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

KATHERINE INEZ LEE

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
Initial interview date: May 16, 2005

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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the 16th of May 2005. This is an interview with Katherine Inez Lee, being done on the behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Let's start from the beginning. Tell me when and where you were born and where you grew up.

LEE: I was born on July 4, 1942 in Lexington, Kentucky. At the time my parents, Ralph Hugo Lee and Katherine Inez Hewitt Lee, were teaching at Kentucky State College (now Kentucky State University) in Frankfurt, Kentucky. When I was fourteen months old my family moved to Alabama when my father took a position at Alabama A&M College (now Alabama A&M University) in Huntsville. At that point I had two older brothers, Ralph Hewitt and Maurice Hugo. In 1944 our family grew to six with the birth of my sister, Charlotte Ann. I lived in Alabama until I left for college.

Q: So -- you were born on Independence Day! Tell me something, first about your father's side and then about your mother's side of the family. What do you know?

LEE: I don't know as much as I'd like because of the difficulties in tracing my family tree back very far as a result of our nation's history of slavery. Perhaps in my retirement I'll have the time to do some in-depth research to try to put together the pieces of my ancestry. That said, I'll tell you what I can.

Q: Beginning with the Lees, how far back can you go?

LEE: My grandmother, Ardelia Anna Wilson Lee, died before I was born, and my grandfather, John Robert Edward Lee, died when I was just two years old--so I don't remember either of my Lee grandparents. I do have some information about them fresh in my memory because of preparations my family and I are making in anticipation of our first Lee family reunion, to be held later this summer in Oak Park, a suburb of Chicago, where my brother Ralph lives.

Most of what I can tell you about my grandparents' early lives comes from accounts appearing in the *Handbook of Texas Online*, a joint project by the University of Texas at Austin and the Texas State Historical Association. I also have the transcribed interview an aunt -- my grandparents' first-born -- gave to Florida A&M University's Black Archives in 1997, when she was 93 years old. There are also other sources, including articles in old journals, books and newspapers. And, finally, there is a piece of "family lore" I might include.

Q: Fine. Please continue.

LEE: My grandfather Lee was born into slavery in 1864 to Mary (Mayes) Lee in Seguin, Texas. His mother, a housemaid who cared for her master's children, took them to school and waited for them while they were receiving instruction. As a slave she was not allowed to attend school herself, but she learned by paying attention to what her white charges were taught. Accounts suggest she took what she had learned home to teach my grandfather. This is why he was prepared for school in Texas after the family was freed from slavery.

Q: Let's see: freedom would have come to Texas a few years after President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in the latter part of 1862, effective January 1, 1863.

LEE: Precisely. Since Texas was not a battleground the Proclamation had little immediate effect on its slaves. And news of the end of the Civil War in early April,1865 did not reach Texas until May. In June the people of Texas were informed that all slaves were free.

Q: What happened with his family after that?

LEE: I don't know if the family left their master's plantation immediately after slaves were freed. At some point, though, my grandfather was prepared to attend elementary and secondary school in Texas as a result of his mother's teaching. According to my aunt's interview, "when she [his mother] was free, she decided she wanted her son to have an education like the white children had. So she sent him to Bishop College."

Now Bishop was founded in 1881 in Marshall, Texas and had a high school preparatory program to compensate for failures in public education for blacks. According to one of my sources, my grandfather started in 1883 (he would have been in his late teens by then) with preparatory classes and graduated from college with honors in 1889, the third person to graduate with an A.B. from Bishop. During his study he was appointed student assistant to the faculty.

Q: *I assume all these schools were segregated*.

LEE: Exactly. He spent the next two years as principal in a two-teacher school in

Palestine, Texas. By then he and my grandmother had already married--in 1885. In 1891 they left Palestine to return to Bishop College where he taught Latin, mathematics and history. He also served as dean as well as consultant for the black schools and churches of Marshall. His work in Marshall brought him to the attention of Booker T. Washington, the most famous black educator of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1899, Washington, president of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama (now Tuskegee University), invited him to become the head of the Institute's Mathematics Division, and he accepted.

Q: Much has been written about Booker T. Washington, the sometimes controversial educator and authors when it comes to race relations in the U.S. He made progress for the Negro community through accommodation, not confrontation. What can you tell me about your grandfather's relationship with Washington?

LEE: From what I can tell my grandfather from the outset was very "upfront" and open with Washington, letting him know exactly where he stood and what he needed in order to pursue his most important goal, providing the best education possible for blacks. In a very telling letter to Washington dated January 6, 1900 appearing in *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, published by the U. of Illinois Press, my grandfather objected to what he considered to be a most unreasonable teaching load which, if unchanged, would have prevented him from being an effective teacher:

> "Dear Mr. Washington, I am puzzled to know what the last assignment of work means. Yesterday I had handed to me an assignment of six (6) classes each day and two (2) at night: making eight (8) recitations to be heard each day: besides, I am required…to study the best methods [of teaching mathematics] and advise the teachers of mathematics -- and am held responsible that all the work in mathematics be done well. Leaving out the question of directing the Mathematics Division, I cannot see how any teacher with *extraordinary* ability can prepare and teach *well* 8 classes a day. I can "keep" 8 classes a day but no man can *teach them well.* It has been truly said by a great educator that "a good teacher can teach 3 or 4 classes each day: a poor teacher can teach 5 or 6 classes each day and a *humbug* and *intellectual wrecker* can teach 7 or 8 or any number of classes each day.
>
> "Mr. Washington, I have given the work of *teaching* the most earnest study for more than ten years and I am convinced that every institution in the land that professes to do really first-class work has found it necessary to have each teacher make special preparation for every class he or she is to teach. *The lower the class the more careful the preparation must be.*
>
> "Our school work here will be the object of adverse criticism as long as this course is taken. I am here to give my heart's interest for the best good of Tuskegee. I am here for *all* I am *able to do*. If I did not feel most heartily interest in it I would not say a word. I would go on and "keep" my pupils.
>
> "The teacher must, if he teaches correctly, study other text books besides the one in hand -- he must study other methods than his own -- consult the journals of education and be fresh for good class work.
>
> "Mr. Washington, Tuskegee's reputation and possibilities call for a different

class of work from that which a teacher is able to do with such a daily assignment.

…

"I regard teaching as sacred a work as the ministry and should be as *conscientiously* done as *true ministerial* work.

"I do not want you to feel that I am seeking leisure. *I have none* -- I want none -- have never had any. *Work* is all I know.

"I put in every moment of today endeavoring to b able to teach the next and tomorrow's classes better. *I came here to work* -- to do the *best* work not the poorest and *to help the institution*. Every moment is spent in that effort. I am in hearty sympathy with all the work -- the industrial as well as the literary."

…

I am quoting at length here because I think this letter gives an extraordinary insight into my grandfather's dedication to education and his willingness to stand up for what he believed -- even if it was to the powerful Booker T. Washington. He goes on to ask Washington, "Under the present arrangement when am I to look over papers handed in by my pupils? Converse with my mathematics teachers? Visit the classes? How can I be held responsible for the class of work which is done in mathematics? Surely you will take up this matter and relieve me and others, if any, who are thus confronted and hampered."

He concludes his appeal with this paragraph:

"There are country schools which are run on the method of one teacher having 8, 10 and 12 classes a day -- the result of which we see in the utter ignorance and stupidity of many of our pupils here today -- but no institution which stands for what Tuskegee does can afford to adopt this course of dwarfing teachers and half-teaching pupils. I am yours to serve in advancing Tuskegee.

J. R. E. Lee"

Q: Do you know how Washington responded?

LEE: Unfortunately, I don't. But if this heartfelt letter didn't move Washington to change things I submit that absolutely nothing would have done so!

Q. What more can you tell me about his Tuskegee years?

LEE: Two or three years after arriving in Tuskegee he joined the staff of Benedict College in South Carolina as professor of mathematics. One account says he went "on loan," but I am not sure of the circumstances. At any rate he returned to Tuskegee in 1905 as Director of Academics.

Q. By then he would have been about 40 or 41 and seemingly dedicated to pursuing a career in education.

LEE: Yes. And yet another sign he wanted to effect important change in his field was his

call to teachers in black schools to join him in 1904 to create a national organization to work together on issues of educational equity. The organization was called the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools, of which he was president for the first five years. Years later -- in the 1930s-- the organization was renamed the American Teachers Association (ATA).

Blacks at that time had been disenfranchised since the turn of the 20th century -- when state initiatives deprived African Americans of the political rights they had gained during Reconstruction. One result was that schools for African-Americans were underfunded and their teachers, underpaid, when compared with their white counterparts. In the beginning the organization sought to improve teaching methods, build more schools through fund-raising efforts and call for legislation for the improvement of schools for black students.

Q: So--at the outset it did not focus on collective bargaining for its members -- wanting, instead, to focus on improving the status of education in general for blacks. Does the organization still exist today?

LEE: Not in its original form. In the 1960s, as a result of changes in education and the civil rights movement ATA merged with the National Education Association (NEA), the nation's oldest and largest teachers union, and the new association retained NEA's name.

Q: Now, let's back up a bit and talk about your grandparents' family life at this point. You earlier said they had married in 1885. What about children?

LEE: By the time of their return to Tuskegee from Benedict College in 1905 he and my grandmother had six children -- two girls, Birdie and Elizabeth ("Betty), and four boys -- Edwin ("Jack"), George, J.R.E., Jr. ("Bob"), and Maurice. A seventh child, a boy, Raleigh, had died in 1894 one month before he would have turned 5. Their final child, my father, Ralph, was born at Tuskegee Institute in 1907.

Q. How long did your grandfather remain at Tuskegee after their return in 1905? And do you know if he was there at the same time as George Washington Carver, one of the most famous names in American history?

LEE: Yes, My grandfather was there with Carver. My aunt speaks in her interview of this scientist "who could also crochet." She recalls her time in his science class during which they "did a lot of things with peanuts and potatoes."

My grandfather and his family left Tuskegee after ten years -- in 1915 -- to become the principal of Lincoln High School in Kansas City, Missouri, where he stayed until 1921. While there he developed an industrial department that served as a model for other Missouri schools. He was also characterized as "an organizer and promoter of charitable work." In 1918 Wilberforce University of Ohio awarded him an honorary LL.D. degree in recognition of "his notable humanitarian services."

Q. Let's see. By then your grandfather had taught at or been administrator at schools in Texas, Alabama, South Carolina and Missouri. He had also organized a national organization for black teachers. Where did he go after Kansas City?

LEE: In 1921--at age 57--he interrupted his educational work to become the extension secretary for the National Urban League in New York City. I would assume this was considered a natural progression, since at the time he was President of the Kansas City local Urban League. Three years later Florida's Board of Control asked him to become President of Florida A&M College (now University) in Tallahassee. After some deliberation he accepted, and in 1924 was named the college's third president. He remained there for the next 20 years--until his death in 1944.

Q: Florida A&M -- what was the school like in 1921?

LEE: According to Professor Leedell W. Neyland, author of a 1970 book titled *Twelve Black Floridians,* "the members of the Board of Control (now Board of Regents), which directed the college, were quite frank that they were asking him to take on seemingly unsolvable problems." They were referring in part to a setback caused by a fire that had destroyed three major buildings and the departure of over a third of the faculty members. "The Legislature refuses to give us enough money, and hardly anyone would care if Florida A and M disappeared off the face of the earth. But Florida needs it, and the people of Florida -- especially the Negroes -- need it," the Board told my grandfather. They went on to explain that although he would be provided a rent-free house on the campus, they could only pay him $2500 a year -- not much, even by 1924 standards. They said, "You are a man of good education, fine executive ability, a good disciplinarian, and we believe well fitted for the position."

Q. So your grandfather accepted the position despite the obstacles looming on the horizon. What were some of his accomplishments as president?

LEE: During his tenure he expanded the school curriculum, introduced extension programs, started a summer school for teachers and obtained accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Additional buildings were erected, more land was purchased and more faculty members were hired. The student population also steadily grew. By the time of his death, the college had accumulated 396 acres of land, acquired 122 staff members and constructed 28 buildings. This was a far cry from the "fifteen wooden buildings, many of them just small cottages, and all the large ones badly needing repairs," according to Neyland.

Q: To accomplish such increases I imagine your grandfather had to be very persuasive to attain the necessary funding over the years.

LEE: Indeed, and it wasn't easy. As a man who believed adamantly that having a good education was essential to a black person's advancement he had to focus on many things to ensure a successful college experience. First, he had to manage the school in such a way as to attract excellent teachers and provide good classrooms, laboratories,

dormitories, libraries and equipment and all the other necessities that make for an outstanding school. Simultaneously he had to raise enough funds for its operation. As Neyland put it he had "to be willing to work with many different groups and kinds of people" to procure sufficient funds to provide all these things.'

Q: So where did the money come from?

LEE: As president of a state-sponsored college he had to convince the Legislature, the organization providing the state's funding, to appropriate the necessary monies.

At first the Legislature did not respond positively to his initial requests for money for repairs. Its members balked, saying "But that's more money than we have appropriated for thirty-seven years!" This led Neyland to comment, "It is easy to see why the college was in such a state of disrepair."

Although the Legislature did not approve the amount he requested it did give him some money to at least start the repairs. He thus had to seek funds elsewhere and turned to various organizations, public and private, for additional financial help. These included the General Education Board, the Rosenwald Fund and the Carnegie Foundation. As time passed the Legislature gradually increased the college's funding.

Q: What more can you tell me about President Lee and Florida A&M?

LEE: One thing that stands out is a statement by Neyland that "his genius was not just in the art of influencing people and raising money -- it was also in interpreting the purpose of the college." He then quoted my grandfather as saying, "We are not here just to educate those who are full-time students. There are many, many others whom the college can help." Neyland continues, "And so the campus was host to rural ministers' institutes, medical and health clinics, agricultural and home economics conferences, farmers' institutes. Students going to classes might observe meetings of a midwives' conference one week, a meeting of school principals another." He said that "if some group could not come to the campus, Dr. Lee made sure that the college went to them -- with music, lectures, dramatic groups, and always with the message: 'Our purpose is to help you. Won't you also help us?' "

Q. You mentioned earlier he died in 1944 after twenty years as President. He would have been about 80 then.

LEE: Yes, you are right. And this isn't in any of my written sources, but the story is that shortly before his death he was soliciting funds for the university, as college presidents must do, standing in the rain in New York waiting for an appointment with financier and philanthropist John D. Rockefeller, Jr. He subsequently took ill, contracted pneumonia and died. The April 15, 1944 edition of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, at the time one of the country's most widely circulated black newspapers, reported he died on April 6 at 9:15 a.m. "following a pneumonia attack" and that he had been confined in the college hospital since March 12.

Q. What else did the newspaper have to say about your grandfather?

LEE: The newspaper reviewed his contributions to the field of education, citing the many schools and organizations on which he had had an impact. Calling him a "great organizer," the paper noted his founding of the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools and his organizing the first summer school at Tuskegee Institute. The *Courier* continued:

> "Another evidence of his educational leadership was the number of organizations in which he held responsible membership. Dr. Lee was a member of the National Interracial Commission, the National Committee on Interracial Scouting, National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses, National Educational Association, American Association of School Administrators, Florida State Teachers Association, American Teachers Association and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He was chairman of the Florida Negro Coordinating Committee on National Defense."

And, finally, the *Courier* noted how he practiced what he preached, so to say, concerning his belief in the importance of education:

> "One of the most ardent exponents of education for his people he exemplified in his own educational progress his advocacy of continuous study. He attended the University of Chicago the summers of 1889, 1907, 1909 and 1911, the University of Wisconsin the summers 1919 and 1920, the University of Minnesota the summers of 1926, 1928, and 1929 and Cornell University the summer of 1930. His achievements as an educator were recognized by several institutions -- his alma mater conferring upon him the M.A. degree in 1904 and Wilberforce and Howard Universities, the LL.D. in 1918 and 1937, respectively."

Q: So it is obvious he was well respected among African Americans. What were some of the reactions of white people in this country towards your grandfather?

LEE: To date I only have documentation about white attitudes with regards to his tenure at Florida A&M. One such indication is very evident according to newspapers and press services across the state which published in February, 1937 Florida Governor Fred Cone's response to a budget committee's request that his salary be raised: "There is no Negro on earth worth $4000 a year!"

At the time of the request his salary was $3600. One newspaper reported that "the amount paid to the overworked school head at present is exactly half of that received by the president of the white state college." Another newspaper reported, "indignation was rife among Negro leaders in the state this week" and that the Governor's only modification to his own remark was in later adding "not for teaching school."

My aunt's interview also sheds some light on the reactions of whites to my grandfather.

In response to an almost identical question as the one you just posed, she answered, "I think they had a certain amount of respect for him and the things he wanted to do. They were all white in those days; they didn't want you around them at all. I can remember when he went to board meetings he couldn't even go in with the other state college presidents because they were white. He had to wait until they called him in. One incident he came home and told us about was when some man [unclear…] he had asked for money. And this ignorant white man said, 'Well, why don't ya'll give that darkie what he wants. Just give him what he wants.' He had to take all kinds of things like that. But he took it because he was getting that money for the school."

She continued, citing the Governor's remarks about his not being worth a $4000-a-year salary. "But those things he had to make do with (his salary wasn't very large) because he wanted to do what he wanted to do. This school was accredited for the first time while he was here."

