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

SUSAN KEOGH

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INTERVIEW

Q: Susan, let's start from the beginning. When and where were you born?

KEOGH: I was born in Warwickshire, England, during the Second World War in July 1943.

Q: Let's talk a bit about your father's side of the family and then your mother's side.

KEOGH: Well, my father came from a long line of yeoman farmers in Warwickshire. He met my mother when she was in her teens. She'd been sent back from Malaya to school in England. Her mother was Dutch and my mother was born in Holland.

Q: Where did your father go to school?

KEOGH: Wycliffe, a boarding school in England. But his family finances collapsed, the family farms were lost and so he joined Lloyd's Bank.

Q: And your mother?

KEOGH: She went to a Dickensian boarding school in Dover, then to high school in Leamington Spa. After she married my father, she had a long distance relationship with her parents who remained in Ipoh, Malaya.

Q: What were they doing in Malaya?

KEOGH: My grandfather was a tin mining engineer. My grandmother came from a Dutch colonial family. Her father had been the governor of Surabaya in Indonesia.

Q: Was your family well located in Warwickshire?

KEOGH: They had been, but post-war everybody was quite poor in England. We grew up in the countryside four miles from the nearest village. We children were good at scavenging. We used to dig over the potato fields for leftovers and look for berries and mushrooms. We were luckier than some who lived in the towns on ration books.

Q: It was a difficult period.

KEOGH: It was rather bleak. The weather in England was not great as you know.

Q: The winter of '48 is renowned for being terrible.

KEOGH: It was damp and drizzly. People walked or biked everywhere, we were always cold. I used to stand in the kitchen and listen to my mother telling stories of her childhood in Ipoh, the heat, the jungle at the bottom of the garden with noisy monkeys, and I knew I would rather live that kind of life than the one I was leading in rural Warwickshire.

Q: You were poised to leap out and get the hell out.

KEOGH: I always felt a pull toward the Dutch side of my family and the Far East.

Q: Did you get over to the Netherlands?

KEOGH: When I was about 12, we went to stay with relatives and I got my first pair of wooden shoes fitted and tried speaking Dutch. That was a strong influence. But mostly it was the Far East. My uncle was the commissioner of police in Hong Kong. He and my aunt spent their long leaves with us. He would talk about his work, dealing with criminal gangs on the docks. It seemed a much more interesting life than ours.

Q: I'd like to hear something about Warwickshire life. What sort of school did you have?

KEOGH: I went to a fairly tough elementary school. I remember some of the kids were "sewn into their clothes in the beginning of the winter and cut out in the spring." No change of clothes. The school wasn't heated and we all had chilblains, frostbite on our fingers and toes. But I think I got a good education.

Q: What were your teachers like?

KEOGH: They were tough and quite strict. After elementary school I was in all-girls high school, a public school, all work and no play. It was not fun like school in America with after-school activities and sports.

Q: Were there libraries? Was it easy to get books?

KEOGH: When I was eight we had moved nearer a town, where there was a public library. And like most people in the Foreign Service, I became a voracious reader. I worked my way pretty thoroughly through the public library.

Q: What books?

I was really into the Second World War. That was because of family experience. My grandfather in Malaya had been a prisoner of war of the Japanese. He spent over three years in Changi Prison in Singapore. My uncle, the colonial policeman, was in the same camp. Also an uncle by marriage was on the Burma Railway. I was deeply affected by this family history as a child. My grandfather lived with us for six months after repatriation. My mother told me how he had survived eating bugs because he only got a few handfuls of rice a day. I was trying to understand what had happened and how this brutality could have come about.

Q: Where did your family fit in the political system in England at that time?

KEOGH: My father was deeply conservative, as many farming people were. We had spirited conversations around the dining room table -- I disagreed with almost all his views, but not his values. He had a very grounding effect on me and gave me a good understanding and respect for people with profoundly traditional ideas.

Q: Did religion play much of a role?

KEOGH: No, it didn't. We attended Easter and Christmas services in the Church of England. Jumping ahead a bit, when I went to live in Dublin, I started going to the Catholic Church, and later did become a Catholic.

Q: What sort of stories did your grandfather come back with?

KEOGH: Didn't talk about his wartime experience. We had to piece it together from other people and books.

Q: Did the war hatred spilled over into England more than did the United States?

KEOGH: There was fear that Japan would rise again. My grandfather was deeply scarred by his wartime experience. The Japanese government finally compensated him for his incarceration with a check for about 14 pounds -- he sent it back. As I was trying to figure all this out, my school offered pen pals from other countries, and I chose a Japanese pen pal.

Q: Was this trying to reach beyond your family experience?

KEOGH: I was trying to understand how ruthless regimes can take over. And really I guess to find common humanity. That's been a sort of lifetime preoccupation I suppose.

Q: In school did you feel there was a distinct division of what girls did and what boys did? Did you feel you were going to be limited?

KEOGH: There was this sense that girls should get married and not work. If they did, they could be a secretary, a nurse, or a teacher. I took a job on the continent when I was 17 with a French family. I didn't have any idea of having a career.

Q: Well, did you feel sort of the class system in England weighing down on you as a kid?

KEOGH: Yes. Kids were class conscious: "I'm a working class lad." I spoke like my parents, I didn't have a regional accent. At school I used to be singled out sometimes because of this but just stayed who I was. I never had a sense of being better than anybody. I just knew I was somewhat different.

Q: Well, what about the kids? How did they treat you?

KEOGH: I was OK. I kind of kept to myself. I worked hard and was a bookish kid. I spent a lot of time reading.

Q: One learns to do that if one is a bookish kid. You moved to an all girls' school, but this was a regular school. I can't use the term public school.

KEOGH: Public school in England usually means a private school, but in this case it was just a local high school -- the Stratford-on-Avon Grammar School for Girls.

Q: Well, did Shakespeare play much of a role in your life, or no?

KEOGH: Oh, enormously. I used to go to the theater all the time in Stratford because you could get cheap tickets the day of the performance. My sister and I used to sleep out overnight on the pavement to get them. I think I've seen every Shakespeare play.

Q: Did acting attract you at all?

KEOGH: Not at all! I'm interested in the theater as a spectator.

Q: I'm with you. Well then, as you moved up, did you specialize in anything particular?

KEOGH: Languages. I started learning French at school when I was 11 and German when I was 12. I had a French pen pal and stayed in Arras with her. France seemed an exciting and interesting place so my French improved quite fast. I thought probably I'd end up living there.

Q: What were you doing with the French family?

KEOGH: Oh, I looked after three children and cleaned the house. I earned one pound a week and I got three hours off on Sunday afternoon!

Q: Ooh.

KEOGH: *(laughs)*

Q: How did they treat their au pair girl?

KEOGH: Not so great. It was a "Pied-Noir" (black-foot) family who had left Algeria. They were used to having a lot of servants. So I was sort of the general factotum. Fortunately I was accepted at Trinity College Dublin to study languages. And so off I went to Ireland.

Q: Up to this time had you developed any impressions of the United States?

KEOGH: Not at that time. I had no family or connections with the United States. But when I was at Trinity I came over to the States for the summer. I bought a $99 for 99-day bus ticket, and I traveled for three months around the U.S., often sleeping on buses and in bus stations. It was an eye-opening experience, transformational.

Q: Well, talk about it a bit. What'd you see and where'd you go?

KEOGH: Well, I started out in Ann Arbor, Michigan. It was the summer of 1964, during the civil rights movement and a lot of students were involved, preparing to go to Mississippi and other parts of the south. The students I got to know in Ann Arbor sent me out to Berkeley. When I got to Berkeley I first stayed on Telegraph Avenue with a group who later that year were leaders of the Free Speech Movement, like Art Goldberg.

Q: Oh yes.

They took me along to all kinds of meetings – Progressive Labor Party, W.E.B. Du Bois Club, and protests against the war in South East Asia. There were sit-ins in solidarity with strikers. I was really just an observer to all of this. They thought I was some kind of curiosity. But in the end, this experience in the U.S. really shook me up. I stopped being so complacent. When I went back to Ireland I was more politicized and started thinking more about the history of Ireland and civil rights and English oppression.

Q: Where else did you go?

KEOGH: All over, Kansas, Texas, Utah, Winslow Arizona. I spent some time in New York in Greenwich Village. The World Fair was going on in New York, some of the group from Berkeley showed up in a car. They'd driven across the country and we all went to the World Fair together. They of course jumped the fence. I paid my fee and went in through the gate *(laughs)*. It was an extraordinary summer.

Q: This still resonates today.

KEOGH: I don't know if it does. But this wide exposure gave me a great foundation for understanding the country. When you travel on Greyhound buses, people are quite confessional, and you learn about their lives and views. I had no idea at that time that I would marry an American and come to live in the States.

Q: Then you went back to Dublin. Trinity is not Catholic?

KEOGH: Catholics did not go there at that time. Trinity was a kind of "outpost of empire." It has now become part of the University of Ireland, basically a Catholic university.

Q: What was your impression of the student body at Trinity when you were there?

KEOGH: Lots of characters. Students went to class intermittently. They were always up to high jinks. We used to borrow bikes from the front square and bicycle off to Howth Head for a swim. A kind of devil-may-care atmosphere -- people pretending to be too smart to study. You don't see this at universities here. Students generally work hard.

Q: My impression is that in European schools, the really hard work is done in high school and by university you've got it made. For Americans, almost the reverse is true.

KEOGH: True. We worked pretty hard in high school. And then we took it easy. But in the end, this lack of studiousness made me uncomfortable. I ended up with a Masters from Trinity, an M. Phil from the University of Cape Town and later I went to the War College and did another master's degree. I guess I was trying to make up for my undergraduate lollygagging at Trinity.

Q: How did the students at Trinity react towards the Catholic Church and its constraints on sex?

KEOGH: Trinity was very locked down. Girls were a small percentage of the students. We had to be out of the Front Gate by 6 p.m. unless we were coming in for some special event.

Q: Were you called a "pommie" or the Irish equivalent?

KEOGH: Well, I made Irish friends and they used to say me "Ah, you're English, but you're all right." I used to go and spend weekend with friends who came from farming families. And we would sit in their kitchens on Saturday night and sing lots of raucous Irish songs. It was a very warm and egalitarian environment. I loved Ireland.

Q: Did you learn Celtic?

KEOGH: My two best friends were both Irish speakers. I picked up lots of phrases from them but could not speak Irish.

Q: So where next?

KEOGH: I was offered a job in the Central African Republic as part of their technical assistance program. So I went to teach in Bangui as an English teacher.

