a complex society. It was layered. It had many fabrics.

I remember on another occasion John Carney, who was the Director of the Market Theater at that time, and guys from the State Theater, coming together for a telephone conference, with another artistic persona in the United States.

Q: Was it a tele-press conference?

GOODGALL: Yes.

Q: With whom? So, they were on the phone and was there someone on the other side with counterparts?

GOODGALL: Yes. There was squabbling in the office because the Market Theater guys wouldn't be in the same room as the State Theater guys. It was an error in judgment in terms of how we constructed the guest list. If it wasn't an error in judgment, it was a lesson in the politics of the day.

Q: Was this a social difference? Or was it a professional difference?

GOODGALL: It was a political difference.

Q: State Theater is the state; Market Theater was the avant-garde.

GOODGALL: State Theater was funded by the state, supporting the establishment. More importantly, it excluded people from the venue. There was a lot of funding available.

Q: Plus, there was an international boycott.

GOODGALL: Yes, there was an international cultural boycott.

Q: Are you saying that if you could live it over again, you would rather have put these things together. Is that what you are saying?

GOODGALL: No, you would not have had the State Theater guys. You should not. They would speak to us, but they wouldn't speak to one another. By us, I mean USIS (United States Information Service).

Q: In other words, should we shun the State Theater?

GOODGALL: No, we shouldn't do that, because that's not your mandate. Your mandate was to engage all these players and to understand to the extent possible.

Q: I'm sorry, but I don't understand. Are you saying that it is better to put them together or not put them together?

GOODGALL: It is better not to put them together. The American Embassy, USIS, was very free to speak to whomever. The circumstances were dictated by the politics of the day. You just could not bring them together in one room at that time.

Q: Is that apartheid?

GOODGALL: It is apartheid, but it's apartheid from the other angle. It's not the establishment people who don't mind. It's the politically active, astute and aware people who say because of your policies, I will not engage with you.

Q: So, this was a meaningful sign, an act of protocol that demonstrated our disapproval of state-controlled culture.

GOODGALL: It was not necessarily your disapproval. Market Theater and State Theater were in two different worlds. Those two groups of people adhered to different political ideologies.

One, we perceived as repressive and undermining, and all the bad things apartheid meant. The other was breaking the mold and delivering a message of protest through the work they did. They tried to affect social change with whatever it was that they did.

You've got these two different worlds. It's like Mandela and Botha saying, "Let's have lunch."

Q: It was politically and diplomatically significant to separate these things. Was it also socially impossible? Or was that another matter?

GOODGALL: It was all-inclusive: political and social. We could never be friends, even in church.

Q: Even though as an embassy, you had to engage with the State Theater, but you had to send a signal that we were not very happy. I am trying to understand.

GOODGALL: I am sorry. I didn't think I complicated it.

Q: No, you aren't complicating it.

GOODGALL: I didn't quite get the impression that it was the American Embassy's calling, or USIS Cultural Affairs' calling, to say we don't approve. You engage people across the spectrum. You've had de Klerk as an IV.

Does it make sense to you Dan?

Q: Yes, it does.

GOODGALL: In any case, that is my interpretation. I don't get the full instruction as an American would get full instruction. I make inferences based on my knowledge.

Q: So, you observed that these things were happening. You weren't privy to the discussions.

GOODGALL: Not necessarily the discussions, but it's also about your mandate. As an American officer, you get your mandate which we as Foreign Service Nationals (FSN) are not necessarily privy to. We don't get the full version of your mandate. Is that fair enough?

Q: Fair enough. I want to start the next questions maybe earlier than I meant to.

The bifurcated dual role that you've had as a South African citizen, but also an employee of an embassy from another country: I want to take up that issue. I think it's very important, where you stand. I'm not talking about loyalty. I'm talking about identity and the activities, where you are personally, because you are in the middle as an FSN. I would like to take up that important question when we take up the next session.

GOODGALL: Okay. Let's deal with that. Once you've asked it, I will think too much about it.

I think it's personal. It depends on a lot of people's backgrounds. I will speak only for myself.