Q. As time progressed did attitudes of whites change as far as you know?

LEE: Yes. Even Governor Cone eventually had kind words. On my grandfather's 75th birthday celebration, when he had been president for 15 years, the college held a banquet in his honor. Neyland writes, "The highlight of the evening was a book of over 100 letters from leaders all over the United States who knew of his line of work." In addition to accolades from Florida A&M graduates "who had gone out from the college to become leaders all over Florida" and from George W. Carver, "who praised Lee as 'my ideal as a great scholar, profound teacher and Christian gentleman,'" Governor Cone, "who had not wanted to raise Lee's salary, wrote: 'As chief executive of this State I have watched your work closely and wish to state that you are doing a splendid work for your race.' Even arch-conservative newspaperman John Temple Graves said, 'President Lee has been the principal factor in a physical, mental and spiritual growth whose worth to the South is beyond totaling.' "

After his death five years later the Board of Control of Florida sent a letter dated April 15, 1944 to each of his children containing a resolution expressing appreciation "for the Christian life and character of Dr. Lee, for the service he rendered and for the noble imprint left throughout the state and nation on the life and character of the people whom he served." The resolution cited many of his accomplishments, including the expansion of the physical plant of the College "from almost nothing to one that would be a credit to any educational institution," the increased enrollment from 300 to more than 1,000 students, and the raised classification of the College "from one of insignificance to a first-class educational institution whose graduates are in demand everywhere because of their able leadership and ability to render service."

Q. Before turning to your grandmother let's go back to the point when you mentioned something about "family lore."

LEE: When I was in my early twenties my father's oldest sibling, my Aunt Birdie, told me a "family secret." According to her, and we have never tried to verify or discredit this,

my grandfather's father was General Robert E. Lee. His mother was a slave and gave birth to this son without the benefit of marriage. This accounted for the supposed shame and secrecy surrounding his birth, although we know from the history of slavery that such liaisons between master and slave were more often than not non-consensual.

The story goes that my grandfather was born "Robert E. Lee" but later added "John" to his name because he didn't want to be named after this Confederate General. So at some point he became "John Robert E. Lee"--and still later was always referred to simply as "J.R.E. Lee" in his professional life.

Until now nobody in my family has been interested in researching this possible relationship to Robert E. Lee, as no-one seems to really care whether this is true or not. Maybe I'll be the one who finally undertakes to write a family history and perhaps research this aspect. Someday I suspect my nieces and nephews or their children will be curious about their heritage -- and if I never get around to it perhaps one of them will. At any rate there are reasons to think it's possible that we are related to General Lee -- but just as many reasons to suspect it is improbable.

One major task would be to determine when and how my great-grandmother Lee could have come into contact with General Lee. We do know that she was in Seguin, Texas when my grandfather was born. And if the January, 1864 birth date of my grandfather is true that would mean that she and General Lee would had to have been together in 1863. That would have been in the midst of the Civil War, when General Lee most likely would have been at one of his camps between battles--according to a Robert E. Lee Timeline.

It's possible the two could have been in Virginia at the same time, I suppose, because my grandfather's mother was in Virginia before she went to Texas. On the back of a photo showing my grandfather, dressed in a vested suit, hat in hand, standing by his mother's graveside, there is a handwritten note which reads,"

> "John Robert E. Lee's mother. Her name was Mary Mayes.
> Headstone reads, 'She was born in Virginia, joined to church at 10 yrs.
> old. Baptized by Rev. Abbot, Died Nov. 23 1922.'"

Precisely how, under what circumstances, and when she got to Texas is not known, although there are a couple of possible explanations I've encountered during my research.

One thing seems certain, though: my grandfather's father was not "John Lee," as stated in the *Handbook of Texas Online*. I say this because among "U. S. Passport Applications, 1795-1925" cited by the National Archives and Records Administration, as found on *Ancestry.com*, there is his April 23, 1919 application -- when he was still in Kansas City. On one page he lists plans to visit France and Great Britain for the purpose of "Y.M.C.A. Work." At the top of that very same page in the blank requesting the name of his father, he states, "Unknown."

Q. Now, about your grandmother, Ardelia Anna Wilson Lee: You said she and your grandfather married in 1885 and together they had eight children, one of whom died in early childhood. What more can you tell me?

LEE: She is listed as six-year-old "Delia" in the household of Hiram and Senia Wilson in the 1870 Texas census -- indicating she was born around 1864, the same year as my grandfather. I have not seen any other source giving information about her early years except that when her mother, Senia, married Hiram she had already given birth to Ardelia. So far I have been unable to determine who my grandmother's birth father was although it has been suggested by a genealogist that it is likely she was the child of her mother's former slave owner.

Part of my grandmother's stepfather Hiram's life, however, has been documented by the Texas State Historical Association, and additional information about him is in a booklet written by a great-great-granddaughter, Laverne Lewis Britt, titled "*In Praise of Hiram Wilson: The Story of a 19th Century Guadalupe County Potter."* We can learn something about my grandmother's early life through stories about her stepfather since their lives were linked although their bloodlines were not.

Hiram Wilson was born a slave on January 1, 1836 in North Carolina. He and his brothers traveled with their owner, Presbyterian Minister John McKamey Wilson, to Texas during the period when planters and other slaveholders left eastern states to escape the Civil War battles and to be able to retain their slaves. In 1857 John Wilson settled in Seguin, Texas with his family and 20 slaves. It was there that he opened his first pottery, known as "Guadalupe Pottery," which produced utilitarian stoneware throughout the Civil War years.

Referring to records she found during her research, Britt concludes Hiram was held as a slave until he was freed in 1867, or beyond, possibly until 1869 -- because it was in that year that Wilson sold his pottery business to an "M. Durham."

In 1869 as a free man Hiram established his own pottery business which he named "H. Wilson & Company," working alongside his brothers. They are credited with being the first black entrepreneurs in Texas. My grandmother would have been about five years old then.

Hiram Wilson would go on to become a "master pottery with a successful business." One account of his life states that the Smithsonian here in Washington, D.C. possesses pieces of his pottery -- but to my knowledge no family member has ever investigated this.

In 1872, with the financial help of a wealthy Baptist minister from Maine, Rev. Leonard Isley, my grandmother's stepfather purchased "a six-hundred acre tract of land, enough to start a community" for former slaves -- where "they could all have a place to worship and a school to educate the children of the community for a more promising future."

In 1876 her stepfather purchased an additional 440 acres. With the continued assistance and mentoring of Rev. Isley, Hiram himself became a minister, and Rev. Hiram Wilson took on leadership of a church. Meanwhile, he longed for more education, and after obtaining a leave of absence he left in 1882 to enter Bishop College. I can find no record

indicating how long he studied there.

Hiram Wilson died on August 4, 1884, when my grandmother Ardelia Wilson would have been about 20 years old.

Q. You said your grandfather Lee died in 1944, when he would have been about 80. And your grandmother? When did she die?

LEE: She died in 1932, twelve years before her husband -- while he was President of Florida A&M. It is very obvious to me that without her staunch support he could not have dedicated so much time and effort to his educational career and made such a difference. With seven children and a home to care for she put in, I'm sure, just as much effort inside the home as he did on the outside.

My aunt shares a telling story in her interview, one which reveals how close my grandparents were and that their marriage was a real partnership--one in which each truly cared about the other's needs and feelings. Speaking of the family's time in New York City when he was with the National Urban League, she says: "We had a call to come down to Tallahassee to interview with the Board of Control here. When he came here and looked he didn't see any possibilities at all. Most of the buildings had burned down. The sewage for the school had been emptied out on the football field. There was no adequate plumbing. He didn't say "yes" right away [to accept the position of President of Florida A&M]. He told the Board, 'I can't tell you anything until I go back to New York and talk with my wife.' Of course they were surprised that he wanted to talk to his wife about it. They told him to call his wife on the telephone, but he said "no," he wanted to see her. So he went back and my mother said, 'If you think you can do anything there worthwhile we'll go.' So we came to Tallahassee in 1924…"

Q. So following her death your grandfather spent another 12 years as President until his death.

LEE: Yes, that is correct. Aunt Birdie, who had lost her husband early in their marriage, was able to serve as housekeeper for her father for a number of years following her mother's death.

Q: You've mentioned how your grandfather's mother valued education and made sure he was exposed to all the schooling possible. And your grandfather's dedication to education is obvious. You also have said that both your parents were in the field of education. Coming from a segment of African American society that was very much involved in education, your grandfather and your parents -- what brought them to this?

LEE: Just as my grandfather was influenced by his mother to value education, that message was certainly passed down by him and my grandmother to their children. All seven graduated from college, and several obtained advanced degrees. The two girls, Birdie and Betty, went to Spelman College. Of the boys, Jack became a physician, George, a pharmacist, and Bob, Maurice and my father all became educators at different

colleges.

Q: Now tell me more about your father's education and work.

Born at Tuskegee Institute on October 12, 1907, my father attended public schools in Tuskegee, Kansas City, Missouri and New York City, all places my grandfather was working at the time. He completed high school at Morehouse Academy, then entered Morehouse College, where he spent two years.

Q: One of the traditionally black colleges in the Atlanta area.

LEE: Exactly. He then transferred to the University of Wisconsin, where he earned the B.A. and M.A. degrees. He did further graduate study at the University of Michigan and New York University.

After teaching English at Florida A. & M., Bishop and Wiley Colleges in Texas and Kentucky State he went to Alabama A& M. in 1943 as English Department Chairman. In 1953 he went into university administration and served as Registrar and Director of Admissions until his retirement in 1973. During his tenure he served as President of the National Association of College Deans and Registrars and as President (the first of his race) of the Alabama Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. On the social side, along with George O. McCalep and George H. Hobson he was co-founder of the first local chapter of Ala. A&M and Huntsville Greek-letter fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha.

My father was also very active in the community. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Huntsville Multi-Purpose Senior Center, Board of directors of the Fellowship Center, Board of Directors of the Huntsville-Madison County Council on Aging and served with the Huntsville Interfaith Volunteer Transportation Service.

Q. And what about your mother's education and work?

LEE: My mother was born on November 23, 1907 in Florence, Alabama and attended elementary and high schools in Alabama and at the Fisk Academy in Nashville, Tennessee. She then entered Fisk University, and upon graduating in 1928 she was offered a scholarship in Religious Education but declined it and entered Columbia University, where she received the M.A. degree in English in 1929.

Q: In the 20s, Columbia was the pre-eminent school for training teachers.

LEE: Yes, among other distinctions.

Before she and my father married on August 29, 1934, she served two years as Head of the Department of English at Bishop College (where she and my father first met) and two years in the same capacity at Florida A. & M. College.

She then taught at Kentucky State before joining the faculty of Alabama A. &. M. as an English teacher in 1947. After two years she was drafted into the Art Education Department and eventually was named Head of the Art Department--where she remained until her retirement in 1973.

My mother also did graduate study at the John Herron Art Institute and Indiana University and earned a commercial teaching certificate in ceramics.

After retiring, she, as my father, remained very involved in the community. She maintained active membership in numerous art organizations and was a member of the Society of Professional Women and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. She was a Stewardess of Phillips C.M.E. Church and a member of other service organizations. She also was a volunteer teacher at the Huntsville Fellowship Senior Citizens' Center and with Head Start.

Q: Now, let's turn to your mother's side of the family. What can you tell me about her parents and grandparents?

LEE: My mother, an only child, was the daughter of Abraham Henderson Hewitt, Jr. and Lottie Posey Hewitt. My grandfather, born on May 27, 1878 in Florence, (Lauderdale County, Alabama), was the owner of a small taxi fleet (six or seven cars), and my grandmother was a seamstress. I never knew my grandfather, as he died on November 27, 1941, just seven months before I was born, but I have loving memories of my grandmother -- a strong, proud, intelligent woman.

My grandmother, daughter of Charles Posey, Jr. and Kate Posey, was born on April 26, 1881 in Florence, Lauderdale County, Alabama, the second of ten children.

She received her very early education in the Posey school, a family school built by her grandfather, Charles Posey, Sr. (wife, Amie Murdock Posey) on their farm. She was taught by her father's sister, Emma Posey. Later she attended a church school sponsored by the American Missionary Association and taught by the minister of the First Congregational Church. She completed the courses offered at this school, which meant she went as far as the sixth grade, the most education available to blacks in that area following the emancipation of the slaves. She later began her career as a dressmaker in Florence for white people.

My grandmother Hewitt grew up in the Congregational Church where she was a member and officer for many years, and she later joined the Tennessee Valley Community Church whose services were held in the same building.

She was a charter member of the Terry Chapter of the Eastern Star and remained a loyal member until her death.

She devoted her life to service to her fellow man, regardless of race, religion, gender, belief or other distinguishing characteristic. A lasting memorial to her generosity and

caring exists in the form of the Westmoreland Boy Scout Camp to which she donated several acres of land. I always found this donation remarkable, especially because the camp was open solely to whites.

Q: Camp Westmoreland--one of the oldest Boy Scout Camps in the U.S.

LEE: Yes. It is listed on the Alabama Historical Commission Register of Landmarks and Heritage. The Camp began when in the late 1920s J.E.F. Westmoreland donated an initial 44 acres of land to start a permanent Boy Scout Camp in Northwest Alabama, located about five miles from Florence on the west bank of Shoals Creek. It has been hosting Boy Scouts and Camp events dating back to July, 1929. Nowadays it has grown to a 284-acre camp with its beautiful forest of hardwoods and pines.

My grandmother's donation was covered in the local Florence newspaper; I remember years ago coming across this paper with a photo of my grandmother and a man representing the Boy Scouts.

Q. What are some of your favorite memories of your grandmother?

LEE: As she lived only 75 miles from us -- she, in Florence, we, in Huntsville, we were able to visit her frequently, often spending Sundays -- or sometimes, weekends, with her.

My grandmother, whom my siblings and I affectionately called "Nannie,"--a name that stuck when my brother Ralph, the first-born in our family, couldn't say "Grannie,"--lived in a large, two-story five-bedroom house on a pretty tree-lined street in Florence -- a home built by my grandfather, where she lived another 37 years after his death. At some point -- I don't know in what year-- one of my grandmother's sisters, my great Aunt Sylvia, a school teacher seven years younger -- and I believe the only sister who never married -- moved into her home and occupied one of her upstairs bedrooms.

My grandmother would welcome us at her front door with open arms and a big smile, in her crisply–ironed cotton dress, shoes and stockings, and often an apron. She was a wonderful cook and I knew we were always in for a treat at her delicious Sunday dinners -- always an ample table, always with a large variety of fresh vegetables from her garden out back, and meats, potatoes, bread… Bread! Her hot cornbread, baked in a classic cast iron skillet, with melting butter -- it was scrumptious! And those fresh tomatoes straight from her garden -- I've never tasted anything like them since!! And she always had delicious desserts -- pies or cakes, ice cream…to top things off. I always left her table so full and content -- my insides couldn't stop smiling. And during our summer vacations we could often spend several nights -- and her breakfasts were just as spectacular -- bacon and eggs, grits (those wonderful southern "delicacies") toast and jelly -- such great memories!

Q. I can see her cooking made a great impression on you!

LEE: Yes, but it wasn't only her cooking. It was her whole being, everything about her.

She was an optimistic and happy person! She had a wonderful sense of humor and laughed frequently. I remember her as an avid reader and very interested in politics, keeping up with the news in her daily paper and on the radio. At news-time she would turn up her floor model radio and listen intently throughout the broadcast.

She was a woman of strong faith and often referred to the Bible, teaching us children how to live good, moral lives. I can still picture her saying, "The Bible says…" I remember seeing her on her knees at night by her bedside in her long white cotton gown and I felt so protected, feeling this devout woman had a direct line to God saying prayers for all of us!

My grandmother was also an astute businesswoman, owning several small houses and a small grocery store she rented out to others. And she had lots of friends in the community -- who would sometimes stop by while we were visiting -- and my grandmother always welcomed them with her wonderful hospitality, including her good food. There was a close family friend whom we called "Aunt Sadie;" Rev. and Mrs. Griffin; Ms. Hattie Pruitt and Ms. Hattie Pride. There was also my godmother, Mrs. Sadie Davis Jason (one of my mother's friends during her college days at Fisk University) and Mr. Jason -- the man from the Caribbean with his beautiful crisp accent, Ms. Zela Fields… The house was always filled with laughter-- whether with just the family, or with family and friends.

And there is another thing I can't leave out -- the times I delighted in retreating into my grandmother's parlor, a room just off to the right of the entrance to her home, a bit separated from the hustle and bustle of the kitchen and dining room. I would often go in and play her piano -- a large square grand, sometimes called "box" piano -- built in the 1860s, which I believe she had imported from Germany. It was of a beautiful rosewood, which had already turned a very dark brown, as they do over a period of 100 years. I first had to get past the "scary" music cabinet -- just to the left of the room's entrance. I thought it was frightening because on the door of the cabinet was carved the figure of something that reminded me of maybe a Greek God -- maybe Zeus -- which to my young eyes was a scary figure. That didn't prevent me from going into the cabinet, pulling out the sheet music, folding back the top of the piano after pushing the family pictures toward the back, and singing at the top of my lungs' along with the music I was playing. As I think about it now, nobody ever came into the room to quiet me, although I am sure my screeching was not always the most pleasant sounds emanating from that room! Both the piano and the music cabinet -- along with the floor-model radio I mentioned, have long been in storage in Alabama, and some day I dream of having the time to go through those things and enjoy them in my home -- and stopping paying all those storage costs, to boot!

Whenever the time came for the family to say our good-byes and return to Huntsville, she would send us on our way with the words, "Drive carefully and prayerfully," and then stand in front of her home waving goodbyes with her hand in a huge circular motion. We'd look behind waving back until our car turned the corner and she was no longer in sight.

Q. You certainly do have wonderful memories of your grandmother. What became of her?

LEE: At age ninety she was forced by the city of Florence to move from her beloved home -- after having fought the city for several years, trying to keep them from taking over her property for commercial use. She finally had to give in, and moved to Huntsville, Alabama where my parents were living -- as I said, about 75 miles away. Even then she insisted on buying her own home, not moving in with my parents, who would have welcomed this incredible woman in their roomy home with open arms. She remained an independent, healthy and happy woman, an inspiration to us all, until her death in February, 1977 at age 96 in Huntsville following a brief illness.