Q: Was it still a republic and not an empire?

KEOGH: It was still the Central African Republic. I'd been there for about six months when Jean-Bédel Bokassa took over in a coup d'état. He was the head of the Army, but became President for Life. I left the country before he became the Emperor.

Q: When were you there?

KEOGH: I went out there in 1965 on a one-year renewable contract, but I decided not to renew it because it was pretty volatile.

Q: What was it like when you got there?

KEOGH: I got off a DC-6 prop aircraft in Bangui. There was no one to meet me, so I got a ride into town, found the Ministry of Education, where they said: "Oh, you're overdue. Your classes are waiting for you." So I walked to the girls' school and straight into my first class. After the revolution in January, I was moved to the boys' school where I taught for the rest of the year.

Q: What was your initial impression of Bangui?

KEOGH: I thought the women were striking, with straight posture, carrying loads on their heads. The Ubangi flows through the town, full of pirogues and river traffic. Orange laterite roads. Marvelous tropical vegetation. But hot and sticky of course. And isolated.

Q: How about the students?

KEOGH: The students were very agitated. There was a lot of political unrest. I was fond of some students, but it was difficult to teach there. The curriculum was from Paris and not relevant to the local context. I used to write plays and have the students act them. So I had noisy classes. After he came to power, Bokassa sometimes used to land his helicopter in the schoolyard and throw money around. It was hard to maintain classroom routines.

Q: Well, what was your experience during the coup, when he took over?

KEOGH: It happened at night. I was in town having a drink with some Israelis on the terrace of the Palace Hotel. Word came that there'd been some shooting and they said to me: "Go home and lock your door." I had a one-room house, I had some food there and I stayed inside for a couple of days. There was no British embassy in the Central African Republic at that time, or really any British community there.

Q: It was basically French, wasn't it?

KEOGH: Central African and French, and some Lebanese. And Americans. I knew Tony Ross, who was the ambassador there, and his wife Andrea. He kept a bit of an eye on me.

Q: What was your impression of Bokassa?

KEOGH: I met him a few times. Smiling and friendly. Initially he was quite popular. But then his motorcade started to roar through the unpaved streets of Bangui and people would literally jump into the ditch as he came by. I knew one of the readers from the radio station and he was afraid of Bokassa. He told me that if anyone made a mistake on air the President would come down in person and make threats. And so I was aware he had a dark side -- but things really started going downhill after I left.

Q: Talking about bodies in refrigerators.

KEOGH: Terrible stuff like that, he became a complete despot.

Q: What was your impression of your girl students and women's role in the Central African Republic?

KEOGH: Many of these girls were concubines of government officials. They were at school because of that. Otherwise, women did a lot of the agricultural work and they were the ones hewing the wood and carrying the water. Some things don't change. I expect it is similar today.

Q: After so many experiences, were you developing a gender consciousness?

KEOGH: I think I was just in survival mode at that time. The French were omnipresent. Their teachers were very strict, they would hit the kids. It was not how I thought kids should learn. So I was pretty out of step with the whole system.

Q: Well, there was a story that a French teacher was turning the same page at the same time throughout metropolitan France as in Africa.

KEOGH: That's correct.

Q: What was life like in Bangui?

KEOGH: It was very strange. I had a mobylette (motorbike). In my spare time I would ride down to the river and do little paintings and just wander around and talk to people. Because I was a teacher I had to be careful about how I behaved, who I was seen with, which meant I felt rather isolated. My main contacts were a group of French teachers that had hired a cook. I used to eat with them twice a day, in a "popotte" (canteen). In the afternoons, I taught at the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) Center -- teachers from all over Africa. And then a couple of days a week I taught the radio announcers English. These classes were at the American Embassy.

Q: What about your social life there?

KEOGH: Not much of that. France had national service in those days. Some conscripts did alternative service as teachers overseas. There were 400 "cooperants" or national service men in Bangui when I was there. And while there were loads of lovely Central African girls around, there were very few single European women there. The cooperants stayed together in a pack. But I was observed all the time. Nobody asked me to go out for a drink or anything like that. It was a peculiar situation. I was a young woman, with no diplomatic representation, no organization around me. It made me pretty wary.

Q: Do you have any idea regarding the sort of motivation behind this hands-off attitude?

KEOGH: There were so many single men, and there was a lot of underlying racism. For example, one of the African teachers at the UNESCO asked me for a ride into town on the back of my motorbike. So I got some comments: "Ah, you like Africans, do you?" One of the cooperants said to me in passing: "If you're here for any other reason but to make money then you should leave" in a slightly threatening tone.

Q: Were you warned about Bokassa?

KEOGH: When I got to Bangui I was given a motorbike that came from then-President Dacko. That bike was stolen, and replaced by the palace, from Bokassa. And I did see Bokassa because he used to come to the school. So he sort of knew who I was and I certainly knew who he was. I got a couple of warnings to watch out because he had a tendency to invite women to visit him at the palace. There was a Belgian girl and two

Vietnamese girls who showed up and ended up sort of incarcerated at the palace. That was one of the reasons I didn't renew my contract.

Q: So after about a year it wasn't a comfortable place to be.

KEOGH: No, the regime was becoming more repressive. People were executed; some were thrown out of the country. There was a growing climate of fear. So I got a ticket on a packet boat leaving from Douala, Cameroon, called the "Marechal Foch." It went down the coast, first to Libreville in Gabon and then to Pointe-Noire in the Congo. Then up to the Ivory Coast and to Senegal, to Morocco, the Canary Islands, and on to Marseilles. It took several weeks.

Q: How did you feel about Africa? Did you want to go back?

KEOGH: Oh, absolutely. While the situation in Bangui was difficult, I loved the people and knew I would end up coming back to Africa. Also something significant had happened to me just before I left. My mobylette had broken down on the road, a car pulled up and a guy got out and offered to help. He dropped me at a gas station. After a while he returned and asked me to have a drink while I was waiting. He was a new officer at the American embassy. And that was the person I ended up marrying.

Q: Ha! What was he doing?

KEOGH: He'd just been transferred from Morocco. But I was leaving. We knew each other for about three weeks. When I got back from this long boat trip, my mother said to me: "Who is Dennis Keogh?" And I said: "Why?" And she said: "Well, you've got a pile of letters waiting from somebody called Dennis Keogh." Then we started corresponding, he passed through London at Christmas briefly – I was working for Guinness at the time – and we later met up in Tripoli, Libya. The following summer I gave up my job with Guinness and went back to Central Africa. We were married in Bangui, by the Mayor.

Q: What was Dennis' job?

KEOGH: He was the political officer in the embassy.

Q: Was America particularly interested in the Central African Republic?

KEOGH: We wanted to be universal. I don't think we had any large commercial interests, it was more of a presence. There was a sense of foreboding about what was happening there, but it was a French sphere of influence. When we got married, Dennis had to resign from the Foreign Service – a pro forma requirement -- and we both went back to Washington.

Q: And so what did you do?

KEOGH: We had an apartment just off Dupont Circle. At first, Dennis was the Secretary's early morning briefer, heading off at four a.m. every day. I got a job with Congressional Quarterly. Then Dennis worked with the Intelligence and Research Bureau (INR).

Q: Did you develop friends within the Foreign Service?

KEOGH: Yes, quite a few. After he moved to the Africa Bureau, Dennis made a lot of friends, especially Jeffrey Davidow, who was the Zimbabwe desk officer.

Q: He's in California.

KEOGH: He is, in La Jolla. He's a wonderful guy. Anyway, after Dennis returned to the Africa Bureau, the Department sent him to UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) to study African affairs, and I went with him taking our recently-born twins. After a great year in Los Angeles, we were posted to Swaziland.

Q: What was happening there? It sounds like a bucolic spot.

KEOGH: Lots of mountains, lots of hiking. Old King Sobhuza had over 100 wives and countless children all called Dlamini. There were political opponents, some of whom were in prison. I taught at the Mata Dolorosa girls' school the first year. Then I was a field officer for a women's organization called Zondle run by Judith Simelane. I went round to a lot of villages, dragging the twins with me, teaching about care of the elderly, children's illnesses -- Red Cross based stuff.

Q: Well, was there much of a women's movement there, or was this purely practical?

KEOGH: Women needed practical help. There were some very strong women like Judith Simelane in Swaziland -- she was a force of nature. But there was this extraordinarily distorted situation of the royal family. The King would pick new wives every year. Some of the girls I had taught would go to the annual reed dance where they might be chosen to be one of the next wives. There were many strong traditional practices. A woman would have to cry non-stop for a month if her husband died, otherwise she would be accused of having killed him. It was a patriarchal society.

Q: Who was the ambassador there?

KEOGH: The ambassador was based in Botswana and was Charles Nelson. I think he was in Swaziland when the famous telegram came out in 1972, announcing that wives were no longer being graded on their husband's efficiency reports.

Q: Oh God yes.

KEOGH: I went into the embassy and Dennis' boss shouted, "Mrs. Keogh!" very loudly.

I went into his office, did this sort of genuflection and said: "You can still count on me, don't worry!" We both had a good laugh and that was it.

Q: Wives were not rated in your overt efficiency report -- they were rated in your covert one that you could only see when you got back to Washington.

KEOGH: I never felt in any way oppressed by that. I came out of a society where people did lots of volunteer work in the community. But I remember at the time thinking that this was a sort of a milestone.

Q: So then you moved off to --

KEOGH: Bogotá, Colombia.

Q: This was quite a change, wasn't it?

KEOGH: Yes, it was actually probably the most difficult post we had.

Q: Because it was dangerous?

KEOGH: There was a lot of crime. The FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia --Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) were still out in the Llanos area. But Colombia had had a long history of violence that began in the '50s. There were thousands of stray children – "gamines" - living rough. And masses of stray dogs on the streets, you'd often see them run over by cars. I even saw a child's body left all day on the road to Chia. There was a breakdown of civility. Dennis was working in the embassy as the GSO. I got a job teaching a kindergarten class in the blind school at San Cristobal (I'd done the Library of Congress course in teaching Braille). It was a rough neighborhood. I used come out and find two big guys sitting on my car to protect it. I returned to Colombia a couple of years ago to work and found a huge change. No kids living on the streets, no stray dogs. People more civil. But it was harsh at that time.

Q: Well, what happened with blind children?

KEOGH: Some of them had been living on the street. You knew that a lot of these kids would end up begging when they left school -- at that time there wasn't much hope for them getting work. But the school was a protective environment, run by kindly nuns, and there was lots of laughing and singing. It gave them a good childhood.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

KEOGH: Viron P. Vaky. He was great.

