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

ELLEN M. JOHNSON

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is April 27, 1994. This is sort of a turn about because it is an interview with Ellen Johnson who has been transcribing tapes for some years now and I finally persuaded Ellen to let me record her story. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. This is something I have wanted to do because Ellen has been a Foreign Service secretary and has had some very interesting assignments and we have tended to concentrate on the officers. But the secretary's role in the Foreign Service is a very important one. It is often true when an embassy comes back and says, "Gee, we have to have another political officer," and is told, "All right, if you need another political officer we might be able to do it but we will have to drop a secretary," their response usually is, "I think we will have to do without the political officer." The secretary is a key element within our Service. So, Ellen, could you give me a little about your background?

JOHNSON: Yes. I was born in 1934 in New Brunswick, New Jersey. My father was from Iowa and was a professor at Rutgers University in New Brunswick. My mother was born and brought up in Arkansas, but her parents had moved from Iowa to Arkansas two or three years before she was born, so they were also from Iowa. She went back to Marshalltown, Iowa to go to high school and went to Penn College in Oskaloosa, Iowa, where she met my father.

I went through the New Brunswick school system and then went on to Bates College in Lewiston, Maine.

Q: You graduated then about...?

JOHNSON: I graduated in 1955 from Bates.

Q: With a degree in...?

JOHNSON: With a degree in government. Then I went to the University of Colorado in Boulder where I got my Masters in international relations. I became interested in other countries at an early age. In my teens I baby sat for a Canadian couple who had a subscription to "The London Illustrated News" and became an immediate Anglophile. While in high school I started a scrapbook on the Korean War, thinking it would last only a couple of months. By the time I got to college I knew I wanted to major in international affairs and history.

Q: When you were both at Bates and Colorado where was the focus of government, what were you looking at?

JOHNSON: My focus was on China. I did my paper at Bates on Chiang Kai-shek, his rise to power and eventual departure from China for Formosa. For my Masters I continued the story, following the consolidation of his position on Formosa and, with the help of the United States, his rising power on the world scene. I made a prediction that we would recognize the People's Republic of China, in about ten years, around 1966, but I was off a little bit. However, I felt we should because it seemed to me that such a large country should at least be diplomatically recognized, which would not necessarily be approval of its form of government.

Q: I came into the Foreign Service in 1955 and I certainly felt that this was a domestic political problem. The idea of huffing and puffing about China just didn't seem to make much sense, the non-recognition, and we would have to come around to it at some point. It was really when would the politicians get around to doing it.

JOHNSON: That seemed to be the issue of the day at that time. Also the Korean war which overlapped my high school and college days.

Q: Yes, 1950-53. How about your professors? Give us a little feeling of the academic world that you were dealing with.

JOHNSON: My history and political science professor at Bates was involved in state politics. He was the campaign manager for Muskie who became the first Democratic governor of Maine in many years. He tried very hard to get a Young Democrats group going, but with little success. I joined and had fun attending various local town meetings, but there was really very little interest among the students as a whole.

Q: It was still part of what was called the silent generation.

JOHNSON: Yes. The fifties was a time of the silent generation and there was very little interest in politics. The status quo was fine with most students. And the professors at

Bates seemed to be the same way. My professor was the most outspoken one I recall and he simply felt it was time to get the Democrats back into the Maine Governor's House.

Q: What about Colorado? It was a sort of unlikely place at that time to study about China wasn't it?

JOHNSON: Well, I had always wanted to go to school in the Denver area from the time of my first visit there when I was ten. I fell in love with the location. Secondly, I really wasn't planning to specifically continue studying China, I was interested in the subject of communist affairs. It just happened that when the time came to choose a topic for a thesis, it seemed appropriate to continue the Chiang Kai-shek story and take advantage of my prior research. The University had a good communist studies department. My professor was an expert in Eastern Europe, particularly, Yugoslavia. He made numerous trips to that part of the world. In fact, he visited both Prague and Belgrade during my tours in those cities and it was very satisfying to be able to discuss what was happening in a country while actually there rather than in a classroom.

Q: When did you graduate?

JOHNSON: I got my Masters in 1956. I did it all in one calendar year. While I was there I took the Foreign Service exam at the urging of my professor. I flunked the exam by one point. I think you had to get a 70 and I got a 69.

Q: Yes, you had to get a 70. I took the exam in 1953 and got a 69.75 and they averaged me into the Foreign Service.

JOHNSON: I always blame that failure on the article that we had to punctuate. It was all about our policy on Communist China and I got emotionally involved in it and lost track of the time. In the end I had to rush back over the article and punctuate on the run, obviously not doing a very good job. As it turned out, the exam failure was a good thing because it forced me to join the Foreign Service as a secretary with the intention of taking the exam again at some overseas posting. However, while at my first post I realized being an officer wasn't for me and I remained a secretary throughout my career. I have always felt that through being a secretary I met and worked with or for probably as many, if not more, top political and government leaders than most mid ranking officers did in their careers.

In 1957 I went to Washington and was told that since I didn't have any secretarial experience I would have to work as a Civil Service employee for a year after which I could apply for the Foreign Service. My first job was in the Soviet economic section of INR (Intelligence Research Bureau). Abe Katz was my boss at that time.

Q: What kinds of things did you do? Here you were a secretary but very obviously watching and involved in everything.

JOHNSON: Other than the usual secretarial duties, one of my daily tasks was to clip articles on the economic situation in the Soviet Union from the Soviet newspapers, "Izvestia" and "Pravda". I memorized the Russian alphabet and learned various key words like agriculture, industry, economics, finance, collective farm, etc. so that I could recognize them. If I saw one of those words in a headline, I would cut it out. This was really a very simple process because the papers did not have imaginative headlines, everything was pretty much cut and dry.

Another task I had during that year was to do a survey on how well the Soviets kept their economic aid promises to various countries in the Middle East, particularly Egypt and Syria. It turned out that in most cases they didn't do well. They would start a project with great fanfare and then slowly draw back as time went on. It was an interesting project. CIA was interested in what I was doing and sent somebody over to look at my results. Interestingly enough, this person turned out to be a classmate from Bates who had been a couple of years ahead of me. It was always amusing to me that in later conversations she never would outright admit that she was with CIA, even though she had appeared in my office that once with CIA credentials!.

Q: As you are saying this, we are talking about the old system where women who were absolutely qualified to be regular Foreign Service Officers, but were hired as clerk stenographers and immediately put to work doing Foreign Service work. But at least they had the good sense to use you rather than to just say, "Type this."

JOHNSON: I was fortunate in the Foreign Service in that I was always treated as more than a clerk stenographer by most of my superiors.

Before we leave INR, let me tell an amusing anecdote. At one point I became "a government source" while there. The Soviets had just launched the first sputnik and I got a call from a reporter who wanted to know how to pronounce the word. There was nobody in the office at the time, but I had heard Abe Katz use the word a number of times and gave his pronunciation to the reporter. Well, that night I heard the reporter say that a government source had told him sputnik was pronounced in such-and-such a way. Little did he know that the government source was a "lowly" secretary.

So, I did this for a year and as soon as it was up I went to Personnel and said, "All right, I want to join the Foreign Service now." They said, "No, you don't want to do that." I said, "Yes, I do." In July, 1958 I transferred over to the Foreign Service and received my first assignment.