Q. You must have found her death difficult since you were obviously very close to her.

LEE: Yes, I did. And the really hard part was that I was unable to attend her funeral, which took place in her beloved Florence on February 6, 1977 in the Tennessee Valley Community Church, where she had belonged for so many years prior to her move to Huntsville. I had joined the Foreign Service in June, 1976, eight months before her death, and when she became ill in early 1977, I was in Spanish language training at the Foreign Service Institute in preparation for my April assignment to Mexico City. My parents thought it best that I not interrupt my training and advised me not to return to Alabama. The good thing was that I had visited her only a few weeks earlier over the holiday season and I sat on her bedside and hugged her tiny body, and she hugged me -- and I could feel a real exchange of love. I was consoled also by the fact that she had led a long and happy and remarkable life. I am also happy that I had the presence of mind to interview my grandmother about her life after she moved into her house in Huntsville, and I have her voice and her stories recorded for our family.

My father sadly couldn't travel to Florence with my mother to attend my grandmother's funeral because he had been hospitalized just days before her death. A statement by him, printed in the funeral program, is telling:

> "I regret that because of temporary hospitalization, I cannot be present at the funeral rites of Lottie Posey Hewitt. However, I should like to add to whatever remarks may be made.
>
> "During my many years of association with her, including forty-two years of marriage to her daughter, Katherine Inez, I have never known a person so firm in her embrace of Truth, as she saw it, Right and Honesty. I sincerely believe that her influence will be felt for many generations. In this way she shall continue to live in this earth in the future as she has in the past."

Q: Clearly, a fascinating life well-lived. Do you know anything more of your grandfather?

LEE: The only other information I could find about him was that he was born in Florence on May 27, 1828 and died in Florence on November 27, 1941, seven months before my birth. My brother Ralph remembers him at age three-and-a-half at our grandparents'

home shortly before his death. I hope to learn more about his life during future research.

Q: And do you know anything about your great-grandparents?

LEE: My grandmother's parents were farmers and eventually owned their farms following emancipation of slaves. Her father, Charles Posey, Jr., born in Lauderdale County three miles from Florence, was a prosperous farmer. His wife, my grandmother's mother, was Kate Murdock. At the time of his death on January 21, 1934, he and great-grandmother Kate had six surviving children, five daughters and one son. A hand-written obituary I found among family papers says "he was a member of the First Congregational Church of Florence" and "active in church work until his health failed." He served a period of time as deacon of his church and "was always interested in Christian work." The obituary concludes, "He was loyal to his home, a loving husband and father. He was always a law-abiding citizen and respected by all his neighbors. He was an unusual character, being peaceable and quiet at all times, diligent in business and highly dependable. He was a model for others."

As with my father's ancestors, education was valued highly by my mother's side. For example, as I mentioned earlier, my great-grandfather Charles Posey, Jr., built a log cabin so his children could go to school.

Q: Yes, you mentioned how the hunger for education was passed down to both your parents from their ancestors, and it has continued with you obviously. I believe you have your B.A. from Fisk and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Stanford. What about your siblings?

LEE: My brother Ralph has a Ph.D. in inorganic chemistry, my brother Maurice earned an MBA, and my sister Charlotte has an M.D. degree.

Q: Quite an accomplished family! Your father was a teacher, and this was, again, one of the traditional black universities?

LEE: I've mentioned that both my parents were teaching in Texas, one, at Bishop College, the other, at Wylie, when they first met. Later my mother taught at Florida A&M and then both parents taught at Kentucky State. Then my father accepted a position at Alabama A&M in Huntsville, Alabama. Actually, the campus was called Normal, Alabama. Now the address is Huntsville, though the campus has not moved. My parents by then had three children and my mother was a stay–at-home mom until each child got into nursery school. So at the time, because there was no housing on campus for his family our mother and the three of us -- my brothers, one, almost five-and-a-half and the other, almost four, and I, 14 months old -- moved in temporarily with her mother, our grandmother, in Florence, Alabama, which was 75 miles from Huntsville. My father commuted every weekend to Florence until the house they were building for us was finished. I think we stayed in Florence about a year and a half, and during that period my younger sister was born. We then all moved to Normal and lived right across from two of the girls' dormitories and a few steps from the campus dining hall. I stayed there until I

went away to college.

Q: Describe growing up in your family. Both mother and father being educators just put a certain cast to your growing up. You weren't going to go out and tinker with motorcycles particularly. How did you find life with your family and three other children?

LEE: I remember those days as extremely happy and relaxed days in an isolated and insulated environment. I remember our happy household, wonderful times spent with my parents and my two brothers and sister -- playing cards and board games with my siblings and learning games my father brought home to play with us. I remember my mother's love of cooking and always having balanced and delicious meals for us every single day of the week -- and the lemon meringue pies, to name one of her many "famous" desserts for Sunday dinner. I remember our Sunday trips to visit our grandmother Hewitt -- mentioned earlier -- as well as car trips to Tallahassee, Florida to visit our Florida A&M relatives -- my father's siblings and their families -- and stopping off en route in Tuskegee to visit my father's brother and his wife, Uncle Jack and Aunt Jean. I remember our Sunday afternoon drives around Huntsville and singing in the car as a family, my father and brothers' trips into the campus woods behind our house to get a Christmas tree and the fun times we all had decorating it…

And the Alabama A&M community was a real family -- our family, along with the Carters, McCaleps, Gills, Chamberses, Wallaces, Bradfords, Bonners, etc. to name some of the faculty members and their children. Remembering those days I think of going from house to house of faculty members with my two brothers and sister and the other campus kids on Halloween Night screaming "Trick or Treat!;" of skipping down the main campus street with the other kids singing songs; of going from home to home singing Christmas carols with the other campus kids; of attending A&M's Saturday football games with my father refereeing the games in his black and white striped uniform and cleats or announcing the play-by-plays over the stadium loudspeaker; of playing baseball with the campus kids on the lawn in front of one of the girls' dormitories, Councill Hall, right across from our home; of riding my bike around the campus, of visiting my father's office or my mother's classroom, of attending events in Bibb Graves Hall, the administration building which housed an auditorium…

Q: What types of events?

LEE: Oh, the college campus had a rich cultural environment and its students, and by extension, its faculty and their families, had extraordinary opportunities, including exposure to a variety of programs: from poet Langston Hughes, to plays, such as Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, Anouilh's *Antigone*, Tennessee Williams' *Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Glass Menagerie*, to pianist Philippa Schuyler, to singers tenor Roland Hayes and contralto Marian Anderson, to dancer Pearl Primus…truly an active and wide-reaching exposure to the arts. Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. spoke on the campus as well as Civil Rights leader Whitney Young.

Aside from the "academic" part of the curriculum for the college students Alabama A&M also had rich athletic and "Greek Letter" programs, programs which we children could also enjoy. I loved attending the basketball and football games and watching the annual programs put on by the fraternities and sororities during their initiation periods. As mentioned earlier my father was an "Alpha," and my mother, a "Delta." Campus families attended events sponsored by all the Greek Letter organizations, no matter their individual affinities. For example, my school librarian, Mrs. Winona Lewis, member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, invited me, child of a Delta, to be her sponsored young adult in AKA's "Debutante Ball;" my mother was the "chapter mother" of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity although my father was an Alpha.

In short, I can't think of a better life as a child growing up in my loving family on the college campus with all that environment had to offer.

Q: It sounds like you had a quite an idyllic life in a very close-knit community. You mentioned being isolated, however.

LEE: Maybe "insulated" is the better word. Let me explain. We children were largely insulated from what was going on as far as racism and segregation laws were concerned. It's hard to imagine now that so much discrimination and so many denials were taking place right outside the campus borders. I was aware somewhat that my parents were experiencing it, but while growing up on the campus and attending in all-black school -- we said "Negro" at the time -- I don't remember being exposed to it the way my parents were as they interacted outside the confines of the campus community. That's what I mean: that I didn't feel this overt prejudice regularly that I know my parents experienced.

Of course, living on the campus didn't shield us children completely from prejudiced acts. For example, one time as a high school student in the late 1950s I was the only black taking some type of competitive exam in the gym of a white Huntsville high school. My father had arranged for me to participate. "They" put a screen around me to separate me from the whites in the gym. Another time there were two of us black students taking some test -- again, in a white high school -- and we were separated in a room away from whites with our own white exam proctor. I remember thinking how stupid that was -- having our separate quarters with an extra proctor. What a waste of resources, I thought! Or I remember being rushed to Dr. Donaldson in Fayetteville, Tennessee, about an hour from Huntsville (which is in north Alabama near the Tennessee border)) to get my arm stitched up after I cut it on a window pane at home -- because there was no black doctor at that time in Huntsville and I needed immediate attention. There was no telling how long I would have had to wait until the whites were taken care of if I had gone to a white Huntsville doctor.

Q: I was interviewing John Bartholomew. I don't know if you know him.

LEE: I know the name.

Q: He grew up in Washington and was saying that for a long time -- he came out of the

black community -- he just didn't know any whites. Not only was it segregated, but in a way there were two really different worlds. Did you find this?

LEE: I wouldn't put it like that. To be sure, there was no everyday interaction in schools, for example, because they were segregated; no white playmates came over to my house to play, for example, and there were no public swimming pools blacks were allowed to use. But we would see whites in other public places, such as the grocery stores or department stores and interacted with the cashiers. Or we children saw the white truck driver delivering candy for sale to our school -- who always seemed to have a nice smile for us kids. Or when we visited my grandmother in Florence, for example, we would come into contact sometimes with "Ms. Bessie," my grandmother's white next-door neighbor. (I'm not sure if it registered with me why my grandmother called her "Ms. Bessie' and she called my grandmother simply "Lottie.")

So I guess I never felt we were in two different worlds -- we were in the same world but aware of the rules of segregation and the prejudices that existed in that world. That gradually changed in the years after I left for college. I'll come back to that.

Throughout those years our parents made sure we knew that we were as important as whites were, and our father made sure that we knew our rights and what we could do legally, and where we could sit legally when whites were around. We'd drive into town to go shopping, for example. You would see a little fountain that said "colored," and then a big fountain next-door to it that said "white," but our father always let us know that we could drink out of the white fountain if we wanted to.

For example, he said, "They have those signs there, but they cannot arrest you if you think the "white" fountain looks better, or the water is colder, or if the little one is dirty. You can drink out of the other one." And he told me similar things as I grew up and went to college. He told me where I could sit on the bus since I was an interstate passenger -- crossing the border between Alabama and Tennessee -- and what the rules were if you were traveling intrastate, within Alabama. But that's getting a little ahead.

Q: This was not a time, particularly in a state like Alabama, when there were great challenges to the system. It was a different world.

LEE: It was, indeed. Not until the Fall of 1959, as a Freshman at Fisk University in Nashville, did I personally experience organized protests against Jim Crow atrocities.

While I was still in school in Alabama our challenges to the system were in the form of individual protests, and my family would protest in our own way on a case-by-case basis. For example I distinctly remember a time when we shopped at Hill Groceries, and I think there was a running account and maybe every week or every month, I don't know how often, my father would get the bill and he would pay for these groceries.

Q: That was very much the pattern, the "tab."

LEE: And I remember that my father stopped shopping at Hills because he insisted that the grocer call his wife "Mrs. Lee." He said the grocer could call him by his first name, Ralph, because no whites called blacks "Mr." or "Mrs." But he insisted that they call my mother "Mrs. Lee." The store refused to do it. So my father closed his account and moved it to Blevins Grocery, where Mr. Blevins called him Mr. Lee and called my mother "Mrs. Lee." So we had those kinds of protests, economic protests, or challenges, as you called them, to the system. I'll give you another example. I remember one time we drove up to a hamburger stand and my brother got out of the car to walk up to the window to order sandwiches for the family. Now there was one side of the stand with a sign saying "coloreds" over the window and the other side had a window with a sign stating "whites." It was around dusk, and the "colored" side was dark and unappealing, and the "white" side was brightly lit. My father told my brother, "Go to the white side, it's dark over on the colored side." So my brother went to the white side and tried to order hamburgers for the family. He came back to the car and said, "Dad, they said I have to go to the other window. They won't serve me at that window." So my father said, "Get in the car." And we drove off. That was how we challenged the system individually before the days of organized protests by blacks to discrimination in Alabama.

But just a few years after I left for college in 1959, blacks as a group started to challenge the system in Huntsville. In early1962, for example, Joan Cashin, the wife of a local black dentist, John Cashin, was arrested while involved in a sit-in protest at a lunch counter. In the late 1960s that dentist, by then one of the most influential civil-rights leaders in Huntsville and Alabama, founded the National Democratic Party of Alabama (NDPA) during the height of segregationist Governor George Wallace's political dominance. Cashin and others succeeded in getting thousands of voters registered who previously had been denied the right to vote. In 1968, when Alabama refused to allow NDPA candidates to appear on ballots, Dr. Cashin filed suit against the state, and the case landed in the U.S. Supreme Court, which ordered the state to include the party on its ballots. In 1970 more than 170 candidates ran on the NDPA ticket for state and local office, including Cashin, who ran against Wallace during Wallace's bid for a second term as Governor. Although Cashin lost the election in a landslide, his challenges helped lay the groundwork for other black politicians to hold office in Alabama -- 107 following the 1970 election, more than any other southern state.

Q: Before we get to your college years let's talk a bit more about your school years in Alabama. In school, as the children of teachers, did you find - I suppose there were an awful lot of other children who were also the children of teachers?

LEE: Although all the children of faculty members attended the same school, there were not that many children of teachers, comparatively speaking. I would guess that in any given school year there were no more than a handful -- ten, at the most, in the entire school, grades one through twelve -- in a school with a total population of, I'd say, between 900 and 1000 students. Most of the children in the school I attended from second grade through twelfth (I skipped the first grade) were children of farmers. And many of those attended rural schools in their communities as far as their schools went -- maybe through the sixth or ninth grade -- and then were bused to our school to complete their

high school education. Since so many were children of farmers that meant there was a lot of absenteeism during the cotton harvesting season because they had to miss school to pick cotton.

Q: I would think there would be a tremendous discrepancy between a farmer's child in Alabama, white or black, and the child of professors at a college, white or black, in those times. Those were two quite different social worlds.

LEE: Quite different. My parents did a good job of letting us four children know that although we had certain advantages within the college community we were not to let that go to our heads. We were taught that we should respect everybody, be kind to everybody. We were aware that we were quote "well off" when compared to others, as far as the things our parents could provide for us. And our parents certainly weren't rich-- but they could provide for us. We did not have to miss school to work. I can remember that every year during the graduation ceremonies perfect attendance certificates were handed out to students. And I can remember our father's telling us, "You each are getting a perfect attendance certificate, but" -- and I've forgotten the exact words he used, but in essence -- "don't let it go to your head, because those children had to miss school to work, and you didn't have to do that." So don't get a big head because you are getting these awards and certificates." We were known as the smart kids. We got mostly A's. We didn't have to miss school, and we had parents who could help us with our homework. I'm not saying that the farmers didn't help their children, but still, I'm sure there was a difference.

Q: This was still when the public school system was abysmal, particularly for blacks. When you start saying Alabama, blacks, farmers, you're moving farther down the line - at that time.

LEE: You know, we had some very good teachers at our school, Councill Training School, named after William Hooper Councill, the first president of Huntsville Normal School, a predecessor of present-day Alabama A&M University. Located at the edge of the Alabama A&M campus, Councill Training School was a "laboratory school," meaning it operated in association with the college and was used for training A&M's students studying to be teachers -- we called them "practice teachers" or "student teachers."

As I said, we had some very good teachers, and in some cases, even outstanding. To be sure, we also had a few bad teachers, but we had some excellent teachers who did fantastic jobs even in the face of limited resources from the state school system. We students got attention and our teachers made sure we advanced according to our abilities. For example, I remember one teacher called me aside - this was when I was in ninth grade English - and said, "You can read extra books. I want you to go to the library and do some extra background reading." But I also remember a few teachers I didn't respect, that I considered to be "bad" teachers. I remember going home and crying when I was in the 10^{th} or 11^{th} grade. I was taking physics, and my teacher didn't know physics. So I went home very frustrated. I remember my father sat down and read the textbook with me. He probably had never had physics, having grown up at the time he did, but he

helped me and I was able to get through that class and feel that I was learning something.

Q: You were in Huntsville. This was a place where an awful lot of German rocket scientists came. Did that have any impact?

LEE: It definitely did. I'm impressed that you know about Huntsville.

Q: I'm 77.

LEE: Oh, I see. Did you grow up in the south?

Q: No, I grew up in Annapolis, partly, and my father had a lumber mill and he lived in Meridian, Mississippi. And I remember Meridian. It was a different world, farmers coming in with mules on Saturday. I was essentially a northern kid watching this. It was like a foreign country.

LEE: The space industry's coming to Huntsville had a noticeable impact. It grew from about 13,000 during World War II to about 40,000 in the early 1950s to close to 200,000 at the height of the rocket production.

In 1950 at the start of the Korean War about 1000 personnel were transferred from the army installation at Fort Bliss, Texas to Redstone Arsenal to form a guided missile center. This group was led by Wernher von Braun, who over the next twenty years greatly influenced the U.S.'s missile and space programs -- including the Redstone Rocket, the Jupiter-C launch vehicle, a descendant of the Redstone, and the Saturn boosters used by NASA in the Apollo Lunar Landing Program. It was while he was there that the U.S. landed the first man on the moon.

During this period Huntsville gained the nickname of "The Rocket City" and billed itself as the "Space Capital of the Universe." Many new companies joined the Huntsville industrial community during the 1960s, and the Cummings Research Park was developed just north of Redstone Arsenal to partially accommodate the city's industrial growth. The Park is the second largest of its type in the U.S. with a nearly 4000--acre research and technology campus.

Q. Huntsville has, indeed, an interesting history. Now, let's go back to something you said about a teacher encouraging you to read beyond the class assignments. Were you much of a reader?