I like the work you do and I like the interaction with people generally. As a South African, I have always been extremely comfortable about who I am and my identity. It has always been easier for me to understand or make sense of my work as using a platform to actually serve my country from a different angle. I think if I take it that way, then everything else in between diminishes. I have never had any issues about not being American.

I have questioned at times that we come from different professional backgrounds. We acquire even more education, but as a human being, as a professional, you will never really realize your full potential. This is a very personal interpretation.

Q: This may be philosophical. Quoting you: "This work was a platform for me to serve my country from a different angle." In doing that, did you think you were working in the spirit of the U.S. Embassy? You were being paid by the U.S. Embassy. I am not telling you, I am just asking.

GOODGALL: I want to be very clear. I understand that, and I understand that it is in the spirit of the American Embassy. It is in response to a job instruction.

Q: Was there any difficulty in reconciling what you had to do for your job, and your sense of loyalty to your homeland?

GOODGALL: No, I never felt that contradiction. There were times when – you must remember that during the cultural boycott days not everybody was 100 percent pro-American Embassy. There were other issues at play, bigger political issues such as the classification of Mr. Mandela on the American Embassy political books as a terrorist. Things like that. Those things didn't really go unseen. It was kind of like a delicate navigation of people.

End S Goodgall 3

Start S Goodgall 4

Q: This is our fourth segment. We are still at the same date (March 6, 2009) of Sheila Goodgall.

I want to pursue this question. It's not an earth-shaking matter. It's not a dilemma, but the viewpoint of a Foreign Service National is different from the viewpoint of a diplomat who has no identity issues. The diplomat represents the country, in this case the United States, the State Department, and is of the same culture and nationality. I want to learn more about the role of the local Foreign Service National who actually deals with two identities. The one is of the State Department, the employer; and on the other hand, the development of your own country, which is your culture.

So, you are straddling two cultures. I would like to ask you about any comments you might have about the difficulties. What is the secret of your success? I ask because you are successful in doing this. I would put it in these terms: what advice would you give to a person now coming into this profession?

GOODGALL: Let me start with the last one, the advice.

The thing is that people are not divorced from their country and other people working with them. The Americans should appreciate that the difficulties the country is going through; the mistakes that country was making at that point, they were not divorced from them. It was an integral part to them. Sometimes, we address issues as if we are talking about a third country or a third party, when the party we are speaking to, if it's an FSN, is actually integrally part of that thing.

For example, let's say we are speaking about the rate of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, or crime, or anything like that. In our work, we remain sensitive that people are involved or are faced with those issues on many levels. It's not only about negativities; it's also about positives. For example, public figures like Judge Cameron, the famous HIV/AIDS positive judge, or Nelson Mandela, those people represent specific public personas to us. We like that.

The thing is to remain sensitive about nuances and specifics about that country. No amount of education or reading can give you the edge over someone who has lived in the country.

Q: I think you are addressing these comments to the American diplomat.

GOODGALL: I think very much so, to the people with whom we work. For them to understand their position, respect that position, and not make the FSNs almost somebody without an identity, without allegiances, without loyalties.

As for me personally, as a person, I told you before that I am extremely comfortable about my own identity. I do not regard myself as a representative as you would regard yourself as a representative. I regard myself as a worker, an enabler, a builder of bridges of sorts. I have no illusions that I am in fact representing the American Embassy as an American citizen. That is different.

What I do is buy into an idea. I understand an idea. For example, with the International Visitor Program, I understand and buy into an idea that a specific experience is coming to a person. We are going to have somebody that is broader. I understand this as something good. I am selling a product really in my approach to things. I am selling a product which I believe in, and which I know will serve you well in terms of who I am. It will also serve me well in my aspirations to see my own people prosper and grow.

I don't think one needs to necessarily make a secret of that. I think from my standpoint, people should feel free to voice those kinds of things, so they can find their own particular place in their own society.

Generally, what we all do, as Americans and South Africans, from whatever angle, it is something good. It's a matter of building bridges. It's a matter of fostering understanding. There is very much a shared kind of ideal. The contradictions, the paradoxes, lie in the execution of how we approach one another. We should really be frank, train one another, and tell one another exactly what our positions are without trying to underplay or overplay one another.

