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

VALERIE KREUTZER

Interviewed by: Dan Whitman
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INTERVIEW

Q: Okay, it's November 14, 2021. This is Dan Whitman talking to Valerie Kreutzer. Valerie and I have crossed paths in the past, but we're still figuring out when, where, and how. But Valerie, welcome to this series. And as you know, there's something like 2,000 recorded interviews. It's a great corpus of memories. And you are now joining it. So we'd like to start at the beginning, as early as you are willing to go. Do you remember your first gasps the day you were born? Maybe not. But what are some of the early things we need to know about you?

KREUTZER: Well, thank you very much, Dan, for doing this. I feel very honored to be part of this big treasure of memories and reflections. So I'll start with being born in Berlin, Germany in 1937, the fourth daughter of Karl Kreutzer, a Methodist minister, and his wife Rosa. Karl was from Vienna, Austria, and Rosa was born in a part of Yugoslavia that became Hungary after World War I and is now Serbia. She grew up German because under Maria Theresa some 250 years ago, Germans were invited to settle in the Austrian Empire as a buffer against infidels. They were guaranteed freedom of religion and encouraged to preserve their language and culture. Karl, ten years her senior, was assigned an internship in Rosa's hometown and taught her in confirmation class. When she arrived late he scolded her and promptly fell in love. They got secretly engaged and got married after he graduated from seminary and an internship in London, and after my mother attended an American college in Macedonia where she learned English overnight. My mother spoke four languages, German, Serbo-Croatian, Hungarian, and English. Their knowledge of English came in handy in 1945 when American GIs sought contact with Germans and knocked on our door. But back to 1937. When I was four months old we moved to Schneidemühl in Pomerania, which is now part of Poland, and is called Piła. The area is flat with sandy soil, has lots of lakes, lots of woods. World War II started in 1939. I was two years old.

Q: Your father was a Methodist minister. You mentioned German enclaves in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. But Maria Theresa, was the regime not Catholic? And does that mean your mother came from a Catholic background?

KREUTZER: No. Her ancestors were Huguenots in Palatinate near France. They were promised that they could keep their faith and their culture. These farmers sailed down the Danube and got off when they thought the land looked fertile and then settled.

Q: I think it was 1685 when Louis the 14th banished the Huguenots, which was the stupidest thing he ever did. Huguenots settled in South Africa, in New Amsterdam. And so this is a fascinating part of the background. Actually, Valerie, you know more about your background than many people know about theirs. Okay. So you're two years old and the war breaks out. Wow! Nothing much happened in Berlin that first year, right?

KREUTZER: I was four months old when we moved. Schneidemühl was bucolic. It was quiet. Nearby it had lakes and blueberries and mushrooms in the woods. I would say I had a very good early childhood. It was later in the war when the planes would come from Russia to bomb Berlin that we would have to go into the cellar. Just about every night at the end. But they rarely bombed Schneidemühl. It wasn't important; they saved all the bombs for Berlin.

Q: You would have been six or seven.

KREUTZER: Yes. I was seven when we became refugees. But I would like to tell you also what it was like for my father, who instead of saying, "Heil Hitler" with a raised arm would say, "Grüss Gott."

Q: Praise to God.

KREUTZER: Literally, "Greet God." A common Austrian way of greeting. He also published in Austria in a magazine without going through Nazi censorship. And so twice the Gestapo came to the house at night. And they told him the second time if anything else happens, you won't return home. So the pressure was huge on the family, especially the adults; but we children had a very normal childhood, eating seasonal food, no refrigeration, in the summer preserving food for the winter. As the war went on, my older sisters were drafted into farm work during school breaks, and my oldest sister was drafted into the military to help monitor air traffic from abroad.

Q: I didn't know that women were drafted. I guess everybody, everybody.

KREUTZER: Everybody, but my father who had served in World War I in the Dolomites between Austria and Italy was exempted because of prior service and his age and profession. But in the end they would have asked him to defend Schneidemühl. Luckily, he got a pass in January of 1945 to attend a conference in Berlin. And my mother said you take the little one, that was me at seven, with you. And so imagine, Dan, at twenty below zero with snow and ice on the ground we went to the train station. And we waited all day. The only trains that passed carried ammunition to the front and wounded soldiers coming back. After that day, we went home again, hoping to get a train tomorrow. Meanwhile my dad took my sixteen-year-old sister Heidi aside for a talk. "What you hear in the background, the thunder, that is the Russian front." Dad listened to the BBC

secretly. “You have to see to it that you and your mother and sister get out as soon as possible.”

Q: The Russian front was in '41? No, it was later.

KREUTZER: It was '45 when they were at our door.

Q: The invasion of Russia was '43, maybe. This would have been like the second half of the war.

KREUTZER: Towards the end. January of '45.

Q: So but going back a bit. Your father took these risks, publishing articles, Gestapo visits. You do remember that, do you remember it from experience when you were five or six? Or do you remember it as it was told to you later?

KREUTZER: No, I remember. It was scary. I learned very early that we can talk about something as family around the table. But you cannot talk about it when you go out of the house. And at school, we all tried to keep a very low profile. My sister Heidi, who turned out to be a musician, remembers that some Nazi would come to school. And the first thing he said was, “Who still goes to church?” And she would be one to get up and stand there. And so yeah, it was difficult, very difficult. And my oldest sister was drafted to go into the youth brigade. And she thought it was very boring and quit. She always had chutzpah. And so whenever she was asked when were you last in the youth brigade? She was saying Thursday because the only time she went was on a Thursday. We all knew that there are two worlds. And it was very confusing because at home at Christmas we talked about the birth of Jesus. And at school, it was only Santa Claus.

Q: So you were really a witness. We don't often attribute great consciousness to five-year-olds, but five-year-olds are very, very perceptive. You certainly were. And so you remember the anxiety. You remember the double--

KREUTZER: Yes, and I’ll tell you an incident: My mother and I went to visit my sister Heidi who was at a summer camp digging out potatoes in the fields while the farmers were at the front. And so we were in a restaurant and my mother and Heidi were talking intimately, sticking their heads together, leaving me out. And I was sitting there and felt pissed. And as usual there was a portrait of Hitler on the wall. And I said loudly, pointing, “There hangs the criminal.” Their heads flew apart instantly and I was hushed with apologies to the shocked observers at other tables. I knew how to get my mother and Heidi’s immediate attention.

Q: Don't do that again. Don't do that again.

KREUTZER: I knew what would get their attention.

Q: Yeah. Okay. Well, that was an extreme measure of yours. Put everybody in jeopardy. So far you mentioned the nightly bombing raids while you were in the shelter. But the target you say was Berlin, it certainly wasn't this rural area. How far was this place from Berlin? Was it nearby so that the planes would be in the area?

KREUTZER: No, I think by train it was maybe four hours. But it's now Poland. Yes. It is quite a ways from Berlin.

Q: Were the Russian farmers lost? Were they looking for military targets? Why were they so far from their target?

KREUTZER: That was the flight line.

Q: Okay. Yeah. So you were east of Berlin.

KREUTZER: Yes, we were living on the straight flight line from Russia to Berlin, and at the end we went down into the basement just about every night.

Q: You certainly don't remember the Nazi invasion of Poland, you were too young for that. But you do remember let's say starting '42, '43. This is fascinating, because you were a witness, directly and indirectly, of everything that was going on. The craziest thing ever. The Nazi attack on Poland and later on the Soviet Union. How does the child see this? Do you remember having a sense of the larger context of all of this? We know that children think more of themselves as the center of the world, not because they're bad. But that's the way children think. At what point did you realize this was a very large thing happening in a big part of the world?

KREUTZER: Only after the war, when we had the occupation of the French, Russian, American, British forces. That's when it occurred to me that this was a worldwide war.

Q: Were you in Berlin at the very end when the city was destroyed?

KREUTZER: Yeah. My father and I went on the second day, and we did get on a train. And the train stopped all the time, because there was bombardment and we fled into the woods. And then the locomotive was hit and we had to wait for repairs or a replacement. I think it took a day and a half. And then we were in Berlin. My father went to a Methodist hospital in what became the western part of Berlin. And I stayed with a parishioner who had already fled and was living with a family member in the suburbs. And then the nightly bombardments started and we were really living in the basement and it shook all the walls. And we did not know about the rest of the family for at least four weeks because for them getting out was extremely difficult. And also for my oldest sister who went AWOL. Oh, she just left and it was very dangerous for her. I still remember that they hanged soldiers from trees with signs saying 'I betrayed the fatherland.'

Q: Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh, you saw this?

KREUTZER: Yes.

Q: As a seven year old. So let's go to 1945. When I said the end, I meant when the bombing basically destroyed the entire city. There were many killed and to what do you attribute your survival? The underground shelters or good luck, or?

KREUTZER: Well, staying in the suburbs. And maybe the hospital had a red cross on top. I don't know why the hospital did not get bombed. And so my father survived at the hospital and he was the only man there when the Russians entered. They were the first. The Americans let them take Berlin.

Q: Bad mistake.