LEE: I did read and there were lots of books in the house. My parents read. But I can't remember growing up having my nose always stuck in a book. I vividly remember, however, often going as a child to the bookcase in our living room that had the 50-so volumes of the *Harvard Classics* -- skipping over Milton and Emerson and Plutarch and Cervantes until my hand landed on Volume 17, which took me to the lands of Aesop and Grimm and Andersen. At other times I'd pull a volume from our *World Book Encyclopedia* set and read about various people and places, from Abraham Lincoln to

South America. And Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* was my favorite novel. I can still remember the yellow book cover and brown binding, and the opening line, "Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents," said, I believe, by Jo. I couldn't imagine Christmas without any presents!

Q: How about sports? You're a tall woman, almost six feet, aren't you?

LEE: I'm six feet, actually, but I was six-one-and-one-half at one time. I've shrunk!

Q: When did you hit six-one?

LEE: I think I was born six-one. (Laughs). As far back as I could remember I was always 5'11.

Q: Did this affect you?

LEE: Yes, it did. I was always the tallest girl in the class, and taller than most of the boys, except for Jimmy Battle, and maybe one or two others. That did affect me growing up. In fact I hated being tall in those days -- now, it's great to be tall, and I love it -- but in those days I wanted to fit in, to be like everybody else, as youngsters are prone to do. I don't know if you noticed that I don't slouch, and I attribute that to my parents, especially my father. He used to say as we walked down the street, "Keep your shoulders back." I might have ended up with rounded shoulders, if it hadn't been for him. I was the tallest in the family. My father was 5'11. My mother was 5'6, my sister, 5'3, one brother, 5'11, the other, 5'9. On my father's side there were all kinds of heights. He had two sisters 5' each, a brother, 6'3 and one 6'2. My mother was an only child. Being tall wasn't the only thing that made me feel "different;" I was very fair–skinned. One day a classmate jokingly told me (at least, he was smiling when he said it, and he was a good friend), "You are the teacher's pet because you are yellow like she is." After that I wanted to be brown–skinned. I remember going out in my backyard one afternoon and lying in the sun trying to get a suntan so I would fit in with my classmates.

Q: Societies and cultures are different all over the place. In some places in the black community, the fairer the skin -

LEE: I was never aware of any prejudice for or against my skin color in my group. Later on I felt it, after I left Alabama and interacted with others. But there, it wasn't anything I focused on. It was my height I was so aware of. (Laughs.)

Q: How about sports? Were you always the number one choice of the basketball team?

LEE: I was good, but not outstanding, in basketball. We even had our little bowling thing in gym, and dance class, and I did well in all of those. But I don't remember emphasis on sports because of my height. I participated. It was just that when I was looking around at the little boys, that's when the height made a difference.

Q: Did they have the equivalent of what they used to call sock hops?

LEE: Definitely, they did.

Q: Were you able to find young boys of a suitable height?

LEE: I actually did. I danced with the shorter ones. Someone told me one time, "Never refuse a dance. When a boy comes up to ask you to dance, don't make him feel bad by saying 'no.'" It was just a general thing, for girls. I went to a school where everyone knew everybody. I think in my class the graduating number was 44. In the whole school, grade one through grade 12, there were just under 1,000. The kids would occasionally make jokes a bit, but also I excelled in class. I was respected because I did well academically. A lot of the kids looked at me as being better off because I lived on the campus. So I had those things that counteracted the being tall kind of thing. So, yeah, I danced with the shorter boys and with the tall ones. I was conscious of it, aware of it, but I didn't feel discriminated against or made fun of by my schoolmates. I just remember, people -- mostly adults -- would comment. One of my parents' friends would say, for example, "Oh look at how tall she is." I used to tell myself, "Well, you know it must not be that bad, because they don't come out if you see a really fat person and say to that person, "My, you are fat!" –and being extraordinarily fat was considered by society at that time to be undesirable. I thought, "The fact that they say 'Look how tall she is" -- maybe it's not as bad as I think it is." I was rationalizing to make myself feel better. And it worked!

Nobody in my family -- my parents or my siblings -- ever commented on or teased me about my height or made me feel something was wrong with me. To this day I am grateful for that, because I'm sure I would not have been so accepting of my height back then if they hadn't been so loving. And as I look back, I'm sure it was harder on my parents than on me -- sensing I was unhappy with my height!

Q: We're talking about a different era, and I'm trying to pick up some of these things. Sports for women were not pushed very much. Today, if one looks at a tall woman, one says, "Oh boy," this gives her an added thing in basketball or volleyball, rather than "Where will she find the right boy?"

LEE: Indeed. It's a different era. And when I got into my twenties I also often got the question, "Are you a model?" Or, "You should be a model." Or I'd often get the comment, "All the models are tall." I'd often answer, "but I don't want to be a model." Those comments put an idea in my head, and years later, after I started teaching following graduate school, I did go to modeling school and ended up with a very nice portfolio, if I do say so myself!

Regarding sports, though, I did end up really liking volleyball when I went to college -- and when I spent a year at the University of Munich right after I graduated from college and before I entered graduate school. I liked being up close to the net and spiking the ball!

Q: I've got a granddaughter who towers over me, and she's great in volleyball. By the time you got to high school, did you find there were some courses you cared for more than others?

LEE: I liked English, I liked math. History wasn't a favorite; it might have had to do with the teacher. I liked what we called the Core class; today that would probably be called, "World Cultures." I liked Home Economics, learning about cooking and sewing and child care. In fact, I liked most of my subjects.

Q: You were about 12 or 13 when Brown vs. Board of Education came up. It took a long time for the south to absorb the mandatory integration of schools. How did that affect you?

LEE: I remember when that decision was made. I was a newspaper girl on the college campus. My parents always made sure we all had little jobs; I guess they figured that helped develop a good character and work ethic! My brothers were in charge of the paper route for *The Birmingham News*. Dean Carter's sons had *The Huntsville Times.* My sister and I would deliver *The Birmingham News* in the girls' dormitories for our brothers, and I distinctly remember the headline on that momentous day as I entered Councill Hall with my stack of papers: "Segregation Outlawed!" I remember thinking, "What's going to happen next?" and, "This is something interesting, exciting." Nothing in our schools changed, of course, before I went away to college in 1959 a few months after I turned 17.

Q: George Wallace was blocking the door.

LEE: Yes, indeed. And in 1963, the year I graduated from college. Gov. Wallace literally kept his campaign promise to "stand in the schoolhouse door" to block integration of Alabama public schools when he stood in a University of Alabama doorway to prevent African American students Vivian Malone and James Hood from enrolling. Of course his attempts were thwarted when President Kennedy federalized the Alabama National Guard, which intervened to force Wallace to step aside so the students could enter. With that action he failed to keep his inaugural promise of "segregation now, segregation tomorrow and segregation forever."

Q: Alabama was as far behind, though we're talking here in Virginia which shut down the school system for a while.

LEE: It certainly did. And schools were segregated when my sister, who was three years behind me in school, wanted to go to medical school. After she graduated from Fisk the state of Alabama paid the difference in tuition costs between the University of Alabama and the University of Indiana, because there was no black university in Alabama that offered a medical degree at that time, and the University of Alabama was still segregated. And then once the University of Alabama was integrated, while she was still at IU, the state stopped paying.

Q: I take it that where you were, in many ways, was still almost an island. This was an issue, but it wasn't -

LEE: For me personally, it wasn't. I do know that my parents suffered, and I'm sure a lot more than we knew. I remember phone calls coming, the battles that my father fought. They did not let it affect us. A friend of mine who is my age, who grew up in New Jersey, says he thinks I had it better. Because in New Jersey, they were supposed to be integrated with no prejudice. But he felt the prejudice in the integrated schools. Whereas in the segregated schools, we didn't have all the resources that the white schools had, but we had teachers who cared, who gave us the attention.

Q: You were also on a college campus, and you had the laboratory school.

LEE: As I mentioned earlier, what we had on the campus was a lot of intellectual stimulation and community interaction. The whole campus felt to me like one big happy family. Of course, that was from a child's perception the entire time I was growing up. It was a good feeling exposure.

Q: *What about family trips outside of Huntsville? How was traveling for blacks during the time of segregation?*

LEE: - would drive to Birmingham, which wasn't that far away, but there was a black-owned motel there, the A. G. Gaston Motel. That's where we stayed. Also, some summers we drove to Tallahassee, Florida to see my father's brother and sisters and their families. His brother and one sister were employed at Florida A&M University. We'd stop off en route in Tuskegee, where my father was born and where another brother and his wife lived. Of course, on those trips the families would provide lodging so we didn't need to fear not finding a hotel or motel that was open for blacks. And I've mentioned our trips to Florence, Alabama to visit my grandmother. We didn't do any trips across the country as a family, although both parents traveled by plane on business or other types of trips. I started traveling to parts far and wide after I entered college.

Q: How about beaches?

LEE: There were no beaches open to blacks close to Huntsville -- although I remember how wonderful it was to go to the beautiful Lake Hall beach near Tallahassee during our summer vacations in Florida. In Huntsville we couldn't go to the white swimming pool and there was no pool for blacks. If we wanted to swim we had to go to Rogersville, Alabama between Huntsville and Florence, to a place on the Tennessee River where blacks could go. I have fond memories of that, our father teaching us how to swim, while my mother, who didn't like the water, sat under a tree reading a book. Afterwards we'd have a wonderful picnic lunch.

Q: How about movies?

LEE: There was a black-owned movie house in Huntsville. My brothers would go see

westerns on Saturday. During the week, the movies weren't anything that our parents wanted us to see. But I do remember occasionally there would be a movie that all the people at Alabama A&M would want to go. One was called *The Robe.* I can't think of others.

Q: But you weren't much of a movie buff, then.

LEE: No, because we didn't have the movies to go to. Whereas, when we went to Florence where my grandmother lived, 75 miles away, we could go to the theater, open to blacks and whites, but the blacks had to sit upstairs, separated from the whites, who sat downstairs. There we could see some of the current movies.

Q: We're talking about a very difficult time, but I think it's important to get a historical record of what it was like. But I guess the other side is that under limitations, this is true in an awful lot of circumstances, people often have more of a sense of community and have a good time by being together.

LEE: Definitely, and I have very good memories of growing up. We were a very close-knit campus community, and had there was lots of fun.

Q: By 1959, you went away to school. Was the idea that you weren't going to go to your parents' school?

LEE: We didn't go to Alabama A&M, where our parents were teaching, but we did go to our parents' schools! I'll explain in a minute.

Leading up to the time for college, I don't remember ever discussing where I wanted to go to college; I just knew I always wanted to go to Fisk University in Nashville. That's where my mother had gone. It was the idea that when you go to college you leave home. But I don't remember my parents' ever asking, "Do you want to stay here at Alabama A&M, or do you want to go to Fisk?" As I said, somehow I just knew I wanted to go to Fisk.

Q: There were Morehouse and one or two others, Spelman I think - these were the pre-eminent schools that were clustered around Atlanta.

LEE: Morehouse and Spelman belong to the Atlanta University Center, the largest consortium of African American private universities of higher education. AUC also consists of Clark Atlanta University, Interdenominational Theological Center and the Morehouse School of Medicine.

Q: You went to Fisk from '59 to '63. Describe Fisk - how you saw it when you first went there? This was a coed school.

LEE: Yes, I went to Fisk University, my mother's alma mater. That's what I meant a minute ago when I said my brothers and sister and I didn't go to Alabama A&M

University, our "parents' university," where they were teaching, but we nevertheless went to "our parents" schools, in the sense that we four attended our parents' alma maters. My sister entered Fisk when I was a senior, and my brothers both attended Morehouse College, my father's school before he transferred to the University of Wisconsin. I remember that at one point at least three of the four of us were all in college at the same time! Looking back, I see that must have been a terrible financial burden on our parents!

Yes, Fisk was a co-ed school at the time, and still is. I remember the university officials, kept really close tabs on the students, especially their female students. For example, we had a lot or regulations. Women could not ride in cars without the written permission of our parents. Girls could not wear slacks except on Saturday. (Laughter) Fisk women did this, or didn't do that. There were these rules-- how to dress and when we went to church we wore a hat. I don't remember gloves. But the university was an extension of our families. Fisk definitely stood in loco parentis to us. And the fact that at least two of the faculty members during my time there knew my parents -- Dr. John Cottin, who had taught my mother French 35 or 40 years earlier, and Ms. Mary D. Shane, who came in contact with my father at professional meetings around the country -- she, as Registrar at Fisk, and he, as Registrar and Director of Admissions at Alabama A&M.

Q: The role of religion in your family and upbringing: how important was this for you?

LEE: I remember that for years we would go to the campus church services, which were interdenominational and were held in the auditorium of Bibb Graves Hall, the administration building. We were good friends with the minister, who also was the head of the music department. We kids also went to Sunday School, taught by the father of my second-grade teacher, Mr. Wilson. We would go to church there, but we didn't "belong" to a church; nobody could just "join" the campus church. My parents, as they were growing up, did belong to churches. My father was a Baptist, my mother was a Congregationalist, but there were no Congregational churches in Huntsville, and my father had not sought out a Baptist church. They were very satisfied with the religious training on campus. Nobody really talked about it a lot. We went to church.

I do know that when we visited my grandmother in Florence she always lectured us on reading the Bible and believing in God; she would talk a lot about religion. But at home we never talked about it. I just knew that my parents had a faith. It was only one day when I came home saying that when we were registering on the first day of the school year, maybe I was 12, 13, and we were lined up, and the teacher was asking each of us questions, and the teacher asked me, "What church do you belong to?" I said, "Well, we go to the A&M Chapel but we don't belong." So Maezel Douglas, one of my classmates, turned around and said, "Oooh, Inez, you don't belong to a church?" (I grew up being called by my middle name until I went to college, where my roommate dubbed me "Kathy, a nickname which stuck for the next 35 years. Now I'm called "Katherine" by most people I've met during the past several years.) At any rate, I was affected by Maezel's comments. So I went home and I told my parents, "Maezel Douglas said I didn't belong to a church." Whereupon, my parents started taking us to visit churches out in the city until we found a church. We visited several churches - we found a church, I'm

not sure how long it took. We found a Methodist church that we joined and I could then tell Maezel that I belonged to a church.

Q: When did Martin Luther King and that movement - did you become aware of that?

LEE: I first heard Dr. King talk when I was a freshman at college. He came to the Fisk Chapel. I have an entry in my college diary about that event. And I had just graduated from college and was off to Germany to study when the 1963 March on Washington took place, where Dr. King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech. And when the Selma-to-Montgomery march occurred in 1965 I was on the West Coast in grad school. I was on a subsequent trip to Germany to study when Dr. King was assassinated in Memphis in April, 1968.

Q: Growing up through high school?

LEE: It was when I was in junior high school that Rosa Parks, in late 1955, refused to give up her bus seat to a white man. That was the catalyst for the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and Dr. King was a leader in that effort.

Q: In Tennessee, some of the traditional black colleges were a source of what later became SNCC and others. You might say, a hotbed of the civil rights movement.

LEE: Exactly. When I arrived at Fisk in Nashville in the Fall of 1959 to begin my freshman year of college, little did I imagine what lay ahead during the next months -- student protests to desegregate downtown Nashville. There were workshops on non-violence, sit-ins at the lunch counters at the five-and-tens such as Woolworth's, McClellan's and Kresge's, and more sit-ins at Walgreen's, Greyhound and Trailways, and locally-owned department stores. Students attending Nashville's black colleges -- Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, Tennessee A & I (now Tennessee State University) and the American Baptist Theological Seminary joined in the protests.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), was founded in April, 1960 by young people who had emerged as leaders of the sit-in protest movements breaking out in college towns all over the south. They saw the need for sharing experiences, training leaders and promoting communication among the independent sit-in groups. The organizing conference was held at Shaw University in Raleigh, NC. Reports indicate that the most influential of the student delegations came from the Nashville Student Movement, the Atlanta Coalition and the Nonviolent Action Group at Howard here in Washington, D.C. Marion Barry, a graduate student of organic chemistry at Fisk, was chosen as SNCC's first Chairman. Incidentally, when Barry was elected Mayor of Washington, he became the first prominent civil rights activist to be leader of a major American City.

One of the first things I remember about the protests was seeing Marion Barry and Diane Nash, a fellow Fisk student activist, standing on boxes telling students about the protest marches that were being planned to integrate downtown lunch counters at the dime stores

and a drugstore.

Q: A drugstore with counters which were not even segregated - which were forbidden. Did you feel part of the movement?

LEE: My freshman year I took part in the march on Walgreen's. I have a photo in my freshman year of the people marching in front of me; I captioned it, "Our Stride for Freedom." There were lots of arrests. Some students were put in jail. The Dean of Students asked those of us who were under 18 not to participate because minors ended up in juvenile courts -- or something to that effect. So I didn't after that. I think my parents were relieved that I wasn't out there marching or being arrested. Everybody was doing it on campus, so I joined in.

Q: Did the civil rights movement begin to dominate the campus?

LEE: It certainly did, although regular school activities continued, of course: freshman orientation, being "crabs," the name given to new students…And, of course, classes went on as usual. But the protest movement was right up there with all the ordinary school events. Simultaneously, the local newspapers were covering the movement, everything from the off-campus strategy workshops on non-violence attended by students from the various Nashville schools, to the marches, to the sit-ins. And similar protests were happening across the south.

Those were exciting times, as we felt important changes were bound to come, but they were also scary times.

I remember an especially unsettling time was when Attorney Z. Alexander Looby's house was bombed. He was the first lawyer to offer financial and legal services to student protestors, defending students who were arrested in the Nashville sit-ins. In response to his support of the students, segregationists bombed his home, nearly destroying it. He and his family were not harmed, thank goodness. That happened in April, 1960, seven months after I entered Fisk.