I think as you grow into what you do, as you become more confident, as you know about your particular strength that you bring to the table, that makes me extremely comfortable with who I am.

We no longer live in the times when we had policies on either side that we should be ashamed of. Sure, there are still differences in countries. Sure, there are still policy differences. If you look at things like the Kyoto Protocol, that has been a matter of difference. That plays itself out on various political levels. It is not of such a nature that it can curb our operations.

Q: That's a very interesting example. I believe South Africa signed the Kyoto Protocol.

GOODGALL: But you did not.

Q: And the United States did not. And there you are in the middle.

GOODGALL: I am in the middle. Fortunately, I have never been in a position where those issues confront me. As I said earlier on, other issues would have been, say in the time of the cultural boycott. If those were ignored by the country I worked for, the American Embassy, that definitely would have caused issues.

I remember that I worked with a Cultural Attaché, Brooks Spector, who brought out the work of the Dance Theater of Harlem. That was really at the close of the cultural boycott, the last two years of the cultural boycott. I worked very closely with him. I knew every meeting he was attending. Nobody would understand how intricate it was. It took two years of negotiation and two years of getting all the players on board: from PNC to ANC (African National Congress) to the South African government, the Market Theater, all the players in the cultural world at this point. They had to buy into this idea, to give their blessing, before the program could actually take place. Those were issues that could cause serious predicaments.

Maybe I came in at the close of things in many ways.

Q: This is an interesting topic, the cultural boycott, and the breaking of it by the Cultural Attaché, Brooks Spector. Let's dwell on that for a moment.

There were many paradoxes here. Breaking the boycott: some people could say that is giving the blessings of the apartheid regime. Others would say it is to everybody's benefit for there to be open exchanges, regardless of the politics that it might send.

As you went into these two years of negotiation, what was your feeling? Were you questioning the validity of breaking the boycott? Did you prefer to have the boycott?

GOODGALL: Brooks Spector did a lot of good work. I wouldn't give him the credit of saying he broke the boycott.

Q: That was the effort that everybody worked on together.

GOODGALL: It was a collective effort. I want to say that at the close of the 1990s, various things were really being negotiated. The cultural boycott was very effective.

Q: Did you say the 1980s, right?

GOODGALL: Yes, at the close of the 1980s going into the 1990s, there were a lot of negotiations on various levels. One of the things that people were grappling with was the cultural boycott, which was very effective. That being said, there were people who actually broke the boycott, who went to perform at Sun City. Shirley Bassey comes to mind, during that time before the cultural boycott was broken.

I wanted to say that we wanted to bring the Dance Theater of Harlem, but we couldn't just do it without the blessing of the players, the performing arts equity, the cultural office within the ANC (African National Congress), the cultural office within the PAC (Pan Africanist Congress). All those people had to be brought to the table. That wasn't breaking the boycott as such. It was going into a new era, opening up cultural activities to everything. Brooks Spector was right there at the right time.

Whilst South Africans were negotiating their own way to enter the international world, to releasing Nelson Mandela who was at the forefront of that. Having the opportunity to bring the Dance Theater of Harlem and having the foresight and negotiating skills to work with the appropriate people, here is a perfect example why it is sometimes very important to be able to speak to everybody, to meet everybody, irrespective of what their policies are. To be able to have a meeting one day with a National Party person and still have the clout and credibility to go and speak to an ANC (African National Congress) guy the next day. That's a skill.

Q: So, you were there while all this was happening.

GOODGALL: I was there in the background. I wouldn't say I was in the negotiations with him. I was acutely aware of what was happening. There were people in those offices that he was speaking to that I knew. The support staff within those offices, I had contacts with those people. This was a Cultural Attaché negotiation thing. It wasn't really at that point an FSN thing.

Q: It took two years to do this. That means that someone was arguing against it. What were the arguments against? What were the resistances? Why did it take so long?

GOODGALL: First of all, you have to understand South African politics. We operated very much during those apartheid days on communication. Communication was extremely important, getting the message to the right people, and from the right people to consensus. So that we would agree that what we do would serve the collective. That makes it complex.