KREUTZER: It was terrible. It was just horrible. The screaming and the raping of women. Later in the hospital, there were women who had been raped dozens of times. And my father gave tours to the Americans and said, ”Look, this is what happened here because you stayed out of it.” Anyway, he was the only man and he yelled at the Russians, “I’m a priest,” using a Serbo-Croatian term he had picked up in his youth down south. And somehow, these boys from the country had respect and believed him. He told the nurses and the sisters in their habit,“Resist!’’ Miraculously, except for a kitchen maid, they were all spared sexual assaults. Just before the invasion we learned that my mother and sisters had escaped to Annaberg, a town in Saxony, East Germany, and Dad thought I should join them while he remained in Berlin. When the Russians invaded Annaberg they were satiated with victory, less interested in rape, more into plundering. Every day there would be new edicts: Bring in your radios, your jewelry, your watches. My mother was very concerned about her teenage daughters, and we slept every night in different places, including old mining caves. We didn't know whether our father had survived in Berlin. It was summer when we found out that he had survived. And then we all trekked back to Berlin.

Q: W*e’ve heard that the occupying Russians committed terrible atrocities. Do you think this was a cultural thing or was it just because of the craziness of the conflict itself? Any idea looking back?*

KREUTZER: They had suffered a lot from the Germans. This was revenge.

Q: It was pay-back.

KREUTZER: And I think Stalin even said you can have any German woman you want. He encouraged it from the top. And so the slaughtering and raping and dancing on the graves was the script of revenge because Russia, of the four Allies, had suffered the most.

Q: At least ten million. Maybe twenty.

KREUTZER: Terrible.

Q: What a childhood, what a childhood. I mean, first of all, you survived. And there's some luck, your father figured out how to say priest in what he knew from Serbo-Croatian. I almost know the word in Russian. But anyway. And so this was good tactics, good strategy, but also lucky to make it out of a city. We've all seen the photos. What do you remember when you could get out of the shelter and look at this place now with nothing standing? Do you remember anything from that?

KREUTZER: Well, only after we came back to Berlin, which was August of 1945. We were reunited as a family. We got a room at the hospital because there was no housing. I remember the stench of the subways that had filled with water because that was Hitler's last order to open all the sewage and canals to flood the place to slow down the invasion. People had sought shelter in the subways. And so there were lots of bodies in that sewage and the smell was horrible in August of 1945. There was total destruction and nothing worked. And the worst, Dan, of my childhood was hunger. The whole supply system had broken down, there was no food, we had no food. And when we were in Saxony, we would go out in the morning and cut nettles and make spinach soup. And if we had one potato, then grind that into the spinach. So it had a little bit of thickness. But I remember fainting as a child from hunger as I played. And so the worst experience was hunger.

Q: Did you know as a small child that this was abnormal?

KREUTZER: We had memories of normal. Schneidemühl became sort of this place of fantasy and paradise and wholesomeness. And when we had nothing to eat, we stayed in bed in order to save energy, because we were so weak. We read books, because we stayed with a former parishioner who lived there and welcomed us into her house. She had a nice library of books and we read books, and there isn't a book in the world that doesn't talk about food. That was the painful part about reading. Every book has some meal or something, or it would talk about poor little Peter who only had a crust to eat, and we thought a crust would be fantastic.

Q: Oh my gosh.

KREUTZER: So hunger is the most dehumanizing thing. You would do anything for food.

Q: You know that the cruel regimes use hunger as an instrument of oppression.

KREUTZER: As we know right now in Ethiopia. Yeah.

Q: Do you remember the Trümmerfrauen? Do you remember the women out there scraping bricks in the rubble?

KREUTZER: Oh yeah. We all had to do it. In order to get a ration card, you had to do it. And my father's first job was to dig out the minister and his wife and the deaconess under the rubble of his newly assigned church in the Russian sector of Berlin. He and some parishioners scraped a lot of bricks from the former church and when Sweden generously

donated a wooden church, providing every plank and nail, he applied to build a new church on the site of the old church. The new communist regime was not keen on granting a permit to build a church. My father had to promise that he wouldn't take any material from the people because they needed to rebuild the city. He promised that he had everything, reasoning that he could exchange the cleaned bricks for the cement needed for the foundation. The church was built and functioning when the communists discovered Dad's clever maneuver. A nice secretary warned him that he was in trouble and possible arrest and he had to leave and go to West Germany. And that's how our family, luckily, ended up in West Germany, because Dad was again a refugee. The church he built is still standing and now under historic preservation.

Q: Wow. That's quite a series of good luck. I mean, being banished from the East to the West.

KREUTZER: At the end of the war Berlin was divided into four zones, French, English, Russian and American. We got an apartment in the American zone and I got my introduction to Americans. We were so lucky to finally get an apartment. It had belonged to the family of an attorney who had been forced to join the Nazi party in order to practice but had maintained ties to his Lutheran church. During the time of reckoning after the war, the Nazi attorney and his family were kicked out of their home and the apartment was offered to their homeless Lutheran minister. He said his conscience didn't allow him to move in.

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Q: This is our second segment, we had a little technical glitch. This is more than fascinating. And it's very dramatic. And it's extremely sad. But I think you're about to tell me about the Lutheran minister who was offered an apartment.

KREUTZER: He said I cannot move in there because I baptized that man's children and I cannot do this. But you, Karl Kreutzer, don't know this man, you can move in and so we moved in. And Dan, it was one of these grand Berlin apartments and it happened to be in West Berlin, in Steglitz, with parquet floors, a winter garden, sliding glass doors, and a box on the dining room wall to call the maid to bring the second course. It was a fantastic apartment but we had no furniture. We slept on the floor and some of the walls were also crumbling. And it took a while to get it all together. With the last money he had, my father bought a grand piano. You could buy pianos and original art, but you couldn't get any bread. So we had a grand piano and made music. We have always been a singing family. We sang after lunch and after dinner and often congregated around the piano and harmonized.

So into this time comes an invitation for my father who spoke English—word got around—to come and meet with American army chaplains. The meeting was in another part of town and without public transportation my father mounted a donated rusty bicycle and went. The bridges had been blown up and he had to wade through the water and over some rocks. It was evening and he was confronted by some drunken GIs who called him a German pig, threw him on the ground and broke his bicycle. He pushed the bike the last

mile and was late. The chaplains were all assembled, wondering where this German was. Dad apologized and told his story. They let him clean himself up and then they talked until midnight over coffee and donuts. Later that night they brought him and his broken bike and a bag of donuts home in an army jeep. And he woke us all up. He was euphoric over this meeting. He opened the bag and there was my first donut. And then he said, I asked about jobs and they said yes, they could use some English-speaking young women in the Red Cross cafeteria. He said, I think you, Beate and Heidi, are going to work there because you can eat all the donuts you can. My two sisters interrupted schooling and Heidi, an accomplished pianist, was immediately very popular because she could play anything and quickly learned *Home On the Range* and other catchy tunes.
That was also the beginning of Americans coming to our home in their free time. By then we had enough chairs to sit down. The GIs came in uniform, that was the rule, but they were allowed to fraternize. The Americans had suffered the least at home during the war and were the friendliest towards us because of that. They had suffered, of course, fighting during the war. But we met these nice young men. I fell in love with one of them, Franklin Dentz. He was very tall and smiled at me. I have a photo of the two of us. He got down on his knees so that we would be level and he had his hand around my shoulder. He was maybe eighteen years old and I announced that I would marry him. I was eight. Almost sixty years later he came upon one of my stories published in a Sunday magazine and sent me a big package with letters from my parents and me. Those letters were written to him after he got home because our relationships continued. When our American friends got home, they alerted their churches and clubs to send us CARE packages. They had observed how starved we were. When they visited us we never had any food to offer. But by October 5, my father's birthday, we had enough soup to share. It was Stipp, raw potatoes grated into boiling water with some salt. We thought it was delicious and we had three GIs at the table to share it. And I remember how one of the very well-mannered soldiers raised his spoon to eat and then put it down. He said he couldn't eat this. And I looked at his bowl and thought I want that. Food was still rationed and portions were meagre.

Q: Well, of course, the reader wants to know sixty years later, that's 2005 I think. What happened to Franklin?

KREUTZER: He apologized that he got married to—

Q: He should. That lousy, lousy rascal, how dare he? I mean, he was only ten years older.

KREUTZER: He became an engineer, and he built bridges. And by the time we reconnected he was retired, a grandfather, living in Sanibel, Florida. We never met in person again but exchanged Christmas greetings for a number of years. I think we would have been politically in different camps. Arlene, his wife, was lovely and a quilter.

Q: I guess you are resilient, eight-year-olds tend to be resilient. Amazing.

KREUTZER: During this time, the very big information source was RIAS (Radio in the American Sector) and we listened to it for news and pop music. The station had a symphony and a choir. I sang in the choir for a while. RIAS was huge.

Q: Wait a minute. You sang in a choir that was brought on RIAS?

KREUTZER: Yes. As a fourteen-year-old.

Q: We can say your radio career started when you were fourteen.

KREUTZER: Yeah, little did I know at the time that I would become a broadcaster for RIAS Berlin later in Washington, DC.

Q: Amazing. We'll get to that later. I want to dwell on this amazing story and not leap ahead too much. But just tell us, give us a little preview, when you ended up working for RIAS that's a huge irony. I mean, this had been a formative thing, when you're eight, nine, and ten. And then was this effort an objective? Or did it sort of happen by coincidence when you were later there?

KREUTZER: Being at VOA (Voice of America) broadcasting for RIAS wasn't a life plan. Things just happen, in retrospect quite amazing.

Q: It almost seems predestined, doesn't it? But well, I guess, if you're not a Calvinist, you don't believe that?

