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

JAN KRC

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INTERVIEW

Q: So now this is May 22, 2016 and we are starting our first recording session with Jan Krc. And we start with the usual question of where you born and raised?

KRC: Well, I was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia, what was then Czechoslovakia, now the Czech Republic. This was in the years of deep Stalinism, communism in that country and I lived there for the first eleven years of my life. Then, in the late sixties, right at the time of Prague Spring and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, my family was able to get out. We actually escaped. It was not a very dramatic escape, but an escape nevertheless, though Yugoslavia into Austria where we were refugees for a few months. I had my first English lesson in a Viennese elementary school which, as I found out later, was right near the American Embassy.

In Austria we waited to get to the United States, where we came as refugees in the late sixties.

Q: Okay, pause for just one second. Before you go on the United States, whereabouts in Prague were you living? Was there anything about the schooling in Prague that you recall as being important, influential or was it just more of a regular elementary school education?

KRC: It was a regular elementary school, built on top of the World War Two ruins of the largest synagogue in the city. We lived in a part of Prague that is near the old town but not in the old town. My parents were both in the medical field so they were not really

politically active, and I think the only thing that sort of relates from that time to the present is the fact that my first foreign language in school, Russian, was useful in the Foreign Service. It was mandatory back then in Prague, back in the mid-sixties.

Q: Interesting. Okay, now you've gotten out and you're in Vienna and you starting English lessons looking forward to going to the U.S.

KRC: So, we're in Vienna waiting to go the U.S. and I really didn't know what to expect. To me America was this never-never land of skyscrapers, big cars and cowboys and Indians, a much skewed view of America that I think many kids of that age, or maybe even today, still have. It's sort of a big, romantic, wild country. I, of course, read all the Karl May stories and seen the movies which showed America as this land of noble Indians, majestic landscapes and so forth. So that was really the only impression that I could conjure up in my mind. So it was a very nebulous, and obviously not very well informed impression. America was not something that we studied much in Prague in those days.

In fact, the only U.S. related thing I remember are drills of going underground and coming out in gas masks for when the American imperialists would attack our socialist homeland. Not that anyone took that very seriously but it was required by the regime. So anyway, landing in the U.S. as an eleven-year old with the few words of English that I'd picked up during my brief stint in the Austrian elementary school in Vienna, was a bit of a shock because it was all so different and unexpected. Of course, we went where most immigrants go, where you have relatives, so we happened to have an aunt and uncle who were connected to Yale University in New Haven so we ended up in New Haven, Connecticut. And I remember waking up my first morning in America and being kind of shocked because I looked out the window and I didn't see any skyscrapers and I thought, well, this can't be. America is skyscrapers and all I saw were these… Now, of course, I think they're lovely, but back then I thought, these Victorian-type townhouses, how dreary. We've got that back home as well. You come all this way and that's all you get to see? So I was a little disappointed by the first impression, but it soon picked up once my parents took me on a day trip to New York City and I had my fill of skyscrapers.

But anyway, landing in New Haven, Connecticut in the tumultuous days of the late sixties there was quite a lot of controversy over desegregation and busing and the Vietnam War, of course, which I followed already at that young age and so it was an exciting time, interesting time. I remember feeling initially a little panicked landing in this public school in the fifth grade without any English. I was wondering, my God, will I ever get the hang of this language? Will I get used to this strange environment? What are they saying? What's going on? But at that age you adapt very quickly and, in no time, my brother and I were serving as interpreters to my parents who, of course, had a much tougher time with the language being adults and having full time jobs. So English came to me very quickly and easily, and this bicultural background and foreign heritage really contributed to my interest back then and to this day in the Foreign Service. Because of our escape from communist Czechoslovakia, I was exposed early on to two very different

cultures, languages, and people. In addition, the 1968 Soviet invasion of the country I was born in served as my first introduction to international affairs.

History, geography and foreign languages always interested me in school and so in high school I began to think about the Foreign Service. Of course, back then I'm not even sure I called it the Foreign Service, it was just being a diplomat and really giving something back to my adopted country. My parents and I, of course, were all very grateful to the U.S. for having taken us in, given what happened to the country we came from, namely that it was invaded by the Soviet Union and suffered for the next twenty years under a neo-Stalinist regime. This gratitude made sense to me, and motivated me to want to give something back. And the Foreign Service seemed like the right thing to do given my academic interests. In high school I continued with my Russian and I also picked up French and German so after years of these foreign languages you start thinking about what good will they do you and how can you use them? So the Foreign Service really seemed like the obvious choice. Plus, to be honest, it had an entry exam that didn't have any math in it so that made me very happy.

Q: How did you first hear about the Foreign Service? Or was it that because your family had emigrated and had contact with the embassy that you automatically knew about it?

KRC: I think it was that. You know when you emigrate you deal with consular officials of course. And in my case, I have to do a little aside here, the first contact was with a Foreign Service Officer in Austria. Charlie Salmon was a junior officer at the time who lived in the building I ended up living in many years later as a diplomat. He was in the consular section of the bilateral mission, and he handled my family's immigration case. I had not seen him since the sixties, but I remembered his name because it was on the immigration documents and some congressional letters. Many years later I went on vacation to Hawaii. And a friend of mine, a retired Foreign Service officer said, "You should look up Ambassador Salmon, because you've mentioned him as the one who did your immigration papers and he's retired there. And so I looked him up. We had a lovely dinner, and it was amazing, more than forty years later, to actually sit down with a former consular officer who handled my immigration to the United States. It was a wonderful chance to reconnect with some old history but I digress.

Early on the Foreign Service was in the back of my mind because of this youthful exposure to embassies, immigration and consular work. I had always thought of it as a career possibility, and so when the time came to start thinking about colleges, it made sense to me to apply to the Georgetown, School of Foreign Service. I didn't end up going to Georgetown; I got in but I didn't go because someone said, "Well, the Foreign Service is great but you really should get a liberal arts education first and only then if you still feel like you want to do it, then focus on it but why specialize so early? So I took their advice and ended up going to Wesleyan University in Connecticut not too far from home but still thinking about the Foreign Service. And of course, I chose subjects that ultimately contributed to my work in the Foreign Service, namely more languages. Again, Russian, German, and French, as well as history, politics, economics, subjects that one needs as a foundation for Foreign Service work.

Q: Just pause one second. Now you had mentioned your brother. Is he older or younger?

KRC: He is a younger brother.

Q: And was he interested similarly in all of these international things?

KRC: No, he was the one who would take something because it had math in it. In fact, he turned out to be much more of a technically-oriented person that I am to this day. He works with computers, math and physics. He ended up getting a Ph.D. in physics and engineering at Yale, so very different in that sense from me and probably more in keeping with my parents' scientific background, so not surprisingly he was not as interested in learning foreign languages and the Foreign Service was not for him.

Q: And just one more question about high school. You went to a public high school? Private high school? What was that experience?

KRC: Well, initially we landed in New Haven, Connecticut, with one suitcase, no money so private schools were out of the question so I ended up in a public school for two years and then two years in a Catholic junior high school which I didn't like much since I found their approach somewhat totalitarian reminding me of the communists' intolerance which I had experienced earlier in my life. So my parents thought better of that and placed me then for the next four years, high school basically, in a private school, Hopkins Grammar School, one of the oldest in the country. In fact, I always like to point that out to Europeans who accuse us of not having any history. Well, I would ask my European friends, when was your high school established? And they would mumble something about the 18th century, maybe 19th, and I would say, "Well, this one in the New World comes from 1660 so it's way older than anything you attended." That was always a good little talking point. But it was a wonderful school, still is, and I had four great years there with all the languages and history I liked, so it was a good preparation for college. And then Wesleyan, of course, where I continued in my interest in history.

Q: So when you go into college, were there professors who had connections to international work or maybe the Foreign Service who you might have consulted about what you were going to be doing after college?

KRC: You know, that didn't actually happen. I know people talk about how they would have a professor that would talk to them about the Foreign Service and so forth. I majored in European history, modern European history and so, of course, I knew my professors and all, but I don't recall coming across anybody with that kind of a connection. Again, it was a small liberal arts college in the middle of Connecticut so it was a bit distant from Washington and international affairs but I never lost sight of the profession. As I said, it was part of my thinking in applying to colleges but in the end, I took a pass on it and did the traditional four-year liberal arts college.

But then when the issue came what to do after college, I realized I wanted to do some more academic work so I went on to graduate school. At this point, I focused more strictly, applying to international affairs schools like Georgetown, SAIS, and the Fletcher School in Boston, where I ended up going in the end.

Q: Now, were there opportunities or did you travel abroad while you were in high school or while you were in college?

KRC: I did. Mostly, of course, back to Europe. I remember going back as a high school graduation present to Czechoslovakia, still communist Czechoslovakia at the time and again that whetted my appetite for Foreign Service work. The contrast of different cultures, languages, living abroad. It all seemed very attractive to me, still is. And so I think those trips contributed to that attraction. I think I did about three or four trips like that. In addition, I made a couple of trips to Southeast Asia, which certainly broadened my world view.

I ended up having a dear friend, a roommate, in graduate school who was from Thailand so as a result I visited Thailand a couple of times. Met the royal family. Needless to say, he was well-placed in that society. Most tourists don't get to meet the royal family. But again, it confirmed my interest in things international because prior to my visit to Southeast Asia, I was strictly a Europeanist and I thought that nothing else would be interesting to me. Once in Thailand, I realized my mistake. I discovered another continent, my God, Asia, fascinating. The history, the culture, the language, the food.

And so when I was confronted with the Foreign Service requirement of world-wide availability, I was ready to go anywhere. I was prepared because I thought anywhere in the world is of interest to me and I wanted to broaden my horizons. Although, I suppose due to my languages, in the end, as you'll see, I ended up serving in Europe.

Q: And, of course, the other nice thing about going back to Czechoslovakia periodically is you could update your knowledge of the language which is spoken because often what happens is people who leave the country and go back 20 years later find that their knowledge may be the same as it was 20 years ago but the language on the street has changed quite significantly.

KRC: Yes, that's very true. Unfortunately, that's what happened to my brother. He didn't go back as much as I did and, as a result, to this day, his Czech is not what it should be and my trips back and, of course, some of the jobs I had right after Fletcher, really contributed to maintaining my Czech way beyond the "kitchen level" that a lot of émigrés have when their only exposure to their language is sitting at home with their parents and otherwise never using it. But I used it professionally in several jobs, including translation work for the Helsinki Commission.

Q: Okay, so now you're in Fletcher. Were there any particular subjects that, because now you're thinking about professional world and Foreign Service in the not-to-distant

future. Were there particular things you did in graduate school to prepare yourself for the Foreign Service or any specialization in the Foreign Service?