Should the cultural boycott be broken today, or over a year? Have we achieved our goal? Was the goal to really isolate South Africa, not only on a cultural level, but on other national levels, an economic level, so as to force the South African government of the time into realizing that we are going to be isolated. We could not live alone. We are dependant on those other countries. They wouldn't benefit from international activity such as sports. The sports boycott was on at the same time.

Those were all issues or weapons or tactics that were at the disposal of the people.

Q: I am guessing that the Nationalists would have been in favor of breaking the boycott and the ANC might have been opposed.

GOODGALL: Absolutely. The Nationalists were not even concerned. In this negotiation, they were not even at the table. The American Embassy would not do such a huge undertaking at the expense of relations with the ANC, which became the government of the day. The PAC didn't know where they were going to. What would be the future of the political dispensation? Performance arts workers equity which had some writers, if those people had cut their ties with the American Embassy, it would have impoverished relations rather than serve any goal. You cannot impoverish relations.

We all knew that apartheid was slowly coming to its end. The privileges that were at the disposal of the National Party without them having any effect on their day-to-day functioning were slowly coming to an end. That was the issue.

To do that at the right time, to be successful over a long period of time, to get to that point and do it almost right on the doorstep of Mandela's release, was wonderful. There is a beautiful photo in the embassy of Nelson Mandela and Ivor Mitchell walking somewhere in Soweto.

These two things happened almost simultaneously.

Q: If you are talking two years before Mandela, people might have expected that apartheid was going to change, but there was no certainty. You were guessing. Many people thought there would be violence, even civil war. The future was not known. It happened that it was a happy coincidence. The end of the cultural boycott almost coincided with Mandela's release.

In retrospect, it's a marvelous scenario. At the time, it must have been very risky.

GOODGALL: It was, but negotiators being what they are, and all these people we are talking about were privy to information we don't know, on the political level. These people that we are talking about are not really divorced from political action. Some of them are very well placed, very highly placed, key players.

When we talk about a single scenario, they've got a frame of reference that we may not necessarily know.

Q: Speaking of political action, you wouldn't be privy to this, but surely Brooks Spector was not engaged individually. Surely there were people in Washington watching this carefully, in terms of U.S. policy on the cultural boycott. It wasn't just Brooks Spector doing a solo, I think.

GOODGALL: No, on the level that an FSN would not necessarily be the Office of Cultural Affairs. Beyond that, I don't know. Certainly, it was a huge undertaking. It was an expensive undertaking. It had implications. My guess is that there were issues that were discussed beyond my knowledge.

Q: Note to the Editor: The interviewee is showing an uncharacteristic display of humility. This is completely out of character.

Brooks Spector was here, I think, until 1990. His successor came in ...

GOODGALL: In 1994.

When did Rosemary Crockert come?

Q: In 1993 or 1992.

GOODGALL: Rosemary Crockert came in 1992.

Q: I believe that Brooks Spector negotiated this, but he himself was not in the country when the Dance Theater of Harlem came. It was Rosemary, I think.

GOODGALL: It was Rosemary.

Q: He was no longer in his position.

GOODGALL: Yes, he was no longer in his position. When we came to the point of opening night, he was not there. I do give him credit for his tenacity and for his foresight, just generally speaking. Brooks Spector has an extremely creative mind. He is also extremely sharp about latching onto opportunities.

As I always tell everybody, people should open up to what they can get from one another. Each person brings to the enterprise unique qualities. Apart from general education that we bring, there are unique qualities in every situation. We should be looking out for those.

Q: So, Spector, at that time, did the best thing that Spector could do in those circumstances.

GOODGALL: Absolutely. Apart from just navigating the cultural office day-by-day, it was extremely wild there.

Q: That's a major event, the Dance Theater of Harlem (DTH) coming after a decade and a half long boycott, something like that.

So, culture is politics, as they say.

GOODGALL: Yes, in South Africa, culture is politics.

Q: So, this gave the implications of this break in the boycott with African Americans enormous overtones.

GOODGALL: It drew so much interest. I think people in or those people on really hard-core policy issues just don't realize what an impact it had on how they were received. It's subtle; you don't see it. These are door openers that you just cannot...