KREUTZER: Well, the road taken and the road not taken, we don't know. But sometimes there are patterns, as you look back. My mother was very enthusiastic about the Americans. When the Russians came, we were in the Russian zone. And she always said, if we could just go a few more miles, we will be in the American zone and safe. She was so very positive about Americans because she had fabulous experiences as a young woman at that college in Macedonia. She said they were so team-oriented, and so not authoritarian. To her it was like a wonder how generous and easy the relationship could be between teacher and student. When the GIs rang our doorbell in Berlin, she welcomed them with enthusiasm. She was very creative and imaginative, and though we had no food to share, my mother invented parlor games involving her attractive daughters. Well, we had a full house just about every weekend. The soldiers brought their red army hymnals and I soon learned how to belt out *Onward Christian Soldiers* and many more hymns while Heidi played on the piano and sometimes my father got out a violin. There was a bus stop in front of the living room window, and one time I looked out and people looked up and I'm sure they thought, Oh, these lucky people, how come they are so happy? And yet we were as hungry as the people at the bus stop. It was our way of surviving. And the Americans were very good to us and remembered us when they got home. They sent us CARE packages. They sent us clothing. We distributed food and clothing in churches and orphanages and shared as we could. We were very lucky with that connection and that my parents spoke English; without the language it wouldn't have happened. One of the most faithful friends was Ralph Howard, a father of three. He

distributed ice-cream back home and showed me a nickel. “With that you can buy yourself an ice-cream,” he explained. I was awed. When I came to Duke University I met his whole family in nearby Chapel Hill. We stayed in touch until his death. When asked, Ralph Howard would say, “I fought in the war and then I met a wonderful family in Berlin.”

Q: There's some truth to the stereotype of the benign simple goodhearted GI.

KREUTZER: Absolutely, we met them all. But I also told you about the encounter with the drunken soldier.

Q: Yeah, yeah. I hope he was punished.

KREUTZER: He probably got away with it. And he probably wanted to be home with his sweetheart.

Q: He may have had a rough time on the Western Front before getting to Berlin.

KREUTZER: Indeed. What happened next in Berlin was the Blockade, from June '48 to May '49. We had almost a year of the Airlift. We lived through the Blockade.

Q: Blockade, just the drama never stopped.

KREUTZER: Yeah, the Blockade was horrible. We were scared that the people would break down under the hardship.

Q: The cruelty of the Nazi Party was replaced by the cruelty of the Russian occupation.

KREUTZER: Absolutely. At the height of the Blockade, a plane landed in Tempelhof every three minutes. The bulk of their cargo was coal in order to keep some of the grid going. We would have electricity for two hours a day. That could be in the middle of the night. And we would have to cook then and put the food into the featherbed to keep it warm for later. It was a bitter cold winter and we had no fuel. My sister Heidi was by then married to a dentist who had his practice in East Berlin. In the East they lavished the market with fresh fruit and vegetables and made living there so appealing. At the time we could still go all around Berlin on the metro system. And we went once a week to take a bath at my sister Heidi's place, and get warm, and have a nice meal and do some shopping, and then go home to our cold and dark apartment. It was tempting to give in but the West Berliners stood fast. They didn't know whether this would ever end but they stood fast.

Q: That's why Russia didn't have fruits and vegetables, they sent it all to East Berlin. So it was a cold war from the very beginning. We remember the airlifts as a Kennedy thing, but it was much before that, I guess.

KREUTZER: In May of 1949, the Russians gave in and the trucks started rolling into Berlin and Berliners were euphoric. And it was thanks to the Americans and the British that we survived and held out. They managed the Luftbrücke, the air bridge. There is a nice little footnote. The Americans were amazed that German children did not beg. They had seen so many Italian children beg and they were touched. And they decided to put sweets into handkerchiefs, white handkerchiefs, and just before landing they threw them out the window. And there are photos of kids waiting and running over the rubble to catch these handkerchiefs full of sweets. But we did not beg. We were very proud.

Q: This is a really human story. It's almost unimaginable in 2021, with so much cynicism and so much distrust. It's as if we've gone backwards. I know that some American politicians romanticize the good that Americans did in World War II, which was much more good than bad. But they dwell on that as if it were permanent. And we know that nothing's permanent. That's remarkable. So you're eight years old. I don't want to exhaust you here. How did you get to nine, ten, eleven, twelve, and thirteen.

KREUTZER: I grew up in Berlin, and it was great. I think my identity is being a Berliner. I love the culture, I found my way around, I was free. I learned the lingo. And I thrived. I was fourteen when my father was assigned a new ministry in Pforzheim, in the northern Black Forest of southern Germany. In February of ’45 Pforzheim was bombed in a twenty-two-minute attack by the Royal Air Force. They dropped 1,575 tons of bombs on a town of 40,000, killed 17,600 and mutilated thousands more. The town was eighty percent destroyed. Proportionally, it was the worst destruction in the war. And so when we arrived in 1951, my father had to build another church because there was no church. And he started a new ministry there. And again, housing was very, very difficult to get. But I spent my next eight years there, eventually living in a very nice parsonage next to the church, built by my father. Very close by was an America House with a big library of American classics in English and German.

Q: Oh, yes.

KREUTZER: That's where I read my first Hemingway and Mark Twain and Faulkner. The books were housed in a little barrack. But it was a treasure because the local library, like everything else, was destroyed. Pforzheim was just a heap of rubble. Many people know about the destruction of Dresden or Hamburg, but very few people know about Pforzheim.

Q: When you mentioned America House we think of Hans Tuch who died a year ago. He was a German child who was sent to Nebraska when he was 13. And then was of age at the beginning of World War II and came to Germany as a GI. He stayed after the war and was one of those who developed Amerika Häuser. The reader may not be familiar with this institution. I know it only by reputation. Tell us about the Amerika Häuser because that became part of your life later, when you joined the U.S. government, right?

KREUTZER: Well, they were all phased out after the fall of the Berlin Wall. But they were a lifeline for so many people, especially behind the Iron Curtain in Croatia,

Hungary, or wherever. People just loved going to that library, but after the Fall information could flow freely and they were considered obsolete. I was fourteen when I discovered the Amerika Haus. It also offered programs about America and was a little oasis in the midst of all that destruction.

Q: As I understand it, I only have heard this. Some of the GIs had the idea that there were some buildings that were still intact, that were not totally ruined. And some of them had been librarians and decided to restore these and give them an American theme. That became the model for American cultural centers that later spread over the whole world. Fantastic.

KREUTZER: And that's the way to spread the culture. Sharing treasures like *Huckleberry Finn* and *The Grapes of Wrath***,** that's a gift to the world.

Q: Let's see, sometimes I think if this was a title of a book, maybe the title would be A Gift to the World*. Maybe that's a good header. Should we get into the next phase of this?*

KREUTZER: Maybe I can wrap it up quickly. There are a few more chapters before I worked for the foreign service community. I graduated from high school, went to college and then taught. Meanwhile my father retired and visited America where he was invited to speak at different places, including Duke University's Divinity School. He found out that I could apply for a scholarship. I did and came with a scholarship to Duke University. I got a master's degree in religion and comparative literature. And it was the time after Sputnik when a new educational reform advocated the teaching of foreign languages in order to keep up with the Russians. So my language skills were in high demand and I taught full time at Duke. I taught at several other universities, I pursued a PhD, and also spent two years in Canada at a university.

I returned to the U.S. and worked in publishing in Boston. I published some best-selling textbooks. After a few years I decided to quit and see the world, bought a backpack and a sleeping bag and traveled for a year through then-communist Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. I also climbed Kilimanjaro. It was the time of America's war in Vietnam and I became an activist in the movement against the war. During my time at Houghton Mifflin I helped organize a day off work to join a massive demonstration. And I remember that I stood there at the entrance handing out pamphlets that explained why we would not work today and also handed a pamphlet to my boss who took it and went in to work. He felt ambivalent; didn't know what to say. But his bosses, the higher-ups, were outraged, especially the next day when the *Boston Globe* showed a photo of a big banner about gay rights and right behind it marched Houghton Mifflin against the war. We got a lot of flack. But I escaped it and went to Africa, my favorite place. When I returned I worked for McGovern in Philadelphia, and I want you to know that he won in Philadelphia. And then I went to Washington, DC because I was interested in politics and maybe there was some way that I could be useful. I started at some NGOs (non-governmental organizations), including Ralph Nader. [not clear] Then I applied at VOA (Voice of America).

Q: I've taken these notes. You're not going to get away with racing through this. We're going to go through in some detail. I believe I was in Boston at the same time you were at Houghton Mifflin. And I remember the day Nixon defeated McGovern. McGovern won only in DC and Massachusetts, as you remember. And I remember walking around Beacon Hill that morning. I had never seen Boston so quiet, so mournful, so sad. It was a silent city. It was ghostly because the massive national landslide was very hurtful to most people who lived in Boston. I personally benefited, maybe not from you, but others. This is enormous. Wow! Let's take it fresh next time. And let's think of some of your first reactions when you came to North Carolina.

KREUTZER: I arrived in 1959 at the beginning of the civil rights movement and it grabbed me completely.

Q: Yes. It sounds like you got a running start in modern America. Now we can keep going. But taking this fresh might be a good idea. Let's sign out here. This is Dan Whitman talking with Valerie Kreutzer. It's November 14, 2021.

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Q: Okay. This is Dan Whitman talking to Valerie Kreutzer on November 16, 2021. When we last talked, Valerie, we were talking about your move back from Boston to DC, because you wanted to be part of the policy world. And you've spent some time in the Ralph Nader effort, and then at some point made it over to VOA. Can you walk us through that?