It was also scary to learn about students being put in jail -- and about how they were learning in the workshops to endure such indignities and pains as having cigarettes being put out on their backs as they sat at the lunch counters or being slapped or punched and just taking it without any kind of self-defense. Those students were much braver than I could ever have been! I was not unhappy that I wouldn't reach the age of 18 until July of 1960, the summer between my freshman and sophomore years, and could therefore have a legitimate "excuse" for not putting myself in harm's way -- although as a second- class citizen I was already in harm's way, if you think about it…

Q: Were things changing in Tennessee while you were there? Could you go to Walgreen's?

LEE: After the bombing of Attorney Looby's home, 2500-3000 civil rights leaders and

students from local schools, led by Fisk students, marched silently to meet with Mayor Ben West at the courthouse. In response to Diane Nash, who asked, “Do you feel it is wrong to discriminate against a person solely on the basis of their race or color?,” West said, “yes.” After that exchange, the Mayor recommended that store owners put an end to discriminatory practices. In May of 1960 under an agreement between black leaders and city businesses, lunch counters in Nashville were desegregated. With that, Nashville became the first major city, outside of Texas, to begin integrating its businesses. And by October Attorney Looby and his associates had gotten charges dismissed against some 90 students for “disrupting trade and commerce.”

Another change that took place while I was in Tennessee was largely due to the efforts of the Freedom Riders, civil rights activists who rode interstate buses in mixed racial groups in the South to challenge Jim Crow laws forcing blacks to sit at the back of buses. In late 1961 the Interstate Commerce Commission announced new rules, prohibiting segregation in interstate travel.

It was then that my father told me that since I was an interstate passenger I could sit anywhere I wanted to on the Trailways bus that took me on a three-hour trip from Alabama to Tennessee. On my next trip I sat in the third row of the bus, whereupon the white bus driver ordered me to the back. I boldly announced I was an interstate traveler and could sit anywhere I wanted to. With a loud “Humph!” and a stamp of his foot he returned to the driver’s seat, and I stayed seated where I was. At a 20-minute bus stop and hour and a half later somewhere in Tennessee, I first went to the “colored” waiting room, only to find one dusty bench with a cardboard box atop. I immediately went to the much larger and cleaner “white” waiting room and approached the counter to order a hotdog. The waitress barked in her strong southern drawl, “What are you, colored?” I replied, “I’m a Negro, yes.” She responded angrily, “You belong on the other side!” Feeling all eyes of the white patrons on me I told her that the “colored” room was dirty and that besides, I was an interstate passenger and I could use any room I wanted. Clearly annoyed, she made my hotdog as I watched her closely and nearly throwing it at me, she admonished, “The bus is leaving in a minute; you don’t have time to sit here and eat it!” She was right, so I took my hotdog to eat on the bus, proud that I had had the courage to stand up to her -- and even more satisfied that Jim Crow laws were slowly changing.

Q: Meanwhile classes continued. What subjects did you concentrate on?

LEE: Among the core classes freshmen had to take were Western Civilization and English Literature. We also had to take a foreign language. I thought I wanted to be a mathematics major because I really liked math and algebra in high school. I took German because my brothers had done so at Morehouse. One brother was a chemistry major, the other, a math major. Since I was going to be a math major, I thought German was a good ‘scientific” language, so I chose German as my required foreign language.

I had already announced to the mathematics professor that I was going to major in math. But I changed my mind after an experience I had the summer following my freshman year in Scandinavia. That September I returned to Fisk convinced I wanted to major in a

foreign language. At that point on campus Spanish, French, German and Russian were offered. If I had been enrolled in Russian, Spanish, or French, I would have majored in that language. Because I was already studying German I majored in German. My German professor, Dr. Ferdinand Gowa, was very delighted, while my math teacher was not at all happy.

Incidentally, during my junior and senior years I was a "proctor" for one of the three sections of German being taught as an experiment in closed-circuit TV. As such I would drill the students in my section for 30 minutes after Dr. Gowa's 30-minute presentation on TV. One of the students in my section was now-Congressman John Lewis, who played a major role in the success of the Nashville sit-ins and the Freedom Riders efforts while I was at Fisk. Little could I imagine that he would go on to become a renowned civil rights leader and politician -- truly one of the most courageous, dedicated and effective public servants of our time.

Q: Talk about this trip to Scandinavia. You were a young lady who really hadn't been out much. How did that come about?

LEE: You're absolutely right. I remember when a lady by the name of Miss Margaret Scattergood from Reston, Virginia came to our campus, a tall white woman with grey hair, looking for a young man and a young woman to go to the Scandinavian International Institute. They -- and I don't know what organization she represented -- wanted to send two people from Fisk to the Institute for five weeks. As the highest ranking female at the end of my freshman year I was one of the two students selected. The highest ranking male, William Alexander, was the other student. All expenses were paid except for $200 they asked our parents to contribute. Plus, of course, our parents had to help us get ready, get some clothes and things. So we were sent off. There were students from all over the world, various countries in Africa, from the Far East, the Middle East, Europe, South America. The common language was English for our classes. We traveled around Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

Q: Where was the institute located?

LEE: It was located in Denmark, headed by Dr. Peter Manniche, and his son Juergen helped out. But we traveled also to Norway and Sweden. We learned about Scandinavian culture and life through lectures and site visits. For example, we visited a newspaper business, a farm, various industries, Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, the second oldest amusement park in the world. It was all so interesting and exciting -- my first trip out of the United States! We flew on Icelandic Airlines, with a stop in Reykjavik. I can still remember looking out of the airplane window watching s a crew scrape ice off the wings right before takeoff to continue our journey.

There were a couple of experiences during that trip that made me decide I really wanted to major in a foreign language. First, I was so impressed that the students in the program from countries around the world could all speak English; they could speak their native tongue and sometimes three and four other languages! I was just fascinated, because I

had grown up in Alabama, where little emphasis was put on foreign languages in the schools, white or black. And I suspect at that time -- in the late forties and fifties -- that that was common in many schools throughout the U.S. I was so impressed that these people could switch, seemingly effortless, from one language to the other. That was one thing that made me know I wanted to major in a foreign language.

Q. And the second experience?

LEE: That happened when I was on a bike ride with five students attending the Institute. Bill, my fellow Fisk student, was in the group. We were riding bikes in the Norway countryside when a heavy rainstorm came up., and we took refuge under a big tree in front of a farmhouse. The owners of the farmhouse came out and invited us in. We went in, and nobody could speak anybody else's language. The only common language was the little German that I knew and the German that these Norwegians knew -- and I should add, piano music. So I was sort of the translator (laughs), speaking my little German and putting it into English for my international institute mates -- and playing their piano. I really liked the role of facilitating communication. Of course after one year you don't know that much German. But when I returned to campus I knew I wanted to major in a foreign language, and it was German since I was already studying it.

Q: Speaking of languages, you speak with just a hint of the south. Obviously you are with southern extraction. Did you speak two languages - the equivalent of Alabama talk with your classmates, and high English at home, or the equivalent thereof?

LEE: I wasn't aware of it, quite frankly. No, I think I spoke the same way at home as I did at school with classmates. Nowadays, when interacting with so many people whose native language is not English, I'm aware of how fast I am speaking. I'm also aware that there is a transcriber for this oral history project and I am forcing myself to slow down.

Q: We in the Foreign Service speak A or B English. We tend to slow down when we're talking for the record.

LEE: I speak very fast. Here, I consider myself speaking slowly because I'm thinking somebody's got to be able to understand this and transcribe it. I hope I'm not insulting the transcriber! That's an aside.

Q: How about the election of John Kennedy. Did that engage you or the students at all? The campaign?

LEE: Not so much, to tell you the truth; in 1960 at the time of his nomination in May I was finishing up my freshman year at Fisk, where my focus had been on my new college life as well as the Nashville student civil rights movement. And when John Kennedy was elected in November,1960 I was an exchange student at Colby College in Waterville, Maine. His assassination, however, was a different matter. I was in Germany at the University of Munich for the 1963-64 school year right after I graduated from Fisk. He was assassinated while I was in Germany, and that really affected me a lot.

Q. Tell me about that time.

LEE: We all remember where we were when President Kennedy was assassinated. I was in Munich riding in the first car of a two–car tram when I noticed a man in the crowded streetcar directly behind me standing in the aisle reading a newspaper. He had the paper fully open reading an inside page so that I could easily see the front page headline, "Kennedy Ermordet" ("Kennedy Murdered"). I was so shocked I jumped off at the next stop and raced across the tracks to the nearest paper stand, failing to notice an on-coming tram heading directly at me. The car's driver frantically rang his warning bell as I narrowly made it to safety. I bought the paper, read the coverage of the assassination and headed straight to the *Amerika Haus*, an institution with branches in several German cities run by the U.S Government until around 2006. It's purpose was to provide cultural and political information about the U.S. The auditorium was completely full. What I remember most were the many elderly German women dressed in black and sobbing -- and I was sobbing, too. It was truly a sad and shocking event.

Nearly five years later, in 1968, I happened to be in Germany again on another of several occasions -- in Hamburg, working on my dissertation -- when Dr. King and Attorney Robert Kennedy were killed in April and in June, respectively. I was beginning to believe I needed to stop traveling to Germany since that's where I always seemed to find myself when our leaders were assassinated!

Q. And talk about your experience at Colby.

LEE: Fisk had an exchange program in which students would go to another university campus for a semester, and a student from that campus would come to Fisk. We had that program with several colleges, including Beloit, Whittier, Oberlin, Redlands, Adelphi, Pomona and St. Olaf. I wanted to go to one of the California colleges, because I wanted to get to know California. I'd never gone to the West Coast. Fisk's Dean Redd, called me to his office and said, "Are you interested in an exchange program?" I said, "Yes." I wanted to go to Redlands, or Pomona, or Whittier. Those were the three in California. But he said, "Well actually we're starting a new exchange program at Colby College in Waterville, Maine." My heart sank. I wanted warm weather, I wanted to get to alluring California, to the West Coast. But I had never been to New England and the idea of going to new places fascinated me. I think normally Fisk waited until a student's junior year to send him or her off on an exchange program, but it was the first semester of my sophomore year. But he asked me, adding that he thought I could handle being the pioneer student to go up to Maine and introduce the program.

So I told Dean Redd I would go while a Colby student, who turned out to be Nancy Rowe, would spend that same semester at Fisk. It was a great choice! I had so many new, exciting and interesting experiences. I shared a suite with two other girls, Karen Forsland and Lucille Waugh. I remember studying in the suite wrapped in an electric blanket with snow covering the ground and half of the window next to my desk. I saw my first soccer game at Bowdoin, spent Thanksgiving at the home of Lucille and her twin sister, Louise,

had numerous conversations with Rosemary from North Carolina about race relations. She had never interacted with blacks -- I think we were "Negroes" in those days -- except for the maids in her home. She recounted how her family would sit around the dinner table each Sunday talking about how the South should have won the Civil War. I wrote an article for the campus newspaper about the new exchange program and about my experiences thus far. I spent time in the campus hospital with tonsillitis and the Spanish professor came to visit me there to administer my final exam.

I returned to Fisk for my second semester of my sophomore year. From then on I participated in the usual campus activities: I joined a sorority, Delta Sigma Theta, the same as my mother's, and she came to campus to "pin" me at the time of my initiation. I was President of the Judiciary Cabinet, a reporter for the Fisk newspaper, was initiated into the Gold Key Honor Society and Phi Beta Kappa, and lived in Jubilee Hall as a counselor for freshmen students my senior year. I dated guys from Fisk and Tennessee State.

Q: You graduated in '63 with a degree in German. What were you pointed towards?

LEE: In those days, if you got a degree in foreign languages, you taught. I always just knew that once I graduated, I'd get a graduate degree and I knew I would teach. And that's what happened.

Q: So what did you do in '63? Where did you go?

LEE: I went to Germany. I had been awarded a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, and I had chosen Stanford. My German professor, dear old Dr. Ferdinand Gowa, wanted me to go to Boulder, to the University of Colorado, because they had a great German Department there. But I still yearned to get to California! I had substituted Maine for California for my sophomore student exchange program -- a choice I never regretted, mind you--and I thought Stanford was my ticket to California in addition to having a great German Department!

But California had to be put on hold yet again!

I had been accepted by Stanford, but at the same time I had applied for a grant from the German government, and I got that grant also, from the DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst -- the German Academic Exchange Service). I wanted to go to Germany, so I happily postponed my dreams of going to California. Dr. Gowa recommended Munich, saying, "You should go to Muenchen." This time I took his advice. So I wrote Stanford, said I had gotten a DAAD grant to go to the University of Munich for a year, and asked if I could delay entering Stanford for a year. They wrote back saying, "Yes, we're very glad for our students to get that experience in Germany." The Woodrow Wilson Foundation also agreed I could postpone accepting their fellowship. So I went to Munich for a year, knowing that after that I would begin my graduate studies at Stanford the following year.

Q: How did you find it?

LEE: I started out with one month in Marburg living with a German family, a widow, under the Experiment for International Living. While there I attended the Goethe Institute, where I continued to learn German. Then I moved to Munich. I've always wanted to travel, and as a child I had always looked at going to Florida from Alabama as an adventure. And after entering college in Nashville, I found my trip to Scandinavia between my freshman and sophomore years to be an exciting experience, as well as my exchange student semester at Colby in Maine. So I was not surprised that I was also fascinated by Germany! It opened up a whole new world for me!

The first couple of months in Munich weren't easy, though, especially when it came to finding housing. I would look in the newspaper for a room-for-rent advertisement, take out my trusty map, and find my way there via streetcar. At the appropriate stop there were always students jumping off the tram and running to get to the room first, because student housing was hard to come by. I lost out on a number of occasions because somebody always beat me there! All the time while searching for permanent housing I was living in a little *Pension* next to the University. At the end of the day I'd return to the hotel disappointed that I still hadn't found a place.

But then one day things seemed to look up. I went to an address to look at a room with a family that had a little child. I knocked, and when the mother opened the door she said someone else had looked at the room and they were waiting to see if that student was going to return to take it. She said I could come back in an hour to find out if the room was available. So I sat in this park across from the apartment building on a cold, cold winter's day, my eyes fixed on the building's entrance, waiting, hoping nobody would enter the building. During that hour absolutely nobody entered that building. So I was excited, telling myself that I had finally found my room. So I went back, and they told me the person had come and said they wanted it, and I knew that was not true because I had watched that building's entrance like a hawk.

I had looked for so many rooms, and this latest experience was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. I went back to my P*ension* and I just boo-hooed in my room. Afterwards, I was so embarrassed, because the owner of the *Pension* had heard me! She said, "We heard you crying in your room. We have a small room here at the hotel, it's the secretary's room, but if you'd like to stay here, you can." I was so excited. So I stayed there in the pension, started classes at the university, and lived there for three months -- when I was lucky enough to get a room in a new *Studentenheim* -- student dormitory -- that had just been built. That happened, thanks to Anne Adams, a fellow German major at Fisk -- there were two of us in our graduating class. She had gotten a Fulbright grant to Berlin at the same time I received my DAAD grant to Munich and had met friends on her ship going to Germany who were in Munich. Through her I had made friends with them, and they were able to get me into that *Studentenheim*.

The good things far outweighed the few difficulties I experienced that first time I went to Germany. I found humor and interesting occurrences everywhere. For example, a few

months after I arrived in Munich a very comical thing happened while I was still in the *Pension*. It was during *Fasching* in Munich, Germany's carnival season. I was out one evening with a German girlfriend I had met at the university, and we were dancing in the streets with crowds of other merrymakers. I ended up dancing a couple of times with a student named Otto. Several days later he showed up at my *Pension.* How surprised I was because I certainly had not told him where I was living! In his hand he had a popular tabloid which contained an ad he had placed that read, *"Gesucht -- Katherine von Alabama*" containing his name and contact information. In English that means, "Sought -- Katherine from Alabama." I told him I had not seen the ad and asked how he had found me. It turns out he had gone to the University's international student office, and they had let him go through their records until he found a Katherine from Alabama! I was not at all attracted to Otto so a friendship never developed.

At the university and at my *Studentenheim* I did make good friends, though. I had a German boyfriend who also lived in the Heim, and we dated the whole time I was in Munich. A medical student, he had been a stand-in for Steve McQueen in *The Great Escape.* I also made friends through a girls' volleyball team. And during the semester break I made a month-long bus trip with German tourists throughout Spain. I can still envision the stunningly beautiful lemon trees in the luscious gardens of the Palace of Generalife in Granada. And I would like to forget the horrible bullfight I experienced in Barcelona -- where I had to sit through the killing of six poor bulls by the so-called brave matadors. I felt the poor bulls didn't have a fair chance! After seeing the first bull die I vowed I would never attend another bullfight! And I can still remember the goat cheese for sale by vendors atop a hill outside the Montserrat Monastery -- and the alarm of one of my fellow travelers when the cheese she bought leaked through its wrappings and stained her beautiful tan leather purse.

Morocco was originally included in that trip but for some reason was cut from the tour. Morocco is still on my long list of places to visit! Following that trip to Spain I continued to meet up with friends I had made on the tour bus -- and was invited by one family to travel to Bayreuth for the annual music festival. I have so many memories of wonderful experiences during that year abroad!

Q. What are some of the others?

LEE: I encountered so many fascinating -- and sometimes comical -- situations. They were from ordinary life, and were so different from what I had come to know in the U.S. That's the great thing about travel -- you see and come to appreciate the many different ways of doing things. I'm sure people coming to the U.S. for the first time must have similar experiences.

There are two topics I remember writing home about soon after I arrived in Germany. One was how they flushed the toilets. There seemed to be a different way whenever you went into a toilet -- either you pulled on a chain suspended from above you somewhere, or you found a button or lever on the floor to step on, or you lifted a button on the top of the water tank, or you found a button on the wall. One time I spent five minutes looking

for the way to flush the toilet!