Q: Just died very recently.

KEOGH: Yes.

Q: How'd you find the embassy life?

KEOGH: Not so easy for Dennis as the GSO (general service officer). He had to deal with an illegal a scheme for importing cars that the GSO people had been doing; he had to fire a lot of people.

Q: Had the drug cartels taken hold at that point?

KEOGH: It was the beginning. After we left a DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) agent was shot by narcos in his office in the embassy. But Dennis didn't deal with that side of the house.

Q: Then where did you go?

KEOGH: Came back to Washington. Dennis became fully immersed as the Deputy Director of Regional Affairs and then as the Deputy Director of Southern Africa. The logical progression was back to Africa. He was posted to Niger as the DCM (deputy chief of mission).

Q: Well, your husband and you were assigned to Niger, from when to when?

KEOGH: We were there from '78 to '80. Seyni Kountché was the president. He was an army officer who lived in the military barracks in austere style, to set a good example. He used to show up in government ministries at 7:00 a.m. to see if people were at their desks. He would go to the hospital and check if the x-ray machine was working, and if not, why not. So it felt safe and peaceful in Niamey. But it was very, very poor. One of the worst droughts in Niger's history had just ended so it was a famine boom town full of UN vehicles. All the herds had been lost. There were some pretty inspiring stories about how women in Niger had sold their jewelry to feed their families and beat prickly grass called cram-cram to extract the seed. Women were probably at their highest status then.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

KEOGH: It was Charles James. Unfortunately he had a heart incident and so Dennis was the chargé there for some time. And then Jim Bishop arrived as Ambassador. Jim has been a significant person in my life.

Q: Jim Bishop had the notoriety of having been in both Liberia and Somalia and being forced out of both those.

KEOGH: Yes, famous for closing down posts. Well, he didn't do that in Niger. He was a very good ambassador and traveled all over the country. Dennis was busy writing cables on moderate Islam in Niger. And I was teaching part time at the University of Niamey. Rhetoric and grammar. Boring subjects but teaching allowed me to learn about Niger from the students.

Q: What was it like when you went there?

KEOGH: Hot as Hades! When you opened the airplane door it felt like you were being hit by a blast furnace. What was harder was that the children didn't speak French. The local French school was demanding, and some of the teachers were tough. One of my daughters was mistreated by her teacher so I ended up volunteering in her class to try to mitigate the situation -- there wasn't another school. After a while, all three children became fluent in French and it was a useful experience. There wasn't much to do in Niamey -- movie nights and baseball against other regional embassies. On weekends we used to go out to the desert and recruit shepherd boys to play international soccer tournaments. We used to rent donkeys and have races, and go out on the Niger River in pirogues. I once went to Bilma, far out in the Sahara where the salt caravans came. A lot of Tuaregs were in town because of the drought. It was exotic. It was also very Muslim -- the first Muslim country I ever lived in.

Q: Were the Muslims radical or were they --

KEOGH: The population in Niger was largely Sunni Muslim with a long history of tolerance. What I hear today about the area runs counter to what we experienced. There was little or no violence when we were there.

Q: Did the United States and European powers have much interest in the area?

KEOGH: At the time, the development of strategic minerals in the north was beginning. And the beginning of real interest in what was happening in Islam. Dennis won the Director General's Award for writing about the Islam in Niger. He saw the impact of poverty, political pressures and modernizing trends on traditional desert communities.

Q: How about the students at the university? What were they pointed towards?

KEOGH: In my first class, they said: "We're very dubious about America. We don't like individualism, we find it frightening. We're a communal society. If you watch how we reap our crops, we move in a line across the field with one person moving slightly ahead of the others. And that's how we work. We survived the drought because if we had six dates, we gave two to a person who came to our door. For you it's always about getting ahead." Of course I had my doubts about this since they'd all pushed ahead of the crowd to get into the university. But it was the first time that I encountered this counter argument to our deep belief in individual rights. It is a different way of thinking.

Q: And certainly has a strong validity, particularly under the circumstances.

KEOGH: Absolutely. And I could see in Niger how this sense of community had saved a lot of lives in the drought.

Q: And you and your husband moved from there and went somewhere else?

KEOGH: We went to South Africa.

Q: And you were there from when to when?

KEOGH: 1980 to 1983.

Q: Apartheid was still very much --

KEOGH: Apartheid was in full effect. Dennis was the political counselor. Dr. Chester Crocker was in charge of Africa policy. Secretary Kissinger was working on a regional plan to get the Cubans out of Angola and to get the South Africans out of Southwest Africa -- a strategic bargain to end the conflict and to give Namibia independence. The next step would be to work on ending apartheid. So Dennis made 27 trips to Namibia over this period. It was his major focus while he was based in Pretoria and Cape Town.

Q: The policy of constructive engagement was highly questioned by many --

KEOGH: It was, but I understood the rationale behind the policy because Dennis worked so closely on it. First the regional plan, then end apartheid. People felt Crocker could deliver the South Africans to the deal. In fact, the South Africans delivered themselves. We did not play the central role in the transition. There were many imperatives, like demographics, that we could use to encourage the South African government to work out a deal with the ANC (African National Congress). There was an extraordinary negotiation at Kempton Park between the parties. Certainly Chet Crocker deserves a lot of credit for his careful groundwork for that second stage to happen. Namibia finally achieved independence in 1989 and chose its government through elections. It was a remarkable outcome.

Q: Did you get much of a feel for conditions in South Africa?

KEOGH: Yes, because I was a teaching assistant at the University of Cape Town.

Q: What were you teaching?

KEOGH: I was teaching teachers in the Education Department. We went out to rural areas to give training courses for African teachers. I took student teachers to the Eastern Cape and to KwaZulu to do their practice in local schools. Many of these student teachers found themselves in classes of 80 kids, trying to encourage real learning in the classroom. It was a brilliant time. We lived at a teacher training college in Amanzimtoti, we got up in the morning at four a.m., ate mealie porridge for breakfast, cleaned everything and then we went out all day. It gave me an inside view of South Africa.

Q: What were whites thinking?

KEOGH: A lot of white South Africans that I knew were anti-apartheid and were working on the anti-conscription campaign. Some Afrikaners were fearless in sticking out their necks, but that was not the average - the majority of whites convinced themselves that they weren't allowed to go into townships and thought that blacks weren't ready to have political rights. They were afraid there would be a blood bath. But I knew some extraordinary people there on all sides -- people of mixed race and African and white South Africans who were all working to overturn the system.

Q: What were you seeing as contact between the blacks and the whites?

KEOGH: Apartheid was pretty effective at keeping people apart except in work situations. Our kids went to Catholic schools, which were mixed race. Coming from Niger, they gravitated to the kids from the township areas. And so we got to know some interesting people through school and through my teaching. We had some crazy parties at the house, playing games, musical instruments, singing. One time some South African friends invited us to stay with them at the black holiday camp. My children felt they were way too white and their hair was way too pale. They wanted to fit in -- a useful reverse experience. My son Miles used to ride the train to school, on the "nie blankes" (non-white) side with his friends. The guards would make him get off the train. One time he shouted, "I'm an *albino!* I'm an *albino!"* I asked him if any of the black kids tried to ride on the white side, but that never happened. There were too many consequences at that time.

Q: How old were your children then?

KEOGH: The girls (twins) were 11, my son was seven.

Q: Were they caught up in the politics? Were they asking questions?

KEOGH: Yes they were, they completely understood the issues and the injustice of the system. It's affected them all their lives. They're all very public spirited and have a strong feeling about justice and fairness.

Q: Were your contacts somewhat removed from the white tribe of Africa, the Afrikaners?

KEOGH: Dennis knew some of "the white tribe," people like Van Zyl Slabbert, who was the Head of the Democratic Party. He was Afrikaner and an extraordinary guy. We knew other Afrikaners like Roelf Mayer and others who ended up in the negotiation at Kempton Park.

Q: Whites were excluded from sports; did they feel they were kept on the outside?

KEOGH: Absolutely. People often said to me in South Africa: "The thing that will end apartheid is not international sanctions. It's not being able to play rugby." The film "Invictus" dealt with the rugby phenomenon a couple years ago. Mandela understood that recognizing the Springboks was something he could do to unite the nation.

Q: Did you live in Cape Town?

KEOGH: Dennis moved back and forth between Pretoria and Namibia. Most of the time I stayed in the Cape because I was working and studying at the University of Cape Town. We had to move for a while because our house burned out in Cape Town.

Q: This was on purpose?

KEOGH: Van Zyl Slabbert's house had been burned the night before, that was definitely a fire bombing. And we always said it was an electrical problem, but it started in the same place as Van Zyl's -- in the library. Dennis was in Pretoria and I was upstairs in the house. Around four o'clock in the morning I thought the kids were making a lot of noise and I dragged myself out of bed only to realize the ceilings were falling in. I was smoke addled but able to get downstairs and got the children out. The house was gutted. It took six months to restore "Tembani" (it means peace).

Q: Did you find yourself trying to explain South African racial matters in the U. S.?

KEOGH: Having been involved peripherally in the Civil Rights Movement when I came to the States in 1964, I was conscious of how race relations underpin a lot of our own history. Similarly in South Africa, the white tribe had been there for 400 years, many generations. You could not say: "Go home." It was a complex process to ensure justice without sweeping away minority protections. That was why the transition agreement was so innovative and extraordinary.

Q: And you left when?

KEOGH: 1983.

Q: Where'd you go then?

KEOGH: We returned to the States. Dennis was working in INR again. I started teaching at George Mason University. Dennis went back to Namibia on a mission to oversee the withdrawal of South African troops from southern Angola. In April of 1984 he was in northern Namibia with Lt. Col Ken Crabtree. They went to refuel their car. There was a huge explosion in the gas station. It was what would be called a terrorist bomb these days. And both Crabtree and Dennis were killed. So that was a life changing event. We were "terminated" from the Foreign Service. I stopped work and tried to pull things together for us as a family.

Q: How long did that last?

KEOGH: A long time. I had various options. I had a friend who was a sheep farmer in Australia, also a widow. I thought about going out there to help her but decided I could not put the children in boarding school. One daughter had a serious orthopedic problem. I

didn't have any family in the U.S. So we felt in a somewhat isolated position, sent out of the Foreign Service fold. And my children felt they were American and we were a Foreign Service family. Many people encouraged me to try for the Foreign Service. Secretary George Shultz had come to the house to offer his support at that time -- he encouraged me to apply to the Foreign Service. Dennis was posthumously awarded the Citizen's Medal of Honor by President Reagan and when we went to the White House people said to me, "Well, are you going to try for the Foreign Service?" And so I started thinking that might be the direction I'd go.