Q: Since we are here, how did you detect this in conversations with compatriots, the television, or the news coverage? How did you know this had such an impact?

GOODGALL: First of all, not a single troupe would receive so much publicity. The publicity was enormous. The opening, seldom or never before had something so huge

been done, in a very long time. Everybody who was anybody was on the guest list for the opening at the Civic Theater. It had just recently been refurbished. That was the first big major occurrence that happened at the Civic Theater.

Q: Did you say guest list? This was not an open performance?

GOODGALL: Opening night. I can almost say that for the entire time, which I think was two weeks, it was a full house.

Q: Every type of audience?

GOODGALL: Every type of audience. The other thing is that Arthur Mitchell and his young men really opened up the doors and encouraged many young South African men, especially young black South African men.

Currently, South Africa boasts a whole lot of very talented young men in choreography and in dance. It was not always the case. There are women also, but I am specifically mentioning men because it was a non-traditional area for men to enter into. I wouldn't say that we attribute the entire action to the Dance Theatre of Harlem's visit only, but in life all kinds of experiences come together to form the collective. This is part of what was seen at that point, and this is part of what all the rage was.

This was wonderful. New partnerships came. One brilliant choreographer, I think his name was Boyziee Cekwana, subsequently was invited to visit DTH. He worked with DTH after that. Today, it's common knowledge that we've got a lot of men on stage. They are brilliant and they are wonderful. There is nothing to it.

Q: So, this was a new genre. This was not commonly the thing young men did.

GOODGALL: If it was, I was not knowledgeable at the time. I do think that those were the years of huge developments, making appointments or trying to contact people at dance or at the Department of Education for example.

If once an embassy such as ours was placed so firmly on the map and in the minds of people by something so vivid and so visual that in itself opened doors. That makes you very out there. It makes you a serious player, somebody who is interested in the people.

Diplomacy for me is coming from all different angles and showing a serious and real interest in the people. It is not flaunting what you can bring financially to the table, because sometimes that can actually be repulsive. For South Africans especially, that is not a very welcome way of diplomacy.

Q: Now, we are talking about your history. That's the whole point of this.

February 11th, 1990, was the release of Nelson Mandela. Do you remember where you were?

GOODGALL: Yes, I was sitting in the multipurpose room (MPR) in the old building on Pretoria Street. We were listening to Frederik de Klerk's State of the Nation, his parliamentary address. It was the opening of parliament that day. Nobody was in their office. We all went into the MPR. That was before all the officers got televisions in their offices.

We were all there: myself, Charl, the lady Pasha. We had just come to work. We had just had enough time to read e-mail and drink coffee when that started. I can't remember the circumstances that made this particular speech so important for us to go and listen.

At that time, there were already cross-border negotiations between the ANC (African National Congress) and some Afrikaner people who had already visited Nelson Mandela. There were murmurings from all kinds of directions. There were uncertainties in terms of what they discussed. You had to follow every lead to be on point. Frankly, we had apartheid fatigue by then. We were so fed up with these people.

The writing was on the wall internationally. Sanctions were tightening around these guys.

Q: You knew the release would be imminent, but you didn't know if would be that day?

GOODGALL: Frankly speaking, I don't have insider connections in that way. We knew there were a lot of negotiations. I did not have a clue that it would just be bang, bang.

Q: Bang, bang, in terms of sudden results?

GOODGALL: Yes, sudden. The man tells us today that this man is going to be released.

Q: So, de Klerk announces.

GOODGALL: De Klerk announced in the State of the Nation address. He said on 11 February, 1990 that Nelson Mandela would be released. It was almost surreal. Everybody in the room, I think, became shell-shocked. I was the only one who had my voice. I screamed. Brooks Spector looked at me. I remember that distinctly. That was it.

That evening, there was pandemonium everywhere you went. People were dancing around and were extremely happy.

Q: What was your impression of the reaction of Americans who had been in the country for a short time, who did not have the deep personal investment in all this that you did?