KRC: Well, I realized that the languages would still be important so I certainly tried to keep those up and, of course, keep up with international affairs in general, getting a smattering also of some development issues, military security issues, and economic issues. My area of specialization, an obvious choice given my background, was and is Eastern Europe. This is in the days of the "evil empire" and so it was very much something that one could take on as a lifetime preoccupation because it was such an important component of our foreign policy. Perhaps more in those days than today. The whole East-West global confrontation. And so I was already thinking what will be my area? What will be my focus? And I was gearing the courses that I chose at Fletcher to that. And in some ways, I was not preparing myself properly because I really never thought about much else but the Foreign Service. Call me crazy, and some people did back then, because I put all my eggs in one basket. I didn't really seriously pursue anything else, gee, what about doing this or that track or this track. Not really, no.

Q: I have to admit I didn't either and there are some people who put themselves on a Foreign Service track from the very beginning; others who just fall into it. So both approaches work but it just really sounds like you were very motivated and this is what you really wanted to do. So, it's not entirely surprising. Okay, so you're in Fletcher. Have you been taking the Foreign Service exam through this period?

KRC: Oh yes. Fletcher was very good about that, which is one of the reasons why I chose it. In many ways it is really a preparation for the Foreign Service, the World Bank, the UN, that kind of work. So they took the Foreign Service exam preparation very seriously at the school. All sorts of training for that and prepping for the exam. A trip down to Washington to get acquainted with who's who and the bureaucracies and the various options in Washington and setting you up for internships during your summer there.

In fact, my first exposure to the Foreign Service took place at Fletcher, or through Fletcher, because the summer between my first and second year at Fletcher, I did an internship at the State Department, unfortunately unpaid, in the Office of Eastern European and Yugoslav Affairs, that's what it was called back then. I understand it's still unpaid to this day. And this was still under Jimmy Carter, summer of 1980, and I just loved it. In a sense my first real FSO work took place when I subbed for the Yugoslavia Desk Officer who went on leave for a week or two. Very exciting, very heady stuff and in many ways a confirmation, hey, this is exactly what I was looking for and I really like this and so I went back to Fletcher with the feeling, I made the right choice and Fletcher really prepared me for that very well I think.

Q: Okay, great. When did you pass the Foreign Service exam for the final time, the score that would actually get you hired?

KRC: Well, I was lucky. I only took it once for practice, passed the written, but didn't pass the oral which was fine since I still had another year of graduate work so I did have

that dilemma that I know many of my colleagues had coming in which is, gee, do I finish my degree or do I go into Service? No, I passed both the written and oral exams towards the end of the two years at Fletcher and so I had a year between finishing graduate school and entering the Service. During this time I worked at the Congressional Research Service (CRS) at the Library of Congress on Capitol Hill which was a great job, a wonderful job.

Again, focusing on Eastern Europe. I was in the Foreign Affairs National Defense Division dealing with Eastern European issues. As my special project, I got to do a CRS Backgrounder on the Czechoslovak monetary gold, an interesting issue that's now ancient history but back then it was quite topical. At issue was this monetary gold that belonged to pre-World War Two Czechoslovakia, was then taken by the Nazis, and then at the end of the war, consolidated, and taken by the Allies. And for years nothing much happened with it and then when the price went up, the communists suddenly realized, hey, we should try to get this gold back and, of course, we, the U.S. had some claims of nationalized property of American citizens so there was room here for a deal and the CRS was asked to provide a study about this to see the background of this and ultimately, was this a good deal? And, in fact, it was. It satisfied the claimants that had claims on the property that was nationalized and at the same time, it returned gold to a country that owned it, that it belonged to. And all done at a time when relations were actually not very good so that was kind of a surprising thing that a deal was made between regimes, governments that didn't like each other at all. And, in fact, it got passed by Congress before martial law was declared in Poland after which it would have probably never passed so the timing was also fortuitous. So that was the project that I did at the Congressional Research Service when I was there.

Unfortunately my stint at the CRS was only a limited appointment, so I went to work as a contractor, on purchase order, at the Voice of America, which I actually fell into completely by accident because I met somebody who worked there who said, "Oh, you know, they'd love to do an interview with you. An émigré kid who still speaks Czech and all that. Why don't you come over?" And I did and then it turns out they weren't so much interested in doing an interview with me but rather hiring me because they needed Czech language speakers and back then, of course, there was a Czechoslovak service; it doesn't exist anymore. And so that was my other job before the Foreign Service, working at the Voice of America, broadcasting news live every day in the afternoon to audiences in Czechoslovakia.

In fact, I remember some relatives recognizing my voice which was kind of exciting. So, I really enjoyed that. It wasn't something I wanted to stay with forever, but it was a good appetizer for the Foreign Service work that was coming later. I remember thinking how lucky I am to be here in Washington and be connected to all this. It was a great feeling connecting with people behind the Iron Curtain and helping to counter communist disinformation.

Q: Oh yeah, these were ideal jobs immediately prior to the Foreign Service because obviously they are acquainting you with some of the major bilateral issues and giving you

skills that can be used no matter where you go in the Foreign Service. You know, ability to speak publicly…

KRC: Tell America's story; that's what the Voice of America is all about and that's really what the work of most diplomats overseas is, telling America's story. That's what you're there for.

Q: And so typically the Foreign Service sends you a letter or gives you a call and says, "Well, you've passed the exam and you're on the register and we've reached your name and when did that happen?

KRC: Well, that exciting day came, let's see, while I was at the Voice of America; I remember being very, very excited and, of course, my colleagues at the Voice were too because they knew I was waiting for that and so that happened in the summer of 1982 and I was just thrilled. Because, I had, at that point, been waiting for some time. Not that I waivered in my commitment, it's not quick getting into the Foreign Service. I think most people will agree that it usually takes way too much time and when you're young and impatient to get going, that can be pretty frustrating but the offer came that summer and as much as I hated leaving my friends at the Voice of America, I had to take up this Foreign Service offer. At the time, the U.S. Information Agency and the Voice of America were the same agency, so I stayed in touch with many of the colleagues from the Voice throughout the years.

Q: Great and when they presented you the opportunity, was it in a specific cone or did they invite you to choose? Or how did that work?

KRC: Well, you know, these things change over time and my second time in the Foreign Service, it was, of course, again a different system but back in the early eighties you took the same exam but you were placed on different registers and I remember being actually being placed very high on the political register. Not so high on the USIA, the public diplomacy register, but the first offer that came in was public diplomacy so I thought, a bird in the hand... Plus, to be perfectly frank here, being gay, of course I thought about the implications of what that might mean in terms of security because I knew that there could be issues there, just from reading and hearing stories and so forth. So my feeling was if I'm going to enter, I'm probably safer entering public diplomacy rather than something more sensitive like political-military matters that the State Department would handle. Of course, that turned out to be a big mistake on my part.

Q: Right, as I was preparing to go into the Foreign Service, what I had heard were similar things, that somehow it was a little easier if you were gay to be in USIA, the Information Service, than it was in the State Department. That the State Department had a much more rigorous and strict application system that tried to weed out gay people and yet I found out the same thing you did, that it turned out to be exactly the opposite. That the State Department was a bit more liberal than USIA and that USIA ended up being oddly much more antagonistic or intolerant towards gay people.

KRC: That's exactly right. USIA was way behind on that score, behind the State Department as well as other Federal Departments. The State Department, at this point, had, without my knowing it, entered what I would call, a "don't ask, don't tell" policy. Not that they were open to gays or welcoming them, not at all, but they just didn't make it an issue. If you didn't make it an issue, they didn't make it an issue so everybody was kind of quiet and people got along and no big problem as long as you kept your head down. Now that doesn't mean they didn't kick out people; they certainly did but it just wasn't an open kind of hunting season the way it was at USIA which again, I didn't realize, but at USIA, you had leadership, especially on the security side of things, that didn't believe that gays belonged in the Foreign Service and they were not shy about stating this belief.

Q: And one other thing to keep in mind about USIA, and the State Department, is that their security offices are often deferred to by everyone all the way to the top. It really takes something major that reaches to the secretary before questions related to security are potentially overturned or changed.

KRC: That's very true and, of course, the smaller the organization, the more power security has because there are fewer layers to appeal to. And that's true for the State Department but it was doubly true for USIA which being smaller, security just wielded a lot more power and also people traditionally didn't want to come into their crosshairs. They stayed away. They were fearful; they didn't know what might happen if they confronted security so there was this powerful reluctance to get involved when security was on to something. Furthermore, challenging security by their definition made you automatically a security risk.

Q: Okay, right. So now you're offered the opportunity to join. It's 1982 and what happens from there?

KRC: Well, there I am in the summer of 1982; I entered the USIA Foreign Service which, of course, meant that you had some training together with State, with the same class coming into State, but then some of it was separate and, of course, the focus was more on press and cultural matters although we did get some training in consular and the other functions. The wonderful thing about USIA for junior officers back then was that you were a junior officer and your first assignment really was a freebie to any embassy that took you in. In other words, you didn't get sent out the way that State Department would send you out with a job in a given country that is waiting for you there and needs to be filled right away.

No, instead, we went out as extras, above complement, and so we would end up in an embassy, not occupying a job, but being on a rotation, meaning we could spend half a year in the USIA offices, then maybe a quarter of a year behind the visa window and then maybe a couple of months in the economic section and really get a good exposure to the entire gamut of what the embassy does and I think that was just a wonderful preparation and introduction to the different cones. I wish they would bring that back, but I guess that costs money and so now you get sent overseas and you just get into that visa window and

that's that. They need you there immediately, and the luxury of going around as an extra person in various sections just doesn't seem to be feasible anymore.

Q: Yeah, that's what I understand as well. But, okay, so you had the Washington D.C. training and was there anything unusual about that? Was there anything in it that gave you the idea of what you were going to pursue in a Foreign Service career?

KRC: Well, I think I always thought, again with the languages I had, that I would be focusing on Eastern Europe as my area of specialization. So I was very pleased when I got my first assignment which was Yugoslavia back when there still was a Yugoslavia. It was also a lucky assignment since in the early eighties Eastern Europe was not particularly friendly ground for American diplomats. Lots of restrictions on our lifestyles. A lot of non-fraternization policies in place and nasty tussles with the local equivalents of the KGB. Not an easy area. Relations were oftentimes quite icy but Yugoslavia was the great exception. That's, in fact, why the State Department area office was called Office of Eastern European and Yugoslav Affairs to make that distinction.

So getting Yugoslavia as my first time out was great because I was going to a country that was not part of the Soviet bloc, which did not have a harsh, repressive regime, which had relative openness, border, press and so forth. It really was a breath of fresh air compared to the rest of the bloc and so I felt very lucky. And I was also happy to be able to take advantage of my Slavic languages background. I mean I didn't have Serbo-Croatian but having Russian and Czech was a huge help in picking up Serbo-Croatian so my year of Serbo-Croatian training was quite pleasant, not a struggle that it might have been for someone with no Slavic languages.

USIA was also more generous back then in terms of language training, so even as a junior officer you could get a full year of a language rather than the shortened bit that you get nowadays which I think is a terrible mistake because you're at an age when you can absorb foreign languages a lot better than when you're over fifty years old. What a shame to cut down on the language training for incoming young officers and then expecting them to pick up some hard language when they are twenty-five years older, it's just not realistic. So I think it was wise for USIA to fund full length language courses even for junior officers.