Q: Could you explain what happened to Dennis?

KEOGH: As I said, he and Ken Crabtree had gone into a gas station in Oshakati to fill up with gas. They had pulled out of the gas station but went back for a receipt. The attendant drew their attention to something on the side of the gas pump. Crabtree was squatting down to look at it when the bomb exploded. He was blown underneath the vehicle, I think he only lived for a few seconds. There was a big truck on the other side of the gas pump that had just filled up with fuel. So there was enormous explosion as this truck went up. Dennis was blown across the forecourt of the gas station. He managed to crawl to a puddle and sort of rolled in it to put out the flames, but he was very seriously injured. He lived for about an hour and a half. There were some South African troops not too far away and they came but I don't think it was a question of medical care. I think Dennis would have died even if he'd been nearer to a hospital. I was told he died of shock and burns.

Q: What was he doing there?

KEOGH: Ambassador Jim Bishop had asked him to monitor the withdrawal of South African troops from southern Angola, that's what he was doing with Ken Crabtree. There was a question as to whether they'd been targeted, but the Department received a telegram from SWAPO (The South West African People's Organization) saying: "We don't target people who are not our enemies." It was probably a SWAPO bomb, but you know, there was a war going on. It was a conflict area. Mercifully I felt no sense of any particular culpability. I knew many people died and had suffered in this conflict, and Dennis was one of them.

Q: You did get this attention. Did you feel there was something behind this?

KEOGH: Tex Harris has said Dennis was really the first terrorist killing in the Foreign Service. I'm not sure about that, I see him more as a victim of the conflict. Certainly at the time the State Department wasn't geared up to dealing with such events. I struggled a bit initially. There was only an interim death certificate. Our bank account was frozen, Dennis' pension did not come through for months, insurance policies were annulled, because he was killed in a conflict by a bomb explosion. But in the end, things did get worked out. Jeff Davidow, Jim Bishop, Hank Cohen and others were very active in trying to make sure that I did receive some support. In fact, when I first came into the State Department, it was on a one-year presidential appointment to give me time to take the

exams and try to come in permanently. And that's what happened. My first A-100 class was as a presidential appointee, and the second as a Foreign Service Officer. And my first job was on the South Africa desk, so I covered the case of the people arrested for setting the bomb in Oshakati. The charges were dismissed, I believe for lack of evidence.

Q: How'd you find the South Africa desk?

KEOGH: The constructive engagement policy was unpopular and not well understood. I was often sent out to speak publicly because I'd been working in townships and in education in South Africa, so I had some credibility. It was a hard slog because there were aggressive public reactions to the policy. I remember representing the Department for a debate at Randall Robinson's alma mater in Richmond – he was the head of TransAfrica and one of the leading voices against engaging with South Africa. The mood was hostile, people were yelling. Whenever I told people what I did, it generated a lot of heated discussion about South Africa and apartheid.

Q: Were you aware of the collision between the State Department and the CIA, particularly William Casey on South Africa? In my interview with Chet Crocker he said that he had to almost develop his own intelligence service to find out what the CIA was doing vis-à-vis the Afrikaners. We were moving in a different direction.

KEOGH: There were many competing forces. One thing was sure, we knew we had to move the relationship with the ANC forward, still officially labeled a terrorist organization, because it was clear Nelson Mandela would be released and the transition to democracy would take place. For example, we sent an officer to the Embassy to begin making connections with Mandela's family and his supporters inside South Africa. I had no contact at all with the intelligence side. We were just trying to anticipate the beginning of the transition.

Q: What sort of things were you working on?

KEOGH: Apart from explaining and trying to implement the policy, we were moving forward on initiatives such as training. Congressman Steve Solarz had authored a bill to provide six million dollars for educational scholarships in South Africa. I worked closely with AID (Agency for International Development) on how to use these funds. I had some ideas as to how it could best used internally, but in the end, working through government institutions in South Africa was nixed, so that money went to bring students to the States. Congress was very actively involved in directing us to help black South Africans through the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act in 1986.

Q: Was there the feeling that these students would not be well received by the whites when they came back?

KEOGH: I think there was a growing understanding among educated South Africans that the writing was on the wall, that change was coming and that more education for black

South Africans was critical. Many saw there would be open conflict if they couldn't cut a deal through negotiations.

Q: As you were doing this did you feel that there were forces within the Reagan administration that were unhappy with this approach?

KEOGH: I am not sure about those forces. Certainly some individuals were committed to ending apartheid and did not think this was the way to do it. Chet Crocker had to walk a very fine line. Constructive engagement with South Africa was so unpopular among some in Congress, who wanted total sanctions, that there was a move to eliminate the position of the assistant secretary for Africa in order to remove Crocker. Others still supported the view that South Africa would lose its infrastructure and economic clout if the ANC came to power. I thought Crocker was a clever, far-sighted guy; he had a vision and he was patient and realistic. It was a ground-breaking concept to get a beleaguered government that still held power to negotiate giving it up.

Q: Did you find yourself either defending the policy or being shunned?

KEOGH: Both. Public opinion in the States tended to be simplistic. Kids at my children's school would say: "Oh, you lived in South Africa. You must be a racist." That was annoying for them. People didn't understand their experience or what was happening in South Africa. For me, in my first job in the Foreign Service, it was a great lesson. I had to understand and explain the rationale behind the policy, while also trying to contribute to and influence policy based on my own convictions and experience. And not to take criticism personally. There were many well-intentioned people who wanted a more aggressive posture towards South Africa. But a combination of careful constructive engagement and targeted congressional sanctions-- carrot and stick-- was successful in the end.

Q: How'd you find dealing with a South African embassy at the time?

KEOGH: Their officials were under huge pressure, living in the U.S. and trying to represent the apartheid government. We routinely summoned their ambassador or deputy chief of mission to the Department. Crocker and his deputies would ream them out over brutal acts and repression in South Africa. And they were very uncomfortable. They knew apartheid was an untenable, indefensible system. They had international experience and were decent people. Many stayed in their foreign service after the transition to represent the new South Africa.

Q: What kind of family pressure were you under? This was not an easy assignment.

KEOGH: It presented some challenges. I came into the Foreign Service in an era when work often intruded into family life but family life was not supposed to come into the office. One of my daughters had developed serious epilepsy after I came into the Foreign Service; she was having a lot of falls and injuring herself. And then her sister had a serious orthopedic problem, which required a major operation. She was on crutches for

about a year. So I was struggling to hold up my end at work, but to be present as a mother as well. I made lots of trips to the grocery store at 2:00 a.m.! At the same time, I was aware I had been given an extraordinary opportunity. Coming from a very low place, losing Dennis, not knowing which way we were going -- to having a career in the Foreign Service. I was glad that I could continue Dennis' work, and amazed that as an immigrant, I could represent the United States. So I just muddled through. Partly because of this pressure, I remarried but later divorced. In the meantime, I had another child, Luke, shortly after I arrived in India for my first overseas post.

Q: How long were you on the South Africa desk?

KEOGH: For the first 18 months I was in the Department. Then I became the Australia desk officer; that lasted for two years. I had not been sent overseas because Molly and Kate were in their last year in high school.

Q: How stood things with Australia? You were doing this from when to when?

KEOGH: I was there from '86 to '88. It was an interesting period in our relations. New Zealand had withdrawn from the trilateral ANZUS treaty (Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty) because the U.S. would not unambiguously declare if its visiting submarines were "nuclear free."

Q: Nuclear power ships.

KEOGH: Mostly nuclear powered submarines. At the same time, it was a lively time to be on the Australia desk because it was the bicentennial year. Australians were embracing their past, something they really hadn't done before. Everybody wanted to trace an ancestor back to somebody who'd stolen a loaf of bread and shown up on one of the first prison ships. One of my best moments was finding the probable stern post of the HMS Endeavour -- the discovery ship of Australia – in a small private museum in Newport, Rhode Island. Someone tipped me off that it might be there. On a visit I talked to the museum curator about this huge piece of rotting timber I saw propped up in a stairwell. A lot of activity followed, preserving it. Then the Australian Embassy took over and flew it to Australia. Eventually P.M. Hawke put it into the new maritime museum, part of which was funded by the U.S. government to celebrate U.S.-Australian maritime history. It was a happy period in our relations with Australia.

Q: I assume you had a political ambassador there.

KEOGH: We did. Wild Bill Lane *(laughs),* former editor of Sunset Magazine.

Q: Well, how did he fit in?

KEOGH: He was absolutely tenacious in getting a U.S. contribution for Australia's bicentennial. He told me: "I don't care what you do, just make sure we get this commemoration of our long history and future relationship with Australia through

Congress." He talked to everyone, eventually he found an influential person in Congress who had been in the Battle of the Coral Sea, was nursed to health in Australia. So we were able to show some solidarity with Australia while I was the desk officer.

Q: Were you having problems with our facilities up in the northern desert there?

KEOGH: We had facilities in a place called Pine Gap. Their purpose was secret at that time. I had a letter clearance that allowed me to go there. Basically banks of computers that read satellite signals to track ballistic missile testing. The Australian public didn't know why it was there, so there were protests with bags of blood flung over the fence and things like that. But now its purpose is well known.

Q: Was there a significant anti-American movement at the time?

KEOGH: They welcomed ship visits but did not want bases. There was a lot of aggravation on the part of farmers over American wheat subsidies. But quite a few Americans wanted to emigrate to Australia – I think they felt Australia was like the new frontier, a bit like the west in the old days, and that they would have a natural affinity with Australians. In fact, a high percentage who did emigrate came back, partly because of red tape but also because of the undercurrent of anti-Americanism there. I think it was a surprise to find that they weren't all huge fans of the United States.

Q: How about the government?

KEOGH: Relations between our governments were very good. Bob Hawke was Prime Minister, Kim Beazley Minister of Defense. And we had fantastic cooperation.

Q: Well, then you moved on to India.

KEOGH: Yes.

Q: Where did you go in India and when?

KEOGH: We went to New Delhi from 1988 to 1990. I was in the Political Section, covering the human rights portfolio and multilateral affairs. I was also the Tibet person, the Bhutan person, and I covered India's regional foreign relations. It was a period when India was very closely allied with the Soviet Union. And so there was considerable tension in our relations.

Q: What was the political state of India when you got there?