GOODGALL: I think Mandela's story was so big, that you would have to be far removed from civilization if you were a diplomat and you didn't know. I didn't find that people were extremely blasé. They may not have been as excited as we were. It might have been a huge political happening; to us, it was not a huge political happening. That was the difference. To us, it was personal. To us, it was the right thing to happen at that time. We

could no longer wait, because we knew that people were getting more and more militant, things would have turned the other way. It is not like black South Africans would have waited another two years, another six months, or whatever the case may have been.

That is the beauty of some moments in history.

Q: Other world leaders, not de Klerk, would have carried on without changing, but he changed. Something about him changed, because it was his decision, yes?

GOODGALL: It should have been a collective decision. Just like President Obama cannot make single-handedly a big decision. He has people he has got to refer to.

De Klerk made enemies in the process in the political party, if you remember. He is a political being also. He had to make calculations. And he made calculations the right way. As a politician, he saw that the time had run out. The National Party knew that the time for them had run out, and that either they made a decision as far-reaching as that one or faced consequences whose reach we cannot even begin to tell.

Q: Much was said about de Klerk's visit to the United States about six or seven years previously. He said in public once that partly that visit, organized by your office before you were there, gave him a viewpoint that led to this decision. I have no privileged information and you have none. What are your feelings about the fact that it was your office that arranged for de Klerk to visit the United States in the early 1980s? He said this changed his mindset.

GOODGALL: Generally, I think that it was a good thing. If that was a contribution, I would not disregard it, but I would say that there were greater factors at play. Let us just say that we should be proud that we led a person to a different perspective, a different way of looking at things at the time he was not president of South Africa. Any form of interaction really leads to growth.

Travel in itself, just moving from Point A to Point B, I went from the porch to Perfenny to Park Station in Soweto. I have grown in leaps and bounds. That should have an effect. I would be very careful in attributing the entire political action of the day to that singular twenty-one-day trip. That's my honest opinion.

Q: It was one factor among others.

GOODGALL: Yes.

Q: We talked about things known as historical events. The transformation of de Klerk, you don't know the details. The ending of the cultural boycott through two years of negotiation. The release of Mandela.

Do other historical moments come to mind?

GOODGALL: The actual announcement about Mandela and the actual action of release, I think those were huge.

Q: Here you were, a South African citizen, engaged and devoted to the future of your country, working for another embassy. How did the embassy react, or ride the crest, or ride the benefit, or fail to seize the moment – this was a moment – what happened at the embassy? How did the embassy then interact with the people to give its own input?

GOODGALL: I worked only in a very small section of the embassy. If you watched the papers of the time, you would see different angles. My understanding, or what I perceived, was the embassy really tried at every opportunity to be a participant in areas that could be helpful. An example was the training of police.

On a more public and political level during the inauguration of President Mandela, you will remember that First Lady Hillary Clinton was here. There was a reception at the Market Theater where they featured very prominently the ambassador of the day, James Joseph. There was a huge reception at his home for ministers and a whole lot of political people.

Q: This was after the elections?

GOODGALL: It was after the elections, during the inauguration celebrations. I think on that festive level...

Q: It might have been Swing (Ambassador William Lacy Swing).

GOODGALL: It might have been Swing. I am laughing because you are right. I liked Swing for his shining shoes. He was a very neat man, very well spoken, very hard working, and very bright.

That was a very impressive ambassador.

Q: Was it because of his shiny shoes?

GOODGALL: Let's be frank. American men, unlike South African men, don't care about shiny shoes, except the Marines.

Q: Are you saying that we are neglectful in our personal appearance?

GOODGALL: I would say you might not have the same "polish." That's a big thing for South African men, by the way.

Ambassador Swing, unlike many others...

Q: I am going to remove myself as an example here.

GOODGALL: I don't want to laugh. Who was the man you worked with, your deputy?

Q: Bernie Luck.

GOODGALL: Before that.

Q: Cathy Shadow.

GOODGALL: Dan, you remember we were very busy. Those were wonderful days. Sometimes I understand people cannot pay attention to...

Q: ...to transient material?

GOODGALL: Such as?

Q: We're laughing, but maybe there is something serious about this. The physical appearance of an ambassador or a diplomat does make a statement. A casual appearance implies a casual attitude.