Q: Well, now so after your A-100 initial training, you spent the rest of 1982 and the first half of 1983 in language training, so I guess you arrived in Belgrade in the summer of 1983?

KRC: Yes, I arrived in Belgrade that summer, literally the same week as Vice President Bush. In fact, when I had my photo opportunity with him, we joked, and he said, "Oh I should have taken you on my plane. We could have saved some money in getting you over to post." So that was, of course, very exciting. It was my first exposure to a high-level visit. He wasn't president at the time; he was vice president but still, very exciting. There I am talking with the vice president, having just arrived at my first assignment.

Q: Yeah, and he had been ambassador to China before that point. And so he knew a fair amount about how the Foreign Service worked.

KRC: And he was very good about showing appreciation and understanding of what the service was all about and that clearly came through in the way he dealt with us and the way he recognized the embassy personnel. He, of course, had a pretty good idea of who the FSNs and FSOs are and what they do and their contributions, so in that sense he was very good.

Q: All right, so you arrived at post. This is your training post, in theory. So, what were you told when you arrived? What sort of thing would you be doing?

KRC: Well, I knew that it would be a rotation and the rotation depended a little bit on who needed what at what time. So I knew it was a little bit of a catch as catch can, that it would be a mix of experiences. And it turned out to be that way. It was a full year. I remember doing some work in the consular section which does not appeal to everyone, but I think it's essential for all of us in the Foreign Service to be somewhat familiar with consular issues. Because so much of what we do overseas is connected with that whether we are economic or political officers, there will always be local contacts who will be interested in some consular issue so it really behooves us all to know as much about it as possible. So I was grateful for that opportunity and found the experience very useful in the years that followed.

Q: And also as a USIA officer who has to deal with explaining things to press and public, often consular issues are where the average person connects with the U.S. Embassy and a positive experience is seldom reported. It's usually only the negative ones so learning how to handle that as the USIA officer strikes me as good background for you.

KRC: It's excellent, it's an excellent background and even though we as Americans don't think about it much because we pretty much pick up our passports and go anywhere we feel like it, for many people overseas, this is not the case and their biggest hurdle to go anywhere is the consular section at any given embassy of the country that they're trying to get into or pass through. So that is a big issue for them, and your ability to be able to explain it clearly and sympathetically is extremely important. So for any kind of PD work that consular background is essential.

Q: Did we have a lot of Yugoslav visitors that you handled or was it visitors, immigrants or was it just a relatively low level amount because we might have had good relations but not that many people from Yugoslavia traveled to the United States?

KRC: Well, this of course, was a very peaceful and good time relatively speaking given what happened some years later in Yugoslavia, so I don't recall a huge crush of humanity trying to get out. The borders were fairly open anyway, and as I said, I only had a few months so I don't want to generalize too much because my exposure was limited and it was so long ago. But, I recall, it was a fairly easy-going situation and Belgrade was not a stressful visa mill or high fraud or anything like that because the Yugoslavs at that point

were doing pretty well, especially in comparison to their Soviet Bloc neighbors. I'm sure 10-12-15 years later, it was much worse when the fighting broke out in the country and the consular section, if it even was still open, would get a lot more business.

Q: Any other recollections from the other sections that you worked in that left an impression on you?

KRC: Well, of course, some of the experiences were more positive than others. I remember early on thinking that the economic cone was not going to be for me with all due respect to the fine Econ officers out there. And some of my best friends are. I'm not just saying that as a cliché. I just thought this is not for me, writing about the inflation rate in a given country or something like that, no thank you. So it sort of confirmed some of my own prejudices and biases and that's okay. That's fine and that's useful; the negative as well as positive experiences contribute and help in making your career decisions. I quickly realized that consular would be fine, PD would be fine, political or economic less so. So I got to poke around the different cones for a while, and figure out what I liked more and what I disliked.

But all of it was very useful and my year there was a wonderful year. It was a time when Yugoslavia was at peace, a fascinating country. Back then a country with a great mixture of religions, languages and ethnic groups. But unfortunately all the things that made it so fascinating then contributed to the tragedy that befell the place a decade or so later. Nevertheless, when I was there, it was a dreamy place that people paid good money to visit on vacation. The coastline is spectacular. As the capital of a good sized country, Belgrade was a lively city whose culture was influenced by the rich ethnic mix of the Balkans. After the passing of Tito in 1980, there was a lot of hope that things would turn out well but unfortunately, they didn't.

Q: That's obviously quite sad. Well, all right. I would say that we are probably ready to follow you to the next location if there's nothing else in this first tour that leaves a major impression.

KRC: I think you're right. It was only a year, a wonderful exciting year. I loved every minute of it. I thought I did a good job. I had a follow-on assignment to Cape Town, South Africa so it was going to be very different. And I was ready for that, in fact, I was looking for a little variety because I didn't want to be wedded to just one area of the world. I took that worldwide availability requirement seriously back then. That decreased as I got older.

But at the time, I was excited about my upcoming assignment to Cape Town. I was nervous about the fact that back then apartheid was very much in place and it wouldn't have been a very easy assignment in some ways, but I was ready for that challenge and was looking forward to it. In fact, I was supposed to do a direct transfer, but I thought: "Gee, I don't know much about Africa. I'd like to stop in Washington, do the area studies and so I argued my way into going to Cape Town via Washington. And therein lies a very sad tale of what happened next.

Q: Yeah, this is a period of time when the worst possible expectation did actually occur, if I understand correctly.

KRC: Yes, unfortunately my three-week stop in Washington turned out to be a decade. I, of course, had no idea that this would happen. But what happened was I had interviewed, while at Fletcher, with the CIA, not because I really wanted to work there but as sort of a back-up or as something to do while I'm waiting for the Foreign Service. It was another option so maybe an analyst, again, an Eastern Europeanist like me with Russian and Czech. I would have been of interest to them. And so I interviewed for the CIA on campus and I'll never forget the interview. Initially, it went very well. They said exactly what I thought they would say. "Oh, you have Czech and you have Russian, just the man we're looking for to place in an analyst position. And so if you're ready to take the polygraph test, then you're all in. Oh and by the way are there any sensitive issues that you would want to raise with us before we go to the next step?"

And I thought, "Oh, my goodness. That's moving along very quickly" but I thought you know, it's another option, so why not go with it? So at that point, I said, "Well there really aren't any drug or alcohol issues or questionable contacts, so as long as you don't mind my being gay, then there are no "sensitive" issues to go over." Well, I think I would have gotten an easier and friendlier reaction if I had confessed to being a KGB agent. One of the interviewers dropped his cigarette, that's how long ago this was, and was just in shock. There were two of them, and they looked at each other and you could read their thoughts on their faces: Where's the exit? Let's get out of here. No need to go further with this meeting. And, indeed, that was the end of the interview. I never did hear back from them, nor did I ever work for the agency. So I thought, oops, maybe I shouldn't have said that. But, you know, I was always very open about myself; I never hid anything. So I thought I did the right thing, and then two years went by and I got into the Foreign Service. So I thought, okay, fine, it must not be a problem anymore.

Well, times had not changed as much as I had hoped, and it turned out to be a big problem. The unraveling of my first Foreign Service career started when I was in Yugoslavia. While there, one of the official trips I took involved escorting an American orchestra, (back then we had money for such things) to Romania, Ceausescu's Romania. Nothing out of the ordinary happened on the trip. Romania was quite grim back then, Ceausescu and all. And I'll never forget when we crossed the border back into Yugoslavia, people were literally kissing the ground; they were so relieved to be out of there. It was a dreary place but it was important for us to go out there and present Americans and American culture and we did that.

And, of course, that was written up in a report and that report apparently, although I don't have any proof of that, but I'm assuming, was shared with our friends in Langley. Well, that unfortunately, started the case against me. As I discovered later, years later through the Freedom of Information Act, the date of that trip was the date of the beginning of the case, the file that the CIA started on me.

So when I ended up back in Washington after Belgrade, after Yugoslavia, all of a sudden I got called in to a security interview regarding my recent assignment to Yugoslavia. This turned out to be a nine-hour interrogation without the benefit of an attorney even though I asked for one; I was told there was no need for that as long as I was truthful. I shouldn't have believed them. That naïve trust in my government's official representatives cost me my job. Sadly, the purpose of the nine hours was not really to figure much of anything of intelligence value as far as I could tell. In the end, it was basically to get names of other gay Foreign Service officers. That's what they were actually after.

It was really a witch hunt, and I fell right into it. The true purpose of the investigation/interrogation was revealed early on when I was asked the question which was not asked when I came into the Service through what was, a joint State Department-USIA procedure which didn't involve asking the question anymore, "Have you since the age of 18 engaged in any same-gender sex?" Not at all expecting this, it took me back, and I hesitated in answering. There were two agents present, one was USIA, and the other was with the CIA as I later found out. One was the friendly cop and the other the tough, aggressive one, a classic interrogation tactic. One of them right away said, "Well, you had no trouble dealing with this in your interview in Boston in 1980 so in other words, we know about you even though at the time of the CIA interview, I was told that those pre-employment records would be destroyed six months after the interview; they clearly weren't. I suppose that's not the first time that members of our government have not told the truth but they certainly didn't in this case because they had the old interview. So I realized I might as well stick with the truth since I'd already been open before. Besides being open about my sexual orientation, what the agents wanted was a written confession, signed and sealed, assuring me all along that this was the right thing to do and that there would be no problem as long as I cooperate with them. All that was clearly a lie because a few days later my ongoing assignment to Cape Town was cancelled even though I had air tickets in hand and all my home furnishings, everything was on its way to South Africa.

My HHE was shipped out of the country, and all of a sudden here I am stranded in Washington, no job, no onward assignment, and no place to live. I had no idea of what was going on, and nobody would or could tell me anything. It's not like somebody said, well, they found out you're gay, so you're out. No, no. It was nothing that direct. I remember calling my parents that first week, and they commented on the good phone connection to Cape Town and I said, "Well, actually, I'm not in Cape Town." "So, where are you?" "Well, I'm still in Washington?" "Oh, and why are you still in Washington?" Well, things had to be explained. Anyway, it was a very difficult time. A very difficult time because all of a sudden the career that I thought I was going to have started crumbling in front of my eyes. The years of preparation of graduate school and all that suddenly were meaningless, pointless, or irrelevant, and all I could see is great trouble ahead.

Initially, they actually tried to fire me for misconduct, amazingly enough, claiming that I fraternized in a non-frat country. Now, fraternization are policies that were instituted in places like Moscow or Prague, I was fully aware of them because I was planning to serve

in those places so I obviously knew how things went in those places but Yugoslavia was not that way at all. Yugoslavia did not have a non-fraternization policy. In fact, my Serbo-Croatian teacher was a Yugoslav national who married a Foreign Service officer about a year before she was my teacher. The ambassador attended the wedding so clearly it was not improper behavior to fraternize with the locals. In fact, the officer went on to be a U.S. ambassador himself (to Slovenia) and so I certainly did not have any indication that Yugoslavia was a non-frat country. In any case, I openly admitted to having two one-night stands with Yugoslavs during my time in that country. Not particularly wild or inappropriate behavior for a single 25-year-old, I thought at the time and still do today.