KEOGH: It was a few years after Indira Gandhi was killed, after the terrible reprisals on Sikhs. There were frequent communal massacres and violence all across the Punjab. Then the war in Kashmir broke out. As the human rights officer I was not only reporting on bride burnings and child labor and those kinds of things. I was also trying to follow what

was happening in Srinagar, where up to a million people were demonstrating in the streets because of the unresolved territorial dispute that had gone on since 1947.

Q: Because it broke out into war, was there any solution possible?

KEOGH: Well, a temporary UN mandate put most of Kashmir under India pending a referendum. Of course this never happened and is still unresolved. I didn't get the sense that the Kashmiris wanted to be either part of Pakistan or India, they wanted their autonomy. But it became bloody as they took to the streets and the Indian Army and police tried to suppress the demonstrations.

Q: How did you know about the situation there?

KEOGH: One source was close to home. Unwittingly, just prior to the conflict breaking out, I had arranged a vacation for my three older children in Srinagar! Having recently had another child, I could not travel with them, so they went on a package tour with a guide that included Ladakh – the 'roof of the world' – and a house boat on the Dal Lake. They flew up to Ladakh and climbed mountains, got altitude sickness and generally had a memorable trip. They were coming down in a taxi from Ladakh to Srinagar when a lot of army officers started riding in their taxi -- they knew something was up. Small towns en route had pictures of the Ayatollah Khomeini everywhere. When they got to Srinagar the demonstrations were starting. They were able to get on a plane and leave. They went to the RSO (regional security officer) to tell him their story. And after that, the Embassy put a travel ban on Srinagar. It was really the beginning of the conflict.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

KEOGH: John Gunther Dean, then William Clark.

Q: I would think being a human rights officer in India at almost any time would be difficult because the Indians like to preach to the United States and the United States likes to preach to the Indians.

KEOGH: The Indian Government was very sensitive to outsiders criticizing their handling of 'internal affairs.'

Q: Would you go down and talk to the police commissioner or something?

KEOGH: Well, initially I had to find out what was going on. So I read the newspapers and spent a lot of time developing contacts and talking to human rights lawyers and to press people and to women's groups. Later on, to dissident Kashmiri policeman and others who were worried about the situation there and would unburden themselves because they were trying to stop the violence. As the human rights officer you meet some of the finest people in the society, some real fighters for truth and justice. One person I met early on was Ravi Nair - he was a young human rights lawyer who documented human rights abuses. He'd been in prison 26 times, mostly under Indira Gandhi - an

outspoken and fearless advocate. He wanted India to be a better place that protected its people.

Q: Did you find that you had problems within the embassy? It doesn't help relations when the government knows that something's going to be published in the world about their internal affairs. And I would think that the elders from the Political Section would say lay off, you're not helping.

KEOGH: The political section worked closely together and helped each other. At that time our relations with India were quite complicated anyway. I never felt anybody was trying to suppress or divert anything.

Q: It's almost like you're saying we didn't really care. I mean the Indians were snuggling up to the Soviet Union so we didn't really have to play nice with them.

KEOGH: Not at all. Everyone understood the strategic importance of India in the region and in the world. There was huge concern about instability in that region, as there still is. The conflict in Kashmir and confrontation with Pakistan were only two areas of concern – the Russians were leaving Afghanistan, harassed by the Mujahadeen , the conflict with the Tamil Tigers was going on to the south, relations with Nepal and Bangladesh were shaky. It was a dangerous period.

Q: What about China? The border was not resolved, was it? Still isn't.

KEOGH: No. There's still a stand-off near the McMahon Line. Both sides patrol and have built infrastructure. My only involvement was when I had the Tibet brief. I used to go up by train from Delhi to Dharamsala where there were about 35,000 Tibetans. Refugees were still coming all the time from Lhasa. I was restricted to talking about human rights and refugee issues. Not politics, because the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan community were allowed to stay in India on a refugee basis. They had to be careful not to be overtly political because the Indians didn't want China to react.

Q: The Dalai Lama has been played up as a very benevolent personage. What was your impression of him?

KEOGH: He's a great man. While he has fought for Tibetans' freedom and welfare, he's a realist - he recognizes that autonomy within China is the only option. He was never, as the Chinese said, a "splitist." Some younger Tibetans want to push for independence, but that's not the Dalai Lama's position. Underlying his globe-trotting public image, he's plain. He sees himself as a simple monk. His preference for a separation between the political and religious leadership has now happened, so he is freer to teach and promote human happiness.

Q: Well, what was your impression of Indian treatment of the Tibetans?

KEOGH: They treated the Tibetans carefully. They had freedom to live and work and practice Buddhism. They set up their own schools. They had their own structures, like a parliament. The Indians walked a fine line. But they basically did the right things by the Tibetans.

Q: What did you do when you left India?

KEOGH: We came back to the U.S. in 1990. I was to be the Deputy Public Affairs Advisor for the Middle East Bureau. Ten days before I started, Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait. I was one of the people who spoke to the press and prepared guidance for the Seventh Floor and did public speaking during the First Gulf War.

Q: What was your impression of the press corps that you were dealing with?

KEOGH: I was pretty comfortable dealing with them because they knew the rules. Sometimes you're afraid you're going to be burned and that you will either make a mistake or be misrepresented, but in my experience they were very straight, they did not want to burn their bridges. Of course they were hoping you would tell them more than you could. But I only remember being misquoted once by a Turkish newspaper reporter who had an angle he wanted to pursue. And then I just never dealt with him anymore.

Q: I guess the Gulf War pretty well took up most of your time, didn't it?

KEOGH: It was busy. There was the longish period when the focus was on negotiations, then the offensive period when we went in to Kuwait. At that point, the story moved from State over to the Defense Department. Several other major issues came to the fore in 1991. The first was the Middle East Peace talks, the conference in Madrid, also talks between the Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians in Washington. Then the release of the hostages from Lebanon. Because of the press angle, I was part of the 'welcome team' for the last five hostage releases. We went to a hospital in Wiesbaden, waiting for a day or so, hoping the signal of an imminent hostage release would pan out. And each time it did. The last to be released was Terry Anderson. The press was hungry for news of ill treatment. We went to some effort to protect the former hostages' privacy as they reunited with their families, were given medical attention and went through a debrief. They were able to talk about their experience with a small team of counselors who were experts in understanding what they had gone through. It was a bridging period before they were thrown back into public life.

Q: What was the story of Terry Anderson's sister?

KEOGH: Peggy Say.

Q: Was that a difficult situation, or not?

KEOGH: To some extent. It was difficult for some of the relatives of the hostages because for years they had become public advocates for their loved ones. Many of them

had spoken regularly with the press and with government officials. When the hostage was released, he became the focus of interest. Some families were able to pull back. Peggy Say had championed her brother's case for over six years, all over the world, so she still was in the public eye when he came out. That created some discord; he was reuniting with his fiancée and little girl Salome who he had never seen. Subsequently Terry moved into the spotlight and Peggy stepped back.

Q: What was the public perception of these hostages?

KEOGH: There was enormous interest in them. They had suffered a great deal. Most of them had been held in awful conditions -- in Anderson's case for six and a half years. There was a kind of morbid fascination with what happened to them. You see the same thing in the popular TV series "Homeland" that's on right now. "How did it feel to be kept in a hole underground all those years?" The hostages wanted to talk about their coping strategies -- one person about the faith he developed; how they got the guards to do things to improve the situation. They were pretty remarkable, the ones that I dealt with. They were so happy to be out, seeing their families, trying to make sense of their experience. But the public interest was more in "Did they torture you?"

Q: The Gulf War, as we were moving towards the war, how did you feel about it?

KEOGH: It was a tense period. Joe Wilson, an old friend, was holding the fort in Baghdad, and we were obviously very concerned about our people there and in Kuwait, and others who had been caught up in the invasion. Our concern was less about whether should we go in or not, and more about how we could ensure the safety of those people.

Q: I have a long interview with him. This is before he became a really public figure because of his wife. He then wrote a book called <u>the Politics of Truth</u>. The first half is essentially our interview. What were some of the issues in dealing with public affairs in the department?

KEOGH: Jim Baker was the Secretary, Margaret Tutwiler was his public affairs spokesperson. She was fairly exacting as to what she wanted. We raced around getting cleared language to her every morning. She liked plain talk. I once included the word "potable" in press guidance. And she said, "What is potable?" And I said, "Well, drinking water." And she said, "Well, *say it then."* No State Department jargon.

Q: Yeah.

KEOGH: There was a sense of high purpose in the Department at the time. We were looking to build a coalition of allies and work out a strategy to deal with the Kuwait situation. There was some scapegoating on how the war happened. I knew Ambassador Glaspie and she was under a lot of pressure.

Q: Did you feel April Glaspie was portrayed as being one of the problems by giving Saddam Hussein the go ahead? This has always struck many of us as shifting the blame

and being unfair accusation. Was this the impression you got?

KEOGH: Yes. She was a very able diplomat, one of our foremost experts on the Middle East. She was put into a terrible position when she was called to the bunker in the middle of the night.

Q: This is Saddam Hussein's?

KEOGH: Yes. Saddam Hussein almost never met with diplomats. April had been delivering demarches to the foreign ministry the previous week about desisting from any action against Kuwait, because Saddam had been saber rattling. In the middle of the night, she got the call to go to the bunker. Saddam assured her that he would not go into Kuwait -- clearly the opposite of what he was planning on doing -- and I guess she was persuaded enough that she returned to the Embassy, wrote a reporting cable, and left on planned leave. Right after, Saddam attacked. April couldn't go back to Baghdad. There were accusations in Congress and innuendo at the highest levels at State that she had not delivered a tough enough message. That ignores the fact that she had made the position clear through demarches all week.

Q: No American diplomat would have had the guts to threaten Saddam that we would put half a million American troops on Saudi soil ready to go within six months if you do such and such. It just wasn't going to happen.

KEOGH: No. She couldn't make those kinds of threats. April is a person of grace and character. And I think she managed the post-invasion situation with enormous dignity and professionalism. She was called to testify before Congress. I went with her to assist with the media ("mop up the blood" as someone said). State did not allow her to speak from a prepared text – "not fully cleared" -- so she spoke extemporaneously. She made a clear and powerful presentation to Congress and some of the dust cleared after that. She was very loyal to the Department.

Q: Well, those were heavy times. How long were you with public affairs?

KEOGH: For two years. After that I took a year out of State to be the Dean Rusk Fellow at Georgetown.

Q: What does that mean?

KEOGH: Well, you go as a State representative to the School of Foreign Service, with fellows from other branches of government. You can choose to teach, you can take on projects, you can organize conferences. You're basically a diplomat in residence. I taught some classes and supervised graduate students. It was wonderful. Two of my children were at Georgetown, so it was a family affair.