KREUTZER: Sure. Maybe I want to take a step back because you had asked me early on what it was like to come to America. Upon my boat-landing in New York I learned that you eat hamburgers, or Klopse, as we would say, between a bun and without knife and fork. But I learned fast. What was stunning to me was the segregated south. The Americans who brought us democracy, what are they doing to black people? Duke University was white, and the only black people were the ones who did the cleaning and the uniformed matron who sat in the reception of the women's graduate dorm and would announce over the intercom, Miss Valerie, you have a caller. And then you went to meet your date in the parlor. This was 1959. That's when the sit-ins happened in Greensboro and some of my fellow-students from Divinity School who sat with black students at a lunch counter and refused to leave were arrested. Over the next four years at Duke I worked at my trauma of having grown up in a fascist dictatorship where the Holocaust happened because too few had resisted. So I got involved in the civil rights movement. And there were poignant moments: Like going to a church one Sunday and being ushered in and warmly welcomed and the next time when I came with a group of black young people they refused to let us in. We formed 'prayer circles' in front of the church and when the parishioners came out we stood there as witness to an injustice. So I exercised my right to speak up and these were healing moments. I stayed at Duke for four years and taught in the German department as a full-time faculty member. I was among the faculty that voted to integrate the graduate school. Integration happened first at the top. The thinking seemed to be that once you work on a Master's or PhD you're acceptable.

Q: You came to a country which to you represented free speech, democracy, equality. Segregation came no doubt as a surprise. Can you describe more the disappointment or the surprise of seeing this big flaw in American society?

KREUTZER: Well, what was exciting was that I found Americans who worked at it. That was the exciting part. I was a lonely voice, but there was a huge effort to change the system. And there was the belief that it can be done. That moved me just about to tears, that realization. I hung out with people who were my leaders, really. And yeah, it was absolutely fantastic.

Q: Well, then let's describe the beginnings of your involvement. You had something in your mind and in your heart? How was the connection made with these other Americans?

KREUTZER: Well, there was a group that was interdenominational off campus. And they had black people in that group. We became friends and cared about each other. And the leadership in that group helped create the demonstrations, the kneel-ins and the protests. From there it gripped the campus and the students. At one point, trying to integrate Howard Johnson's on the highway between Durham and Chapel Hill, they had 700 students arrested for trespassing. It was momentous and I joined the spirit and participated.

Q: Do you know what the attitudes were about you, a newcomer? You had a divided society in North Carolina, the old guard doing bad things, and then your colleagues. Were you seen as an interloper or a welcome guest?

KREUTZER: I was always very, very welcomed, until I spoke up. There was an assumption that I would be elitist and that I would just blend in with the white folk. Like the time I went to church and they ushered me in, saying you must come to the women's circle, and you must talk about Germany. And the next time, I came with black, young people, they didn't want me in the church.

Q: This was a cognitive dissonance for them. They saw you at the beginning as—

KREUTZER: I think the Americans had warm feelings towards the Germans. As I mentioned earlier, they wanted to make contact with Germans in Berlin, and we had these GIs in our home. And so it was an extremely friendly welcome. I think I got the scholarship because I was German.

Q: It's describing two sides, the old and the new. You think both sides have the same friendly feelings towards you?

KREUTZER: Well, as long as I wouldn't talk about equality and that I didn't like what America is doing. Then they were not interested in me. I even heard people say why don't you go home.

Q: Not welcomed by all, welcomed by some, I guess.

KREUTZER: Well, welcomed by most; it was rare that I was told to go home.

Q: Yeah. Well, thank you for your boldness back then. We never knew at that time how this would turn out. And it seemed as if perhaps it would never change, certainly in the early 60s. Well, can you differentiate being a student and a faculty member? Was this a big, big change?

KREUTZER: Oh, no. I was just an instructor. I didn't have much money, but we instructors and graduate students were all hanging out, working and playing hard and didn't feel poor. We had enough to eat. My boyfriend taught me to drive at the cemetery and I got a car, a VW. I was twenty-three years old when I started teaching full time. And it was rough. I remember one particular incident. There was a shuttle bus going between the East Campus and the West Campus. And kids went to different classes on these two campuses. I sat in the shuttle, and this boy across the aisle was talking to the girl next to me, and he said that he was going to have German next, but he was going to change his class because the instructor had just come on the boat from Germany. And I sat there holding my breath. When class started I had a stack of IBM cards with the names of the students and as I went through the stack I came to Mr. So-and-So and said, "I understand you would like to change classes." He clearly recognized me from the bus and he says, "No, I'm going to stay."

Q: What we're talking about is breaking stereotypes. It sounds like that may be a large meaning in your life, breaking stereotypes.

KREUTZER: I was inexperienced, I would say. And I don't think they got their money's worth that first year because knowing your language and being fluent in it does not mean that you know that with a coordinating conjunction the verb comes first and with a subordinating conjunction the verb goes to the end. You don't know that.

Q: I can only validate what you're saying, because I'm not a native French speaker. But I always knew that when the direct object precedes the participle, the participle will agree. And if it does not precede, it will not agree. I knew that. But I doubt most French people know this.

KREUTZER: That's it. So it took years to learn about my German language. And it took writing textbooks at Houghton Mifflin to know what the subjunctive is all about.

Q: Way off topic. But now that I'm struggling with Russian which has cases like German, how does the native speaker learn cases? We're way off the topic here, but I've always wondered how native speakers know to use the accusative as needed.

KREUTZER: They mastered their language at five. I always thought, "why wasn't I born in China?" Learn the hardest language by five, then go for the easier ones.

Q: Not to challenge Noam Chomsky. But do you have any idea how children learn?

KREUTZER: Yeah, by repetition, repetition, repetition.

Q: And we all say that the first language of a child will be natural regardless of the relative intelligence of the child. Whereas, an acquired language will forever have a slight accent. That's a mystery, isn't it? Well, fascinating, because language is, of course, the medium for everything we do in VOA and public diplomacy. Well, okay, so you found yourself suddenly in a social movement, you could never have predicted. Duke is a great university. It is remarkable that it was the faculty that decided to integrate. Was this the result of student activity?

KREUTZER: I'm sure the initiative came from the movement.

Q: Okay, so you were an instructor.

KREUTZER: Yeah. I taught at several universities and colleges, but I think we're going to talk about VOA, right?

Q: Yes. Actually, tell us a little bit about your work with Ralph Nader.

KREUTZER: Getting his signature on the pay-slip was the most valuable thing you got out of it. Otherwise it was a sweatshop of typing manuscripts with a little editing. But there was great camaraderie in the group, and when I applied to VOA they looked at me like a traitor. Oh, my God! You're going to work for the government. That propaganda machine? And I remember trying to say something defensive. But then this young woman said, “Well, I guess they broadcast a lot of good jazz.” That seemed to be the saving grace for that crowd. VOA did good jazz. But I was apprehensive when I applied for a position in the German department. After the interview and after they offered me the job I asked to read some of the scripts that the department had produced and so they gave me some scripts, and I read them and the information seemed accurate and balanced. And so I felt it's okay, I can do this. And what a great opportunity it was!

Q: Were you there as a researcher, a writer, an announcer, in what capacity?

KREUTZER: The slot was writer, broadcaster, and editor, and the position was flexible. We wrote our own stuff, always with two sources. I would like to talk about the bosses. Well, I was the only woman in a team of five. The men, who by then seemed ancient, had come to VOA off the boat as immigrants. VOA started in 1942 and was in New York at the beginning. Walter Engel was one of the first in the German department; he was Jewish and had come from Berlin via London. Georg Siegert had survived a German concentration camp and arrived in ’45. They were professional actors and excellent on the microphone. By the time I met them, they had grown into their role of reporter and commentator. But they were, for me, very conservative. You know how Ed Murrow, the first director of USIA (United States Information Agency) and VOA, defined our

mission: Telling America's story, warts and all. My bosses avoided the warts, while I was into them. And so you can imagine that they had a hard time with me and I with them.

Q: Thank you for being such a problem to so many people. What does the German service of VOA---how does that differ from RIAS?

KREUTZER: VOA's forty-seven language services hooked up to affiliates overseas. And so RIAS Berlin, which had its own program, would use three segments from us every day. That meant getting up very early in Washington DC, reading four or five papers, scanning the wire services and then quickly deciding what to write about that day. What's the big topic? While my male colleagues wrote the big political stories, I usually got to write about softer subjects. I was also told that women's voices do not carry very well over the airwaves. There were no women on the airwaves when I started at VOA. Today women dominate the airwaves.

Q: And this was a theory. Yeah.

KREUTZER: So sexism was the next battle for me. I was relegated to writing feature stories. And I like telling stories. But it grated on me, because the more important stories were the political stories. What did the president say today? And how's the war going? I was not allowed to write about that. The closest I got to high politics was telling about Betty Ford's breast cancer. That was a woman's story, like the war on the tobacco industry.

Q: The year is '60 something?

KREUTZER: No, '73. We covered Nixon's abdication. Then, since the men were not very interested, I went every day to the Watergate trial and reported on that.

Q: How could they not be interested?

KREUTZER: Well, they were more interested in fast-paced news, but I sat there through hours and hours of testimony, got to know the villains and wrote my stories. But it grated on me that I was excluded from the top stories and I escaped into writing thirty-minute shows in the vein of NPR's (National Public Radio's) *All Things Considered*. I wrote and researched different topics and that was the best job I have ever had. It suited my interests and talents. I would write about the educational system in America and interview students at American schools and the German school in DC and package it with sounds and music. I produced one documentary a month and also continued writing features. I wrote a thirty-minute show on women in politics and how they were rising. But being considered less important grated on me. I complained about it to somebody in personnel and she said that's terrible. But how can you change the mentality of the people at RIAS, because that was the big obstacle? I could have convinced the guys in the office but RIAS with its big budget and all-male organization told my boss, "We don't want her."