Anyway, that was damning enough in their eyes but they realized, that they can't get me on misconduct because it wasn't backed up by the facts. There was no non-fraternization policy in Yugoslavia. In fact, we were allowed to have relationships; we just had to report them, especially if they became more than one-night stands and since I didn't develop any long-term relationships there, I had nothing to report.

So all of a sudden the charges were dropped and I thought I was back in the Service. I should also say that meanwhile, since they had to plant me somewhere, I ended up being dumped in an office in what is now ECA, Education and Cultural Affairs Bureau, in the International Visitors Program under a wonderful boss, Nan Bell. She is now retired but we're still friends to this day. And so I ended up in this office, literally a week after I'm supposed to fly to South Africa to Cape Town and nobody knows why I'm there; I don't know why I'm there, but it turned out to be a lovely, wonderful office and to this day, I strongly believe in that program. It's a great professional exchange program, now called the International Visitors Leadership Program.

Anyway, it now looked like things are being cleared up. This was the fall of 1984 and I got another assignment, this time to Manila, Philippines. So, I'm thinking, okay, I can put this behind me, a half a year lost, but things cleared up and now the gay issue is not going to be a problem. Well, again, right before leaving the IV program office to begin preparing for my assignment to Manila, I get another letter from Personnel, this time telling me that I'm being separated not for misconduct, no more misconduct alleged, but simply because I cannot have a security clearance for overseas work. My security clearance stayed but it was only good in Washington. In Washington, you're not a security risk, but anywhere outside of Washington, you are. So I'm not going anywhere. I have to stay in Washington and with that limitation, of course, I can't stay in the Foreign Service.

All this really came as a shock to me. I had done good work in Yugoslavia, learned the language well, had a very positive evaluation from there so I had thought I have the perfect preparation for this career. I have done a good job on my first assignment. I get a good follow-on assignment. Why is this happening?

Now, at the back of my mind, of course, I was aware of cases like this in years past. But, foolishly I thought, well that was in the bad old days and these things happened to other people; they can't happen to me. So when it started happening, I was really shocked. I

just really didn't think this could happen but it did and initially I was quite worried, my God, I'm going to end up on the street. I have no money. I didn't know if my parents would support me at this point. It was a very frightening moment in my life but I must say, people, not in security of course, but other people in USIA were very supportive. My immediate boss, Nan Bell, approached others in the hierarchy, like the Senior Foreign Service Officer, Jodie Lewinsohn and Personnel Director, Angie Garcia, and they managed to transform, to basically change my position from a Foreign Service position to a GS position so because I retained a Washington security clearance, I was able to stay on the job. So thanks to several brave women, I became overnight a GS employee, a civil servant rather than a Foreign Service Officer.

Now, I think some considered that to be enough and I should just be happy that I got that because of course, in the past, many gay foreign service officers were not even given this option; they were simply kicked out and banned from any federal employment because as I discovered if you are kicked out of the federal service, it's very difficult to apply elsewhere because people want to know what happened to you and if the federal government doesn't like you, they probably wouldn't want you either. So it really is a mark against you for the rest of your life, especially in the Washington DC area.

So, some thought I was lucky in that I got this GS job and that's it. End of story. Well, it wasn't the end of story for me because I felt this is wrong. This is not why we came to the United States as immigrants to be told that Big Brother made a decision about you as part of a group that they don't like or trust. To simply accept that lying down was not something that I was willing to do. And so I fought back. I happened to be friendly with a longtime gay rights activist here in Washington, Frank Kameny. He's no longer with us, but was a great man who was fired back in the 1950s by the U.S. government from a federal job and then basically spent the rest of his life fighting this discrimination. I spoke to him, and he right away got me in touch with the American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU, who became very interested in my situation. Within days, the ACLU secured for me top notch legal representation: two lawyers from the venerable firm of Covington and Burling, to represent me pro bono. With such a prominent Washington law firm backing me, I was able to fight back.

And fight back we did. We made it very clear that giving me a GS position was not going to be satisfactory. I joined the Foreign Service, not the domestic service and I wanted my job back since losing my job had nothing to do with my performance. And if there is no connection between my job performance and this action against me, then how could this action be justified?

So began a ten year legal battle that had its ups and downs. Initially, we did very well. We went before the Foreign Service Grievance Board, which is the court of first instance for officers in the Foreign Service who have a grievance against their employer, in this case the U.S. Information Agency and what happens is that a panel of three distinguished former retired Foreign Service officers or judges would take your case and you present it as you would in a regular court with witnesses and all that. We were very lucky in that usually in discrimination cases, certainly with women or minorities and so forth, it's very

difficult to prove clearly discriminatory intent because nobody's really crude enough or ignorant enough to simply say we don't want to hire Jews or blacks or women. You have to look at which people pass the exam, which ones get promoted or not promoted and why is that? You have to approach it in a very round-about way to prove discriminatory intent because the management is never very open about why they don't like a particular group. At least not nowadays or not even in the 1980s.

But here we had a clear case of discrimination, and when I say clear I have this backed up by a Foreign Service Officer class that came in a year or two after mine in the mid-80's which was subpoenaed as part of my case, and the junior officers were asked what did the USIA Director of Security, who addressed each incoming class, say about gays in the Foreign Service? And to the best recollection of a number of them, and they stated this and swore to this under oath in written form, the Director of Security meaning the chief person behind the whole case against me, said that homosexuals, he would never use the word gay, homosexuals don't belong in the Foreign Service. His logic was sort of a catch-22: "If they are closeted they are security risks because they are subject to blackmail, and if they are out of the closet they are also security risks because they are of higher susceptibility to hostile intelligence approaches." So, in his "professional" opinion you can't be in the closet, you can't be out of the closet, you simply can't be in the U.S. Foreign Service.

In fact, a number of these officers remembered his name, Bernard Dowling, and that he stated the following: "If there is anyone among you who is a homosexual, I have papers here that you can sign right now and resign now because sooner or later we will get you out. You do not belong in the Foreign Service of the United States."

So when you have evidence like that and you take it to court, it's hard to imagine that any judge, that is any fair-minded judge, would actually think that what happened to me was correct and in fact, thank goodness, justice prevailed even though the three gentlemen who ruled in my case were by no means gay libbers or lefty liberals. They were selected under President Reagan in the early '80s, so this was not a panel of left-wing progressives, but they deliberated, it took about two years, and in the end ruled unanimously in my favor to put me back in the Foreign Service and to clean up the record of all these nasty allegations and accusations of improper behavior and basically make me whole again after USIA derailed my career for over two years.

Q: Now here this is once again the Grievance Board within the Foreign Service and what they are saying in effect is… No, well tell me, did they, in fact, in their conclusion say the reasoning was flawed? Someone who is openly gay is not subject to blackmail or vulnerable to being recruited by foreign intelligence services or did they simply say we don't believe was this proved sufficiently and therefore on what grounds did they reinstate you?

KRC: Now, of course, some of the details I would have to go back and check my files… I have the papers in boxes in storage, I would have to go back and review them as I haven't

looked at them in decades. The Grievance Board had to tread a careful line because, of course, one doesn't mess with security. It's a bit of a sacred cow, even though you could point to instances where it was clear that they didn't know what they were doing. I recall friends who were called in for debriefings from communist country assignments and they were not assigned to a communist country, they were in Western Europe but security just got these things mixed up. And there were other cases where it was clear that they were not on top of the pertinent foreign affairs/cultural/linguistic issues as they probably should have been. And I think in some respects, just by the nature of their work, they look at people who want to live overseas as somewhat suspect to begin with so that immediately brings a certain suspicion on their part against Foreign Service officers but that's maybe just my own impression and may be false; I hope today it is.

But the bottom line was: the Foreign Service Grievance Board recognized that I was not given equal treatment, that the equal protection clause of the constitution was violated. That clearly, what happened to me would not have happened to a straight Foreign Service officer and that my sexual orientation was obviously the motivating factor against me. So the motivation of the USIA Office of Security was the anti-gay bias of its Director and his subordinates. I think anybody looking at the record today would come to that conclusion as well.

Q: And forgive me, what year did you receive the reply of the Grievance Board?

KRC: That was two years after the whole thing started, so that would have been 1986. And I remember celebrating, thinking, my goodness, justice prevailed, America is great, and our justice system is great. And I was very pleased that even though it took two years, in the end, it ended the way it should have: I was vindicated. I was getting my job back. It was a very exciting moment.

Unfortunately, moment is all it was. The government had sixty days within which they either accept the recommendation of the Grievance Board or they appeal it. Now, normally, maybe because it's their grievance board, in other words, they appoint these people; it's not like I selected them. They are supposed to carry out the directives of the Grievance Board unless those directives endanger or do not conform to national security needs. So, in other words, if they make the argument that national security is at stake, they can refuse to carry out the directive of the Grievance Board; and they have to take it to a federal court.

So, contrary to what people think, I did not actually take this case to the federal courts, but the government did and their argument was that this decision would somehow endanger national security. All of this, of course, in retrospect looks laughable but it wasn't for me because my victory turned into a dire defeat once we landed in a federal district court. Judge Ritchie, appointed by Richard Nixon years earlier, crusty fellow who's no longer with us, who sat on the case for two years and unfortunately saw it very much in the same light as the Office of Security. He basically was of the opinion that whatever security said should be the final word, there is no review of that and no second guessing these experts. This despite the growing realization during the course of the

Grievance Board proceedings, that these so-called national security experts are not all that expert.

As a sort of a vignette, I recall my lawyer trying to be friendly with the chief of security at USIA, and just feeling him out on where he was coming from professionally and what was he like. It turned out that his work background prior to USIA was a night watchman in a ladies' undergarment factory. I mean, not exactly a foreign policy expert that has to be deferred to by the courts. But anyway, I digress.

Basically Judge Ritchie then, as I said, sat on it for two years, and then overturned the Grievance Board and said, no, what happened to Krc was justified and he is a security risk and so he shouldn't be in the Foreign Service. So, then it became my turn, or my lawyer's turn, the ACLU lawyer's turn, to appeal his decision.

Q: Ah, pause one second. So, initially you had an attorney from Covington and Burling and he was working pro bono? Or how did that work?

KRC: Well, initially, actually I have to give a plug to AFGE, because initially it was an AFGE attorney.

Q: And that's the American Federation of Government Employees.

KRC: That's correct. It was an AFGE attorney that helped me in the first few months and only once it began to be bigger, in other words, once we realized that we would have to go to the Grievance Board and it would be a full-fledged trial, she no longer could handle that and so that's when I got in touch with Frank Kameny and that's when he got me in touch with the ACLU, Art Spitzer, who then through their network got these lawyers from Covington Burling to take the case on pro bono basis. So it was under the aegis of the ACLU, but they were lawyers with Covington and Burling and they stayed with the case, God bless them, for ten years, all the way to the Supreme Court.