Q: Were they taking international affairs?

KEOGH: One was studying international affairs and Arabic. The fellowship was a chance to stand back and see a larger picture. When you are on the job, as Kissinger said, the urgent always takes precedence over the important. You tend to be scrambling every day. So this was a great year.

Q: Well then…

KEOGH: And then I became the officer-in-charge (OIC) for South Africa over the democratic transition. So that was an extraordinary…

Q: Oh my God, yes.

KEOGH: … period. Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as President of South Africa. I was the OIC when he made his first state visit to the U.S. I actually went to the state dinner at the White House and stood by Presidents Mandela and Clinton to help with the name pronunciation of some guests – Zulu, Xhosa or Afrikaner names. It was a historic moment.

Q: When did you start?

KEOGH: In 1993. The transfer of power took place in May 1994. It was really the fruition of everything Dennis had worked for and it was enormously satisfying for me to be part of that team.

Q: Was it apparent in 1993 that this would be an ordered and peaceful transition? Because I remember back in the 1950s we were talking about a night of long knives.

KEOGH: We were relatively optimistic, the Kempton Park negotiations were moving forward. One of my main areas of focus on the margins involved Chief Buthelezi of KwaZulu/Natal, who did not want to participate in the transition talks. April Glaspie was the Southern Africa Office Director at the time; she and I went to New York to talk to Henry Kissinger amongst other people, in an effort to get Chief Buthelezi to engage. He did agree to join in the elections at the last minute, partly because of Kissinger and Lord Carrington's intervention, but also thanks to an unexpected third party, I think a Kenyan official of some kind, who talked to him.

Q: What was he after?

KEOGH: Well, he was a proud man with a long history of rejecting any designation of KwaZulu as a "homeland." He came from a royal family, like Mandela. As Chief Minister of KwaZulu, he had done a lot to set up teaching and nursing colleges and to push for peaceful change. He wanted a form of federalism or autonomy for a Zulu kingdom, something separate from the outcome of the talks. But almost everybody recognized that would be an untenable long-term solution. There had to be a united South Africa. So that was why the international community was involved. I have a flash-bulb memory of walking down a corridor in the United Nations with Buthelezi to meet

Madeline Albright…so interesting to be there as a witness.

Q: What was your reading of South African whites? Were they resigned or what?

KEOGH: There was an uptick in emigration. Many who stayed thought that political power did not mean transfer of resources -- they thought their lives would go on as before. But those who had always found apartheid untenable, who wanted to be part of the new country, were relieved. A lot of the people who were involved in the transition must have been carried away on a tide of elation, people like Roelf Meyer and Cyril Ramaphosa, who represented the future of South Africa, who could work things out.

Q: How?

KEOGH: The election was an example of that. Hackers broke into the computers, there were reports of voting totals being changed. In the end, the transition team negotiated the final figure. I understand the ANC agreed to an outcome that would not give them full dominance in the new parliament. The whole thing was done in a remarkable spirit of cooperation. When we were asked whether it had been a free and fair election, we ended up saying that it "represented the will of the people." And it did. That was an amazing outcome for such a complicated situation.

Q: So what did you do after the election? Were you working from Washington?

KEOGH: I was basically working in Washington on our new relationship, on the shape of assistance programs to South Africa, a new canvas. And then one day, Bob Houdek came into my office and asked if I'd be his DCM in Eritrea. He was a three-time ambassador, with a great reputation. I was very grateful for this opportunity, so at the end of two years on South African affairs, I went to Eritrea as the DCM.

Q: Eritrea, from when to when?

KEOGH: I was supposed to be there for two years but only did one year for family reasons. We went to Asmara in 1995. It was the period after the 30-year war with Ethiopia. We were in the process of rebuilding the embassy on the ruins of the previous compound. It was one of these rare moments of peace in Eritrea. There were lots of ex-combatants in wheelchairs, lots of demobilized women soldiers -- they were still walking around Asmara with their boots on and wild hair. The whole society had suffered terrible deprivations, being bombed and living in catacombs underground. So there were many older fighters with young children who were enjoying the respite.

Q: Who was the head of the government?

KEOGH: It was President Isaias -- he's still the president.

Q: How was he at the time?

KEOGH: He was very popular. He'd spearheaded Eritrea's effort against Ethiopia. He and President Meles of Ethiopia had joined forces to bring about the overthrow of Mengistu. They marched into Addis together. But they subsequently fell out. When Houdek and I were there, Isaias was readily available. One night, we were having supper in a café when Isaias walked in, sat down at the table and ate with us. He didn't travel with bodyguards. He could walk around the streets. He lived in a small bungalow, drove a small car. There was a lot of hope for Eritrea. For a brief period it had the most U.S. commercial investment of anywhere in Africa. There were potential hotel projects in the Red Sea. Eritreans had a reputation for being incorruptible. Some of the leadership remembered having Peace Corps volunteers as their teachers, they used to listen to an American radio station in Asmara…so they were generally pro-American.

Q: So what happened?

KEOGH: There were indications of combativeness when Eritreans got into a skirmish with Yemen over the Hanish Islands in the Red Sea. The ongoing confrontation was averted thorough French diplomacy, I was involved somewhat in that.

Q: You were involved?

KEOGH: France sent out a senior diplomat to broker a proposal that would head off a conflict (we learned later that Yemen was pointing scud missiles at Eritrea). This person had no experience in the region so I assisted on briefing and backgrounding him. He successfully worked out an agreement between the two countries that they would abide by the ruling of an arbitration panel on the territorial dispute.

Q: Who got them?

KEOGH: In the end, the UN ruled in favor of Yemen.

Q: Were there political factions in Eritrea?

KEOGH: Yes, there were, and there had been historical faction fighting during the war. Many of those people had left Eritrea, went to Sudan and elsewhere. When I arrived, some people were in prison, mostly Jehovah's Witnesses who had refused national service on religious grounds. We regularly raised these cases with the government, which was unsympathetic. After my departure, the situation changed drastically for the worse. Many people, some close to Isaias, were imprisoned. USAID left the country, also the Peace Corps. In 2000, a local staff member who had worked to promote investment in Eritrea was arrested on a pretext and disappeared into the jail system. Ali Alamin – a tremendously talented and good man. We were never able to secure his release.

Q: This is after you were gone.

KEOGH: Yes, after we left. A couple of years later, the war restarted with Ethiopia over a border town called Badme. There was huge loss of life again, a human disaster.

Q: Did you see President Isaias as having megalomania?

KEOGH: No, not when I was there.

Q: I've heard subsequent reports that it's really quite bad now. It's sad when Eritrea seemed to be on such a roll.

KEOGH: Yes, it seemed like a very positive period. I felt very down after Ali's arrest and when the war broke out again. We knew quite a few young men and women who were sent to fight. There was so much suspicion and aggravation. The whole country is now pretty locked down. Mandatory national service can go on for years, in order to build roads and other reconstruction projects.

Q: So you left.

KEOGH: Yes, I had to come back early. I was reassigned to work with Ambassador Dick Bogosian and Special Envoy Howard Wolpe on the Great Lakes of Africa. The first Congo war broke out, hundreds of thousands of refugees poured back into Rwanda or turned away, fleeing further into the forest. It was another humanitarian disaster, but one that was complicated by the militarization of the situation. Also, after the failure to stop the Rwanda genocide, there was great fear that Burundi would be next. There had already been mass killings, some might say genocide, in Burundi. So we were doing everything we could to stop a full descent into chaos. One of the most edgy moments for me was when I attended the secret second track negotiations mediated by Sant'Egidio in Rome. Wolpe was involved as well as some Burundi government officials and opposition representatives. I am not sure how much was achieved, but Burundi did step back from the brink. It was an extraordinary effort to put people in the same negotiating room who knew that the other side wanted to kill them.

Q: And what did you do after that?

KEOGH: I spent a year at the National Defense University, trying to figure out national security strategy. Then I was assigned to the Human Rights Bureau in 1998 as the director for bilateral affairs. And one of my first assignments was go back to Rwanda with a U.S. Special Forces team to investigate recurrent genocide by Congolese-based militias in northern Rwanda. We traveled in an armored car, coming across a number of people on the sides of the road with machete injuries. It was very tense. And as we were doing this, we heard reports that the Rwandan Army had invaded the Eastern Congo. We knew immediately we had to get out of there. The team went straight back to Kigali and waited at the airport for transport. At that moment, we learned that the Embassy in Nairobi had been attacked. We eventually left Kigali on a plane that was transporting bodies back home from Nairobi.

Q: Did you concentrate on Africa, was that your field?

KEOGH: I thought of myself as an Africanist, because that's where I began. But in the Human Rights Bureau we covered everything, it was a global portfolio. The conflict in Darfur with widespread starvation, the man-made disaster in East Timor with a tsunami of refugees. Human rights protections for Plan Colombia. Assassinations of IRA defense lawyers in Northern Ireland. Killing of indigenous and religious leaders in Central America. The repression of Aung San Su Qui in Burma. China – what to do? I had a map on my wall of the crises that we needed to focus on. We worked for Harold Koh, a brilliant and inspiring boss, formerly Dean of the Yale Law School. He kept us all running pretty fast.

Q: How did you do all this at the same time?

KEOGH: We worked with the regional bureaus, the refugee bureau, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), other governments, to put pressure on regimes that were abusing their own people. Also the Human Rights Bureau started getting funding to do targeted projects and programs to help groups in need. I began learning how to administer programs and spend money under congressional oversight.

Q: What sort of things could you do?

KEOGH: For example, support freedom of the press in Eastern Europe. If a repressive government had closed a newspaper, we could help sometimes by providing equipment, print paper, or a new internet format. I did a project to help women survivors of genocide in Bosnia, Rwanda and Cambodia. And I went back to the Eastern Congo to do an assessment of women and children affected by war – child soldiers and the like – to see what we could do to mitigate the humanitarian disaster there.

Q: Who were your partners?

KEOGH: We worked closely with a bunch of human rights organizations and NGOs. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, relief groups, many others. When Harold Koh became the Bureau's Assistant Secretary, we opened the doors to the human rights community. We also worked well with colleagues in other embassies. We were always trying to do things multilaterally or leverage other people's influence or help, or let them take the lead. Harold used to say that the bad side of globalization was the proliferation of arms and crime and drugs. But the good side was a more universal sense of human rights. For example, the Pinochet case came up when I was working in DRL. Under Harold's leadership, we tried to ensure this was understood as a question of international law, not just a matter between the Spanish and the Chileans.