Q: Was the reluctance on the part of the Civil Service people due to their wanting to keep you in the Civil Service?

JOHNSON: That is what they indicated. They tried their best to convince me I wasn't really interested in the Foreign Service, and would be better off staying where I was.

After being sworn in and experiencing three days of "training," which consisted mostly of looking at and being told about various forms of communication--the dispatch, the telegram, and the airgram--I packed my bags and sailed for Japan and Kobe-Osaka. The 13-day cruise was my first trip outside the United States and was very exciting..

Q: It was a consulate general you were headed for and you were there from 1958-1961.

JOHNSON: Yes. I discovered afterwards that it was unusual to have a three year tour as a first tour, and I don't know why it was set up that way. A two year tour, or 18 months-home leave-18 months tour would have been much better.

Q: What was Japan like at that period?

JOHNSON: It was not the easiest place for a single woman. A nice woman didn't work in those days. One year I commuted to the Osaka office from Kobe, where I lived in the consulate general compound. It was about a 25 minute train ride and often young Japanese would come up to me to practice their English. I was 23 at the time and there were always the questions, "Where are your parents? What are you doing here?" They were always amazed when I told them I worked at the consulate general. The Japanese did most of their entertaining at public restaurants, although some of the officers occasionally were invited to a Japanese home. There was only one Japanese that I got to know socially, and that was the head local in the economic section who invited the office over to his house for dinner once. His wife waited on us, but didn't join us at the table. It was almost impossible for a single woman to get to know Japanese at that time.

Westernization was just beginning to creep into the Japanese culture which made living there much more interesting and different. Once I adjusted to the culture, I enjoyed staying at Japanese inns, strolling around shrines and discovering new ways of doing things. I don't think I would like to return to Japan because I fear it has become too Westernized.

Q: You worked where?

JOHNSON: I was in the ECON section doing typical secretarial work.

Q: Who was the consul general then?

JOHNSON: A man by the name of Emory who previously had worked for AID. This was his first Foreign Service post and I believe his last. He and his wife had a drinking problem which was very evident. The foreign community talked about them all the time, which was very embarrassing to a newcomer to the Service who was proud of being an American and in the diplomatic service.

We had a wonderful senior Japanese national in the ECON section who had his Masters in economics from Harvard. He knew a great deal more than his American supervisor did and in effect ran the section.

It was a small consulate although all the usual sections were represented including CIA, USIA and the military.

Q: Did you get any feel for what we were thinking about the Japanese economy at that time?

JOHNSON: We were trying to encourage the economy at that time. We certainly weren't worried about competition from them yet. Shipbuilding was thriving in the Kobe area, which has one of the largest natural harbors in Japan. The textile industry was also doing well. I don't think anybody thought the automobile industry would develop the way it has. The Toyota was being manufactured, but the electrical system was so poor that people bought a Toyota only when they couldn't afford anything else. If your were important, you drove a four-door, black sedan, American car!

It was becoming evident that the Japanese were good copiers and thought nothing about flooding markets. Whenever a new fad, like the hula hoop, developed somewhere in the world, most notably in the United States, small cottage industries would spring up immediately throughout Japan and they would flood the market, soon putting themselves out of business. They would then wait for the next fad and then start manufacturing the new item, again flooding the market. Somebody may have begun at this time to worry about these tactics which might be used with larger items as well, as the Japanese industry developed.

Q: I take it you liked it but didn't like it, is that right?

JOHNSON: I liked it but wasn't very happy with the head man and hoped he was not typical of principal officers. I had a wonderful time in Kobe, outside the consulate. There was a large foreign community in Kobe, many of who were single British men working in the Kobe branches of various banks and insurance companies. I was young and loved to party. So it was fun. But three years without home leave was long enough. I was in need of a rest and recuperation period by the time I left.

For my next assignment I wanted to go to a communist country and hoped for the Soviet Union. Lo and behold my assignment came through Moscow and I left Japan in high spirits, only to find out on my arrival at the State Department that the assignment had been changed to Warsaw. They had found a spouse to fill the position in Moscow, which makes sense to me now, but really didn't at the time. I was unhappy with the Warsaw assignment, initially, but it turned out to be a place where I made more lasting friendships than at any other of my posts.

Q: Well, Moscow would not have been....

JOHNSON: It would have been fascinating, but Warsaw, as it turned out, was much more enjoyable and interesting to me.

Q: Well, you served in Warsaw from 1961-63. What were you doing there?

JOHNSON: The first year I worked in the consular section. Then one day the USIA secretary walked out and said she was never going to go back and work for the PAO, who was Pic Littell. The DCM felt that something had to be done and I was pulled out of consular and put into the USIA job where I was for the second year.

Q: Before we get to USIA, what was the consular situation there?

JOHNSON: We had a large consular staff for a communist country. I think there were five American officers, including the consul. The main reason for this was that the Polish government allowed older Poles who weren't working any longer to leave the country. There would be 3 or 4 thousand a year leaving for the States, which was a large number for a communist country in those days. So it was a very busy section. Most of the consular officers were in the economic or political cones and after one year of consular work they usually rotated up into the economic or political sections.

Q: What were you doing?

JOHNSON: I was doing strictly secretarial work and found it rather boring. Although I didn't want to go to USIA, the work was a great deal more interesting there.

Q: What was life like in Warsaw in those days?

JOHNSON: It was a restrictive life.

Q: Who was ambassador there?

JOHNSON: When I arrived, Jake Beam was ambassador. He was there four months and then John M. Cabot arrived. Both of them were very shy men. However, Mrs. Cabot was not shy. She would have wonderful parties and made up for her husband's shyness as far as the staff was concerned. The DCM was Albert [Bud] Sherer, who became a very close friend of mine and we met up at another post later on.

One tended to make close friends in Warsaw because of the restrictive nature of the environment. There was very little you could do outside the embassy so we spent a lot of time entertaining each other. It was a lot of fun. For example, I found myself playing volleyball with the Marines one Saturday afternoon because they were short a player. I didn't add much to the game other than allowing them to play.

Q: At the time there was great concern about intelligence in all communist countries. I would think an obvious target for intelligence would be both unmarried men and unmarried women in the American embassy. Were you under strict instructions?

JOHNSON: We were told to be very careful in our contacts with the Poles and should consider every one a possible employee of the secret police. Of course, it worked both ways, the Poles could get into trouble if seen with an American or foreigner without specific permission. I had a young student coming once a week to my apartment to teach me French, but he called one day and said that he would lose his job at the university library if he continued to come, and that was the last I saw of him.
I also had a maid who lived on the top floor of the apartment building where I lived. She had a Canadian sister who would send her packages, or so she claimed, and often dressed better than I did. I don't know if she was in the employ of the secret police or not. However, I had to assume that she was and be careful of my conversation within her hearing. Once a bug was found in my telephone and I don't know if she put it there or not.

The Marines had a tough time because they were constantly targets of the secret police through seductive advances by women who just happened to have an apartment across from the embassy and would parade around in the evenings and weekends.