Q: Wow that is remarkable. Okay, all right, so your attorney also now reads the reaction of the circuit court judge and what happens next?

KRC: Well, he said to me: "If you're willing to fight this, we should." And I said, "Of course I am. I don't agree with this decision. This is outrageous." And so we took it to the U.S. Court of Appeals.

Q: And now this is 1988 when you received Ritchie's opinion?

KRC: That's right, two years after the Grievance Board decision. So it's still the Reagan years, but about to be Bush Senior, and we go to the Court of Appeals and we were very lucky because we managed to get a panel of two leftover Carter judges, Patricia Wald, she was the Chief Justice of the Court of Appeals and Abner Mikva, so two Carter judges and one Reagan judge, Ginsberg, that's Douglas Ginsberg, not Ruth Bader, the fellow who didn't make it to the Supreme Court because of pot-smoking. And so we got two out

of three who were fair-minded judges, and so after two years, of course, it always seems to take two years, they came back in my favor 2-1 saying that basically due process was violated and they returned it back to the lower court to reconsider… Because Judge Ritchie ignored that issue altogether, due process, no due process, never touched it, so they gave it back to him to consider that.

Needless to say, Judge Ritchie was not a happy camper about this decision. I guess judges aren't if they are being slapped down like that, and so he then sat on it for two more years. Because when you go back down, you unfortunately go back to the same judge you had going up so we ended up in Judge Ritchie's chambers again and as I said, he was not happy to see us there. And so he sat on it for another two years and again, ruled the same way. Same thing. So, once again we, and the ACLU, Covington-Burling and I, we had to take it to the Court of Appeals. Unfortunately, at this point, we lost Mikva. He had gone on to… I forgot where he went but he was no longer there and so we kept Patricia Wald and the pot-smoking Ginsberg, and we gained another Reagan judge. She never said a word so I don't really remember her very well. I think Henderson or somebody like that. I'd have to go back to the papers. And once again they sat on it for two years, naturally, and so we're talking 1992 and again it was a 2-1 decision but this time going against me. And writing for the majority Ginsberg, in his great wisdom, basically concluded that my homosexuality had nothing to do with the case which was astounding to anybody who looks at it because of course it has everything to do with that. I mean obviously if I weren't gay, then the case wouldn't have even happened. So to say that was not a factor is nonsense but that's what he claimed.

Patricia Wald, God bless her, wrote a scathing dissent that actually turned out to be very useful at a future point in my career, but at the time I thought, well, so much for that. That strong dissent apart from making me feel a little better, doesn't get me anywhere. I lost. But the lawyers and I still took the next and final step and that was to appeal to the Supreme Court. Covington stuck with me through that as well even though they were beginning to see the handwriting on the wall that this was not going to end well and it didn't.

We went to the Supreme Court in the fall of '93 and the case concluded in '94, ten years after it began in '84. The Court did not take on very many cases that term, and in my case it did not grant cert, meaning it didn't take the case and so the bad decision, the second Court of Appeals decision that was not in my favor, was the one that carried the day. So that was the legal end of the whole case.

Now I need to back up a little bit because about two years before this happened, one of the lawyers, and I don't know which was one it was, or who actually came up with this, pointed out an interesting thing about the Foreign Service Act which was that if you get separated from the Foreign Service, you can't really just show up again and reapply. That's it, you're done unless your separation was ruled unlawful by the Foreign Service Grievance Board which, in my case, it was.

Now, it doesn't then go on to say that ruling has to be upheld by the Supreme Court or the Court of Appeals or any federal court, it just says if the Grievance Board finds your separation unlawful, you can reapply. So they said to me, "Why don't you reapply?" And I thought, this is crazy. I just spent at that point eight years getting kicked out of the Foreign Service, a million dollars, a lot of wasted taxpayer's money, I might add, only to show up again and just reapply? Are you guys kidding me? They responded, "No, what do you have to lose? Do it."

So I thought, okay, what the hell? So I went in and took the test again, my second time, the written and the oral, and I was very nervous because I thought, what if I don't pass, all this becomes moot, but lo and behold I did pass. The oral examination was quite interesting because what happened was… At that time, the way they did the oral exam was that you were just candidate A, B, C, D, no names, no file, no identification. They didn't know who you were from Adam and so you would just go through the whole day's proceedings and then at the end of the day, if you passed, they would call you in and then they would get the file and connect you with the file.

So there I was at the end of the day thinking, oh my goodness, this is not going to end well. Everybody got sent away that day, nobody passed except for me and I was still sitting in the room waiting, waiting and so finally they call me in and they say, congratulations but at this point, they also opened the file and I could see that they were quite surprised. The first time, just to give you an example of how different the file would have been at this point, the first time around my essay was all about what I've talked about earlier, and what I still believed in, wanting to serve my country and foreign service was something I always dreamed of and so forth. Perfectly valid still, but the second time around I thought, well I'm not going to write the same thing. I might as well do something else… And one of the things they encourage you to do is to write about some significant event in your life. And I thought, well, ten year litigation with the Foreign Service is fairly significant, why not write about that?

So I did, and so they read about that. They were quite surprised, the panel, but they wished me luck and that was it. And then followed a year and a half, almost two-year hassle with, again, security because security was not going to take my return to the Foreign Service lying down.

Q: Now, your reapplication took place in 1990?

KRC: Let me get this date straight. This all stretches over more than a year. The reapplication started in '91 I think. I could be off; I'd have to go back into the papers but by '92, I was in the throes of dealing with security again, getting called in for interviews, basically harassment. At one point, they got the FBI to go after me, believe it or not. I spent about nine months with the FBI. That got pretty ugly. I mean when you have four agents, FBI agents, showing up at your workplace…

Q: And no attorney.

KRC: Oh no, I got myself an attorney; I knew better this time around. This time I had my attorney from the ACLU. The Covington and Burling lawyers did stick with me, God bless them, and believe me things are different if there's a high priced attorney going in with you. Well, the FBI came to me at USIA, saying there were some discrepancies in their files about me from Belgrade. Now mind you, this is years after my assignment there. Yugoslavia was falling apart in the '90s, and finally ceased to exist altogether. Czechoslovakia didn't exist anymore either, and they are poking around in those files? How very strange, but what could I do. And this time around, they were threatening my security clearance which, of course, would put an end to my domestic service job that I was still holding in the International Visitor Program. So I had to cooperate with them, with the FBI, and so that involved taking a polygraph test. I do understand now why those tests are not valid in court because I think they are just basically used to shake people up, scare them and make them spill the beans on their own because in and of themselves those chicken scratchings that they produce signify nothing and can be easily fooled by a determined agent. Of course if you have nothing to spill and are not willing to make things up, then you appear as non-cooperative.

But I took it very seriously; I had to and, of course, they didn't let my lawyer into the polygraph testing room which I think was a travesty of justice but they didn't so I had to go in alone. And they strapped me to this machine; this is down in Anacostia in some special FBI facility. All very frightening and meant to be so. I think it was a ham fisted way to make me desist in trying to get back into the Foreign Service. Their feeling was, hey, you got this GS position, be happy that you've got that. We'll leave you alone, but just don't bother us with this Foreign Service application again.

But I was not going to make it easy for them. So, I said "Okay fine you want to polygraph me okay. I have nothing to hide. So we sat down in this room under the portrait of J Edgar Hoover still on the wall, and what they had was a file of a Czech KGB (STB) agent from Belgrade when I was stationed there back in the early eighties. The file, of course, was about me because he had met me there, this agent. Now they were not going to show it to me although you figured well, if the other side has it, and now because the regime has changed completely and the 1989 revolution came, and they're sharing it with the American side, then everybody has seen it except the person who is most affected by it, that struck me as ludicrous. And so when I made that point, they said, well, we can't show it to you but we can read it to you. Very Kafkaesque and again, I'm thinking, the guy didn't speak any English, how are you going to read it to me in the original Czech text? "Oh, it's been translated." Well, you know, translations are translations, they can change meaning. So again, I was taking a risk here because who knows how good a translation it was or accurate or whatever but I had no choice. So I had to agree to that.

So there was this really odd session where I sit for hours, and at this point I was able to get my lawyer in there, so one little bit of progress. I'm sitting in this room with a bunch of FBI agents, and this file comes out and they start reading from it. Something that this foreign agent wrote in Belgrade and submitted to his ministry back in Prague years ago. And I'm thinking, oh great, so it's going to be my word against some KGB agent who,

who knows what he made up or said or whatever but somehow I'm going to be held accountable. Now, of course, at the back of my mind was the question, why are we doing all this, years after the fact? What is this for? And clearly, it was for harassment purposes. It was an open threat, bug off, and don't push this any further. We can get you and we are going to get you, but I had no choice; I had to cooperate and defend myself.

So we went through the polygraph, and at the end I was thinking, well, okay, I had nothing to hide, so there should be no problem. And they said, well, unfortunately you didn't pass. I'm like, "What do mean I didn't pass?" "Well, there's some areas that you were not honest about." And I remember this can't be so I kind of jokingly said, "Well, I guess occasionally I lie about my age." And they said, "Well that was not it." And I said, "What was it?" And they said: "Knowingly giving classified information to hostile intelligence agencies." Needless to say, I nearly had a heart attack at this point. I said, "What are you talking about? Knowingly giving classified information to hostile intelligence agencies? That's crazy!"

Well, years later I realized this was just a way to shake me up and make me spill something, anything. They were lying, of course, it was pure and simple intimidation. There was no classified information that I gave to any hostile intelligence and why would I do that coming from a country which imprisoned my grandfather in the fifties in a concentration camp. It would be the equivalent of telling somebody who is Jewish that he was helping the Nazis, why? To what purpose? Where's the million-dollar yacht? So it was outrageous and they said, "Well, basically there are discrepancies between what you reported about this contact and what this contact reported to his superiors in Prague."

And I'm like, what discrepancies? Well, to make a long story short, the translated report actually was quite accurate. It was amazing. Hearing what he reported, it was like a transcript of cocktail chatter from a couple of receptions where he would run into me: Oh, gee, how your weekend was, and what are you doing for Christmas, etc. Normal polite banter you would exchange with anybody from any country at any reception.

Q: In fact, you are expected to do that as part of your work.

KRC: Exactly, and in a place like Yugoslavia where there were a lot of countries represented, it was one of the leaders of the non-aligned movement, so there were people from communist and non-aligned countries, as well as the West, everybody was there. It was perfectly normal that I would run into them and I, of course, reported this contact right away so it wasn't like a contact I had hidden. I reported him. I was told okay, you can see him, no problem, just if he tries to pull anything funny, then report right away to us. To us, meaning the embassy security. Well, he never did try anything. We had a couple of lunches over some stretch of time, and that was the end of it.

Well, the discrepancy was that he alleged going to some expensive restaurant meetings with me on weekends when I was away with embassy people in other parts of Yugoslavia and I was not even in Belgrade. And so clearly this guy was padding his contacts account, my account in this case, by hosting who knows who, but not me. And so that was the

only discrepancy that was found. Never in the file that this guy had submitted was there any indication that I gave him anything, didn't give him the combination to the ambassador's safe or any bit of any other information, nothing. He concluded his report by saying, well, Mr. Krc is a friendly young man who is being transferred to Cape Town. We should keep an eye on him there as well. That was basically it.