Q: And after you left there? You're really hopping around.

KEOGH: After the Human Rights Bureau I went north to be Consul General in Quebec City, one of the most beautiful posts in the service. In Washington, I'd been working

horribly long hours and worrying about every situation in the world. And then I found myself in a small consulate where I lived upstairs and walked downstairs to go to work in the morning. That was a pleasant respite from what I'd been doing. My rusty French came back fairly fast, fortunately, because I'd only been there for 10 days when New York was attacked. And so I had to do a lot of public speaking. There were a lot of Americans visiting Quebec when 9/11 happened. The borders were closed so they could not move. I went around to the hotels to reassure people, get them to wait it out. Quebecers were very helpful. And the Canadian Government was very supportive.

Q: And they took a lot of airplane passengers in.

KEOGH: They did. They were fantastic. Out of caution, they decided to put all the consuls general under police protection, also my son Luke who was with me. He had a Mountie with wires in his ears accompanying him to school for about a year. And for 18 months I was under RCMP (Royal Canadian Mountain Police) protection. I didn't feel under any threat. But that was their decision. It was an unusual situation.

Q: How stood things in Quebec vis-à-vis the rest of Canada when you were there?

KEOGH: Quebec has historically leaned towards pacifism. It is known as "a distinct society," and it is. Only 2% of people in North America speak French, and most of them are in Quebec. Quebec City is 400 years old, it's a walled city. 98% of people speak French there -- it feels like you're in Europe. If you've ever been there you'll know it has a fascinating past, from the time Champlain set up French administration. The government of Canada gives Quebec a lot of leeway to be its own society.

Q: Well, did you find yourself trying to be co-opted to favor separatism?

KEOGH: Not really. The Quebec government was welcoming and hospitable but they knew we did not get involved in separatist politics. Bernard Landry, who led the Party Québécois (PQ), was the Prime Minister at the time. He was very supportive over 9/11, and thereafter. But the PQ and much of the population was against our incursion into Iraq. In 2003 there were huge demonstrations outside the consulate, up to 15,000 people one night demonstrating against the U.S., throwing things at the consulate walls and windows, dumping bloody effigies on the doorstep. We left the building when we knew it was going to happen. The French Consul General was a close friend, very supportive. We often attended public events together. He and I agreed to do a public debate on the Iraq war, in a civil atmosphere, at the University of Laval. But the rationale for our action in Iraq was a hard sell in a place where anti-war sentiment had deep roots.

Q: During World War II the French responded fairly well, didn't they?

KEOGH: Conscription came late in the Second World War, and was strongly resisted in French-speaking Canada. There were also demonstrations in Quebec against the Vietnam War, not surprisingly.

Q: There was another U.S. Consulate in Montreal, wasn't there?

KEOGH: Yes, in Montreal. The consul general in Montreal did most of the visa issuance, and focused on trade, generally looked south. In Quebec we looked north to the great hydro projects and lumber industry. My consular district covered a chunk of the Canadian Arctic, so I was able to go to Nunavut a number of times. A big issue was, still is, how climate change would impact the future of Nunavut.

Q: It seemed as though the Canadian government passed a lot of vital territory to the Inuits.

KEOGH: It's a confederation. Nunavut is part of Canada, but they do have a degree of autonomy. The circumpolar peoples are really a group on their own. They have their own languages, cultures, and an amazing adaptation to living in very low temperatures and difficult conditions.

Q: Did you go up to Churchill?

KEOGH: No, that was not part of my district. I did go out to Somerset Island with Luke on a vacation. We hopped around on the ice flow in the Northwest Passage and saw polar bears, and the changes in wildlife and vegetation in the tundra.

Q: Was there talk about opening up the Northwest Passage at that time?

KEOGH: It was clearly coming. I wrote a cable about how the melting ice was freeing up the Northwest Passage -- major international issues would be involved with that. We consider it to be international waters, but Canada claims it as part of their territory. That makes sense to me. Better that they have oversight because they're actually up there. Visiting some of the remote Inuit communities was one of the more interesting aspects of my job in Quebec.

Q: What was your impression of the villages?

KEOGH: They are hard to get to - absolutely remote. Wooden houses on stilts because you can't build on the permafrost, it would melt. The impression is of contrasts. People still had sled dogs, running around outside their houses, but they traveled on skidoos. Men wore sealskin shirts, with gore-tex trousers. English was widely spoken but there was an emphasis on using Inuktitut, their language. Seal hunting was part of daily life, but everyone had a bottle of coca cola in the house. Life was easier, but more fragile because the ice was melting -- there were a lot of skidoo accidents. Widespread unemployment; tremendous social issues of drug abuse and alcohol; and a sense of unavoidable change coming.

Q: Was alcohol sort of the escape?

KEOGH: Yes. There was a general sense of disconnection. A lot of young people were

committing suicide, their parents were afraid to say no to them on anything. It was a huge challenge to hold onto cultural roots and promote new economic activity in this remote part of the world.

Q: Were the young people able to get jobs in the south?

KEOGH: Some did. They wanted the Internet, social media -- to be part of the modern world. But they also wanted to maintain their difference, their sense of identity. If you go to Toronto or Montreal, you're divorced from your roots. And so there's a governmental effort to make a worthwhile life for Canada's arctic communities. One interesting development was adventure tourism. I talked to guides about tourism in the old days when fathers would bring their sons to go on a polar bear hunt. And now parents bring sons and daughters, and they go rafting on icy rivers. Sometimes people fall in; the guide pulls them out and heats them up really fast. They build a snow shelter and camp out. Dealing with extreme cold is one of the last frontiers.

Q: How about any other issues?

KEOGH: Well, I got married there!

Q: Oh, who'd you marry there?

KEOGH: Another widow, Bob Delaney who I knew from St. Patrick's Church. He had four children and so we combined forces.

Q: Which made how many?

KEOGH: Well, eight at that point.

Q: Good God (laughs). I question your judgment!

KEOGH: Well, there it is. Bob was a professor at a college and able to take leave of absence. His two oldest children stayed in Canada, two sons came with us, as did my youngest son, and we started a new life in Peru. I was the head of the Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) in Lima. One of our sons married a Peruvian.

Q: You were in Peru from when to when?

KEOGH: We were there from 2004 to 2008.

Q: Peru, 2004. What was it like?

KEOGH: It has a rich history, civilizations going back thousands of years. Another part of the history involves coca, the main ingredient of cocaine. We've had a big anti-drug program there for decades, including a fleet of UH-2 helicopters on loan to the government, fixed wing aircraft, lots of infrastructure. Narcotics have been a defining

issue for Peruvians. Like the FARC in Colombia, Shining Path guerillas triggered internal conflict and took over a good part of the country in the 1980s. They funded their operations with drug profits. When I arrived in Peru, there were almost no police east of the Andes.

Q: How did you get into this?

KEOGH: Going to Peru worked for the family. It was not a natural fit for me, I knew nothing about drugs and thugs -- I'd been a human rights person. And I had to relearn Spanish. No time to do FSI (Foreign Service Institute) training, so I was thrown in the deep end, had to have meetings with generals and the drug czar about operational issues with rudimentary Spanish. Hard work! It took about six months to be able to function properly.

Q: What sort of government did they have?

KEOGH: President Toledo was in charge. He'd come from a poor family but was helped by Peace Corps volunteers and had studied at Stanford. So he was pro-U.S., and pro-business.

Q: What was the U.S. doing? Were we supporting eradication of coca?

KEOGH: We were trying to stop the increase of coca growing beyond an agreed amount for traditional uses. And there were something like 40,000 hectares of coca being grown in Peru, a lot more than the locals could chew. My office worked very closely with USAID to discourage illegal coca growing, to improve infrastructure like roads, and to encourage crops such as cacao and coffee that would make money and deter narcotics trafficking.

Q: Evo Morales in Bolivia pushes the indigenous benefits of coca growing.

KEOGH: There's a big difference between chewing coca leaves and producing drugs for sale in urban streets, including Lima. Many country dwellers in Peru and Bolivia chew coca, mostly the older, poorer, less educated part of the population. They say it fends off hunger, tiredness and thirst. The Spanish used coca leaves to pay off workers in the mines. It's not a healthy practice, but it's part of the culture. It is also used in religious ceremonies. Nobody was against that, but the drug cartels are a different thing. They exploited everybody. They paid growers small amounts: one woman told me "the man comes every month and gives me a bag of rice." Peasants were also involved in putting coca leaf into pits full of harsh chemicals, making basic drugs, then sending them on. The further along the chain, the higher the value of the product. At the other end, somebody is sitting in a penthouse apartment making millions.

Q: You're flying helicopters around. Who was shooting at whom?

KEOGH: The helicopters were for logistics support. If we flew in dangerous areas like

the Apurimac Valley, we would fly at 4,000 feet to avoid taking fire. There were remnants of the Shining Path guerillas in the area, running drugs. It was quite a different job than office work. There are no doors on the Hueys. And we would be strapped in with Vietnam-era lap belts. As I said before, there were very few police in the drug zones. So we invested a lot in building three police academies where local recruits were carefully screened and well trained. About 3,000 new police graduated during my time there, about a quarter of them were women. It changed the equation in these remote areas where there really never had been much government control at all.

Q: What about eradication?

KEOGH: A group of Peruvian workers would pull up plants that had been identified as illegal. Sometimes USAID workers would negotiate with communities to pull up their own crops in return for something a community wanted, like a clinic or a bridge, so they could get their goods to market. It was a pretty successful program. A big part of the Huallaga Valley went legal.

Q: If you were working the eastern side of the mountains that would push you off onto Brazil.

KEOGH: True. More and more cocaine was going toward Brazil. When I worked in Bolivia, doing the same kind of anti-drug work, it was a big focus. Once I crossed into Brazil from Bolivia to talk to the police on the Brazilian side about drug trafficking routes. The same routes used for human trafficking, particularly women and girls.

Q: Was this the usual human trafficking, more for sex purposes?

KEOGH: It was largely for that but for hard labor too. Some people thought they would get jobs and then when they'd cross the border they weren't paid anything, they were in a no man's land.

Q: When were you in Bolivia?

KEOGH: I was the NAS director there from 2009-2010.

Q: Evo Morales – I understand he has taken a hostile stance towards the United States. Did you find this?

KEOGH: Definitely! Before I arrived, Morales had basically given our Ambassador, Phillip Goldberg, 24 hours to leave the country. It was a disorienting time for the embassy. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) were given notice. And the Narcotics Affairs Section was the only law enforcement agency left. We still had 16 helicopters in Bolivia that were on loan to the government for their use, as we did in Peru. And three C-130's and other aircraft. The whole time I was there I was waiting to read the headline in the newspaper that NAS was to be thrown out for some misstep.