The attachés were always followed and played the game of trying to evade their pursuers as often as possible while driving around the countryside. In fact, we all were followed at times. In those days the road traffic consisted mostly of Warszawas, a 1940 Ford appearing car, and horses and carts. So it was amusing that the secret police generally drove around in black Mercedes, making it easy to know when you were being followed. I can remember once leaving a party and seeing a Mercedes parked out front. There were two men in the front who were sound asleep. I decided to have some fun and tapped on the window and said, "I am going home now." They quickly straightened up in their seats, started their car and proceeded to follow me home. I thought maybe I had saved their jobs, or something.

Another form of harassment was phone calls at all hours of the night. This would happened most often immediately on return from a trip. The phone would ring in the middle of the night and you would hear nothing on picking up the phone. This would go on three or four times a night for a couple of nights before it would stop for a while. If this happened here, one would just take the phone off the hook, but in Warsaw there was always the chance that the embassy needed you for something, or there was an emergency at home, etc. so you didn't dare not answer each ring. We were fairly certain there was a lady who lived across the street who watched our comings and goings and perhaps was told when to make the calls.

We had a couple of people who couldn't live in this kind of closed environment where one had to assume you were under surveillance constantly, and therefore were transferred out.

Q: Were there any cases of people being caught up in all this?

JOHNSON: There was a famous one.

Q: Oh, yes, it was a General Services officer.

JOHNSON: Yes. The officer involved had left about five or six months before I arrived, however, a couple of people who had testified at the hearing, were still there and the whole affair was still a topic of conversation throughout the embassy and the diplomatic community.

Q: He was caught passing on information through his girl friend.

JOHNSON: Yes, she was an East German, I think.

Q: I don't think she was a plant, but had been pressured by the Poles or something.

JOHNSON: I am not clear on the details. But he was convicted.

Q: Now, on to your USIA job, I have to ask what was the problem with the PAO?

JOHNSON: Pic was a very demanding and energetic person. He couldn't understand why people didn't like to work through lunch hours. The secretary previous to the one who had walked out, was fluent in Polish and didn't mind clipping newspapers and fielding calls, etc. during her lunch hour. She also was able to contact Polish officials directly, without going through a national employee. Pic would use her as a fill-in at small social sitdown functions, where she was undoubtedly a success with her language abilities. Well, her replacement, didn't speak Polish, didn't want to work through her lunch hour, couldn't clip the newspapers or call the Foreign Office, or even fill-in easily at small functions. Pic would get upset and annoyed with her, and criticize her inability or willingness to do these things. So she walked out.

The DCM knew what was going on and didn't feel the secretary should have a black mark against her and devised the plan to have us exchange jobs. Pic was told he had to behave or else, and he did for the most part. Although I must say I did have to go to a couple of those small functions and with only a few words of Polish and German, I did feel extremely uncomfortable. But, I didn't work through my lunch hour unless it was necessary.

I didn't want to move to USIA, but in retrospect it did give me an insight into what USIA did. Of course, it was very limited as to what they could do there, although I was there at a period when things for artists were a little freer than it had been before and it was going to be by the time I left.

Q: The Kennedy Administration was coming in.

JOHNSON: That I think may have had something to do with it. Certainly the Poles were, as was the world, distressed at his assassination. There were long lines to sign the condolence book at the embassy and there was standing room only at a memorial service held at the cathedral.

There were modern artists who would come to your parties; we sponsored a number of small exhibits; there were a few guest lecturer programs including Munro Leaf...

Q: He illustrated a very famous book, "Ferdinand" which was about a bull that loved flowers.

JOHNSON: Right. He also did the Watch Bird series which appeared in "Good Housekeeping." I had grown up with that series as a youngster...This is a good Watch Bird watching you or a bad Watch Bird watching you. That was fun.

John Steinbeck also came out. So there was a small amount of exchange. The library was used to a certain extent. But it was hard to do too much and by the time I left the door had closed again.

Q: Did you have a Polish staff?

JOHNSON: Yes, but only a couple people. There was also a Pole in the consular section and a few in the administrative section. We didn't have the bubble room in those days so the Polish staff were not allowed above ground floor.

Q: Bubble room was a room built for discussing classified information and supposedly was secure. We had one in Belgrade about that time.

JOHNSON: You are right, we did have one. The China Talks were going on secretly in Warsaw at that time. I remember taking dictation after one of the meetings in a bubble room. But the Polish staff still were not allowed above the ground floor.

Q: How did you find the USIA officers?

JOHNSON: There were two others besides my boss--a press officer and a cultural officer. The press officer was very good, but he was really a security risk because he kept papers piled all over his office and didn't pay too much attention to their classification. I believe he left under somewhat of a cloud in the end.

I got to know John Scanlan, the cultural officer, very well. He had a temper to go with his red hair. He was really a very good officer, but had a habit of showing classified documents, Limited Official Use, to locals who were supposed to see nothing higher than Official Use Only. I caught him doing this once and told him he shouldn't do it and he told me I had no right to tell him what he could and couldn't do. I'm sure the entire

embassy heard our raised voices. But we mended our fences and after that became the best of friends.

Q: He became ambassador to the Soviet Union later on.

JOHNSON: Yes, that is right. He was a junior officer at that time. One story before we leave Poland. There was a diplomatic riding club on the outskirts of Warsaw. One day I got to talking to the young lady in charge and she told me she had gone to the States to study advanced methods of raising pigs and was waiting for a job to open up at the university. As you know, at that time the export of ham was a big foreign currency maker for Poland. I asked her where she had gone for the training and she said at Iowa State in Ames, Iowa. I asked her who her professor was and she said a Dr. Leslie Johnson. I told her Leslie Johnson was my uncle. It is indeed a small world!

Q: Then you took off for another two years in quite a different locale and job.

JOHNSON: Yes, I went to London. This was a thrill because, as I mentioned earlier, I had been an Anglophile ever since my early teens when I discovered "The London Illustrated News."

Q: You were there from 1964 to 1966.

JOHNSON: I worked for the Labor Attaché, which doesn't sound particularly exciting, but the Labor Party came into power while I was there and caught the political officers flatfooted. They hadn't deemed it worthwhile getting to know the leaders of the Labor Party feeling the Conservatives and Liberals were the ones to know. However, Thomas Byrne, my boss, who later became an ambassador, had gotten to know these leaders very well and was the only one in the embassy who did know them when they came to power. Suddenly my job became more and more interesting. Tom began to spend more time at the Ambassador's right hand because he was the only one who knew some of these new leaders of government.

Q: It is an interesting thing because during World War II sort of the same thing happened. Sam Burger was the Labor Attaché and he knew Attlee and company. The rest of the embassy got infatuated with the Tories. I think there is a tendency to associate with them or something. That Labor is a little more unwashed or something like that. So Sam Burger was the only person who knew who these people were in a way. I guess it is the natural course of things, that the embassy tends to pick up the feeling from the society or from the Ambassador who if a political appointee may be more interested in the social side of the position.

JOHNSON: Well, David Bruce was the Ambassador at that time. But I was amazed that nobody else had spent any time getting to know these people.

There was another reason why I liked the job. This had to do with the way Tom Byrne worked. Tom would come in early in the morning as did I. He would call me in and we would go over the financial page of the newspapers and then discuss what was going to happen during the day. Throughout the day he would feed me a constant flow of work. By 6:00 he was ready to go home to his family and I had finished all the planned work.