Q: And it's not surprising that an Eastern Europe communist intelligence agent would pad an account because obviously they're also expected to provide ample information on U.S. Foreign Service officers and if they don't, they can run into trouble. It's like, why aren't you doing your job?

KRC: And, in my case, he would have been completely derelict in his job because my uncle at the time, a Yale professor, was the president of one of the largest Czechoslovak émigré societies in the United States, so clearly I would have been of interest to them. Why wouldn't I be? I was born in Prague, and suddenly here I am an American diplomat in Belgrade, so of course he was interested, but nowhere was there any impropriety alleged or anything compromising, so at the end of this bizarre reading session, my lawyer and I looked at each other and felt like saying, so where is the smoking gun or what was all this about? So the discrepancy that required the intervention of the FBI was a couple of expensive dinners that a foreign agent clearly treated somebody else to at the expense of the "Krc" account.

So I said, "Well, this has gone too far" and for the first time I felt like no more Mr. Nice Guy. I had tried to keep this civil and just in the Foreign Service. I didn't go out to any press or anybody on the outside but I said, "Enough is enough. I consider these accusations and insinuations obscene. I find it very disturbing that you would be thinking of accusing me of collaborating with a communist regime that my family suffered under and that we went to great lengths to escape from. How dare you make such an accusation? This is disgusting. I've had enough."

I called the *Washington Post.* I called a Congressman, Barney Frank, because, of course, being in the District we don't really have congressional representation so Barney Frank was the closest I could come; somebody who could actually pick up the phone and call the secretary of state, which he did. And the *Washington Post,* of course, would listen as well. I should also point out at this point, it was just as President Clinton was elected the first time in '92 so all of a sudden the atmosphere was changing. Finally, at last. Thank God!

So as I was preparing to go public with this government harassment, suddenly I get a call back from the FBI saying, "Well, maybe we can do another round of the polygraph?" I responded: "Really, why is that? I mean if it's so infallible, what do we need to do a second one for?" They responded: "Well, let's just do another one and see what happens." So I stopped the *Washington Post* story, but Barney Frank already called the then acting Secretary of State, Lawrence Eagleburger and had it out with him about all this harassment. And so I went back, and took the same polygraph and all of a sudden true blue, no more allegations of handing over classified to hostile intelligence. The

additional harassment interviews were quite intrusive. I was called back in a couple of times and asked things like how many sexual partners have you had in your life? How many times have you done it with each one of them? Why in the world would that be relevant, how many times I had sex with someone? Nobody knew. And that's one of the things that Barney Frank complained to the Secretary of State, who then, as I was told, said he would not answer those questions either.

So all of a sudden State Department Security basically washed their hands of the case and finally stepped out of it which then threw the ball into the Board of Examiners' corner who apparently in the meanwhile had gotten hold of Patricia Wald's dissent and I've been told by people in the know that reading that was what convinced the Board to give me the second Foreign Service offer. That happened in the summer of '93, and it was no coincidence that Bill Clinton was in the White House by this time. I should also add that one of the items on the one-page, short list of top priorities of the State Department transition team, the Clinton transition team in the fall of 1992, was to stop the gay-bashing and harassment of gays in the Foreign Service. So in the summer of '93, I got my second and final offer for the Foreign Service which I rejoined that fall, and again had a great celebration.

Now, mind you, it was not easy to return because I had offered to go back to USIA but they still preferred to pursue the case against me which they did until the year after we went to the Supreme Court, until '94. So I reentered the Foreign Service, this time into the State Department, the Department that I stayed away from twelve years earlier thinking that my being gay would be a bigger problem there. Well, it wasn't. So I joined the State Department in the fall of 1993, the 69th class and it's been great ever since. I must say I've had a wonderful career since then. The gay issue was no longer an issue and, there was no need to hide. In fact, the scenario that the security people were so worried about, did take place years later when I was in Russia.

I became a target of hostile intelligence and guess what? I reported it. Nothing much else happened. I wasn't "blackmailable" and so I finished my assignment. In fact, I was extended in Russia and that was it.

Q: I think this might be a good place to pause because we can then pick up the rest of your career in the Foreign Service at our next session.

KRC: So I reentered the Foreign Service in early October, 1993. And it was a very different time for me; a very different experience going through A-100 the second time around. The first time, of course, one is very nervous and even mundane tasks like introducing an ambassador was a stage fright inducing experience. Well, the second time around, it was like, I actually know the ambassador already so it was much, much easier, much more relaxed. I had a lot more fun I think too and again, had a chance to interact and connect with and become buddies with a whole group of wonderful people who are friends to this day. And unlike the first A-100 class which is basically now all retired, the second class is still around, and we get together from time to time. It's just delightful keeping up with them and their careers and families.

So there I was in the fall of 1993, back in the Foreign Service. Unfortunately, starting from scratch again I had to take a pay cut of about $10,000 because my GS salary meanwhile had grown beyond what an incoming junior officer was making. But, I was determined to overcome this wrong, this bad thing that happened and to make myself whole again and so I went ahead with that. Even if I had won the case, it still wouldn't have made much financial difference to me because from the very beginning I made it very clear that I was not in this battle for money. I never made any financial claims on the US government for any damages or defamation. Money would not have not been a part of any final settlement because it was always just about getting the job back. The job that I dreamed of, trained for, competed for fairly, and received, this is what I should have been given back, nothing more, nothing less.

So there I was back in the Foreign Service, bidding once again as a junior officer. This, of course, was an exciting time because the Soviet Union had just broken up and so there were all these new missions in the former Soviet Union so again great demand for people with Slavic language skills especially Russian which I had from college, high school and elementary school. So, I thought I was well-positioned to go off to Eastern Europe. Well, that's not what happened actually. But, it's one of these turns that you think at the moment, oh my God what happened, how come I didn't go where I expected to go? I ended up going to a place that turned out to be my favorite of my seven overseas assignments and that was Istanbul, Turkey.

I must say on Flag Day when all the Slavic countries' flags were given away to my classmates, the crescent flag that I was given induced a bit of a panic because I didn't right away recognize what it was and I thought, oh my God, where am I going? And it turned out to be fantastic. It was just the most wonderful experience. My two years in Istanbul as a junior officer… Istanbul is one of these magical cities with a spectacular location, three thousand years of history, the whole East meets West confrontation, the culture, the cuisine, the people, the mixing of civilizations, the place was magic. And of course, I was lucky to be there before the days of Mr. Erdogan, so it was a freer country than it is right now, I'm sorry to say.

It was just a great experience. It reaffirmed my devotion to the Foreign Service and my feeling that I chose the right profession because it was exactly what I was looking for. It also expanded my horizons a good deal because, as I said, I was always wedded to Eastern Europe and here was something really different and I found it fascinating.

Q: Did you learn any Turkish for the position?

KRC: Oh yes, in fact, I jumped ahead a little bit. I didn't go to Turkey in 1993, I went into a Turkish language program at the Foreign Service Institute in Arlington, Virginia. Unfortunately, because I was a junior officer at State, I didn't get the full year that I would've gotten at USIA so it was only half a year and it's not an easy language by any means, but I made the best of it. I got my 2/2 which was all I was required to have for the consular job that I was assigned to in Istanbul. I loved consular work, but was not

consular-coned at this point. These were the days when junior officers came in "un-coned." And one's cone was chosen later. The system had changed from my first time in the Service, and it is different again today. It changes over time, but anyway I was, in the end, a consular officer. Work that I really enjoyed.

In Turkey, I worked mostly on nonimmigrant visas, but I also did some American citizens services so the whole gamut of consular work, dealing with distraught tourists, people in prisons or in hospitals, the visa line; it was all just very exciting. The Turks were warm, friendly, wonderful people. In non-immigrant visa work, of course, we do have to reject some applicants who cannot overcome the presumption of immigration. I forget the actual percentage of refusals, but it wasn't terribly high. Nevertheless the visa window work was taxing. I do remember occasions when somebody would be refused and react badly. One occasion that stands out in my mind, a young, powerfully built Nigerian man who when I turned him down for a visa just refused to leave the window, and started yelling. We had to get a half-dozen Marines to physically drag him out of the building kicking and screaming. There was blood on the floor when they finally got him out. So visa work had its moments, but really I would never trade that experience for anything else.

Also, I had the benefit of a fantastic leader, the Consul General there, Mark Dion, now retired, and was a great man to revive my dedication to the Foreign Service and the practice of Foreign Service work. I am eternally grateful to him for that. So these were two perfect years in breathtakingly beautiful setting, finally doing the work that I so badly wanted to do, but could not while the decade-long legal battle dragged on. This was the only time that I broke down and cried at the end of a tour when I realized I was leaving Istanbul. It was so difficult to leave a place like that, and I've been back many times as a tourist, of course.

But, when you go back as a tourist to a place that you served in, it's not the same. There's a huge difference between visiting a place for a few days or week or two and living there. That experience of being a long term part of a place, of belonging there, of living there, of going to the same stores and sharing in all the same daily experience as the locals, that can't be matched by a tourist visit, it just can't. So although I've enjoyed going back, I miss that feeling of being a part of that place. But that's an inherent problem of all our assignments of course due to the very nature of our transient work lifestyle.

I finished in Turkey in the summer of 1996 and did a direct transfer from there to Frankfurt, Germany which, at the time, was our largest consulate in the world. I was in a consular job again, but this consulate was a visa mill. It has a huge visa load because of the airport and all the international connections there. It's kind of a crossroads of Europe. Nevertheless, I enjoyed the work very much, and in fact at this point, I think I was already getting coned as a consular officer. The city, of course, is not as historically rich as Istanbul but it's in the middle of Germany which is a wonderful country. I had German as well and in fact, working in a place like Frankfurt, my other languages came in very handy were because there were a lot of visa applicants from Eastern Europe that came through and also a lot of Turks who lived in Germany. So I got to use Turkish, Russian,

Czech, and Serbo-Croatian, all of them quite useful in that visa window in Frankfurt. In fact, the one language I didn't use all that much was German because of course they didn't need visas.

And besides non-immigrant visas, I also did some immigrant visa work, some American citizen services, so the whole gamut of consular work. The two highlights of the assignment, however, did not take place in Germany, and were not connected to my work at the Consulate. One involved a return to Yugoslavia in early 1997, now broken up into its component republics. I volunteered to be an election observer in Bosnia's first elections after the war. I was based in Sarajevo for a couple of weeks, a city that I last saw at its best moment right before the 1984 Winter Olympics. Now I came back to a war torn city with many un-cleared mines still all over the place. The hotel I stayed at in 1984 was now only a burnt out shell and makeshift burial grounds had sprung up all over the city. Despite the horrors of the recent events, the election went fairly smoothly as I recall. But in Serb majority areas, there was far less enthusiasm for the newly emerging state and visiting sites of recent massacres like the town of Srebrenica was quite chilling. The other temporary duty trip out of Germany that year was to Central Asia, a region I had never visited before. Our newly established Embassy in Tashkent, located in a former House of Pioneers, needed a temporary consular section chief and being curious about the post-Soviet republics, I volunteered for the short term assignment. I had a chance to visit some of the remarkable historical cities like Samarkand and Bokhara and was impressed by how enthusiastic was the very youthful newly hired local staff. So those two years in Frankfurt am Main went by fairly quickly. At that point in one's career, they say you should try to get back to Washington, and so I did. I worked for a year in INR watch. This is the INR section of the Ops Center.