Q: Did you visit RIAS at that time?

KREUTZER: I did.

Q: Did you meet those people?

KREUTZER: I met these people, and they were a little chagrined. And they were friendly enough. But I remember the sexism was so strong. One guy in the DC office said let's send her over and she can sit on So-and-So's lap. That was his idea of introducing me to the RIAS bosses. This was long ago.

Q: I don't think Edward R. Murrow would appreciate that. When you were doing these wonderful thirty-minute shows, how was the structure above you? Were they controlling or deleting or advising you?

KREUTZER: No, they gave me free rein. On request, I translated some of my shows into English for the whole VOA service to use. One such show was *The Graying of America*. And I love America. What I poured into my scripts was loving America. I loved the process of producing and working with the very skilled technicians who would blend the English over and bring in the German version and then mix it with sounds and music. The problem was always to find German speakers who could sound like a young person or a factory worker. I had to use my colleagues and RIAS complained that a doctor or taxi driver in the script sounds like Walter Engel who usually does political commentary. You can't do that.

Q: Don't we have native German speakers in Pennsylvania nearby?

KREUTZER: Well, we had no money to pay anybody for that. We did the best we could. And those shows were appreciated. Because we had very talented people in the studios. The way they would blend in and out and mix it up was so smooth and skillful. My guess is that these days everybody has to do it themselves with a few buttons.

Q: Did you ever meet Ellen Heil at that time?

KREUTZER: No. But I'll tell you something that I may later cross out. I felt pretty free in my reporting. My immediate bosses often felt uncomfortable, but they didn't know how to shut me up. They edited quite a bit. But ultimately, they didn't know what to do. So, one time my boss was called in by his superiors. He came back and stood at my desk and said, "I was just told, 'Listening to Valerie Kreutzer is like listening to Radio Hanoi.'" I thought beyond our service nobody knew any German and there was this man upstairs who had been on assignment in Berlin and knew German. And he objected. I did not think that I was catering to the enemy. To my understanding, RIAS was on a mission to inform East Germans about America. And East Germans did listen, RIAS was very popular. And instead of pure propaganda I felt that our mission was to show how people in a democracy struggle against oppression, against racism, against this war, tell the story so that people say, wow, this is how a democratic society works. Imagine, there are

people in an anti-war vigil in front of the White House day and night without getting arrested! In fact, on Christmas eve the police bring them hot chocolate at midnight!

Q: This is certainly what Edward R. Murrow had in mind.

KREUTZER: Well, the higher-ups wouldn't have it. It was difficult. And then another time, when Shirley Temple Black was announced by Reagan to become—

Q: Ambassador—

KREUTZER: Ambassador to Ghana. Her first response was, "I like chocolate." I quoted her. I was again reprimanded from the top, saying, it's not essential, but I thought it was just right. Anyway, there were corrections, but not many. And soon you get the hang of it, what you can say and what you can't say. In many ways that didn't feel very comfortable. And so when I saw a job opening in the magazine section at USIA, I thought, well, I'll have a printed byline and nobody will complain about my voice. I switched over to the magazines for a while.

Q: That was at the P bureau. Before we get there, backward glances at VOA. Americans who seldom hear VOA because it's intended for overseas. Not having heard it much they assume that it's propaganda. Your response to that? I mean, there's this perpetual debate. Is it political or not?

KREUTZER: Well, the idea was that it would be neutral. That depended very much on who was at the top, which political appointee was there. We always had to rely on two sources. I'll tell you later when we get to my Vienna stint, I'll tell you more about Radio Free Europe, because I interviewed these guys in Munich on the fall of the East European dictatorships, and I was very impressed with how they helped. So I would think if you are, for example, in Burma or Myanmar, you get some information that you don't get over the local airwaves. I think VOA tilts towards telling a positive story about America, but it also gives you some hard facts.

Q: Yes. I mean, Vaclav Havel said, thank God for Voice of America. Because he felt and probably true enough, he didn't really have any other source that was not propaganda. I should say I have a pro VOA bias, but I'm aware that many Americans, I think ones who have not actually listened to VOA, very much see it as a government thing.

KREUTZER: But I also wanted to say a few words about us at VOA, a totally unglamorous bunch of people. There was this slovenly guy down the hall in baggy pants and worn sweaters who put on jazz shows for Poland. And after the fall of communism in that country he came to visit and was welcomed like a big hero. The Russian department was the biggest when I was at VOA. They felt most important and if they yelled "air-time" you stood aside and let them xerox their script. Rumor had it that they didn't get along very well and had several lawsuits against each other. Working at VOA was lively and interesting but lasted for me only two years. I moved to a very sedate climate at the magazines, but then I eventually moved to the Wireless File for Latin America.

And then it became very interesting again because I went to hearings on Capitol Hill on the civil war in El Salvador, and it was blow-by-blow reporting. I had a very good time reporting to Central and South America.

Q: You said sedate? Did you initially fear boredom at the P Bureau on doing publications? Or was it enough?

KREUTZER: It was. There is something if you do news, there is excitement every day. It's a different rhythm from writing a story that's going to be in a magazine two months from now. The adrenaline isn't as high. You go to the hearing on Capitol Hill and you come back and you have to write about it within the next forty-five minutes because that's when it goes over the wires and you're in a room with other people who are talking and doing their own thing. And you just have to concentrate. There is pressure and you have to concentrate. It's wonderful.

Q: Was the atmosphere at the Wireless File kind of similar to VOA in that sense?

KREUTZER: The adrenaline was there and then there were also very conservative bosses. But I think we were on the same page on the civil war in El Salvador. It was actually a supportive atmosphere. We had translators who translated our versions into Spanish and they were all highly educated journalists, several from Cuba, and they were very kind, and very supportive. Also, we were more women all of a sudden; it was women who reported.

Q: So which side of C Street SW was more enlightened, USIA or VOA? I used the Wireless File many times overseas in Europe and I definitely got the impression under Reagan and under Bush Father that the Wireless File was pro White House. And I've often wondered if somebody were to look back at those days to see to what extent the Wireless File really was kind of an instrument of the White House, which it was never meant to be. Did you ever have a sense that it was tending in that direction?

KREUTZER: In my experience it was always pro administration. Whatever it was, that's how the flag was flying. Democratic or republican administrations set the tone. But democratic administrations were more open to critical voices. It was as if we remembered Ed Murrow then.

Q: Was the Wireless File less objective than VOA?

KREUTZER: I think VOA was a little more objective. When I came to the Wireless File I noticed there was a difference.

Q: Just judging from other anecdotes you've told us, did you feel more or less constrained at the Wireless File after VOA?

KREUTZER: For me, Latin America was a new territory. And it was exciting to get to know the area. I went to my hearings and heard the pros and cons. And I reported on all

the voices in congress, including the critics of the administration. These were very lively debates.

Q: That's extremely interesting. Going back to the Watergate Trial, did you observe the co-conspirators?

KREUTZER: John Dean and his wife were sitting very properly in the first row and didn't mingle. And there was John Ehrlichman who came out of prison with a beard and a divorce. During the trial his wife was always schmoozing with the press and the court sketchers, rooting for her husband. She seemed to know everybody and seemed to love her husband dearly. The defense for these guys insisted that they were used by a person who played the fiddle and they just had to dance to the tune.

Q: No comparison to Nazi Germany but sometimes it takes willing underlings in order for the system to go wrong. Watergate was so dramatic because there were courageous Republicans who informed President Nixon that his time was over. And it's often said that could never happen in today's politics.

KREUTZER: One important personal event while I was working for the Wireless File was the adoption of my daughter. I had tried to adopt a child for the past four years when I met a woman at the State Department who had just adopted a girl from Colombia, and she said, "Why don't you use your connections with USIA." So I did. I made contact with a PAO in Bogota. They knew my byline. In fact, USIS had printed up a pamphlet of my stories about women leaders in Latin America. So they said if you come, maybe we can be helpful. So I flew to Bogota. There was a young intern, Olga, and she came with me to the orphanages. A woman in the consulate had all the contacts with the orphanages because adoptions were a big item and adoptees needed visas. At that time Colombia was in the midst of a civil war. So I visited all the orphanages and they had many children. Most of them had a relative who had not signed a release. The children were in the orphanage to get food and care, but they were not available for adoption. But the children knew why I was visiting and hung to my skirt saying Mama Mama. It was heart-breaking. The administrators, mostly nuns, were more interested in adoptive couples than a single woman. I ended up empty-handed.

In fact, on the last day in Bogota I took the funicular up Montserrate for a spectacular view. It was a sunny day. I met an American expat and we decided to walk back to town. Half-way down we were attacked and thrown to the ground and robbed by a group of young men who lived in hovels on the side of the mountain and quickly disappeared. We got up. They had my shoulder bag with money and passport. My companion who had also been picked clean yelled after the guys, "Give her the passport" and they threw it down. Then we limped back into town. I reported the incident and the embassy advised the staff right away to avoid the mountain. Well, these were difficult times in Bogota but I had made some valuable contacts and it took another year before I received a letter from Bienestar, Colombia's welfare agency, telling me they had a child for me. In contrast to the private orphanages, Bienestar accepted parents regardless of marital status, age or religion. Their letter informed me in two lines that Maria Consuelo Garcia, almost two,

was available for adoption and I should come and get her. I took the next plane and picked her up. The PAO and many at USIS were very happy for me.