GOODGALL: In some ways it does. Sometimes it's disrespectful. Nonetheless, that's not the most important thing.

I really want to say I have enjoyed doing this work. I have grown as a person. I think that I have contributed. I like being a very politically aware person, environmentally aware person. I have been able I hope to share some insights with the bosses, whoever I was working with at the time. Rosemary Crockert, even though she was my mentor, I don't think she reaped the benefits. What I say to people is that as diplomats, if you do well in your tour, you leave the place a better place for the next person to come to.

People don't always realize that. I am frank when I think sometimes there is a certain element of selfishness among the diplomats, not really caring about the bigger picture but being so concerned about a career. We see that. We are not dummies . We are extremely sharp and perceptive people, irrespective of whether people talk to us about those things. We can see that. You can see when somebody is generally for the collective, or whether a person is just interested in paving his own way.

That translates not only to the Foreign Service National (FSN) employees, but it will translate to the society which he tries to represent. This is a difficult society. South Africa is a society of people who really care, unlike any other African society, I think. I am proud to be South African. They demand respect.

I have worked with wonderful people who just by their nature were able to pick up on those things. What I really appreciated about the Americans was the fact that most are industrious, most are extremely hard working. They earn their keep. That closes the gap on such issues as corruption, mismanagement, that kind of thing. That is a lesson to be learned.

You can hear that now I am coming to the conclusion of my story.

Q: It sounds so.

GOODGALL: As a person, as an FSN, I can be honest with you. I would not let my recent graduate daughter take the same path that I have taken. In one way, it's good. It one way, it opens the environment. Why would I let her be an FSN when she can be a diplomat? Do you get the point? She can really be in the thick of things. "Let" her is the wrong word, because people have their own choices.

What I would say for a young graduate is that I came in at a different time. I came at a time when the perks of being in this environment were so much higher. I don't want to underplay what the embassy has meant to me. I would be dishonest if I didn't say that I dream of a different world for me, a different career, where I can reach my full potential without being subservient.

That's what it boils down to. I have seen young people come through the ranks. I have seen inexperienced people. We trained people, Dan. We taught people their job. We know respect if we are industrious. That is what we bring to the table. We feel people shouldn't be paying lip service to it.

It's all about the quality of people coming through. We have affectionate, frank, and open relationships with people like you, Bruce Watt, Amelia Broderick, and Rosemary Crockert. People with whom you can say, this is who I am and this is what I am doing. We are not threatened by our own unique position. You know what I am saying. You come from a certain position of strength as an appointee; I come from a different position of strength as a South African. If we can bring those things together in a mature and amiable way, then we've got a winning recipe.

Full stop.

End S Goodgall 4

Start S Goodgall 5

Q: We are nearing the end of what you say is the end of this interview. I think we could and should go for four or five hours.

GOODGALL: Oh my. You are kidding me!

Q: Yes. We will add some postscripts to this.

I do want to ask you – this seems very significant.

You would not want your educated daughter to do what you did. I think this has to do with the personal development that is possible in the twenty-first century that was not easily imagined in the twentieth century. It may also have to do with representing policies that you cannot, in your heart, represent.

Is that part of why you feel that you could not...

Let's say you had been offered a position as a diplomat in the 1990s. Are you saying you would have had to say no?

GOODGALL: I would have had to say no. I have friends who became that, who did that. I have friends who went to teach in the Okavango Delta in Botswana. I know people who did that. It was a matter of weighing our principles. It was weighing up how much you were willing to sacrifice or willing to betray your own political standing.

I wouldn't do it. We wouldn't do it.

Q: So, while you hope something different for your daughter, you have no regret about what you did?

GOODGALL: I wouldn't say I haven't any regrets. In part, I am happy for what I did. At a certain point, I think I should have moved on. I should have bought my own career.

You know for a fact that I was extremely interested in gender violence. After you left, my interest grew so much that I registered for a nursing degree with the University of Pretoria. I spent two years of my life trying to grasp it on a deeper level and trying to have an understanding, so that when I eventually ventured into that direction, I would not only come from my personal experience, the social work experience, but that I would have a deeper understanding, and I could do justice to what I was doing.