Q: And that stands for intelligence and research

KRC: And the Ops Center stands for the State Department Operations Center which is a 24/7 operation monitoring the movement of our principal officers and world events and informing people that have to be informed of what's going on at every moment. So a very exciting place to be, especially as a fairly junior officer. You get to meet and interact with some of the highest level people in the department. And at the Intelligence and Research watch, you basically are responsible for preparing the morning intelligence briefing book for the secretary who then takes it to the president that day. So, that's heady stuff, very exciting and I enjoyed it.

And it's, of course, a 24-hour operation so it was shiftwork, but that didn't actually turn out to be much of a problem. I felt that going home at nine in the morning and going to bed would be difficult to manage, but it's amazing what one can get used to. I mean, I had no trouble going in the morning and going to bed. And so that worked out fine. And it was only for a year, so not that long.

And then that was followed by an unusual experience at the Foreign Service Institute where they put me, not into regular language training, but rather a course that transformed one related language to another. What is that called?

Q: Conversion course.

KRC: Conversion course. Yes, thank you. It's funny, twenty years later you forget these things. The conversion course that I did, because I had very good Serbo-Croatian, but my Russian had gotten rusty; I hadn't used it much so I needed to convert my excellent Serbo-Croatian into better Russian. And within just a few months, they did that. It was amazing. I started out basically speaking Serbo-Croatian and then a couple of months later, all that came out of my mouth was Russian which was the whole point of the conversion. So, I went with pretty good Russian to Russia, to St. Petersburg. Unfortunately my spoken Serbo-Croatian never recovered from this procedure.

I had a choice, Moscow or St. Petersburg, consular work again, and I chose St. Petersburg, and I'm glad I did, simply because it's just a much more gracious, beautiful city. Moscow is an overgrown village. Rich, all the money goes there and has all the power, but St. Petersburg is the jewel, the lovely city on the Neva with the canals and the elegant classical architecture. A bit provincial compared to Moscow, but that didn't bother me. I just loved it. It's an unforgettable place.

I could have done without the Russian winter and the darkness that came with it and the KGB, or, at this point, it was the FSB, but it was still delightful to be there. This was at a time of relative freedom and openness before Putin began his step by step destruction of the nascent Russian democracy. I liked it there so much I extended. And again, I was in charge of the visa section. The immigrant visas back then were not done there, but rather in Moscow. So I did consular work, and enjoyed that again. I got there during mid-winter and realized right away the Russian propensity or ability to just suffer through anything and everything, much higher threshold for suffering than any other people I've ever met.

And that came home to me when our a fairly small waiting room in the consular section filled up, and the line got so long that the visa applicants were waiting outside which is quite punishing in a Russian winter. I would always start the interview with an apology to the applicant for making them wait for so long and in the cold, and they would just be so surprised. "Oh, it's nothing, we're used to this. No problem." And I thought, my God, you do know how to suffer.

So, anyway, I still enjoyed meeting the people and interacting with them. My Russian got much better and this is perhaps why I had the run-in with their secret service, the very scenario USIA security used to justify my earlier exclusion from the Foreign Service. Well, lo and behold, when one can be and is open about one's sexual orientation, one is not "blackmailable" and there is no problem. I was introduced to someone, it became clear to me right away, who was an FSB agent, and so I reported that at the embassy. Was told by our security to be polite, but obviously not to deepen the relationship in any way. You had to play along with them a bit, because if you didn't, then thugs might ransack your apartment or attack you in the subway in retribution.

So I was polite, and this agent just kept on coming and trying to create a connection. He was not very good, I must say. It was very transparent what he was up to. And the poor fellow thought that he had the goods on me so his approach was, "Well, you know, there's this allegation that you're interested in Russian men, and you wouldn't want this to get out. But I can help you if you help me." Classic, and so clumsy and clunky.

He was crestfallen when I informed him that I took a male date to the Marine Ball, and so the embassy already knew about me being gay. In fact, if he had bothered to google my name, although I'm not sure there was google at that point yet, he would have seen very quickly that the gay issue was very much connected with me already thanks to the federal courts and the long legal battle. It was preposterous that he could somehow gain an advantage over me with that issue. So I would politely dismiss his offer of assistance, but a few months later he would be back again asking: "Why aren't you calling?" And then making various crude recruitment pitches. I remember some of them were quite humorous.

At one point, he ran into me supposedly by accident, which it wasn't, of course, saying that he needs some help in developing coastal defense plans for St. Petersburg and could I help him with that for pay? And I thought, yeah sure, right. It's like you're going to give me some military papers and somebody's going to take a picture of it and the next thing everyone hears is that the U.S. embassy is stealing military secrets. So I said, "No, thank you. I don't need the money." Another time he accused me of violating the visa privileges of a U.S. diplomat. And I said, "Really, how so?" "Well, you have the right to invite people to visit you in Russia but some of the people you invited are homosexual." And I said, "So what, can't gays visit Russia?" "Well yes, but if that got into the papers that the U.S. embassy was sponsoring homosexuals to come to Russia…" I said, "Be my guest. If that gets into the papers, I don't think anybody will have a problem with that from our side."

So all these crude attempts continued. His final one was also funny when he asked me to recommend him for a job at the Consulate. Needless to say, I begged off on that, using the excuse that he had no English, so what could he possibly do there? And so it just went on and on, but in the end nothing much came of it and as I said, I reported every single move of his so no harm done. Well, so much for gays in the Foreign Service somehow being security risks. They're not risks if they're comfortable and open about their orientation, which should have been clear to anybody even back in 1983.

So that was Russia, and then after Russia I was very lucky to get an assignment in Prague. Now, this was not a consular assignment. The job that opened up was a PD job, public diplomacy job, in the cultural section and then in the press section and so for the next four years I was in Prague. I ended up being the information officer, the IO in Prague. Loved it. In some ways, it was an unusual assignment. It wasn't like being at home, of course, but it wasn't like a foreign country, either. It was something in between. I'm sure that is an experience that others, Foreign Service officers who were born abroad, might have had when they served in a country where they were born.

Needless to say, I had the perfect language preparation. I have a 5/5 in Czech and I passed the State Department interpreter's exam. In fact, I had the honor to interpret for President Clinton some years earlier. So it was great to be in a country where I had such good language skills and I enjoyed those four years very much interacting in Czech with the journalists and other local contacts.

And you know, this brings me to a point I like to make that language training is so very important. I mean, oftentimes people want to dismiss it, or shove it aside, or this doesn't fit into the schedule, so let's just drop it or waive it or cut the training short. Without the language, you're getting one-half, one-third, one-tenth of the story because language colors every aspect of life… Not that people will necessarily lie, but if they are forced to communicate in a language that's not their own, you're not going to get the most out of the them because they will have to simplify their speech because their language ability will be limited… They are not going to be able to express themselves as fully as they could if they could speak in their own language. So our biggest advantage would be when we can actually communicate with the locals in their language and catch everything that they say, broadcast or print in their language.

And the higher the level of that language that you have, the more effective you can be. At the Foreign Service Institute we have a foreign language ability scale from 1 to 5 with pluses, and a 3 is the middle of the range and is considered to be working proficiency in the given language. But it's not really working proficiency. It's good enough for chatter like this but it's not good enough to do a TV interview or to discuss some complicated issue with a local contact. So my 5/5 in Czech, the FSI score I have, was really a huge benefit to the embassy I'd like to think. The ambassadors used me all the time to interpret for them.

Q: And that obviously is a fantastic job because when you are translating for the ambassador, you develop a good working relationship with the ambassador and you learn the issues in somewhat greater depth so it also improves your ability to do your job with the press.

KRC: Oh, for sure. It gives you so much more immediate contact with both our side and their side and your interlocutors, they trust you more because if you're speaking in their language, you have more credibility because they don't have to filter it through some language barrier of their own which might lead to serious misunderstandings, and loss of nuances or tone. You know, they miss a lot just like we miss a lot when we deal with a foreign language. So when you're fluent in their language, it's a far better setup. So, from that point of view, it was a great assignment even though I had two political appointee ambassadors, they were both very capable men, very nice men. I had good relationships with them. It worked out really well.

The work was interesting. I especially loved working with the press in Czechoslovakia, of course by this time it was already the Czech Republic. The country had split peacefully a couple of years earlier. The post-revolutionary period was an exciting time with dramatic changes taking place in all walks of life. This was certainly true in the Czech

media world. The previous set of spokespersons, broadcasters and journalists were discredited because they were communist party hacks and nobody wanted to hear them or see them so they were gone.

So suddenly you had a profession that was totally populated by young people that generally didn't have much experience. But what they lacked in experience, they made up in enthusiasm and energy and so, for example, most of the major papers and newsmagazines had editors-in-chief who were in their thirties, early thirties, unheard of in the States. The editor-in-chief of *The New York Times* is not going to be 30 years old; it's not going to happen. Well, it happened in Prague.

These were young people, just suddenly open to the world and open to new ideas. We had tremendous program opportunities right after the revolution, for example, the IV program, our budget was practically unlimited so literally thousands of people could be brought to the United States and those experiences stayed with them for the rest of their lives. You can't imagine how transforming it is for someone who's never been to the West to suddenly get the trip to the United States for a month, meet people in his profession, and see different parts of the United States. It's a tremendous, life changing experience.

Just as an anecdote, I remember a couple of years ago I called on a head of a major museum in Vienna, an important contact of the embassy. And I remember walking into his very elegant office overlooking the Ringstrasse, where he had framed on the wall the invitation letter that he got many years earlier, from the US ambassador inviting him on the IV Program. You know that clearly meant a lot to him to have that framed and displayed prominently to this day in his office. He was from Austria so it's not like he was some impoverished fellow who couldn't have made it to the US on his own. He probably could have, but that IVP trip really meant so much to him, that experience, that years later he still talked about it. So that was great to see and in fact, all throughout my years overseas, it's always been a huge pleasure to run into people who were alumni of the Fulbright program or the International Visitor Leadership Program because these people really are the true success stories of our global public diplomacy effort.

So anyway, getting back to Prague, so I was there for four years from 2002 two 2006. I got there in the summer of 2002 just as the city experienced the biggest flood in 500 years, a terrible event. Half the city flooded; the Metro shut down, a great deal of damage but it all got cleaned up so that soon after I started there the city hosted a major NATO Summit and a POTUS visit. My job at the summit was to support the international press which was located in the stately baroque and gothic precincts of the Prague castle. After extending in Prague for a fourth years, I had to move on once again. I had bid on a job in Budapest on the information officer, I/O position at the Embassy, but before I could go to Hungary I had to do a year of Hungarian language training which was very tough.