Although I enjoyed this way of working, it didn't help the morale of the other secretaries in the political section (we all sat in one long room) who were still busy at the typewriter getting out telegrams that just HAD to go out that night, as I closed up and went home. The problem was that they had sat around all morning waiting for their bosses to give them some work. However, they seldom started work, collecting of information, etc., until around lunch time and then would come rushing back and start dictating around 4:00 and the secretaries seldom got away before 7:00 or 7:30 on a regular basis. I felt I had the best job in the political section.

Q: This is one of the things I have noted again and again. I come from the consular background where you kind of have your day's work and you do it, work hard, and then when it is over, it is over and you go. But there is a tendency for political officers to sort of get moving very, very slowly, to go out and have a working lunch and come back and be a little slowed down from a heavy lunch an all, and then around 5:00 they start cranking up to turn out the day's work.

JOHNSON: And most of the work could have been saved until the next morning so the secretary could be busy in the morning and then be ready for whatever went on in the afternoon. Their excuse was that the government offices didn't open until 10:00, which was true, so there was nothing for them to do until then. That way of operating was very unfortunate because it made for an unnecessarily long day on a regular basis for many secretaries, and we didn't get paid overtime in those days.

Q: What was life like in London?

JOHNSON: I was very fortunate because I had made two very close British friends at the British embassy in Warsaw who had been reassigned to London. So I had built in friends upon arrival. Fortunately, there wasn't room for me in the limited government housing at that time, so I had to go out and find my own housing. I found an apartment two blocks from where my friends were living. Consequently, I did very little socializing with Americans at the embassy. If I hadn't had the British friends already, it would have been a little more difficult enjoying many of the "greats" of the British Isles because the embassy is very large and staff tends to get lost in large embassies. Only at very large functions would junior and middle ranked officers be invited to the Ambassador's functions at the Residence, never staff personnel..

Staff generally were on their own socially. If you thought you were going to be as a staff member in the mainstream of society there, you were wrong. Large posts can be lonely for somebody who doesn't find outside friendships. You wouldn't be invited to the Fourth

of July party, for example. At small posts you are invited to everything so you do feel part of the diplomatic family. This is why I have always preferred smaller posts to larger ones--except for London, where I would be happy regardless.

Life outside the diplomatic world was fantastic in London. There was so much theater that you found yourself going once or twice a week. It was relatively inexpensive and you couldn't afford not to go. After travel limitations in Poland, it was a joy to be able to get into a car and go any where in the country, which I did. I traveled from John O'Groat's in the north to Lands End in the south. I saw a lot of the places I had seen pictured in "The London Illustrated News" during my teens. It was easy and wonderful living.

I went on a three week TDY to Warsaw over Christmas of 1965. John Gronouski, the Postmaster General, was appointed the new Ambassador to Poland and arrived in mid-December. However, his secretary didn't want to come until after Christmas. Albert Sherer was still DCM in Warsaw and suggested that I return to Warsaw until the new secretary appeared. I wasn't very happy about the TDY because I had already made Christmas plans, but the needs of the Service, and all that, and I went.

It was quite an experience, my first encounter with a political appointee as Ambassador. He was still the politician and couldn't understand why people got so upset with him when he would take off and start shaking hands with the man in the street. The Polish officials were not very happy with this and we had to try to impress upon him that it wasn't something you did in Poland. I can also remembering asking him about the zip code program which he had initiated a year or so earlier while Postmaster General. I asked if he thought it would really work. He said that it had better work because his political career depended on it. I don't know what happened to his political career, but the zip code certainly has become an institution. However, then it was difficult for secretaries to figure out exactly where and how to place it in the address.

I appreciated London even more after my return from Warsaw because the door really had slammed shut for the Poles and their relationship with foreigners and living in Warsaw had become much more uncomfortable and restrictive.

I was in London when Churchill died in 1965. I stood in line for hours waiting to file pass the casket. His funeral was a tribute to the British ability to stage outstanding and tasteful pageantry. Nobody does it better.

Q: Was there a change when the Labor Party came in as far as what the Labor Attaché was doing?

JOHNSON: There was a change in that Tom was called often to the Ambassador's or DCM's office for discussions about various Labor Party leaders. Previously that had seldom happened as it was usually a political officer who did most of the briefing of the principals. Tom did more political reporting, telegrams, memorandum of conversation, biographical sketches, etc.

Q: What were your impressions from these conversations and things that you were doing of the Labor Party at that time? How did we view the Labor Party?

JOHNSON: I got the impression that the officers would have preferred that Labor hadn't gotten in. They weren't very happy with the nationalization that took place and tended to look upon the Party as being very close to following the communist line. There was, of course, a group within the Party which was very far to the left, but it hadn't the power within the Party then as it did in later years under Neil Kinnock. Certainly Harold Wilson was not as far left as Neil Kinnock. I think it took the embassy time getting used to Harold Wilson after the aristocratic Macmillan and Douglas-Hume.

Q: Then you left London in 1966 and went back to Washington.

JOHNSON: Yes. I had requested a Washington assignment because my father had died the year before and I wanted to be close to my mother. In those days the only way you could get a Washington assignment was due to illness or for compassionate reasons. There really were no slots open for staff and it took them a while to find me a job.

I went back to a position in S/S-S, the Secretariat Staff for the Executive Secretary of the Department of State. It had been set up a few years earlier by the current director, Jeanne Davis. It was so successful that before I went overseas again, she had left and gone over to the White House to set up a similar operation there. I was the first Foreign Service secretary to be on the staff. Personnel had never considered Foreign Service secretaries for that job before. I understand today the ratio is about 50/50 Foreign Service to Civil Service.

The main function of S/S-S was to keep track of the paper flow to and from the seventh floor principals. I spent hours keeping track of letters that had to be answered, and reports that were requested, etc. If they didn't cross my desk in timely fashion, I would have to make a phone call to the action office and bug them to get it up yesterday. Not only did a reply need to be submitted in a timely fashion, but it also had to be in the correct format. We would ride herd on briefing papers for hearings on the hill, for press conferences, for speeches, or for trips abroad or up to the UNGA.

Another function was to accompany the Secretary or other principal on trips abroad, to international organization meetings, political visits, etc. I went on six or seven trips during my three years in S/S-S.

I went on Nixon's first European trip, which was rather interesting.

Q: Take the Nixon trip to Europe. This would be 1969 wouldn't it?

JOHNSON: Yes, February 21-March 3, 1969. The first thing one would do on a trip was to get the briefing papers up. These would include arrival and departure speeches; toasts

for dinners; bios on everyone he was scheduled to meet; talking points for the various meetings that were to be held. All of this was done for each country.

A S/S-S team for a trip usually consisted of a line officer, who watched over all the paperwork, and a secretary, who organized all the papers, and did whatever secretarial work was required when at the post. On a long trip, like this was, there would be two such teams involved. There was always an advance team that went out to make certain that everything was organized at post, all the administrative arrangements were in order. A second team would actually accompany the principal to the first stop and then continue on to the second stop becoming an advance team there. The first team would then stay with the principal until arrival at the second post, etc. This meant I was an advance team for two countries and was actually on his plane for two countries.

When you were at post, the first thing you did would be to read the morning traffic and decide what had to be shown to the principal's aide. You also make certain that all of the administrative arrangements had been made including a typed schedule for the day's events. There would also be questions coming in from the next stop that had to be answered. The team acted like a mini operations center for the trip making certain everybody got the information needed for a successful trip as well as keeping the principal in touch with what was going on in Washington.