Q: So you adopted Maria Consuelo Garcia. This is a milestone. By the way, why Columbia?

KREUTZER: I had been all over the world. El Salvador, Nicaragua, India---Mother Teresa didn't want to give me a kid because I wasn't Catholic and married. So I have mixed feelings about Mother Teresa.

Q: Oh, there are mixed stories. Did you meet her?

KREUTZER: No, no.

Q: Since her canonization, there have been some shocking stories about her but yeah, anyway.

KREUTZER: But I got Maria Consuelo. Yes. She was very sick. She had diarrhea and lice and more hidden problems but I wrapped her up in my red sweater and took her home. At Washington National Airport I hailed a taxi and said to the African-American driver, "I just adopted her." And he leaned back, patted her head and said, "God bless you." That was the beginning of our life in Washington, DC. His gesture was so lovely.

Q: Yeah. Gosh. I'm silenced. That's very dramatic. What year would that have been?

KREUTZER: '81.

Q: '81 already? Wow. Yeah.

KREUTZER: So then I started life as a full-time worker and single parent with a toddler. I had asked my boss at work whether I could take two weeks of accumulated sick leave for the adoption. He said no. But then I asked his boss who had become a father late in life and he said of course. So I had these two weeks of settling in, finding babysitters, going to health care services and getting the medication from the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta for her tapeworm, signing documents that I wouldn't sue if the treatment would harm her. Pretty scary. After two weeks I was back at the office and Maria toddled off to daycare, run by a Salvadoran family in our Adams Morgan neighborhood. They spoke Spanish and loved her and treated her like Queen Bee.

Q: Did this family have several children?

KREUTZER: Yes. They had their own children but also took in other toddlers, white children. They loved Maria the best. They did.

Q: Did Maria begin learning English in the Salvadorian home?

KREUTZER: She did. It was interesting. I think, to begin with, she was older than the made-up document. All they could tell me at the orphanage was that she had been found in the lavatory of a small downtown cafeteria. And when the police came to pick her up, they named her Maria Consuelo Garcia, and they put an SOS in the local paper. Would anybody who knows this child come forward and claim her, and nobody came. So Maria was a lucky one in a way that she was adoptable because there was no relative who claimed her. Somebody from the orphanage went to the cafeteria to ask what they remembered. The owner said, Well, I remember a woman came in with a ruana, which is this shawl women wear. She had quickly disappeared. We know nothing about her background, except that there was poverty, maybe violence. She was undernourished, she was sick. She later fantasized about a twin brother. And it could be that she had a twin brother who was more valuable to the family, but they couldn't feed two. And so they left this child in a place that had food, like the cafeteria. I wrote a book about her. She died at twenty-one in a car crash in Florida.

Q: Oh, my gosh!

KREUTZER: So, in my grief, and my remembering, I started writing the book. It's a story of adoption and its difficulties; because when I adopted I believed that love conquers all. I never listened to anybody who would tell me something different. Well, I learned that people bring things along from their heritage. So this child had her baggage and difficulties. First of all, there was a learning disability—dyslexia. So you asked about language learning. She was very good at picking up language orally, but when it came to writing, it was impossible. So she learned German very well in Austria. And she also learned Spanish when I took her to Costa Rica to a language school. But when it comes to the writing, that was impossible. So her great problem was that she had a genius-level intelligence and a learning disability. She was much smarter than I am, as I found out when we played games. She beat me in everything. She was excellent at abstract thinking, she could have been a computer engineer. There was a forty percent difference between her verbal and abstract IQ, very frustrating for somebody so smart not to be able to write and read well.
But that girl was so loved and so popular also at work. There were snow days when all of DC activity came to a grinding halt and most colleagues couldn’t make it in, but Maria and I managed to walk to USIA on Seventh Avenue. At that time we were next to the White House in that lousy, rat-infested building. Maria and I did the Wireless File on snow days. And after USIA moved to SW, she visited often and everybody knew and enjoyed her. At ten she said that she was definitely going to work at USIA one day. What a great place, full of friendly and engaging people. But on the way home one time she worried, “Your office is too small for two desks.” We were in the honeymoon period, doing everything together. A few years later as a teenager she hated my guts and said she couldn’t live with me.

Q: Normal. Oh my gosh, this was 1776 Massachusetts Ave. Oh my God! Horrible building. We've talked about Maria. Tell us about you, about you during this process. It was challenging. What moved you to do this?

KREUTZER: She was so pretty. She was so cute. And she was so needy. And I knew I could fix her. And we could take care of diarrhea and lice and all the other health problems. And she would be just perfect. And so she was. And my whole family just supported and adored her. We vacationed in Germany and I could leave her there during the summer. During business trips to Africa I left her in Germany where she attended summer camps and learned German. She was smart and capable but eventually had to attend private schools for children with learning difficulties.

Q: Well, very inspiring, very painful that whole story. I think I cannot continue today beyond that strong marker. I think we'll sign off for today. And we'll stop the recording there. This is Dan Whitman talking to Valerie Kreutzer, which is an honor and it's November 16, 2021.

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Q: This is Dan Whitman talking to Valerie Kreutzer. It is November 19, 2021. Something about moving from VOA to the magazines. Let's pick it up there.

KREUTZER: Yes, I do want to mention something that is very important in the history of USIA. We were mostly women on the staff of the magazines with male bosses.

Q: Sorry, this was Topic *magazine?*

KREUTZER: No. It was *Span*. One day a young woman came to apply for an editorial job and the editor-in-chief said, no thank you, we already have too many women. She went home and reported that exchange to her husband who had just graduated from law school.

Q: I like your story.

KREUTZER: That started a class-action sex discrimination lawsuit that finally settled in 2000 after twenty years. I had been asked to join but declined. The plaintiffs each eventually got $450,000 dollars, but some were already dead.

Q: I remember this. It went by the last name of the plaintiff, the Hartman case. The settlement coincided with the demise of USIA. It cost fifty percent of USIA's budget to settle this lawsuit. They certainly deserved it.

KREUTZER: It seems to me, Dan, that there was not enough training for people to know the laws. They didn't realize that you could not say we already have plenty of women on the staff, we don't need another one. It was ignorance, total ignorance based on ingrained sexism. And so it became a grievous mistake that cost the agency an awful lot of money.

Q: Half of its budget. I think that same lawsuit also obliged USIA to admit women into the foreign service who had been previously denied entry.

KREUTZER: Yes, there was compensation for women who could claim discrimination. Yes. I had some colleagues who joined the foreign service based on that.

Q: Well, very dramatic, and maybe it would have gotten more attention if USIA had survived. Well, I'm sorry you weren't involved. Just think of all that money?

KREUTZER: No, it's okay. I wasn't that feisty. I may have given the impression that I was a trail blazer, but I wasn't. I was really a good girl who went with the flow and apologized when I had to, and shaped up when it was necessary. But I had good times. So one good job was Sports America. I started that program in the P Bureau, and I am not a sports fan. I had never been to a baseball game. I tried very hard to catch up.

Q: You began Sports America?

KREUTZER: USIA had a high profile sports ambassador, Mal Whitfield. He was an Olympic gold and silver medalist. After his Olympic achievements he had been hired to promote sports programs mostly in Africa but also in the Middle East and Asia. But there was no program to back him up at USIA. So we started this Sports America program. The best part of it was sending American basketball coaches from the Midwest to Africa. They returned deeply touched by the goodness of the African people who dealt with adversity and poverty in heroic ways. These coaches said we'd like to do something. I said, well, how about inviting a coach from Malawi, from Nigeria, from Ghana to come during the height of your high school basketball season in the Midwest to attend tournaments to see how the game is played. And that was the start of the Sports America exchange program. That lasted about seven years. At the height, we sent out about twenty coaches, and we had twenty Africans come in January to the Midwest. The American coaches had to raise money to bring equipment and had to host or find families to host the Africans. USIS picked the coach and paid for the air ticket. The Africans often arrived with a little plastic bag and no winter clothing in freezing New York. I usually had to find someone to meet the African and get him to connecting flights. One nice former Peace Corps volunteer who agreed to meet this guy from Nigeria at Kennedy took off his coat and gave it to the shivering African. Afterwards he called and said that he really liked his coat and would like to have it back. We got him his coat but this is just one example of the nitty-gritty in these exchanges. The host families always offered warm hospitality and warm clothing but there were also glitches. Like the man who came from Ghana who was no coach but a political hot-shot in the sports ministry. He came in the summer for track and field and the American coach expected him to help with the games. She soon realized that he was clueless and useless. He was only interested in saving his per diem to buy a golden wedding ring, maybe for a third wife. He refused to participate in events and offerings of hospitality and his hosts and sponsors were deeply disappointed.

Q: That's a failure of the USIS post; they really should have known better.

KREUTZER: Right. They should have known what personality they are sending. Most were fine. In one case the cold temperature triggered a malaria attack and the visitor

ended up being very sick. And we did all this on a shoestring. I am sure that the program generated much goodwill. I know that the Americans were changed people when they came back. We want to do more, they said. They collected equipment and we found freighters and cheap ways to send it. We also found training programs for Africans to come to Atlanta and Indiana prior to the Los Angeles Games in '84. That Olympiad was boycotted by the Russians. The Africans felt that they had a better chance to achieve and were very motivated in their training at the American camps. We received grants for these camps.