Again, this goes back to what I had said earlier about doing these languages when one is young because my Turkish I acquired twenty years earlier was much easier and I remember more of it to this day then the Hungarian which I studied when I was fifty. In

my opinion, it's kind of late to be doing a language that's so challenging but I somehow struggled with it for a year, and ended up going to Budapest in the summer of 2007.

Another great assignment although in some ways it was again a little like my assignments in Russia, Turkey and Yugoslavia. I managed to get to these countries in the best of times, right before a major turn for the worse set in each of them. Now, I'd like to think it was not my fault, but just as Yugoslavia turned out to be a disaster some years after I left, so did, to a lesser degree, Russia, Turkey and Hungary. I was very lucky to be in St. Petersburg at a golden point in terms of democracy, freedom, and open society. Russia had a real chance for becoming a democracy during the Yeltsin to Putin transition at the turn of the millennium, but now, years later, it's a different country, much more authoritarian. The free press is gone and civil society is marginalized.

And in Hungary, a similar thing happened, not to the degree that it took place in Turkey or Russia. But all the more shocking since it is an EU member state. When I was there, of course, it was before Orban got elected for the second time, so it was a freer country than it is today. And Erdogan's Turkey is not the country I lived in twenty years earlier. Like Putin and Orban, Erdogan hates the free press and spreads fear in order to justify his authoritarian behavior.

But anyway, three years as the Information Officer in Budapest, I lived through some exciting times. Assisted in several presidential summits. There was a Bush and Putin summit in Bratislava I participated in. There were a couple of incidents that stick in my mind from that summit. One at the airport when the president got off Air Force One…

Q: And this is George W. Bush…

KRC: George W. Bush, that's right, and there's the entire government, the President of Slovakia, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, everybody is out there to greet him on the red carpeted tarmac. As the president comes down the stairs, he shakes hands with all of them with his gloves on. And I'm thinking, oh my God. Needless to say, that made the evening news. I don't to this day understand how nobody on that plane had the sense to tell him, please take your gloves off if you're going to do this. Anyway, the summit went off okay I guess.

My modest contribution on the day of the summit meeting was taking care of a coffee-tea break for the first ladies. So while Putin and Bush were conferring at the Bratislava Castle, I was responsible for the two First Ladies who were going to have coffee and tea in a nearby salon in the castle. And, as we were setting up for the afternoon get-together of the First Ladies, the castle staff is putting out the pastries and coffee and tea and so forth and they bring out the milk in little plastic containers like in a diner and sugar in little paper packets like in a diner. And this is where my inner gayness comes out and I am like, this can't be. We can't present it like that. Let's get a milk pitcher and a sugar bowl and put the milk and sugar in those. Well, it turned out that nowhere in the whole castle did they have a milk pitcher or a sugar bowl. So the first ladies had to struggle with plastic packets, and I guess they made the best of it, but that was our biggest little

problem that afternoon. I don't know how the men did because I wasn't in on that part of the summit.

But the other summits I did were in Prague, as I have mentioned earlier. One was the NATO summit in 2003 with Bush, and then two more summits with President Obama. Those were exciting, in 2009 and 2010, both in Prague and I so enjoyed meeting the president. Then also a summit with Putin again and Bush Junior in St. Petersburg where I was the FLOTUS control officer.

Q: And this was all while you were in each of the individual countries?

KRC: Yes, with Obama actually, I was not in Prague anymore, I was in Budapest; I got called up there to assist. So anyway after Budapest, I got very lucky in that I got an assignment right next-door in Austria. I was the Public Affairs Officer in Austria at the bilateral mission, so in charge of both the press and culture as well as the information side of what used to be the library/information center. Wonderful job. Once again, I extended my assignment, was there for four years, and loved every minute of it. Never lived in a cleaner, safer, more efficient, more culturally rich city as Vienna. The building we have there that houses some of our officers is a lovely edifice right by the city hall built in the 1880s. It housed Sigmund Freud's first medical practice before he moved into Berggasse, his famous residence for forty years. It is walking distance from the embassy, and it has spacious public space on the ground floor called the Amerika Haus where we did many of our presentations, exhibits, lectures, readings, parties, all sorts of events took place there. So it was very convenient to live above where you often worked. One of my achievements at this time that I am particularly proud of was the total renovation of the Amerika Haus to make it much more attractive as well as technologically up to date public presentation venue.

Although generally I'm not a big fan of living on a compound. I did that in Belgrade, and it's always better to have a little bit of distance between your office and your home. But in Vienna it was just such a beautiful, perfect city that it didn’t matter to be so close to work. It's not a surprise to me that it's ranked nearly every year as the most livable city in the world and I think rightfully so. I had a very good staff there, in fact, speaking of staff, I really do have to say that we are blessed at most of our overseas missions, certainly at all the places I worked in, with dedicated and knowledgeable local staff without whom we would not be able to do our work. I mean, we come in there and manage things but they really are the heart and soul of our operations overseas. They know everybody. They make every effort to make it all work. They are the connection, the institutional memory to everything in a given country and so I found it extremely useful always to have them on your side and you can't go wrong with them.

So that's certainly a lesson I learned early on in the Foreign Service. Value your staff. Don't mistreat them and they will give it back to you and they have. To the extent that to this day when I visit Hungary and Austria, I even get to stay with them as a guest so it helps to be nice to them while you are there.

As I said, Vienna was a dream assignment, and from Vienna, I went back to Washington. Partly for family reasons, after twenty years of being overseas, from 1994 to 2014, I returned to Washington. My father was dying from Alzheimer's disease and so I thought I better be closer to home. My parents lived in Connecticut, not too far from Washington DC. So, that was lucky. And for my father's last year of life, I was nearby and able to visit him fairly frequently. So, I'm grateful for that. It would've been hard to be popping back and forth like that from overseas.

When I came back, I reconnected with my old friend the International Visitor Leadership Program, and I got a job doing the Department of Defense components of these programs. We have about 5000 visitors every year that come on the program to the United States of which of about 700 have some sort of a defense-related interest that has to be taken care of and arranged. And so, that's what I'm responsible for right now at the Pentagon. And I'm going now on my third year there in this job and I have one more year after that.

Q: Lovely. So this is certainly a good place to break and we can see if there are any more additions that you'll want to make after we review the transcripts.

Q: But there is one more thing I did want to ask because as you were talking about the second career that began with you as a consular officer. Later on in this career, you seemed to be moving into public diplomacy jobs and how did that come about?

KRC: Well, my second Foreign Service career, started out as a consular officer. I enjoyed that work. I think I mentioned that before. However, after three assignments in that "cone," namely Istanbul, Frankfurt, and St. Petersburg, I assumed, naïvely as it turns out, that I would get to stay in the area that I specialized in and that I wanted to really focus on for the rest of my career. Whereas, the consular cone works differently and I should have realized that earlier in my career. A Consular Officer has skills that really are usable anywhere in the world, but are generally not very country specific. Your languages are also not as important. I mean, you have to have enough to do basic consular work, the visa interviews, or interacting with the police and so forth but you don't really have to be an area expert or have a high language score.

Now, I'm not putting down consular work or consular officers. Many of them are area experts anyway, but Consular Affairs wasn't looking for Eastern Europeanists. They were looking for consular officers who could go from Eastern Europe to Latin America to Asia to wherever and that wasn't really what I had in mind. So, when I did my excursion tour (a tour not in my conal specialty) to Prague, at the end of that I still thought I would stay in the consular cone. I just assumed, okay, I'll bid on consular jobs somewhere in my chosen area whereas it became pretty clear that the Consular Bureau had other plans for me and Eastern Europe was not necessarily part of that.

And that's when I realized I probably have to switch cones. Since I went from a public diplomacy job in Prague, to a PD job in Budapest and then a PD job in Vienna, I converted from consular to public diplomacy. I underwent what they call conal

rectification and, in my case, it was a very easy thing to do, not painful at all. I just sent a couple of emails and that was it. I became a public diplomacy officer and, as I said, while I enjoyed consular work very much, I think area specialization, in my case, Eastern Europe and its languages, is just more sought after in the political or the public diplomacy cones than in the consular one.

Q: That does make sense. So the change to the public diplomacy field within the Foreign Service did not create any difficulties for you and you would foresee completing your career this way, in this cone?

KRC: Oh, definitely. It's kind of surprising that my initial choice actually turns out to be also my final choice and the choice that makes the most sense for me because I truly believe as a public diplomacy officer, you probably have the most fun on the job overseas than anyone else. I mean, the people that you meet, that you interact with from society, from the world of media and culture, academia, and so forth, it's just fantastic. And the programs that you're connected with. Who wouldn't want to be involved with such a fine program like the Fulbright Program or the International Visitors Leadership Program or the many other things that we do in the education and cultural fields? All sorts of exchanges, teacher training and democracy and English language promotion and so forth. It is wonderful stuff that we do, and I truly believe it to be a crucial pillar of our foreign policy. I would not trade it for anything.

And I now have the pleasure and honor of mentoring incoming junior officers and it's exciting to spend time with them… I did that just recently one evening. A young man, 25-years-old, starting out on his first assignment, going into language training in September for it and I see myself there 35 years ago and it's great to see the same excitement. In this case, a gay officer, who of course doesn't have to worry about being gay. In fact, he's going overseas with his husband, something mind-boggling which obviously was not an option 35 years ago. So it's great to see his life unfolding so well and to know that he will never have to go through the kind of hellish experiences with discrimination that many of my gay colleagues went through in the past.

And GLIFAA, Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies, the organization that I was one of the founders of back in 1992, no longer needs to be saving people's jobs and preventing them from being fired but can focus more on being a networking organization that helps professional development of other LGBT Foreign Service Officers.

So that's wonderful to see those changes. I think there's a lot to be thankful for in terms of Secretary Clinton's tenure, in her making the LGBT advocacy issue an integral part of our foreign policy. I will never forget her speech in Geneva in December of 2011, where she said human rights are gay rights and gay rights are human rights. That speech, which I've used a number of times in presentations to audiences overseas, has had a tremendously positive impact on the promotion of human rights around the world.

I think it's great to see our country at the forefront of an issue like that, and standing up for a minority that is still mistreated in many countries around the world. So, we're not

only doing outreach representing America, its democratic principles, and its tolerance, but also helping oppressed people around the world that need our help. I think it's one of the best things that's happened in our Foreign Service in many years. We have taken up a cause that heretofore was not considered worthy of promotion even by our liberal Western European allies, and we ran with it, setting a fine example that many others have now followed. I saw evidence of that at a recent Gay pride march in Vienna, Austria where, marching along with tens of thousands of participants, there was a large contingent of diplomats for equality representing over twenty countries. So LGBT advocacy is now one of the many important issues that we, as Foreign Service Officers deal with in our work overseas, and I'm very proud to be a small part of that effort and to see incoming officers, gay and straight, who feel the same way.

Q: All right, thanks. We'll stop here.

End of interview