I would get involved to a certain degree in all of these things. There were also the usual steno duties such as typing up the notes of a notepaper at the various meetings held with the head of state and top politicians of the country and sending them back to Washington. It was also my duty to keep track of our own classified material. Sometimes we could duplicate what was needed at a post, but there was still a lot that we had to carry around with us along with other reference materials in large footlockers and those oblong briefcases.

Q: I remember seeing people assembling those footlockers full of documents.

JOHNSON: Yes, we did carry those footlockers around with us. On one of the trips I was alone, without a line officer, and the footlocker and classified briefcase became my responsibility. This was in late 1967 when tensions over Cyprus flared up between Greece and Turkey. Cyrus Vance was the principal negotiator and along with four other officers we flew in and out of Ankara and Athens and once to Nicosia. A three day trip turned into thirteen days and I had to keep track of that footlocker and briefcase the entire time. Our first stop was in Ankara where we landed at the military airport because no one was supposed to know we were there. Consequently there were no steps rolled out to the plane, we had to use a ladder lowered from the cockpit. I had to hang around below the ladder waiting for the footlocker and briefcase while the motorcade waited impatiently for me to get into the last car. I couldn't go anywhere without those two objects.

While in Ankara we worked out of the Ambassador's Residence and I would sleep with the classified material under the bed. I awoke one morning to find it was gone. I panicked

but soon learned that the Ambassador being in need of some papers had come in and taken it while I was sleeping. A fine watchdog I was! Finally a Marine Guard was stationed at the Residence for the specific purpose of watching the footlocker and briefcase, thus releasing me of that vigil.

During this particular trip there was an amusing occurrence that happened on the flight over. We were all very busy writing and typing up briefing and policy papers since we had had only three hours notice before departure on the trip. We were trying to stay ahead of the press in an attempt to defuse the tensions between Greece and Turkey before the media got wind of it. I was typing as quickly as possible for eight hours straight. Suddenly there was great laughter from all the officers. I looked up wondering what had happened. I was told that I had typed "Cyprus" Vance rather than "Cyrus" Vance on one of the documents. From that time on everybody called Mr. Vance, Cyprus Vance. There were many laughs over that one.

The trips could be very tiring. They were not vacations. If the trip was very long you would be exhausted by the time you returned. I was on the African trip of Hubert Humphrey's when he was Vice President, which was thirteen days with stops in 8 countries. There were no advance teams on that trip so we were there for the long haul. On these trips there usually was an admin team from the Administrative Bureau to help out with the administrative details because not only did you have a large VIP entourage, but you had press along as well. After three days, this team just decided they weren't going to continue (I never found out what happened) so their job fell to my colleague and me. In addition to our regular work we had to assist the VIPs and keep track of the press. If they didn't get to the departing plane in time they were left behind. For good PR purposes, we had to do our best to keep them informed of administrative developments. I ended up taping schedules to their bathroom mirrors figuring that was a place they would all see it. This meant we were working practically around the clock to get everything done. I saw little other than airports and hotels during the entire trip.

Q: Back to the Nixon trip. The White House staff is always a problem, being very demanding. But this was the first trip and didn't know, I would imagine, what they were doing. Was there conflict between the professional staff, which you were part of, and the White House staff?

JOHNSON: It was a problem for me because many of those at my level felt they were on the trip to have a good time. So, although White House staff did come along they often were not around when work needed to be done. The State Department people were the ones who would be working late at night while they were often out on the town when we were in Brussels, London and Paris. Many of them had never been overseas before.

Q: Did you find yourself giving motherly advice about what to do?

JOHNSON: Not during the Nixon trip. However, I was in Paris for three months with Harriman and the Vietnam Peace Talks. That was a long time to be a gypsy and we would

get S/S-S people rotating in and out. Some of those young officers got themselves into a little trouble in Paris and I did offer a few words of advice to them.

Q: Was this while you were still with S/S-S?

JOHNSON: Yes, that was in 1968.

Q: Did you get any feel for Harriman or not?

JOHNSON: Yes, I did. While there I filled in for his secretary while she was on leave for two weeks, and it was not an easy job. Harriman lived in his own world, I think. He was becoming quite deaf at that time and he would say something to me and I would talk at my usual level and he would say, "Speak up, I can't hear you." So I would speak louder and he would say, "I'm not deaf, you don't have to speak that loud."

He would call his staff aide every morning to see whether or not he needed to wear his coat to the office. One morning the aide was late in arriving and I answered the phone. I told him that I thought he didn't need his coat. A half hour later he called his aide and asked him whether he should wear his coat. Evidently he didn't trust my judgment. Fortunately, the aide told him the same thing I had.

It was hard working for him because you often took the blame publicly for his actions. I would tell him somebody was waiting to see him. Half an hour later he would come out and say, "Oh, I didn't know you were waiting, nobody told me," and I would be sitting there wishing I were invisible. Despite the way he treated his staff, he seemed to be highly respected by his peers in Paris.

Q: Did you get any feeling of how Dean Rusk was viewed by his staff when you were in the Secretariat? He was Secretary most of the time you were there.

JOHNSON: As far as I could tell people liked and respected Dean Rusk. He treated his staff very well. He was considerate of his staff, at least he was considerate of his secretaries. I was with him once in New York at a UNGA meeting. He had had dinner with the Soviet representative and around 11:00 returned to his office to write up a telegram reporting the conversation. I was called in for dictation. There were four or five other top ranking State Department officials with the Secretary in the room. As I walked into the room, he stood up. Nobody else stood up. He was in his shirt sleeves, as was everybody else, and apologized for not having his jacket on. In the middle of the dictation I missed a word and gulped and said, "Mr. Secretary, I am afraid I missed that word." His said, "Well, it must be my southern accent," and repeated the word.

Secretary Rusk was one of those people with an organized mind who knows exactly what and how he wants to say something. He dictated quite rapidly three fourths of the telegram (none of which needed editing) and then after asking the others to write the final

paragraph, departed for bed. I sat in the room for another 30 minutes while the final paragraph was debated. It turned out to be about four sentences!
Q: Were there any other trips or occasions before we move on?

JOHNSON: Let's see. Oh, yes, I went up to work for Henry Kissinger. Larry Eagleburger and I were seconded to Kissinger during the transition period, from the election to January 20, 1969. We worked out of the Pierre Hotel in New York City. Kissinger had been named National Security Adviser and was getting his staff together. We would shuttle back and forth between New York and Washington so he could interview people in Washington and be available for meetings called by Nixon in New York.

There was one amusing incident. He was trying to get in touch with Henry Cabot Lodge for the Ambassadorship to Vietnam and hadn't had any luck. I knew that he wanted to talk to him. One day when his secretary was out to lunch, Mr. Lodge called and I said, "Just a minute, I know he wants to talk to you." I buzzed Mr. Kissinger and told him who was on the line. Well, the response I got was, "I told you I didn't want to be bothered with any phone calls. I don't care who it is," and the phone was slammed down. So I had to tell Mr. Lodge that I couldn't get him at that moment and would call him back. A few minutes later Kissinger appeared in the doorway and apologized to me and saying, "I am terribly sorry Miss Johnson, I thought my secretary had told you I didn't want to be disturbed. In any case, I really don't know you well enough to yell at you like that." I think I may be the only person he has apologized to for yelling at them. When he asked if I would stay on his staff after January 20, I remembered this incident and decided I really didn't want to put up with that type of behavior.