Q: I remember Sports America from the field. It was a wonderful program. I know it was a very small program. I'm so glad that Africa got more than its share, because Africa is so much fun. That's a personal comment. USIA had this thing, the second mandate, which was the justification for paying for exchange programs, especially for participants in middle America since there wasn't enough exposure to the outside world. I don't think it was ever official. But the idea was, let's see if Americans can benefit. I don't know if it ever had any legislative existence, or if it ever was officially part of USIA, but you're giving a great example of how it worked.

KREUTZER: The exchanges were a success and members of Congress took note and pushed for their constituents to be included in these programs.

Q: Well, Brad Hayes talks about mutual understanding. I have a proverb, it's meant tongue in cheek, but every time a public affairs officer conveys a message to the other side, that's a violation of the law because it's not mutual. I say, arrest him and put him in prison. That's kind of tongue in cheek. You didn't tell us how you made it from the P Bureau publications over to Sports America, was that something that just happened?

KREUTZER: It was. I don't know whether it was a way of getting a promotion. But my philosophy was to move around the agency horizontally, rather than vertically up to the seventh floor and struggle with policy. I wanted to do my little projects and USIA suited me very well that way. Every three, four years I looked for something different and that was energizing. After Sports America I joined the American Participants (Amparts) program.

Q: Wonderful program. At the time that Sports America was created, was it just you?

KREUTZER: Yeah. I started it and then it grew to four program officers. And now there is nothing.

Q: All the good things are gone. That's why we're doing these oral histories. Need to know. Okay, Amparts, another program that I loved and had some exposure to, as I think I mentioned, I may have been the first Ampart in 1981. But a wonderful program. And sadly, it got smaller and smaller and smaller until the entire continent of Africa was getting two speakers a year for the 54 countries. It was a great program. And I believe you were there at the summit during the very good years. Tell us about the Amparts program. It was big. It had regional directors.

KREUTZER: This is how it worked: Every embassy put in their wish list once a year and we would get the wish list. They would ask for high-profile people. Madagascar wanted New York Times columnist Anna Quindlen, Nigeria wanted George Foreman, and Beijing asked for Daniel Ellsberg. Madagascar never got Quindlen but I sent Foreman to Lagos and Ellsberg to China. Both programs were a great success.

Q: Even a big post could really only expect one or maybe two American participants per year. In following years they supplemented real visitors with conference calls. But at the time you were doing this there was no alternative.

KREUTZER: Yes and we sent them all over. And there were no flights from the East Coast to the West Coast in Africa. You always had to go via Paris or London which was a real hardship, haha. From the East Coast, from Nairobi, you had to fly to London and from there go on to Cameroon or wherever on the West Coast.

Q: *In terms of hours on the plane, it is hard. It is hard.*

KREUTZER: It was always costly and hair-raising to make the connections and yet we seemed to have the money to send these people. But it's now long ago. From the Amparts program I went to Vienna, Austria, from ’89 to ’91, as regional editor of *Dialogue*, USIA’s flagship magazine that was translated into 14 languages. *Dialogue* was an erudite, academic-type magazine and in Vienna we produced sixteen-page inserts for editions in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania. My job was to obtain materials for the inserts and oversee their translation.

Q: Fantastic.

KREUTZER: You just had to have your ear to the ground to know what's happening bilaterally with these countries. I remember, for example, that we commissioned a story on Hungarian George Solti who was about to retire as conductor of the Chicago Symphony. That was a story of pride for Hungary and cultural importance in the U.S. In Romania, *Sinteza*, as *Dialogue* there was called, was forbidden. So when it came out every three months, a driver from the embassy would drop packages of the magazine in special places, like doorways and tunnels and within minutes they were all gone. And each magazine was shared by at least twenty people on a secret list. For Romania, *Sinteza* was the only window to the outside world. Romanians were completely cut off, completely. It was difficult to find the stories that were reflective of both countries, but we found them. Usually art stories. There were still a couple of Romanian artists who could sell and exhibit abroad, or American artists who visited the country and we could write about them to fill our inserts.

Q: My understanding is that Dialogue would actually purchase previously published articles and then purchase the rights to republish. Is that correct? You were creating stories?

KREUTZER: No. I didn't obtain the major articles for the magazine. USIA did that. I was just there for the inserts. For example, I wrote a story on the role of Radio Liberty in the demise of the various East European dictatorships after the fall of the Berlin Wall. And that was a fascinating story. Take, for example, the story of the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia. In the fall of '89 I flew to Prague because Shirley Temple Black had just arrived as new ambassador. And next to me on the plane sat a man from Israel who had been invited by students to commemorate an uprising against the Nazi regime fifty years earlier. His brother had been killed in that uprising and the Czech students had tracked him down to be their honored guest. When I came to the embassy they didn't know about the upcoming demonstration and assured me that the fall of the Berlin Wall would not affect Czechoslovakia because, they said, people were quite content with what they got. Well, of course, they were totally wrong. And so what I learned from Radio Liberty was that when the demonstrations happened there were no journalists to report on them because the regime controlled the media. But the Radio Liberty journalist knew of somebody in an apartment at Wenceslas Square and contacted the person and said, can you take the telephone receiver and hang it out the window. That's how Liberty got the sounds of the mass demonstrations and broadcast live to the people all over the country and informed them of what's happening. I found that very, very creative and touching. Another story I heard from the Radio Liberty editor for Romania. He said that they broadcast a lot of stories of positive influence the military had vis-á-vis the government to bring about changes. They cited the military's resistance during Nazi times with the assassination attempt. And so they cited many historic examples of the role of the military to safeguard justice and fairness. And it seemed to work because Ceausescu and his wife were executed by the Romanian military on New Years day in 1989, the last of the East European dictatorships to fall. Radio Liberty played a very important role in all these countries to bring about change.

Q: Radio Liberty was based in Vienna, correct?

KREUTZER: No, they were in Munich.

Q: In Munich. So okay, so that was kind of not central to what you were doing. But this was happening.

KREUTZER: I wrote about these stories for the inserts in each magazine.

Q: Did you meet Shirley Temple Black?

KREUTZER: Oh, yes, I did. My interview was sandwiched between *Good Housekeeping* and *Better Homes and Gardens*. She was very gracious and complimented me on my questions. The embassy was housed in this palace with huge wooden doors. Coming through, she looked tiny, hardly able to reach the golden door handle.

Q: I've seen the building; that must be the most beautiful American embassy anywhere in the world.

KREUTZER: It's gorgeous. Politically, our relationship with the country was in the deep freeze. There was nothing going on between the Americans and that government. I remember hearing that Shirley Temple Black organized a choir for Christmas for the employees because nobody had anything to do. But by the time my story came into print it was headed with a photo of Vaclav Havel hugging Shirlenka, as Temple was affectionately called.

Q: When she arrived, Havel was in prison and then became president.

KREUTZER: He became president and our bi-lateral relationship blossomed.

Q: He said he loved VOA and probably Radio Liberty also. So Radio Liberty broadcast mainly for the Soviet Union, right?

KREUTZER: No, that is Radio Free Europe.

Q: RFE, got it.

KREUTZER: Yeah. I'm sure that he knew about RFE also. So my stint in Vienna was short-lived because after the Wall fell, all these dictatorships fell and there was no longer a raison d'être for our magazines because now the freed press could produce their own stories. That was the end of the world-wide magazines.

Q: What a terrible loss. What a terrible loss.

KREUTZER: We tried for a while to sustain them commercially with advertisement but it didn't work.

Q: That was an enormous mistake to think that it was all over just because the Wall had fallen. Your time in Vienna was short because Dialogue *lost its funding? Is that it?*

KREUTZER: It was the end for the magazines.

Q: When we needed them the most during the transition.

KREUTZER: Yeah. I want to mention two things about my fabulous two years in Vienna. It was a privilege to observe the colossal political changes from a front-row seat. We arrived in June of '89 and for Veterans Day Maria and I decided to drive to Nuremberg, Germany, to do some serious shopping at a huge commissary because life in Vienna was expensive. In Nuremberg we checked into a motel and that evening I opted to go to an organ concert at the cathedral while Maria stayed to watch tv. Walking towards the cathedral I noticed a circle of people quietly holding candles. I learned that their nightly vigil was in solidarity with people in Leipzig, East Germany, who assembled with candles at the Nicolai Church, pleading for regime change. Tomorrow night I'll join them, I promised myself. When I returned to the motel, Maria said, "The Berlin Wall has fallen." I sat on my bed and cried. It was one of the most moving events in my life.

But back to Vienna where the regional program office, RPO, was housed in an elegant building that had been confiscated by the Americans in ‘45. They printed the first newspaper after liberation there. It was a thriving place with seventy employees, including photographers and translators for the various publications we produced. It was a big operation. And it's no longer, it's all gone. But the building itself was also remarkable because before the war it used to be a well-known private hospital, owned by Jewish doctors. And when the Nazis marched into Vienna, they closed the hospital and ordered the physicians to scrub the sidewalk with tooth brushes. After that humiliation the owners committed suicide. That was our building.

Q: I know the story of course; I had no idea it was that building.

KREUTZER: Years later descendants of the former owners claimed the building and I don't know what became of it. It was a very gracious Baroque-style building with a beautiful rose garden for the patients, a morgue in the basement and apartments for the doctors. Its history weighed on me as I was walking up and down its curving, marble central staircase.
The other thing that was fabulous was the American School. I'm all in praise of American schools around the world. Half of the students were Americans with paid tuition. The other half were paying Austrians who valued an American education and wanted their children to get fluent in English. My daughter thrived there because of a special ED teacher in a little hut where Maria went every day to get help as needed. For a year she also took German, taught in the audio-lingual method and got an A. During the second year reading and writing was introduced and she had to drop out because of her dyslexia. But she did well in all other subjects, sang in the choir and created beautiful art.
At the end of my second year I wondered whether I should stay in Vienna but the prospect of finding a well-paying job as a foreigner was daunting. And so we moved back to Washington DC and to my job with the Amparts program. Two Amparts were very special. One was Betty Friedan, whom I sent—

Q: Oh my gosh!