Another other thing that fascinated me was the treatment of dogs, who were often known as *Ersatzkinder*, "substitute children," for the widows and mothers who had lost their husbands and sons in the war. I remember writing home about a lady with a baby carriage, and as she passed by I turned to admire the baby -- only to find a little black poodle in the carriage. And I delighted in hearing stories from my friend Anne -- my fellow Fisk German major in Berlin. She once told me about the dog in the family she was living with -- about how the dog would sit at the table with them and eat out of the family dishes, which would then all be mixed together for washing. Of course, nowadays in the U.S. dogs are often treated, too, like members of the family, but back then I hadn't witnessed that in the U.S. That's why I found the treatment of dogs in Germany so fascinating -- and certainly something to write home about!

Q: Munich, of course, is a great place for a young person because it's a much more jovial place -beer halls, Fasching, a looser society than some of the more staid, austere ones in other parts of Germany.

LEE: And I found that out. I had heard before I went to Germany that southern Germany is as you just described and that northern Germany is more buttoned-down, so to say. And I thought, "hogwash, there can't be that difference." Well, later on I had the opportunity to study in Hamburg, while I was at Stanford, and I could tell there was a difference. One telling example: in Munich in the *Studentenheim* students from the outset called each other by first names. In Hamburg we called each other "Fraulein" or "Herr" so-and-so until we got to be good friends. Of course I now realize that there are often different customs within the same country -- for example, one could say there are similar differences between Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and certainly there are regional differences in the U.S. But back in 1963 as a 21-year-old I had not had much exposure to such differences; by then in the U.S. I had only traveled in the South and in New England, and abroad I had spent only five weeks in Scandinavia. In Germany I was fascinated by all my new experiences and by all the differences I noticed!! And I have never outgrown my fascination for new places; I think I'll always have the travel bug!

Q: At the university was there much of a political life among the students?

LEE: There was -- often over beer at the end of the school day. I had never drunk beer before; I had been through college, where students often start to drink for the first time, but I wasn't a drinker. In Germany, students would meet in a pub to discuss politics and have lots of fun. My German friends would sit there and drink what seemed to me to be at least ten beers each -- all without showing one sign of being tipsy. At first I'd just have a soft drink, but by the end of the school year I was able to drink two light beers during the course of any kind of meeting -- two to their ten! I never did develop a real taste for beer -- even after I returned to the U.S. and entered grad school.

A lot of times I didn't understand what my friends were talking about, but as I gradually got used to their *Bayerisch* -- the Bavarian dialect -- I could sometimes join in. I enjoyed

the meetings because I learned a lot, and it was so interesting observing their animated discussions. And they'd often switch to *Hochdeutsch* -- high German -- so I could better understand.

Q: How did your German come along?

LEE: Over the course of the school year my German improved by leaps and bounds! I made it my goal to speak little English with fellow American students and to interact as much as possible with Germans -- and living in a *Studentenheim* and attending lectures at the university certainly facilitated that. It came along very well. Then I went to Stanford, where I majored in the German language and literature and got excellent training; during my M.A. and Ph.D. studies there I returned to Germany on two or three occasions for study or research. When I entered the Foreign Service I got an immediate promotion, as I tested 4+ in Speaking and 4 in Reading at the Foreign Service Institute, which won me accolades from my fellow Foreign Service classmates. I can still hear their clapping as I returned to class following the exam! I was, of course, very pleased with that score, since 5 is the highest a person can get, usually reserved for native speakers of a language.

Q: 1964 - you went to Stanford. Why Stanford?

LEE: I mentioned before that Stanford had an excellent German department. I must admit, however, that the fact that it was also in California influenced my choice! As I've said, my Fisk German professor advised me to go to the University of Colorado because of their great German Department. But I thought Colorado must have cold winters, and I had already experienced freezing weather in Maine when I inaugurated the Fisk–Colby exchange program. So I thought it was time for me to finally fulfill my dream of getting to California! Plus, Stanford also had an excellent reputation, and I did want to go to a good university.

Q: Were you working on your M.A. or PhD?

LEE: Both. In 1964 I began my course work on my M. A. and in March,1966 I submitted my thesis. I then began to work on my Ph.D. My Woodrow Wilson Fellowship paid for my first year, and after that I was a Teaching Assistant. In 1966 I participated in the Stanford-in-Hamburg program and then returned to Stanford, where I continued my Ph.D. coursework and worked on my dissertation. I chose Professor Edgar Lohner as my advisor. During the school year 1967-68 Professor Lohner arranged for me to do dissertation research in Germany with Professor Ulrich Pretzel at the University of Hamburg. In the Fall of 1968 I returned to the U.S. and began my first full-time teaching job -- teaching at Miami University of Ohio, in Oxford, Ohio. a job I had arranged the previous year before taking off again for Germany.

Q: What was your M.A. thesis about?

LEE: My title was suggested by my thesis advisor, Professor Walter Sokel. It was, *"The Nature and Representation of Loneliness in Büchner's Dantons Tod."* My thesis was

about a play by Georg Büchner, a dramatist, poet and writer of prose, who died in 1837 at the early age of 24 -- but not before writing some widely–acclaimed works. *Dantons Tod (Danton's De*ath) is set during the French Revolution. I examined how most of Büchner's characters in *Dantons Tod* experience at some time or another a feeling of isolation and how the theme of "loneliness" shapes the structure of the play's scenes and dialogue.

Q: You were at Stanford off and on before you went to Ohio. Did you find yourself caught up in anti-Vietnam stuff?

LEE: Not really. In my mind the University of California at Berkeley was more involved than the Stanford students. But I was very aware of the student protests.

Q: Did you have any particular feelings about the Vietnam War?

LEE: I did. First of all, when I was in Germany I was constantly questioned about it, and each time I went back -- I must have gone back four or five times -- Germans asked me about the war. And over time I could see attitudes towards the U.S. change. The longer we stayed in Vietnam, the less we were liked -- although when I first went to Germany in the Fall of 1963 we were very much admired for our politics and way of life. *Westside Story's "I Want to be in America"* was one of the most popular songs at the time, a favorite party song for dancing -- and seemed to reflect the sentiment of many a German student. When I returned to Stanford protests continued, although I never participated.

Q: You sampled German student life at various times. Did you see change, with the coming of a new generation not burdened by war guilt?

LEE: I think that war guilt was still there during all the times I was in Germany. As far as seeing change in individual students as to whether the German political system should change, whether they should be more involved in world affairs, should be apologizing for the Holocaust, I didn't note any change.

Q: Did you see a change in how they viewed the professors?

LEE: No. There was always respect. I didn't see a change back in those days.

Q: There wasn't much of a connect between the professors and students.

LEE: And that was the system. I knew students who had gone to class year in and year out, and then they would decide on their own when they wanted to do their exams. Lecture halls were huge -- and full. Classrooms were huge. I'm sure there were close connections between certain students and certain professors. I myself had the advantage of having a very close connection with Professor Ulrich Pretzel of the University of Hamburg. He was in the Department of German Studies, *Germanistik.* I was introduced to him by my Stanford dissertation advisor, Professor Edgar Lohner. Once a week I would go to Professor Pretzel's home and we would do research together, and Frau Pretzel would cook lunch for us. Every single meal always included boiled white potatoes

-- Professor Pretzel's special request! Fortunately we weren't in the carbohydrates craze, and I liked white potatoes! He shared some unpublished letters by Wilhelm Scherer, and I was doing my dissertation on Scherer.

Q: Explain what your dissertation was about.

LEE: The title of my dissertation was *Wilhelm Scherer's Goethe Criticism: An Investigation and Evaluation of Scherer's Critical Method.* Scherer, who lived from 1841 to 1886, was a literary historian, literary critic, linguist and philologist and was considered to be representative of the Positivist Movement of the late 19th century. His approach to literary criticism -- his supposed "positivistic" approach -- was not very popular when I was coming along. Based on my readings of some of his works and critiques of him by literary theorists, I thought he had been misunderstood. He was criticized for using the laws of the natural sciences to evaluate literature -- the laws of the *Naturwissenschaften* -- as opposed to using those of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, what we would refer to as the humanities or social sciences. And I would read Scherer's criticism of Goethe and his criticism of other works and I thought, "Wait a minute, they say he's a positivist, but look at this, here's a big deviation."

In Hamburg I had access to unpublished letters written by Wilhelm Scherer that Professor Pretzel had in his private collection. Someone -- I believe it was Wilhelm Scherer's widow -- had found these letters "in the gutter" following the war. She had given them to Professor Pretzel who, I think, lived in the same apartment complex and they were friends. In these letters to a woman -- Lina Duncker was her name -- he often wrote about his theory of literary criticism. And in those excerpts I would find thoughts that didn't seem at all "positivistic" at all -- which mirrored examples I found in several of his published works. So I set out to prove that he had been misunderstood.

My argument was apparently pretty convincing because after I joined the Foreign Service one of my former colleagues at Ohio State, where I had taught directly before joining the Service, mailed me an article from a German journal. To my surprise the journal quoted from my dissertation -- or maybe from an article on Scherer I had written later, I don't remember -- and lauded me for proving that Wilhlem Scherer exhibited a more balanced approach as a literary critic than his detractors would have us believe. My article, titled, "Wilhelm Scherer's Two-Fold Approach to Literature," had been published in the May, 1976 edition of *The Germanic Review,* a quarterly issued by the Department of Germanic Languages of Columbia University,

Q. So you went to Germany in 1967-68 to continue your dissertation research and then taught at Miami U of Ohio beginning in the Fall of 1968. How was that?

LEE: I loved my time at Miami of Ohio! Called by one-time poet-in-residence Robert Frost "the most beautiful campus that ever there was," the school of about 15,000 students when I was there was definitely in an idyllic setting. The university, which gets it name from the Native American tribe that once lived in the Ohio Miami Valley, is located in Oxford, Ohio, a charming college town about 35 miles north of Cincinnati.

We had a very close-knit German Department. Three of us, all young, single women, each had our individual apartments in the same house near the campus.

I was close to finishing my dissertation when I returned to the U.S. -- which I thought I could do easily while teaching at Miami U. But that was not the case. Throwing myself fully into my new job, I found I didn't have time to teach **and** write!!. I absolutely loved teaching and working with the students, and I always had my door open. I tried to find time to work on my dissertation on the weekends but it seemed there was never enough time!

I reached out a lot to students during a time when many seemed to have a need for special attention. I distinctly remember one student, for example, who seemed to be serious but was having trouble keeping up in one of my classes. It turned out he was really troubled about the Viet Nam war and was finding it hard to concentrate on his studies. Requesting the help of one of my colleagues, I invited them both to my place for dinner so we could discuss his concerns. (Since I wasn't much older than my students I wanted it to be clear that this was strictly a professional meeting!) I got the most beautiful letter from him at the end of the school year, thanking me and saying how much a difference my caring had made at a time when he was so despondent. I still have that letter as well as others from students who appreciated my teaching.

In short, as an enthusiastic and involved teacher I found little time to spend on my dissertation! So it became clear that to be able to complete it I needed to return to Stanford for a quarter to be near my advisor and concentrate solely on my writing. I therefore decided to resign my position at Miami U after two years and return to Stanford in the Fall of 1969 -- but not before being a bridesmaid in my two housemates' weddings -- in Pennsylvania, at the end of my first year, and in South Dakota at the end of my second year.

I loved California so much that I was sure I would seek a teaching job out there after completing my dissertation. But once again fate interfered with my California plans when I received an offer I couldn't refuse.

Q. What happened?

LEE: A former Stanford classmate, Henry Schmidt, who was teaching in Columbus at Ohio State University, invited me to visit him and his wife and little boy there before I left the state for California. Little did I know when I accepted his invitation what he had up his sleeve! When I arrived he suggested I go to OSU's German Department to meet the Head do discuss possible future employment there. I insisted that I wanted to work in California after completing my dissertation in a few months. Nevertheless Henry convinced me to at least visit the Department, and he set up a meeting for me with the Department's Chair.

Let me back up a minute. I have always been a very optimistic person, and when I

resigned my position at Miami of Ohio I had no idea how I would pay for my living expenses at Stanford during the next few months with no job and no income. But I wasn't worried, because I felt somehow things would work out. And they did -- but not the way I could have anticipated! When I met with the OSU German Department head he offered me a job at OSU following my Fall Quarter at Stanford. He told me OSU professors usually taught for three quarters of the four-quarter year, but that they were paid over a 12-month period. He said if I accepted a position at OSU for the 1970-71 academic year, to begin teaching the second quarter in January, 1971, I could take off the first quarter to finish my dissertation and start receiving a paycheck immediately!

I accepted the job and returned to Stanford, pleased that I needn't concern myself with finances. I finished my writing and submitted and defended my dissertation the Fall of 1970, returning to Columbus in late December, just in time for the big Rose Bowl game January 1 between Stanford and Ohio State.

I watched the game at a Rose Bowl party with a group of OSU colleagues, but at that point my loyalties were still with Stanford and star quarterback and Heisman Trophy winner Jim Plunkett. I must admit I was pleased Stanford won that game! It didn't take me long, though, to become a big fan of the Ohio State Buckeyes and Coach Woody Hayes -- and to cheer for QB Archie Griffin and celebrate his winning the Heisman Trophy a few years later!

Q: You got your PhD when?

LEE: I finished my writing and dissertation defense and orals during the Fall of 1970, and my Ph.D. was awarded later in that academic year, in 1971.

Q: And then you went to Ohio State?

LEE: I began teaching at OSU in January, 1971 -- the 2nd Quarter of the 1970-71 academic year -- as I had agreed to do before returning to Stanford in the Fall of 1970.

Q: How did you find the academic life at Ohio State?

LEE: It had the largest on-campus population at the time -- about 50,00 students. It was a huge university, although I couldn't tell by stepping on the campus the first time that it was that much larger than Stanford, but it was. By then I had lived or studied on different campuses; I grew up on one and went to school on several- so I am able to compare. But a lot of campuses, no matter their size, are similar in that some students have close relationships with some of the professors, some not so close.

As was the case at Miami of Ohio I loved teaching -- undergrads and grads. I had a wonderful relationship with my students. I taught a variety of courses -- from beginning German to intermediate writing, to advanced literature courses and literary criticism seminars. I even played volleyball during one summer quarter with my students in Scientific German -- a class designed for graduate student majors in the sciences who

needed to fulfill a language requirement. I was also asked by OSU administration to chair a committee charged with examining ways to get more minority students on campus -- a task force or something like that.

Q: How does that work?

LEE: We met on several occasions and came up with recommendations for the Dean of the University. Quite frankly, I don't know in numbers how that worked, or if it worked.

Q: Were you plugged in to the tenure system at that point?

LEE: By then I was plugged into the tenure system by virtue of the fact that I had been teaching there for several years. But getting tenure was never my goal, because I knew I loved teaching and had no interest in getting into the "publish or perish" race, a requirement for tenure. It wasn't that I couldn't get published -- after all, *The Germanic Review* had accepted an article of mine "as is" -- without demanding one single change. This was encouraging, especially since colleagues were sending off manuscripts to various publishers only to have to make changes before they were accepted for publication. But to get tenured one had to devote a lot more time to getting published than I wanted to give -- after all, my passion was for classroom teaching, for personal interaction with my students. I would not have gotten tenure, based on my publications -- or lack thereof!

In 1974 or 1975 I started thinking about what I wanted to do with my future. Although I loved teaching at OSU I knew that a large university where I'd be expected to also publish significantly was not the ideal place for a person of my interests! But I was comfortable there and loved teaching, so I didn't put much effort into planning for change -- until something happened that made me get serious about making a move!

In those days, in my field, in literature and language studies, students were not getting jobs. Back then, if you majored in a foreign language, you taught. The world was not as interconnected as it is now. If you studied a foreign language you invariably assumed you'd end up teaching it when you finished your schooling. The world was not as "international" as it is now and having a knowledge of a foreign language was not necessarily a help when it came to getting jobs outside of teaching. You could say I was "shocked" into reality when one of my graduate students, after getting her PhD in German and finding it impossible to get a job teaching German, chose to return to school to study law! It was then that I realized then I couldn't, in good conscience, go out and be enthusiastic at trying to get students to major in German when I knew that they might have difficulty finding jobs teaching German. And as I said, nobody was thinking about how studying a foreign language might be a stepping stone to getting a good job in business or the Foreign Service. That just wasn't happening in those days.

Actually, leaving academia at the time seemed a natural next step to me. I always thought that at some point I would seek out experiences in other areas -- since I had been born on a campus, grown up on a campus, gone straight to college, straight to grad school and

then started teaching. I wanted to be able to tell my grandchildren, of which I have none (laughs), when I was 100 in my rocking chair, that I had done something other than been on a college campus. I imagined I would end up again on a college campus -- after all, it was in my blood and I loved that life -- but that somewhere in-between I would find out what "life on the outside" was like!

Q: Okay, you're sitting there and you decide, "Gee, I want to do something else." How did you go about looking for something else to do?

LEE: There was just something in me that wanted to have an international connection with my career. I mentioned my college experience in Scandinavia and my decision to change my major to a foreign language following my return to campus my sophomore year. When I decided to leave OSU a friend of mine from my Stanford days -- a Linguistics major -- suggested I look into the Foreign Service. At one point he had been thinking of making a career change and had considered becoming a Foreign Service Officer himself; indeed, he had been accepted but had chosen instead to go to law school.

I went to the library, checked out books and read up on the different aspects of the U.S. Foreign Service, and when I read about the US Information Agency (USIA) I thought, "Aha, that's for me." And then I started my application. Two years later -- it took that long for me to go through the exam, undergo the security and medical checks and get accepted -- I left academia for a new career, excited about what lay ahead! When I told my family while I was applying what I was up to, my father asked, "Do you really want to do that? There is security in teaching." And I told him, "Yes, I really do want to do that." So I pursued a position with USIA and was accepted.