Q: I thought you'd be number one on his list.

KEOGH: Interestingly enough, we had a very good relationship with Felipe Caceres, who was the drug czar and a close advisor of Morales. We worked steadily and cooperatively with him. Morales was more unpredictable. He came from the coca-growing region of Chapare and still heads that Coca Growers Union. He's well known as a proponent of chewing coca and its traditional uses. But he was aware that drug trafficking was increasing and that foreign cartels were coming in. He didn't want to lose control of the situation, he did not want Bolivia to be labeled a narco-state. So there was an awareness of danger and that we could help. We picked our spots. Apart from eradication support, the government wanted cooperation to stop trafficking in children. We supported several shelters for victims of trafficking and helped set up a bunch of special border posts.

Q: Did you have any major incidents while you were doing counter narcotics?

KEOGH: There were some major events. Shortly after I started working in Peru, a group of police we had trained departed a jungle base in a road convoy and were attacked by Shining Path guerillas. Only one of the officers survived, and he lost the use of his hands. A very courageous guy, he became part of our training team in one of the academies. It was not just opening ceremonies and vehicle donation events. This was not the Foreign Service of receptions and reporting cables. The graduations of the young police we trained were memorable. I spent a lot of time with them in the classroom to make sure their education was rigorous and ethical. I became very involved with this police program.

Q: How about the police?

KEOGH: Largely admirable, but of course, some corruption.

Q: Were many of these police going to the school in the United States?

KEOGH: Some senior officers went to the U.S. for conferences and training, but the idea was to do training in Peru, and to build public confidence in the police. I'll give you an example. In Ayacucho, which had been a Shining Path base, one of the groups of young police recruits were running through the streets in white tracksuits led by their commander. There were quite a lot of females in the group too. As they went running by, all the people stopped and applauded them. That was an amazing advance, to see the population responding to their own young people. At heart, they wanted a law abiding society.

Q: How were these young women accepted? Where they were coming from and where they were going?

KEOGH: The public trusted them, but I am sure wondered if they would be able to meet the requirements. Not so – these women were tough as nails. They'd grown up in a mountain or jungle environment. To get into these academies they had to meet virtually

the same physical requirement tests as the men. Once they got in, they consistently won the top three prizes, which was a problem! It became almost predictable. They worked so hard and excelled when given a chance to have a career.

Q: This must have been really breaking ground in the society, wasn't it?

KEOGH: It was remarkable. In fact, CNN in Spanish did a program on it.

Q: How did you find yourself treated in Peru and Bolivia and Colombia? Were you part of the team, or were you "she does thugs and drugs?"

KEOGH: I'm certainly not the first woman to do that kind of job. These are old programs, they've been very well funded, which gives whoever runs them a lot of clout. The NAS director plays a significant role in the embassy. And local governments get used to dealing with the head of the program, male or female. Basically they just want technical cooperation, I never encountered machismo. The only problem was not to drink much when I was out in the field because there were never any facilities for ladies!

Q: Ah yes, peeing is a problem.

KEOGH: It is.

Q: Was the Drug Enforcement Agency a presence? How did that work?

KEOGH: We had our own mandates, they largely did their thing and we did ours; the same with the military. We used to get together in the law-enforcement working-group and talk things through to come to consensus. And we funded some aspects of their work.

Q: What was your last post?

KEOGH: I am now a WAE (when actually employed). Bolivia was the last time I left lock, stock, and barrel out of the United States. In 2011 and 2012 I was in Indonesia in a hotel for six months setting up an INL (International Narcotics and Law Enforcement) office in Embassy Jakarta.

Q: What was going on in Jakarta?

KEOGH: INL is becoming increasingly focused on changing systems, not just equipment and training. In Indonesia, we were trying to change the corrupt and inefficient culture of the police, to improve the management of high security prisons, as well as legislative and other changes in the justice system. Indonesia is a sprawling archipelago -- 7,000 islands -- with a supermarket of disasters from tsunamis to earthquakes to forest fires. A huge challenge for a civilian police force that only recently separated from the army. After decades of dictatorship, Indonesia is still an emergent democracy, and also facing radical Islamists. When I was there, the trial of Umar Patek, the Bali bomb maker, was in the works. No security in the courts in Indonesia. Crowds came in and would sometimes

chase the judge off the benches. So we were helping on the margins with that. And helping prepare a special legal team that could try all sorts of big cases, drug cases, money-laundering cases, etcetera.

Q: Were you running across al-Qaeda and its affiliates in Indonesia?

KEOGH: Reportedly there was a tenuous connection a few years back, but there are homegrown organizations that are pretty militant.

Q: What about that business up in the north?

KEOGH: Right, the terrorist training camp up in Aceh, run by JI, Jemaah Islamiyah. Hard to tell how serious this was, I am not an expert on that. Certainly some of the local radical groups were part of the call for a global caliphate, and they had grievances of their own. Some of the groups began under the dictatorships of Sukarno and Suharto, in Malaysia. Others got their start in the Philippines. It is a fine line for the police to keep public order and allow freedom of speech, while radical groups are turning on dissident Muslims and killing people who were trying to build a Christian church.

Q: So it was worthwhile?

KEOGH: Complicated but worthwhile. I think my greatest satisfaction was finding my grandmother's grandfather's grave on the remote island of Tanjung Pinang! He was a member of the Dutch colonial forces. So working with the police in Indonesia, for me, felt like coming full circle.

Q: So what are you up to now?

KEOGH: I'm heading off next month to replace the NAS director in Costa Rica for three months. It's a lot smaller than some of the multi-million dollar programs I've worked on, but should be interesting.

Q: What will you do?

KEOGH: Well, the Narcotics Affairs Section helps the government on law enforcement, border protection issues. Costa Rica's a transit country for drugs, there is an increase in money laundering -- lots of new buildings going up -- the Sinaloa cartel and Colombians are present. It's a great country with a long history of democracy. It would be terrible to see that corrupted.

Q: No military. I would think it'd be a prime target for drug traffickers.

KEOGH: That's why we have a program there. I'm just going for a few months. At some point I'll have to stop. We now have 11 grandchildren and some of the parents wish we stayed home a bit more. But I'm sure if somebody says to me, "Would you like to go to Southern Sudan next year?" I'll probably say, "Sure!"

ADDENDUM

Dennis W. Keogh
Killed in the Quest for Namibian Independence on April 15, 1984

I was at home in Falls Church, Virginia that morning. The children were still upstairs and I was scrubbing a poolside carpet when Ambassador Jim Bishop walked in. I was surprised and pleased to see him; then he quickly told me the reason for his visit -- Dennis had been killed. Initially I was deeply shocked, but realized right away that this was real, so I had no disbelief. The prospect of telling the three children, Kate, Molly and Miles, was overwhelming. I remember thinking I would tell them their father would be away for a few more months so that I could let them know gradually. That clearly would not work; I called them downstairs and told them what had happened. They were amazingly brave but distraught at the loss of their beloved Dad. Then began the ghastly business of informing Dennis' family and the practical next steps -- facing a future without him.

I later read field reports that reconstructed the events of that day. Dennis and Ken Crabtree had set off from Windhoek to meet with the Joint Commission regarding the status of troop withdrawal and political developments. They arrived in the desert town of Oshakati near the Angola border. Before checking into their guesthouse, they stopped to fill up the tank of their Land Cruiser. The attendant pointed out a plastic container behind the pump, filled with a brownish-yellow liquid, and asked them if they knew what it was. (Note: the device was later described as an IED with about a kilo of TNT and a mechanical timer). Neither Dennis nor Ken knew what it was. A Mercedes truck was filling up with diesel fuel at the other side of the pump. The attendant went to fetch a cash receipt. Ken was squatting down to look at the unknown object; Dennis was walking a few feet away when the IED exploded, causing the fuel in the truck to ignite.

The force of the blast blew Ken Crabtree under their car. The Namibian driver of the truck also died in the explosion. Dennis suffered severe internal injuries and burns. Two off-duty police officers ran to the scene, rolling Dennis in a puddle to extinguish the flames. He received paramedic attention and intermittently regained consciousness, repeatedly expressing concern for Ken Crabtree and requesting that USLO Windhoek and Embassy Pretoria be informed of the incident. Because of his "cognizant and coherent statements" the two police officers felt that Dennis would live despite the seriousness of his injuries; however, he died during the 35 km trip to the evacuation air base.

There was speculation in the press that the two had been targeted by the South West Africa People's Organization -- SWAPO -- later to become the elected government of Namibia. SWAPO denied this, asserting: "We do not attack people who are not our enemies." In the subsequent investigation, the Regional Security Officer and local authorities concluded that the two diplomats had not been targeted. The filling station had been damaged twice before, and they concluded the purpose of the bomb was to cause property damage at night. The mechanical detonator was probably triggered by the extreme afternoon heat. The

unforeseeable circumstance of two vehicles being next to the pump meant it was wrong place, wrong time.

This conclusion was important for us as a family in our own process of grieving. The following year, seven SWAPO members were convicted of terrorism in connection with a spate of bombings in the north. The South African authorities dropped the charges that they blew up the filling station in Oshakati for lack of evidence in that case: as a consequence they received reduced sentences. This verdict in some way contributed to the reconciliation process that had been central to Dennis' work. He had gone to a zone of conflict in which many innocent people had suffered. In November 1989, more than 700,000 Namibians voted in a UN supervised election under the U.S.-brokered independence plan to end South African rule. I read one comment from a voter standing in a mile-long line at a polling station that was threatened with closure: "I'm not giving up my vote. Many people have died to give it to me."

In 1993, I traveled to Oshakati for the first time. The gas station had been rebuilt; there was no sign of what had happened there. I wandered over to a busy traditional market across the street and sat with a group of women selling home-made quilts. They recounted their war-time experiences as refugees in the Congo. I did not tell them why I was visiting. The experience made me realize that we had all gone through a lot.

Among other awards, Dennis was posthumously recognized by the Presidential Citizens Medal by President Reagan, and the Secretary's Award by Secretary of State Shultz. He is buried in Arlington Cemetery among brother Marines killed in Beirut in 1983 -- a fitting place for him, a Captain in the U.S. Marine Corps (never a former Marine). The children and I will be there on the 30th anniversary of his death to commemorate the life of this wonderful man, husband and father.

Susan Keogh, February 2014

End of interview