KREUTZER: —to the World Women's Conference in Beijing. When she came to USIA for the debriefing the place was overflowing. People stopped in their tracks: Are you who I think you are? They couldn’t believe it. Here was Betty Friedan in our building, the woman who had raised so many of us to become feminists! Here she was. She did a great debriefing and our post had given her rave reviews for her programs in China. The other noteworthy person was Daniel Ellsberg. China had requested him and I thought that was absolutely brilliant. And he thought so too. His message was that you don't need to cow-tow to the government when it is wrong; you can rebel against it when that is in the interest of us all. And governments can be wrong, let me tell you, and this is my story, he said. And they listened and applauded. There is a footnote to Ellsberg’s excellent program. Before he left for China he gave an interview to *Vorwårts*, a Jewish paper in New York. He told them that USIA sent him on a mission to encourage dissent in China and a member of Congress who read the story was enraged and threatened to block future funding of USIA. Word came down from the higher-ups not to attend the debriefing.

When Ellsberg arrived for the event there were only five or six people in the room. And it was very embarrassing. He wanted to know what's going on. Didn't I tell anybody? I mumbled some excuse. We were afraid that Ellsberg would take his complaints to the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* and we tried to avoid scrutiny.

Q: Interesting, interesting.

KREUTZER: So he never learned about our dilemma. Personally, I enjoyed the contacts with outstanding participants on our program, often had them for dinner at home, including Ellsberg and his beautiful wife, and invited friends, so they could hear about my guests' overseas experiences. That was very, very enriching and I'm grateful for these encounters. During that time we also created electronic journals that were to replace the now obsolete magazines. I edited most of the ones on democracy and human rights and that was a very rewarding experience. I recruited top experts to write about the first amendment and its impact on a free press. We would fill the whole issue on a particular topic. Our first topic was a reflection on the Nuremberg trials, a timely subject in the aftermath of all the fallen dictatorships and the reckoning with the past. We published different voices on the subject of accountability, justice and reconciliation. They were good topics. I learned a lot. But I also had my melt-downs when conservatives upstairs vetoed or tried to edit content. And our writers who told it like they saw it protested, saying, wait a minute, I'm not going to be edited like that. You can't do that. It's not what I'm saying. There was tension very often and the production would go to the last minute with the clock ticking. But in the end we usually prevailed because some enlightened higher-ups said this is okay. You can say that. It's all right.

Q: I'm wondering if there were political remnants of the Charles Wick mentality. He was gone at this point. But I think some of the people thought there was still the ghost of Charles Wick. Charles Wick had a blacklist. Noam Chomsky was on it, I'm sure, Ellsberg. But this should have been a much more free period.

KREUTZER: There were neoconservatives up there on the seventh floor. They put the brakes on very often.

Q: They also locked horns a lot with the VOA editorial writers. That was a very tense relationship also, interesting.

KREUTZER: Well, I retired in '98. It was wonderful to leave. And then came the closure of USIA and I'm sad that it's gone. And it's now just a footnote in history. But I was there and I'm glad I had my career at USIA.

Q: It's not a footnote, it's the topic of this interview. USIA was a great agency. And actually you were there really in its heyday, you started Sports America, my gosh.

KREUTZER: Maybe in time it will be reinvented.

Q: Not as it was. I'm sorry to say it's a great loss and getting the history of what it was is so crucial. It's very important to understand what it did. President Clinton did not understand the loss. And he left this up to Madeleine Albright who willingly put it on the chopping block and it begs explanation. Why would they do such a thing? Now, the story only begins in 1998. Retirement, which is my situation. Life did not stop. What came next for you?

KREUTZER: Well, I started freelancing and wrote stories for papers. And I took a lot of trips and wrote travel stories, published at least once a month. But after ten years I was told that they can't afford freelancers anymore, though the pay was piddling anyway. But the papers in America have shrunk. When I arrived in Seattle we had two dailies, now we have just one. And we're glad we still have a daily with real paper to turn the pages. Other towns like Portland have reduced print news just four days a week. So my freelancing came to an end. I think my heart will always be in social justice. And so I have found my niches, like teaching at the prisons for a number of years, and I volunteered half a block from my house at a wonderful school for immigrants. It's a public school, the Seattle World School. I made contact with a family from Guatemala and tutor the youngsters. And tomorrow I'm going to get a whole turkey and all the extras for them for a Thanksgiving meal. I'm doing that for the second year.

Q: Fantastic.

KREUTZER: I have my personal contacts with the world that way. And it is very, very gratifying for me and very touching to meet these youngsters. They are these kids we've seen on television who flee from gangs and cartels and poverty and just walk over the border. As Juan, my mentee, tells me they were all herded into a freezing cold facility, had to take off their shoes and got no blankets. And every once in a while somebody came in and said look, we can send you home if you want, you just have to sign here. And a lot of them signed because they were so miserable. But Juan hung in there. And now he is in his second year at the community college, works full time in a restaurant and I help him with English. For one of his classes he had to produce a fifteen-page paper on something that is important to him. He did not know that Guatemala had a thirty-six-year civil war because they don't teach that in school in Guatemala. I got him some books. And he wrote a paper on his country's civil war, made his Power-Point presentation and got an A. And yesterday he told me that he has found out that because he was born in Guatemala he can go back and become president. And he gave me a long list of what he's gonna change as president. He's nineteen years old. I'm tutoring the future president of Guatemala.

Q: I hope he does it and I hope it stays good. Sometimes they turn bad. Yours will stay good. Just, again, an unrelated question: You've taught in prisons. In other cultures, like in Africa, when an infraction or a crime occurs, there's often restitution rather than punishment. I'm sure you've thought about this. What is the point in locking people up after they've committed an offense, I'm sure you've thought about this. Does it help society?

KREUTZER: Our system doesn't help us at all. I think if a person is a danger to themselves and others, then we need to find a place for them. But a lot of them, forty percent of the women, are incarcerated because of domestic violence. They finally killed their husband or lover for mistreatment, and so they get locked up for thirty years. What's the point of that? They should get a medal for finally doing it. At the prisons I also found useful rehabilitation programs, especially academic programs that offer college degrees. I corresponded with a woman who had a twenty-six year sentence and took college courses and also learned dog grooming. When she got out, she had a grooming job lined up and got her college degree at the University of Washington. Now she is the director of the academic program at the women's prison. I've also taught at the men's prison and worked with returnees. One man was incarcerated for forty-five years. What a waste!

Q: You saw that they're going to release the accused killer of Malcolm X. Maybe they did, maybe they didn't. But he's been imprisoned for fifty years. That's a great expense for the state.

KREUTZER: Yeah, it costs about 60,000 dollars a year for every person incarcerated.

Q: Which is not much less than it costs to keep a student at Harvard. Yes, it's quite crazy.

KREUTZER: Recently the Pell program changed its regulations so that even people who have been in prison can apply for it. They had been excluded before. There are more resources now and many prisoners take advantage of opportunities and come out with a degree. But the sentences are arbitrary and way too long. Many prisoners are rehabilitated way earlier than the end of their sentence.

Q: Absolutely. There are so many inadequacies and problems. What are the top three? Maybe that'll be my last question to you. Everybody in America is angry. On the right and the left and in the middle. This is one thing we all share. We're all angry. What do you think are issues that could be resolved? Does anything come to mind?

KREUTZER: Well, we need better rules on immigration, and better processing. And it's only going to get worse because with climate change they're all going to come to Seattle. We need some intervention. We need something and I don't know what it is, but it's a huge problem. Yesterday Juan was quoting Kamala Harris who went to Guatemala and said, "Don't come." And he said when she was a candidate she said we are going to have a system that will welcome people from the South. He says she is just contradicting herself. We need some good immigrants. Our huge problem on the borders also has to do with climate change. I once went to Madagascar and it was green and luscious and wonderful. And right now it's in the grip of a drought and people are starving and dying. What are we going to do about that? I don't know. I feel helpless in the face of that, but it is something we have to address because they will all be coming. They will all come.

Q: Absolutely. And this is something that both parties have been very vocal about. They might have nuanced differences, but John McCain wanted reform and George Bush wanted reform. It does not need to be a partisan issue I think. Well, Valerie Kreutzer, what

a story. Thank you so much for this, can you come over for tea or something? We're only 3,000 miles apart. And I see that you've arranged some mudslides up there to discourage migration.

KREUTZER: We're drowning right now.

Q: I know. And so you're actually at the forefront of climate change. More so in British Columbia.

KREUTZER: The border towns are under water. I know them very well, because I have a sister who lives on Vancouver Island. I go through these border towns, they are under water right now. Eighty percent of the houses in Soma, a border town, are under water.

Q: I think very soon what you've just said will be considered prophetic. It won't take long. So again, thank you so much.

KREUTZER: Thank you very much.

Q: Let's end. We'll sign off. Today is November 19, 2021. It's Valerie Kreutzer, sharing her amazing story with Dan Whitman, soon coming to a movie theater near you.

KREUTZER: That will need a lot of editing.

End of interview