Q: After you passed the written, you then took the oral exam. Do you recall any of the questions, or how the oral exam hit you?

LEE: I don't recall. I just know there were two or three examiners in the room, and they were asking questions on the U.S. and world history and culture and -- quite frankly, I don't remember any of the questions. This was a long time ago.

Q: Then they went through the security clearance, and I guess your being overseas slowed things down.

LEE: Oh, definitely. They told me the reason it had taken so long was that I had been overseas and had done research in East Berlin with Professor Pretzel. I had spent a month living in West Berlin and going into East Berlin to examine some of the holdings of Wilhelm Scherer's works housed there. I had to go across Checkpoint Charlie and other points every day to get to East Berlin. They said that's why it took so long. It wasn't only because of that -- they had to check out all the places I had lived in the U.S. and abroad -- but I'm sure that was part of it.

Q: When did you come in?

LEE: In the summer of 1976.

Q: Talk a bit about your entering class, and the people, and the training you received.

LEE: I think we had 14 in our class. Remember, this was USIA (U.S. Information Agency); their classes were much smaller than State's. It was considered an average–sized class, and we were very close. We liked each other very much. There were maybe a few more men then women in our class. I remember having a fun time in training; I think we all did. I think as recently as two years ago class members had a reunion. Of course a lot of people have gone their different ways. Several have retired; a couple of them -- maybe three -- left the Service years ago. One moved from USIA over to State. I think of the original class two are still active Foreign Service officers. Now they were the babies of the class. (Laughs)

Q: Did they look at you and say, "Well, you're fluent in German?" Did they point you toward anything? What were they going to do with you?

LEE: Yes, they did. But I told them that since I'd spent so much time in Germany I really wanted to learn another language and go to a different area of the world. I told them that eventually I wanted to take advantage of my prior training and return to Germany, but for now I wanted to experience something new. Nobody pushed me to go to Germany, because in those days there was no shortage of officers wanting to get to Europe! I guess they were glad to find somebody who said, "I've been to Europe, so I want to go somewhere else."

Q: So what did they do with you?

LEE: For some reason I wanted to go to Latin America. I think it had to do with an experience I had had in high school, with a project that I had headed. It was in a class called "Core," which included sections on geography and world cultures. One of our lessons focused on the seven continents, and the teacher divided our class into groups. Each group was responsible for studying and reporting on a particular continent, and our group had South America (I think we drew straws to decide). The teacher designated me our group's leader. I found working on that project very interesting. I can still see our black poster board and the outline we drew in white ink of the South American continent and all its countries! I think our study of that continent influenced me to want to go to Latin America. Mexico was on the list of available job openings, and it sounded exotic, so I included it among my bids. Today some people might think, " Mexico doesn't seem new or different; we interact with Mexicans all the time in the United States; we know about their culture, we've read a lot about their country." But in those days we didn't have as much interaction with Mexicans as now, and the country wasn't covered as much by our media. Mexico still was a place where I felt I could really get a completely new experience. Nowadays I might choose a country that seems more unfamiliar or distant.

Q: So, you went to Mexico City when?

LEE: April of 1977.

Q: And you were there until when?

LEE: Until March, 1978 -- not even a whole year. I was there as a J-O-T -- Junior Officer Trainee. In those days new USIS officers (or U.S. Information Service, as we were known abroad at that time) were sent to their first post as "over-complement" officers -- not to fill a particular position and remain in one office their entire time at post, but to "rotate" through the various offices to learn how an embassy functions. They would perform various tasks in each section while being introduced to an office's or agency's overall-responsibilities. That way they were to get experiences not only with the press and cultural sections in USIS but also in State Department sections: consular, economic, political and sometimes administrative. And in larger countries, new officers could also get experience at other entities, such as the Agricultural Service or U.S. Trade Center or U.S. consulates in different cities.

In theory, that was to be a new USIS officer's initial experience abroad. In practice, that was not always the case -- unless the officer stayed on top of the situation! Before leaving Washington JOTs were warned: "When you get to post, be aware that if there is a staffing shortage somebody's going to try to put you into a vacant position and say, 'Do that job until we get somebody else.' If you aren't careful you might not get in your complete rotation." That's exactly what happened when I got to Mexico City!

However, I was determined that I was going to get my complete rotational experience, so I went to my supervisors and they said, "Yes, you can rotate, but we still need you to do this job since the present officer in the position is leaving post soon and there will be a gap until the person assigned to this position arrives." I said, "Fine." So I was working long hours. I would stay until eight o'clock in the evening to catch up with work in that office that piled up while I was making sure I got in my rotations. But I was very, very happy. It was all new, it was a lot of fun, and I learned a lot. I didn't mind the long hours.

Q: How would you describe the state of relations between the United States and Mexico at that time?

LEE: During my brief time there, relations, as I remember them, were considered good -- maybe more so with Latin America in general than with Mexico. President Carter was in office then, and he was popular across Latin America because of his emphasis on human rights and respect for developing countries. And though he and Mexico's President Jose Lopez Portillo started out on good terms, their relationship became strained by the end of President Carter's term -- over such issues as Mexico's oil reserve policies and that country's refusal to allow the Shaw of Iran to enter Mexico following his surgery in the U.S. President Carter, accompanied by UN Representative Andrew Young and Mrs. Young, visited Mexico while I was there, so I experienced a presidential visit during my very first assignment abroad!

Q: What was your first job?

LEE: While I was "rotating' I was assigned to the position of Reports and Evaluations Officer after the person filling the job left the post for a new assignment and his replacement hadn't yet arrived. My job was to write reports each week to send to Washington about what had gone on at the post, what USIS was doing. In addition I was the book officer. I had a budget where I had to go out and buy coffee table books, all kinds of books I had to choose that would be representative of the U.S., that the Ambassador, Public Affairs Officer and the Econ and Political officers would give to contacts. So I was responsible for going to the local book warehouses and picking out these books and writing these reports. I also supervised the Foreign Service National (FSN) responsible for the Distribution and Records System, DRS -- USIA's early attempt to keep up with contacts.

Q: In some of your revolving jobs, what else were you doing?

LEE: In USIS I was a press officer; I read the local newspapers and approved media reaction reports sent to Washington headquarters. I was introduced to the workings of the U.S.-Mexico Bi-national Center. I also attended USIS programs; my second evening in the country I attended a lecture by USIS American Participant James Dickey, author of the 1970 novel *Deliverance*. We also had a visit by the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater. I worked with at the U.S. Trade Center and was responsible for calling U.S. businesses, inviting them to participate in an upcoming U.S. trade fair in Mexico City. I had a stint with the U.S. Agricultural Service. I visited the Consulates in Monterrey and Guadalajara. With the State Department I worked in the political section doing biographical reporting, in the consular section, with American Citizens' Services, watching how they helped Americans; I didn't visit any prisoners, but I did know that was one of that section's responsibilities; I was on the visa line.

Q: How did you find the visa line?

LEE: Long (laughs). It was amazing. There were a lot of people wanting to get visas, and a lot of pressure on the officers there to decide without having very much time who should get a visa and who shouldn't. But all this was so new to me. I found it fascinating.

Q: How is your Spanish?

LEE: It used to be very good, but now it's more "Portañol," as I sometimes I tend to mix in Portuguese with my Spanish. Portuguese is my better language of the two, since I spent more time in Brazil than in any of the Spanish-speaking countries combined. I was trained at the Foreign Service Institute in Spanish before going to Mexico and Colombia, and later, in Portuguese, before going to Brazil, where I had two postings ten years apart.

Q: Who was your boss in Mexico City?

LEE: Len Baldyga was the Public Affairs Officer. The Deputy Public Affairs Officer, my direct supervisor, was Mike Kristula. They were the perfect managers to introduce me to

the Foreign Service. I occasionally see Len these days at public diplomacy events, and I'm still in touch with Mike, too, who is ill. Dudley and Mattie Sims and I visited him and his wife Harriet at their home in Annandale (VA) just a few months ago.

Q. How did you find life in Mexico outside the embassy?

LEE: From the very beginning I knew I had landed in the right spot for an exciting and enjoyable new adventure. I was met at the airport by Dudley Sims, the USIS officer in the Reports and Evaluations position who was leaving post for a new job in a few weeks, and his wife, Mattie. They were marvelous to me, inviting me into their home with their children, sharing meals, making me feel a part of the family, taking me under their wings. I learned a lot in a short period of time from them about embassy life and what to expect as a new Foreign Service Officer. We bonded from that first day on, and to this day they are my very close friends.

And I traveled a lot throughout Mexico. I had joined a diplomatic corps group with diplomats from different countries, and we traveled all over Mexico. I did and saw a lot in the short ten months I was in the country! I also traveled with my parents when they visited me -- and I often went on excursions, including to Teotihuacan to see the pyramids, to Taxco, Oaxaca, Mazatlan, Cabo San Lucas, Puerto Vallarta, Cozumel, Acapulco, you name it! I volunteered to serve as mail courier to the Yucatan peninsula. And Friday nights in Mexico City were often spent at the U.S. Marine House, where Embassy personnel and local friends danced the night away. Following the party a group of us would go to Denny's to have breakfast in the wee hours. We had so much fun. I don't know where I got the energy to work so hard in the Embassy and get to know so much of the country on the outside in such a short time!

Q: After this ten months, why did you leave so soon?

LEE: I wanted to stay on, but I was in an over-complement position and they didn't have an opening coming up any time soon, so I couldn't stay in Mexico. I decided to go to Bogotá because I wanted to remain in Latin America, and my boss Mike Kristula was leaving to be the PAO (Public Affairs Officer) there. That influenced me to apply, and I got that. At the same time I applied for an ACAO (Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer) position in Germany, because of my knowledge of German. We had to bid on seven positions, but I was hoping to get Bogotá; I don't recall the other five I put on my list. I was very happy to get my first choice, Bogotá!

Q: You were in Bogotá from when to when?

LEE: I left Mexico for Bogotá in '78. I stayed there until 1980.

Q: What was the situation in Colombia when you got there?

LEE: I arrived in Colombia in April, 1978, just four months before President Alfonso Lopez Michelson was to leave office after completing a four-year term. He was followed

by President Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala. For some years before President Lopez Michelson came to power Colombia had often supported the U.S. in our stance on international issues. However, a year after Lopez Michelson took over it was clear he wanted to distance the country somewhat from what some Colombians believed to be too much U.S. influence. In 1975, for example, he reestablished diplomatic ties with Cuba and declined additional U.S. economic assistance and USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) funding, blaming Colombia's economic woes on too much dependency on foreign aid. He recognized Angola's new Marxist government -- a relationship he wanted partly because of coffee exports -- and supported Panama's call for a new canal treaty with the U.S. President Turbay continued Lopez Michelson's policy of not aligning itself consistently with the U.S. But during the second half of his administration Turbay sought to renew close relations with the U.S. One of his concerns was the Nicaragua's Sandinista government's claims to islands Colombia held in the Caribbean. And as an anticommunist he also strongly opposed Fidel Castro and his support of insurgency in Latin America.

At that time, too, Colombia was responsible for much of the smuggling of marijuana and cocaine into the U.S. Drug-related violence was high against both U.S. and Colombian officials. Some Colombian judges had recently been killed, Supreme Court justices, I believe. Three of our DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) agents had been shot and killed in their offices a couple of months before I got there. So the U.S. was putting a lot of emphasis on the drug trafficking problem. In 1979 the U.S. and Colombia signed an Extradition Treaty and by then the U.S. had put millions of dollars into an antinarcotics program. In addition, there was a lot of drug-related corruption. It was considered to be a violent country then, but not so much as in later years.

Q. In your job you were dealing with exchanges. Were these mainly visitors?

As the ACAO (Asst. Cultural Affairs Officer) for Exchanges I was in charge of the Post's academic (Fulbright) and International Visitor (IV) exchange programs, as well as the book and exhibits programs. I supervised the work of one senior national employee, a secretary and three other national employees working on art production, books and exhibits.

As you know, our IV program is one of the most effective public diplomacy programs. We invite current and emerging leaders in a variety of fields to visit the U.S. to meet with counterparts and experience the U.S. first-hand. We had one of the largest IV programs in Latin America, and the Fulbright program was also large. As a member of the Colombian Fulbright Educational Exchange Committee I helped select Colombian candidates to study, teach or research in the U.S. and kept our Branch Posts in Medellin, Cali and Barranquilla aware of the presence of U.S. professors in the country in case they wanted to take advantage of their expertise for their programs.

Q. So you had a demanding job as ACAO for Exchanges, which included the IV and Fulbright programs. You also handled the book and exhibits programs. Did you have to arrange events for American Participants (AMPARTS) or any other types of programs?

LEE: I was also action officer for several programs, such as a technology transfer seminar given in connection with the Bogotá International Trade Fair and a project on community colleges with our Bi-national Center (BNC). One of our most notable programs was a three-day seminar I organized on American Studies at a retreat in Giradot outside of Bogotá, designed to investigate with Colombian academicians the feasibility of introducing American Studies into Colombian universities. Due to the sensitivity of such a project in a country which heretofore had had no such programs, not even Colombian Studies, careful planning was necessary to obtain the support and participation of Colombian administrators and professors. Initially expecting to get at the most twenty participants, we ended up with about 60 top Colombian university educators, including rectors, deans, librarians and professors. Follow-up activities included identifying and nominating persons to fill our two IV slots for American Studies, securing books for two professors teaching American literature and history, and arranging for a professor to attend the annual meeting of the American Studies Association in Minneapolis.

I must single out an experience in Colombia I'll remember forever: the time I was in charge of Sculptor Felix de Weldon's visit to post! Perhaps his most famous of his many sculptures found around the world is the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial, also known as the Iwo Jima Memorial, which depicts the raising of the American flag atop Mount Suribachi. It is my favorite sculpture in this area -- and you know we have many! I found it so touching and amazing that this famous artist, who has sculpted bronze busts of kings and presidents, took the time to produce a clay bust of a young Colombian girl when we visited her school in Bogotá. We, of course, left the sculpture with the class, and I sometimes wonder whatever happened to it!! I was sad to read in the paper of his death two years ago in Woodstock, VA. He was 96, I believe.

Q: What about representational responsibilities -- which USIS officers often have?

LEE: Yes, I had representational responsibilities.. I remember the time I hosted a cocktail and buffet on a Saturday evening for Colombian and U.S. Fulbright grantees. It's a good thing I had some leftovers, for the next evening a delightful Colombian couple from the Fulbright Board of Directors knocked at my door holding a bouquet of flowers. Seeing me in my jeans, it took them but a moment to realize they had gotten their dates mixed up! I graciously invited them in, pulled out the leftovers, and we spent a very nice evening together. All's well that ends well!

I also hosted a cocktail in honor of novelist and short story writer Richard Stern. I found that I loved my entertaining responsibilities -- thank goodness, as they grew larger and larger as I moved up the career ladder.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

LEE: Ambassador Diego Asencio. I liked him very much. He always had a big smile when I took returning IV grantees to his office to discuss their just-completed trips to the U.S. I enjoyed chairing the IV committee meetings to introduce the IV program to the

various section heads and solicit nominations. The Ambassador always attended and was an active participant. I delighted in selecting and delivering to him books for him to present to his contacts. He was always so welcoming of this new Foreign Service Officer. I liked his wife very much, too.

Q: Were you there when Asencio was taken?

LEE: No, I had just left for Washington to prepare for my follow-on assignment in Brazil. I was horrified to learn a couple of days later that Ambassador Asencio had been taken hostage along with 13 or 14 other ambassadors. As you might recall, they were attending a reception at the Dominican Republic's Embassy in Bogotá when it happened. The hostage-takers were members of the guerilla group known as M-19, the 19th of April Movement, which took root following the allegedly fraudulent presidential elections of April 19, 1970. The hostages remained in captivity for 61 days and were finally freed after tense negotiations between President Turbay Ayala and M-19. Some even alleged that the Colombian government paid between 1 and 2.5 million US dollars, I believe, to gain the diplomats' release. Ambassador Asencio was widely praised for his "grace under fire" conduct and leadership of the captives during the ordeal. He was awarded the State Department's Award for Valor and Colombia's highest honor, the Grand Cross of Boyaca.

Q: Did you feel under any particular threat while you were there?

LEE: Our post had a ten percent differential because of the threats of robbery and kidnappings (meaning your pay was increased by 10% while you were assigned there.) And if you had asked me this question my second full day in Bogotá I would have shouted, "Yes!" Here's what happened:

I arrived in Bogotá and checked into the Tequendama Hotel. I spoke by phone with my soon-to-be supervisor, the Cultural Affairs Officer (CAO). We agreed I would take a taxi to the Embassy the next morning to check in and meet the staff. The following morning I arrived by taxi at the Embassy -- only to find the Embassy's courtyard iron gates locked and guards refusing to let anybody through. Confused, I waited outside the Embassy grounds and watched through the gates to determine what was going on. Meanwhile, a crowd of Columbians gathered outside where I was. Suddenly, through the gates I could see a crowd of police close to the front door of the Embassy engaged in some kind of scuffle, and then I heard what I concluded was a gunshot. With that, I ducked behind a nearby tree, my eyes trained on the Embassy. I waited for a while, still unable to figure out what was happening. Shaking inside, I finally hailed a taxi and went back to the hotel. It was mid-afternoon by then, and when I called the Embassy I couldn't get through. A couple of hours later I got a call from the CAO asking me why I hadn't shown up that day. When I explained what had happened, he seemed to "pooh-pooh" everything, saying it was "only" a case of an angry husband of one of the local employees in the consular section who had shown up with a knife looking for her! Of course, my supervisor's perspective was that of a seasoned officer; mine, of a new officer on only her second Foreign Service assignment abroad! I wasn't about to stick around and try to get into the

Embassy that same day!