Q: What was your impression of Larry Eagleburger at this time? He was a middle grade officer.

JOHNSON: Larry was very good. I felt he was an excellent officer. He was an excellent reporting officer and told things as he saw them, not necessarily like the recipient wanted them to be. He got along with Kissinger very well. Larry didn't outwardly get upset if Kissinger said, "That wasn't what I asked for." He would speak up and tell Kissinger why he had done whatever was in question and then return to his desk to redo it if necessary. I'm sure this kind of response earned him Kissinger's respect.

Q: So, you then went overseas again and for a long spell from 1969-1973 in Prague.

JOHNSON: Yes, I found myself once again in a communist country. I did a double tour there primarily because I like working for Art Wortzel, who was my second DCM there. Prague was a beautiful baroque city which had not been destroyed by the Second World War and a delight to wander through. There was a lot more to do in Prague than there had been in Warsaw. There was opera, the famous mime theater, a castle, bridges, lots of churches, some very good restaurants, excellent beer, golf, to name a few things of interest.

Q: It was what, a year or two years after the Prague...?

JOHNSON: I arrived a day after the first anniversary of the Prague Spring.

Q: This was when the Soviets came in and crushed the new government.
JOHNSON: Yes, with tanks and troops. So, although there were a number of things one could do and see in Prague, the secret police was in control of things. There was a guard box across from the embassy entrance and one near the entrance to the DCM and staff houses in the Residence compound. At times you would be under surveillance, although it wasn't quite as noticeable within Prague as it had been in Warsaw. When you were driving in the country you would quickly know whether you were being followed or not. But it never bothered me, in fact, I felt rather safe. Once when I was driving in the country I got a flat tire, and the two men following me changed the tire for me.

As in Warsaw, there was very little contact with the Czechs. I had a maid, who would occasionally ask me to do things for her and I unhappily had to refuse. Again one had to operate on the premise that she was controlled by the secret police. During my third year, I had a man who came to my house to teach me German. He was a very interesting person. He was a former vice president of a large company who was at that time digging up cobble stones and laying them back down again. He was living alone in Prague while his family was forced to live in the country. He loved his city of Prague and would tell me wonderful stories about its history. Once when I had visitors he offered to act as a tour guide. He was fantastic, showing us all around the city and the castle. I didn't learn much German, but I enjoyed his commentary. One day he called and said he was sorry, but he would not be able to come again. Very sad. I hope he is still alive and can enjoy the city's liberation.
It was sad that the country wasted so much of its professional, business and intellectual manpower resources.

Q: What was the embassy like. How was it operating?

JOHNSON: The chancery, along with 12 apartments, was located in the Schönbrunn Palace which was bought by us in 1924. The office I shared with the Ambassador's secretary had three enormous chandeliers! I felt I should be dancing rather than typing in the room. It was not a large embassy with about a dozen Foreign Service officers and representatives of CIA, USIA and Defense. When I arrived Mac Toon was the Ambassador. He was a Kremlinologist and later became Ambassador to the Soviet Union. The DCM, who I worked for, was John Baker. There was one ECON officer, one political officer, three consular officers (the Czechs had a difficult time getting permission to go to the States so the consular section was not as active or large as the one in Warsaw when I was there), and three Americans in the admin section. In addition to those State Department people there were CIA, USIA and Defense representatives. There were Czech nationals working in USIA, consular and admin. We knew that the head driver was a Lt. Colonel in the secret police.

Q: What was your impression of how the embassy was run by the ambassadors?

JOHNSON: I was there with two ambassadors. Albert Sherer, who had been the DCM when I was in Warsaw, arrived as ambassador in 1972. As a staff member I was impressed by the fact that keeping morale high at post was important to both ambassadors. They held daily and weekly staff meetings to which all American personnel were invited. This was the first time I had ever attended staff meetings. Knowing what is going on and why something has happened or is about to happen certainly helps one understand why one has to work late or on weekends, etc Or why you can't do this or that. Everybody was also included in most official functions. I had to "work" four Fourth of July parties. But we also mingled, staff and officer, at non-representational parties as well. In fact, we all got to know each other socially very well, as often happens at small posts.

Both ambassadors operated informally with an open door policy, although Ambassador Toon was a little more reserved than Ambassador Sherer, who thoroughly enjoyed people.

Q: How about John Baker, how was he as a DCM?

JOHNSON: I felt John was a good reporting officer, but he was a little stiff when dealing with people in his capacity as manager of the embassy. I also felt he was not really at ease with Ambassador Toon who was rather conservative and shy, and could be a bit brusque at times. I don't think he knew how to handle it. When Art Wortzel arrived in 1970, there was no problem at all between him and Ambassador Toon or anyone else in the embassy. And things got even more relaxed when Albert Sherer arrived as Ambassador because he was genuinely outgoing and enjoyed people. People were people as far as he was concerned, not officer and staff. At functions he would be seen talking with staff members, not only American but other nationalities if present, almost as often as officers and dignitaries.

The embassy was a very pleasant place to work when Ambassador Sherer and Art Wortzel were both there. People felt included and part of the entire operation. You knew if you were called in by the front office to do something, it had to be done and wasn't just busy work. Morale was high.

Q: And then you came back to Washington for about four years.

JOHNSON: I came back to Washington because they didn't know what to do with me. They kept offering me positions with ambassadors. But I didn't want to work for an ambassador, because I didn't care for the type of work that an ambassador's secretary has to do.

Q: Can you explain what the work of an ambassador's secretary is as you saw it at the time?

JOHNSON: A high percentage of an ambassador's secretary's time is spent in dealing with the various aspects of the ambassador's official social functions. Very little time is spent on substantive work. The DCM's position is the major office for dealing with substantive work which may or may not be shown to the ambassador depending on its nature. All telegrams are screened by the DCM, and often by his secretary, so the ambassador doesn't have to waste his time reading everything. The DCM also is the manager of the entire embassy and people come to him with their problems and ideas. Consequently, the DCM's secretary generally has a good feel for the entire embassy and knows what is happening both on the substantive side and the administrative side. It is a much more interesting job as far as I am concerned. I was not interested in spending most of my time handling the social side of diplomacy.

And to make the ambassador's secretary job even more unappealing to me, at large posts and sometimes medium sized if the ambassador is a political appointee, the ambassador often has a junior or mid-ranking officer acting as his aide. All telegraphic traffic and substantive work is then shunted around the secretary directly between aide and ambassador, thus decreasing even more the amount of substantive work she sees or participates in.

When I was in Bonn, the ambassador had an aide who was interested in screening the DCM telegraphic traffic, drawing up his schedule and a few other things which he already did for the ambassador. I put my foot down because I did not want to be left out of the loop. I won that battle and continued to read the morning traffic and insisted that all papers going into the DCM go across my desk first. I worked a little harder and longer hours, but the job was more interesting and rewarding, and I ended up doing the work of an aide to the DCM, something that would have been impossible working for an ambassador.