I have had all kinds of similar dreams. I think at a certain point you can move no further in the Foreign Service.

Q: You did some positive good in the area of gender violence in your job at the U.S. Embassy. Tell us about that.

GOODGALL: It's too long a story.

Kathy Shadow, when she came in, she really put this issue of gender violence on the table. At the time, I was too vulnerable myself to be really involved. It touched me on a personal level, and I started to tag along with Kathy, even though it wasn't part of my job. I started to show tremendous interest in what she was doing, bringing out speakers to work in the field of gender violence. I started to read more. I was just extremely interested.

Nobody knew this at that time. In fact, Kathy was the first to know that this touched me on a personal level.

A colleague of mine was killed by her husband, Dinelle, the Cultural Secretary.

Q: I was at the funeral.

GOODGALL: You were at the funeral? I was too faint to even remember.

Anyway, Dinelle was killed by her husband. I started to work closely with Kathy. I helped her put these programs together. When Kathy left, I took it a step further. I started to really go into it.

Q: I think there was a certain, who was one of your collaborators.

GOODGALL: When Kathy left, you started to show interest and supported the work we were doing in that end. Do you remember, Dan Whitman?

Q: I remember.

GOODGALL: From that point, it moved from doing the programs at work. We decided that this program was so large that Beryl and Mabatarohorsh – you remember her – she was the head of the National Network on Gender Violence. There was a wonderful woman from the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID).

Q: There was a policewoman from Sunnyside.

GOODGALL: Beth Foree from Sunnyside. We all got together and we started to make use of your house to meet and explore the idea of forming an NGO (nongovernmental organization). I realize that after you left, I became the driver. We had wonderful people. There was Professorvon Sale, who was at UNISA (University of South Africa) at the time. Lucky Vessels, who I am still in contact with, who was the original magistrate.

With those people, we came together. We stopped at a certain point, but it just never stopped in my heart. What happened is that we moved on.

When I went to study at UP (University of Pretoria), Les and I sat at the church across from the police station, asking the police to refer people to us, so that we could give the necessary support after they reported the thing.

....., my colleague was very much a part of that beginners' group. Reena, after you left, she just tired of the endless meetings. Since then, we were not getting anywhere. Unfortunately, there is a direction to take, and you can't do it. I didn't blame her. It was tiring.

We moved on and did what we could. When I went to study, we needed more drivers. I couldn't manage a job, family, studies, and trying to establish this. At one point, we decided to call it quits. We haven't given up the dream. We haven't given up supporting other people.

You won't believe it, but up to this day, there are very strong NGOs in gender violence in Johannesburg. As I said, it was not the case at the time in Pretoria. It is still not the case.

Q: I wasn't trying to draw attention to the achievements of the embassy. You were very involved in this. You did help a number of people. Are you saying that in a perfect world, you would now switch from embassy work and devote yourself to this?

GOODGALL: Absolutely. Without a second doubt, in a perfect world, if you take all the variables...

I am just munching on my cake because Dan is making me work on an angry stomach.

In a perfect world, there are many things I would like to do. One of them would be to do a little work. I have learned that many of the things we say are kind of like excuses. If we don't get where we want to be, there is nothing like this perfect world.

I would like to write. I would like to write my life story. I would like to write my grandmother's life story. I would like somebody to look a little bit at the poetry that I have done. I don't want to do it in between things. I want to be extremely relaxed at that point and say, "This is the direction that I would to go."

I would still like to serve my country on a deeper level. Maybe if I've got 15 good working years and I devote that to livingcrazy, because that's what we need in my country. We need innovation. We need hard work. We need people who are prepared to do more. There are a lot of people who do a lot of good work in this country. In a perfect world, I would kiss and say goodbye tomorrow.

Q: Did I remember to mention that I come offering you a McArthur Genius Grant, which will give you material support for five years to do anything you want? Just kidding!

GOODGALL: I was on top on the table, already!

Q: Sheila, thank you.

GOODGALL: It's a pleasure.

I like my closing statement: I would kiss and say goodbye tomorrow. That is honest. I like that.

Q: Finally, something honest.

End of interview