I guess the Department finally gave up on me and assigned me to Washington. The personnel policy had changed since my previous tour in Washington in that the Department was now considered an assignment possibility for Foreign Service staff. No longer were compassionate reasons required.

Q: You were in Washington from 1973-77. What were you doing?

JOHNSON: All of it was spent in Personnel and the Director General's office. For two years I was working for the Deputy Director of Personnel for Counseling and Assignments, who was Archer Blood. About the time Arch was reassigned, Art Wortzel returned from Prague and became Program Coordinator of Personnel, a new position under direct supervision of the Director General. The secretarial position for this office had not been filled so I bid on it and got it, thus finding myself again working for Art Wortzel, much to my delight. In March of 1976 Art became Deputy Assistant Secretary for Personnel and I moved up with him.

Q: Tell me about Arch Blood. He was well known in the Foreign Service because he had tilted with Henry Kissinger when he was consul general in Dacca during the Bangladesh war and was sort of relegated to the sidelines.

JOHNSON: Yes. I am sure that is why he found himself working in Personnel. I think he did a good job in counseling and assignments and, although I can't remember where he went next, I believe he did all right for himself. Arch was a low-keyed guy and easy to work for. The negative aspects of the job was that people came to see you primarily for favors--how about getting me this job--or complaints--why didn't I get that assignment. I was always surprised Arch kept his cool as well as he did. His sense of humor helped him survive, I'm sure. On the positive side, working in Personnel enabled one to learn how the system worked and to find a good onward assignment. Most people who served in Personnel and were capable officers or staff, found a good assignment for their next tour.

I always thought it would be a good idea for as many people as possible to have a tour in Personnel because one does learn about the system and how difficult it is to give everyone their first request when there are pressures from all directions put on assignment officers for favors. Perhaps a little greater understanding and sympathy for what Personnel has to put up with from its clients would be gained.

Q: I spent my time in Personnel and I goofed somehow or other ending up going as consul general to Vietnam in the middle of the war.

JOHNSON: That was a goof.
Q: Anything else you want to discuss about the personnel system at the time?

JOHNSON: Just that I think it was as fair a system as you could have at that time. Some people did not think they were being treated fairly in consideration for positions, but I sat in on a number of assignment meetings and listened to a lot of the pros and cons of individuals for this or that job. There was a lot of pressure from the Bureaus who were vying for those officers who they thought were the best. Some times a job was lost because the timing of the opening changed, or a more urgent position needed to be filled at post, or a political appointee had to have a job. It was seldom as cut and dry as picking one person over another person with equal qualifications.

Q: Well, then you went out to Belgrade from 1977-79 with Art Wortzel, was that right?

JOHNSON: Yes. At the time he was assigned as DCM to Belgrade there was no secretary slated for the job. He asked me if I would be interested and without hesitation I agreed. So once again I found myself in a communist country working for a fantastic person whose work habits I knew very well. In addition, Larry Eagleburger had been named Ambassador to Yugoslavia and he, after a number of weeks, was able to persuade Millie Leatherman, his long time secretary in the Department, to accompany him to Belgrade. I knew Millie and therefore found myself upon arrival not only knowing the entire front

office but knowing that I would not have difficulty working with them. That doesn't happen very often.

Q: How did Eagleburger run his embassy?

JOHNSON: He worked very hard at keeping morale high. Newcomers were invited to the Residence for lunch soon after arrival and a number of times throughout their tour and encouraged to discuss situations that might be causing a decline in morale. People did speak up and Larry and his wife, Marlene, did listen. A little note here: Marlene tried very hard to get the wives interested in a variety of fun and "good causes" events, but the "liberation" of the Service wife from the evil ambassador's wife had begun and she had little luck. I always felt when this happened a lot of wives missed out on rewarding activities because rather than choosing events, based, perhaps on the attitude of the wife, they refused requests for assistance outright.

Officers and staff were included in the staff meetings, which as noted earlier I feel is important to the morale of a post in a communist country. Although Larry generally had strong ideas about how to approach a subject, or how to react to something, he was willing to listen to other people. If your presentation was strong enough he would change his mind and give you credit for the outcome. Even if you were unable to change his mind, at least you felt you were given a chance to express your views and he was listening.

He thought it was important for junior officers to rotate around the embassy as much as possible, including some months assigned to the front office. They didn't act as aides when assigned to the front office, but he made sure they had projects to work on and reports to write. The young officers always seemed to appreciate the attention.

Larry wrote extremely well and never seemed afraid to tell it as he thought it was, even though the recipient may not have wanted to hear it. I understand people in the Department read his cables because they were always so interesting and straight forward. He may have been out of step with the current thinking on some subject, but it was how he saw it. I think you can see this trait in his television appearances on TV news programs today.

A not so happy trait of Larry's was that he did have a temper and often his first reaction to something he didn't like was to lose his temper. Fortunately for Belgrade the DCM was Art Wortzel, who was very low-keyed, knew Larry well and just how to handle him. For example, when Larry got the news that a senior officer had done something not very diplomatic, he yelled, "I want that man out of the embassy. I don't want to see him again." Well, the connecting doors between Larry's office and the DCM's was open and Art walked in and said, "What is the problem now?" It wasn't long before Art had calmed him down and had come up with a suggestion of how the situation could be handled and there no longer was a problem. So he needed someone like Art around to handle things on those occasions when his temper would suddenly flare up over something expected.

Another DCM might have just cowered in his office and let the situation get out of hand, not only possibly ruining an officer's career, but also the good morale that Larry normally worked so hard and successfully to maintain. Fortunately most of Larry's sudden outbursts were confined to his office and were temporary, especially if Art was around.

Larry was a person who didn't know how to relax. He was always busy doing something. Millie and I used to hate it whenever he became ill enough to stay home because all day long, what seemed like every fifteen minutes, he would be on the phone with a new project for us or someone in the embassy that he had been lying in bed thinking about. We would have to run around and get what he wanted and then deliver them to him at the Residence. We did our best to keep him healthy.

He encouraged everybody to get out and see the country and meet the people. Belgrade is not blessed with interesting things to do within the city. It is an ugly city with no character, to boot. However, once you get to the west coast, that is a different story. The old towns, like Dubrovnik, are monuments to history and the countryside is lovely. At least this was true before the Bosnia situation which is going on today.

The Yugoslavs loved Eagleburger, however, because he had been at the embassy as a junior officer during the earthquake some years earlier and had been sent down to Skopje to help.

Q: Yes, I know, because I preceded Larry. He and I came into Yugoslavia at the same time, we took Serbian together. I was a political adviser to a hospital for three weeks beginning the day of the earthquake in Skopje. Larry followed me about three weeks later with an engineering unit which was putting up some prefabricated houses outside of Skopje that ended up as a gypsy village.

JOHNSON: Well, it is always nice when people remember that you came in and did something to help them out in time of catastrophe. We sometimes think people aren't appreciative of what you do for them.

Q: Anything else you would like to mention?

JOHNSON: Well, Tito was still alive then, but barely. I remember one day looking out the embassy's front windows and watching a parade drive by. Tito was standing in an open car leaning on a railing. He looked terrible, almost as if he had already been embalmed. And to make matters worse, the vehicle following his car in the parade was an ambulance! I didn't think this was very reassuring to Tito or the Yugoslavs lining the streets watching the parade. That was my only view of Tito.

It was an interesting two years.

Q: You left Yugoslavia in 1979. This was a change in administration, etc. Were you tempted to stay?

JOHNSON: No, I really didn't like Belgrade as a place to live, although I enjoyed Yugoslavia and the embassy. A few months before I was due to depart I received a call from the DCM in Bonn who was losing his secretary and wanted to know if I would be interested. The DCM was Bill Woessner, who I knew from Warsaw days when he was a junior officer in the consular section when I was there. I was ready for a change from living in a communist country...two years generally was long enough at a time, unless the city had a lot to offer like was the case with Prague...and felt the combination of Germany and working for Bill Woessner in my favorite position as DCM secretary, sounded great, so I agreed.

I returned to Washington in October 1979, had home leave, took eight weeks of German language training at FSI and arrived in Bonn in April, 1980.

Q: You were there for two years.

JOHNSON: Yes. My assignment was for four years but during home leave after two years, it was discovered that I had breast cancer and I decided I didn't want to go out again. It was too bad because I regret not getting to Berlin. I was saving that trip for my second tour there.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

JOHNSON: When I went out Walter Stoessel, a career Foreign Service Officer, was the Ambassador. So we had a very professionally, well run embassy with him at the helm. Again, he was a shy man...it is amazing how many ambassadors have this shyness.

Q: Yes, I ran across one in Kyrgyzstan who was a bird watcher and liked to walk solitary in the mountains. It didn't work well there with a small beleaguered embassy.

JOHNSON: But he was very friendly as was his wife.

It was a huge embassy and most of the Americans lived in a compound called Plittersdorf. This meant there was more of an exchange among Americans than there had been in London, where you were scattered around the city (I understand today there is government housing for everyone at the embassy now in London). Being a large embassy, staff did not attend staff meetings nor were they invited to many of the big official functions. There was more social contact with senior officers than in London, however, but nothing like one would have at a smaller post. However there was so much to do in Germany, and with occasional recognition of worth, I felt the morale was high in most cases, at least under Stoessel.

Arthur Burns, a political appointee, came in after Ambassador Stoessel. He was the type of individual who would not take your word on anything that was new to him, and everything was new to him. One of the jobs of the DCM is to take care of the routine

running of the embassy and either sign for the Ambassador or get his signature on papers as required. Well, Ambassador Burns had no idea what the routine diplomatic requirements were. When I typed up a diplomatic note and Bill would take it in to explain what was happening, he wanted to see the regulations requiring that it had to be done. He didn't understand diplomatic language and he wouldn't sign anything if he didn't entirely understand the situation. Much of the routine paper protocol has been going on for decades, yet he wanted to know the history behind each document, which most of us didn't know. He wouldn't accept, "Well, we have been doing it this way for years and years," as an answer to his queries. Bill soon had a complete set of Foreign Service Regulations in his office for rapid consultation and "show and tell" for Ambassador Burns.

With Stoessel, Bill signed most of the routine documents for the Ambassador, but Burns demanded to see and sign everything for himself and wanted to know "why?" However, due to the volume of paperwork and with the passing of time, Bill and other embassy officers slowly gained the confidence of Burns and were allowed to do more for him. But the first six or seven months were extremely hard on everyone. It took forever to get anything signed and away.

The Germans like Burns who was an economist and had been with the Federal Reserve System.

Q: Was he born in Germany?

JOHNSON: No, I don't think so. His parents may have been born there, but I really don't know.

Q: What was the impression of Germany at that time? Was anybody ever talking about the unification of Germany, or was that just a none subject?

JOHNSON: There would be talk about it periodically, but the German government was building huge new government buildings in Bonn giving one the impression that they felt Bonn would be the capital of Germany for a long time to come. Other governments were building new embassies in Bonn as well. So one didn't have the impression that officials felt unification would happen in the near future.

It was a relatively quiet time in Germany. The embassy was busy implementing its security update. When I arrived it was easy to get access to the embassy and the front office. By the time I left it was getting to be more and more like a fortress. This was being done not so much because of what was happening in Germany, but because of the new security regulations pertaining to terrorism that the State Department were implementing throughout the world.

Q: Did you feel that the Germans' welcome of Americans was getting a little thin? We had been around there for a long time.

JOHNSON: One was beginning to heard a little grumbling about the American military taking up too much space with their bases, keeping it from use by the Germans. In fact, some Germans were beginning to think that Plittersdorf should be turned back to the Germans and that the Americans should live on the German economy both housing and food. We still had a commissary, but a lot of us shopped weekly downtown at the wonderful German markets. In fact, the embassy was beginning to allow a few Germans to have housing on the compound. I don't remember what the criteria were, but I'm sure it was being done in answer to the growing grumbling of the man in the street. Otherwise, Americans were treated as well as the Germans treated themselves and I personally didn't have any problems...except at a market every now and then when I tried to feel an apple to see if it was bruised or not. All in all, it was very pleasant living.

Q: You came back in 1982.

JOHNSON: I came back in 1982 on home leave and return orders. However, it was discovered that I had cancer and I decided at that point that I really didn't want to go overseas again because I didn't know what direction the cancer would take and I wanted US medical treatment readily available. I had to take a year of chemotherapy and the Department was very understanding, assigning me to a second secretary slot in the office handling assignments for EUR in Personnel, which meant that on bad days I could easily take the day off or leave in the middle of the day without seriously interrupting the office. It wasn't much of a job, but it was handling EUR assignments and people I knew would occasionally wander in, which was great.

After about a year and a half, Personnel began to offer me jobs in the Department more commensurate with my rank. I had gone as high as a secretary could in those days, I was a FSSO-4. After I left the Service some secretarial slots were upgraded and classified as FSSO-3 positions opening up another rung for secretaries. For a number of years I had begun to realize that times were changing in the Foreign Service and these changes were beginning to frustrate me. Attitudes in the Service were beginning to shift. There wasn't the same sense of dedication to the Service as there had been when I joined. I took for granted that the job was a 24-hour job when serving overseas; long hours were worked if necessary without grumbling and without overtime compensation;.and you went, without question, where Personnel told you to go, accepting hardship posts with as much grace as you could muster. However, it seemed to me that the main focus of new Foreign Service personnel coming on board at that time was on going only to posts they were interested in; working 9-5 unless compensated; and never helping out another office that might be shorthanded. The camaraderie I enjoyed so much at a post, was fast disappearing as was the phrase, "the needs of the Service."

I was beginning to realize that I would have to get out soon or run the risk of becoming so frustrated and bitter over these changing attitudes that I might well regret having ever joined the Foreign Service. I knew some people who, unfortunately, had left with this feeling. So with pressure growing from Personnel to take another job, I decided the time

had arrived and after 27 years in the Foreign Service, at the age of 50, I retired in April, 1984. And I left the Service with the feeling of "well done, it was fun!"

I continued working three days a week as a temporary employee in the EUR Bureau. After two years of that, I finally decided to completely divorce myself from the State Department in 1986. Little did I realize that the divorce was not to be complete. I set up a word processing business out of my home and soon found myself once again dealing with Foreign Service people through the transcription of interviews for the Foreign Affairs Oral History Program.

Q: Well, thank you very much.

JOHNSON: Thank you.

End of interview