During my security briefing when I checked in the next day I was told, “Be careful and try to vary your route to work.” After I had found housing (a nice apartment in a high rise building) and had my car I found there was not much “varying” to be done because of where I lived. But I felt safe driving to work each day. I made sure I kept my car windows closed and doors locked, however -- especially since I had heard of cases where kids would throw a live mouse in a woman’s car while she was stopped at a light, and when she got out screaming they’d grab her purse and run!

Oh, yes -- while I was there a small bomb was thrown at the embassy, though I didn’t find out about it until later, and in a most unexpected way. At the time of the incident I was at a downtown hotel in the press center we had set up in to accommodate a VIP visit -- I don’t recall who was coming. I got this call directed to the hotel from the Embassy. My parents were on the line asking, “How are you? We heard about the bomb,” and I said, “What bomb?” As it turned out there had been a bomb thrown that day at the Embassy, but we were so busy with press work that I didn’t even know about it. When I got back to the Embassy I saw the damage the bomb had made to a portion of the outer gates, but it didn’t look that serious to me. My poor parents!!!

While I didn’t dwell on threats from bombs and kidnappings I did worry about muggings, especially after I was a victim of a robber in Medellin where I had gone on official business at our Consulate and Bi-national Center. As I walked down a crowded downtown street five boys walked very close to me, and one reached up and skillfully -- without touching me -- removed a small gold chain necklace with a medallion from my neck. I was in my heels, they were in their sneakers, so I didn’t dare chase them down -- not that I would have done so if had been wearing flats! For some reason I thought I could safely wear my necklace there which I’d bought at the Bogotá Gold Museum. My bruised spirit wasn’t helped when I arrived at the BNC for the first time and upon hearing my bad luck story BNC Director Ray Anderson laughed and said, “Join the club!”

Q: The exchanges program, were we placing an emphasis on any particular aspect - like the judiciary, or the police?

LEE: We worked with the police and narcotics officials, academicians, politicians, lawyers, economists, artists. We focused on issues such as drug trafficking, technology transfer, energy and American Studies.

Q: Did you get any feel for the media in Colombia?

LEE: Yes, I did. Although I was responsible mainly for exchanges and cultural programs I did do press work when the press officer was away. Colombia has always had a tradition of freedom of the press. A variety of newspapers with different political persuasions and characteristics existed, and they printed a range of political views.

Q: With Latin America, were you looking now towards a career choice of where you

wanted to concentrate?

LEE: No. My idea as a new officer still was to learn as much as I could and have as many different experiences as possible. I wasn't thinking of concentrating in any particular area or job type just yet. However, after just two postings abroad I was learning which skills I enjoyed using most. This knowledge I was accumulating would serve me well as I climbed the ladder and made career choices in the future.

By the end of my Bogotá assignment I realized that one of the reasons I succeeded in my work with the Exchanges programs was that I was good with the many details of organization and planning. Both the International Visitor and Fulbright programs were extremely demanding. In the case of the IV program alone, for example, during one six-month period my office handled a total of 30 IV projects involving 40 individuals. That included visitors already slated to go to the U.S. as well as those not yet nominated for new fiscal year grants. For each of these people I had to ensure input from officers throughout the embassy during the selection process, submit timely nominations to Washington and brief and debrief grantees. I've always liked the challenge of taking care of a lot of responsibilities at the same time, and these programs certainly filled the bill of keeping me extra busy!

Hence I was gradually learning what made for a good Foreign Service Officer. In addition to being recognized for my organization and planning skills and the ability to keep a lot of balls in the air, I got consistently high marks for my interpersonal skills, both inside and outside the embassy, as well as my communication and supervisory skills. My supervisors attributed much of my success to my educational background and teaching experience; I attributed it just as much to sheer hard work! Fortunately, I was loving my new career and didn't mind at all my long hours!

While gathering that knowledge, though, as I said, I wasn't thinking of how or where I might want to concentrate; I just wanted to continue to experience as much as possible in as many new places as possible, including countries in other Area Bureaus, too. As it turned out, I ended up spending much of my career in Latin America. And in the back of my mind I always thought, "Well, eventually I'll go to Germany and use my German. But right now I want to learn as much as I can that's new." So I just kept bidding on jobs in new places where I thought I could learn a lot while making a difference.

Q. You traveled around a great deal in Mexico and saw so much during a short period of time. What was your experience in Colombia?

LEE: I got to see much of Colombia, too. I visited Cali and Medellin on business, and I traveled to Barranquilla to visit my good friends Dudley and Mattie Sims, who were posted there. I also had a Colombian friend who drove me around the Colombian countryside. I fell in love with *Ajiaco,* Bogotá's most famous dish -- a hearty chicken soup made with three varieties of potatoes and garnished with avocados, capers and cream. Delicious!

When my parents visited me we saw some of the country, too, and my secretary, who was from Ecuador, arranged for an acquaintance to drive us around her country when we flew to Quito. During that trip we straddled the Equator at the Mitad del Mundo (Middle of the World) monument just outside Quito -- or we thought we did. (It wasn't until years later that I learned that the monument is about 800 feet, or more than two football fields, south of the actual Equator!) At any rate, we had a grand time during their visit! When my parents returned home they sent several thank-you letters, with copies to me, to the several people in Colombia who had been so kind to us -- inviting us to dinners and parties and taking us sight-seeing. I still have those letters, reminding me of how happy my parents were to experience what my life was like at my different posts.

Q: You left Colombia in February of 1980 after a year and seven months. Then where did you go?

LEE: I was assigned to Sao Paulo, Brazil. Near the end of my tour of duty in Colombia, though, I got a call from Washington asking me to first go to Nicaragua on temporary duty for two months -- in September and October of 1979.

Q*: Nicaragua? Why were you asked to go there?*

LEE: I was tasked with designing a cultural program for USIS that would address the brand-new conditions and challenges in the country.

The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) had ousted the pro-American Somoza regime in July, 1979 and established a new government. Before then Larry Pezzullo, had flown to Managua in the middle of the civil war as a Special Envoy to try to get Somoza to leave the county and turn power over to the Sandinistas. When the plan for Somoza's departure fell through after Somoza and his people failed to keep the agreement, Pezzullo and part of our Embassy were withdrawn from the country. USIS officers were evacuated at that time, virtually closing down USIS operations. After Somoza eventually left, Pezzullo returned in mid-July and presented his credentials as Ambassador to the new government.

When I arrived in Managua in September,1979 I began drawing up plans for 1980 cultural programming in our efforts to reintroduce USIS in the new political environment. Because the country had just gone through the war and was being led by a newly-formed junta the project required a real sensitivity.

I found the assignment fascinating! I called on the new Nicaraguan government officials to talk to them about what kinds of U.S. programs would go over well. One of my favorite meetings was with poet, priest and politician Ernesto Cardenal, the new Minister of Culture. One of his poems was an all-time favorite of mine; it had comforted me in earlier times during a painful break-up with a boyfriend. I was thrilled that I had this unusual opportunity to meet him and to get his ideas on USIS cultural programming. I also picked the brains of Ambassador Pezzullo and other Embassy officials. Gunshots were sometimes still being exchanged between the FSLN and stay-behind members of

the previous government who had not gone into exile, but I didn't feel threatened as I moved around Managua. An L.A. Times correspondent there showed me a lot of the area and introduced me to some of the local people.

I initially came up with draft with recommendations for future cultural and educational programming, but I wasn't completely satisfied. I felt limited by our programming budget and by having, I thought, to rely on our usual USIA/USIS resources typically available: the usual American speakers, (Amparts, or American Participants, as they were called back then), American Specialists, the exhibits and musical programs typically available out of Washington for countries in Latin America. I wanted to offer more and different suggestions, but as a still-new officer I felt I needed to stay within our budget and the usual programming choices while somehow trying to incorporate as much as possible suggestions made by Nicaraguan officials. I presented my draft recommendations to the Ambassador, all the while thinking, "This isn't really completely right for the conditions in Nicaragua, but what can I do?" Ambassador Pezzullo agreed. I was not surprised when he said, "This is not what we need. Forget the usual Washington guidelines, forget about the budget. Do whatever you want, recommend whatever you want." That was music to my ears!! With his blessings I went back to the drawing board, excited about the opportunity to really think and act outside the box -- totally without regard to where Washington would find the money or other resources!

So, I came up with this 26-page cable with recommendations of programs that would go over well. I paid no attention to costs. Having speakers come from the U.S. to lecture -- and some would say "talk down" to people on economics or politics or literature, or to bring in the usual well-known American cultural groups exhibiting our artistic expertise would fall flat in this environment. We needed people who would appeal to the interests and moods of the Nicaraguans in that critical moment of revolution. We needed to show them that we were a diverse country, that we were open to many different communities and ways of thinking. We needed Americans to go across the country and talk their language about things that interested the average citizen, many of them illiterate -- U.S. sports, traditional music, art. We needed to bring down cultural groups -- dance or band or orchestra -- composed of visibly diverse members. These were things I had been told by the Nicaraguans that would be well-received.

The Ambassador was very happy with my new draft and gave me the go-ahead to send the cable to Washington with the recommendations. My first paragraph stated clearly that what followed were non-traditional program recommendations for a non-traditional programming environment. Washington, too, was very pleased with the job I had done; I had clearly outlined my reasoning behind the recommendations and shown they were based on the results of careful research and input from a variety of sources in the country, both inside and outside the Embassy.

In this brief assignment I learned a lot about the country and its people as well as the direction I wanted my career to take in the future. I'll get back to that when I talk about another short TDY assignment AR asked me to accept a few years later.

Q: While you were in Nicaragua did you find the regime oppressive?

LEE: No, not during my two months there. The Sandinista-led rebels had come to power just three months before my arrival. They had overthrown President Somoza after 46 years of dictatorship by the Somoza family. A year–and–a–half earlier the editor of the leftist Managua newspaper, *La Prensa,* Pedro Joaquin Chamorro Cardenal, had been murdered, and the Somoza government was widely thought to have been behind the killing. Riots broke out at that time, and there were demands for Somoza's ouster. When the Sandinistas took over, the country was badly in need of repair due to the war and because the country had never recuperated from the damage caused by the devastating 1972 earthquake. The new government promised Nicaraguans social justice and economic, political and cultural reforms. So when I was there the country as a whole was optimistic that changes for the good were coming, and many did. By the late 1980s, of course, people, moods and politics had changed, and the Nicaraguan population started to reject the Sandinista movement.

Q. Did you feel any personal threats?

LEE: Not really. Before I left for Nicaragua I had some concerns, especially because of my parents, who were aware that remnants of the civil war still existed and that some shooting was still going on. When my father asked me exactly what the situation was like in Managua I thought I'd get the answer from the head of AR (American Republics) who had asked me to go there. He answered simply, "fluid," when I called him before I departed from Bogotá. I'm sure that answer was not very comforting to my father, who tried to put on a good face when I phoned to tell him the result of my call to AR. His response was, "Well, I guess they wouldn't send you there if they thought it was dangerous." My poor parents! Once again they had to hope and pray that their daughter who had left the serene college campus environment for travel abroad to potentially dangerous places would return home safe and sound!

Once I got to Nicaragua I felt safe living with other TDY-ers in a large white mansion on a hill that was the home of former Ambassadors, but which Ambassador Pezzullo didn't occupy. Instead, he moved into a smaller residence to help change the image of U.S. Ambassadors whose country was blamed for perpetuating the Somoza regime.

Q: You served in Sao Paulo for how long?

LEE: For three years, from 1980 to 83.

Q: What was your job?

LEE: I was responsible for all Country Plan (CP) programming in the areas of economics and labor. The CP themes we emphasized in those areas were The U.S. Economy and the World Economic System and Free Labor Organizations in an Industrial Democracy. I also was in charge of identifying and nominating candidates for IV grants in economics and labor, and I supervised the post's Distribution and Records System (DRS) -- a

responsibility I also had had during my JOT assignment in Mexico.

Q. That must have been a pretty demanding job, as Sao Paulo is one of the largest cities in the world! How did your responsibilities here compare with those of your previous Foreign Service jobs?

LEE: The sheer size of the city and its role as center of business and industrial activity in all of South America insured from the outset that my other job responsibilities would pale in comparison! Talk about keeping a lot of balls in the air -- I never had so many balls as I had in Sao Paulo!

The role Sao Paulo was playing in the economy of Brazil when I arrived was obvious: with a population of about 14 million it had the largest urban concentration in South America. I think at that time it was the third largest city in the world. In addition, its industrial sector (including the whole state of Sao Paulo) was responsible for 46 percent of the national industrial output. The Brazilian automotive industry, centered in the Sao Paulo metropolitan area, had made Brazil a member of the elite club of nations producing more than one million motor vehicles a year. It was the center of the country's financial and investment banking activities, and it was the hub of domestic and international commerce, leading the country in internal sales, exports and imports. The national labor unions were headquartered in Sao Paulo.

So my work was cut out for me. To prepare for the assignment I took a three-week course in Washington on economics. Three weeks isn't a long time, but I was able to at least get an overview of micro and macro economics and how the U.S. economic system compared with Brazil's. I also boned up on our labor issues. So I wasn't completely in the dark when I arrived at post, but I had to learn a lot quickly on the job. I love those types of challenges, so I didn't mind at all -- indeed, I found it exciting.

I definitely "hit the ground running," to use a worn phrase from evaluation reports. Two weeks after my arrival, while I was still living in the hotel while seeking permanent housing, I found myself in the role of control officer for one of the U.S.'s most prominent economists, John Kenneth Galbraith! What an honor! Other speakers quickly followed, including Ex-Secretary of Labor William Usery, labor movement expert Everett Kassalow, MNC expert Robert Radway, international trade and finance expert Robert Dunn, professor at GWU, Professor of Economics and Industrial Relations Jack Barbash, who had led the merger of a trade union movement into the AFL-CIO. Those are just a few I recall, and they were only a fraction our speakers.

Q: Who was our consul general when you were there?

LEE: Consul General John Leary -- a very nice man.

Q: How were our relations with Brazil in this period?

LEE: The U.S. and Brazil had a history of good relations, but they had begun to cool

somewhat before I got there in 1980. Under the Carter administration human rights and nuclear proliferation issues created some tensions between the countries, and in the early 1980s under President Reagan those tensions centered on economic questions, such as penalties for unfair trade practices. Brazilian exports of orange juice, commuter planes, steel, textiles and shoes were threatened. Still, on the surface relations were good.

That said, there seems to have always been a love-hate relationship between the two countries. Brazil is a huge country and has a lot of resources and understandably was saying, "Well, we're a big country like you, we have power, don't tell us what to do." But on the other hand, Brazil was very open to getting help from the United States. It was if there were two messages: "Help us, but we really don't want your help." So, we had to be very diplomatic - which I think we have to be in any country when we are trying to make a difference.

President Reagan came to Brazil -- Brasilia and Sao Paulo -- during that time. He was very well received, although it didn't help matters that in a press conference on arrival he said, "I'm glad to be in Bolivia." He had just left Bolivia before coming to Brazil. Of course, that slip of the tongue made the news. I think they eventually forgave him for saying that. I was control officer for Secretary of State John Hughes when he and President Reagan came to Sao Paulo.

One big issue we worked on during my tenure there had to do with labor affairs. Brazil was trying to decide what type of labor-management system they wanted to follow in the wake of the 1980 strike movement which followed demands of salary increases among workers in the Saab-Scania truck factory in 1978.

Q: The managers and the union class, were we able to stay friendly with both camps? How did they deal with each other?

LEE: Of course, labor unions had existed in Brazil since as far back as the beginning of the 1900s, I believe -- but labor laws regulating them had varied over the years. When I arrived union and management were trying to decide how they would work together in the present environment. They were looking at the collective bargaining methods in both the U.S. and Europe and were considering patterning their laws after one or the other. Much of our programming had to do with providing information on our system. In addition to bringing in speakers from the U.S. we had a series of very popular video tapes explaining U.S. collective bargaining which we were constantly showing to union and management groups throughout Sao Paulo. We were very involved, talking to both groups about the approach we use in the United States. One of the labor unionists, a very colorful person in Sao Paulo, was very active representing the unions, and years later he was the Minister of Labor in Brasilia. He participated in several of our programs, and he and I became very good friends. We had a couple of economists we worked closely with who were considered leftists in Brazil, and one of them later became the Minister of Economics.

Q: By the time you were there, the military dictatorship was over?

LEE: Not yet, but it came to an end a year or two after my departure. But while I was there President Joao Figueiredo, the last military president, began a gradual *abertura* (opening of the political system), saying that he wanted to make Brazil a democracy.

Q: On the social level, how did you find you fit in? The Brazilians say "we have no color bar," but everyone I've talked to says, yes, they've got it, and here you are betwixt and between as we mentioned before. I can see you could puzzle a Brazilian. Or, were you just 'an American?'

LEE: As far as I know I was just "an American." I'm not sure. They have these different classes. We were constantly explaining that we don't have those. We weren't talking about Hispanics or any other; it was black and white. They had mulattos, they had blacks, they had whites. And they could all exist in one family; it all depended on how they looked, their skin color. I think they felt we had this big divide between the races, whereas there was a lot of mixture there. They constantly said they didn't have racial prejudices, they said it was an economic factor that determined a person's class. But the people of color there more often than not were in a lower economic class, so to the outsider it seemed as if there were indeed prejudices.

Let me give you an example. One day a couple of Embassy colleagues - a marine and a consular officer, both black - came by my home for a visit, arriving five or ten minutes apart. Each was told to go to the back elevator -- the service elevator -- to come up to my floor. One came up laughing, the other, furious. The guy who sent them to the back, to the elevator for the maids and service people, was the doorman who himself was an Afro–Brazilian. But this was the thing - if you were Afro–Brazilian, you automatically were thought to be a service person and had to use the service elevator. They said it was an economic thing. In those days and even now -- because they are still working on trying to upgrade the conditions of Afro–Brazilians -- a lot of the poverty was amongst the Afro–Brazilians. Another of my colleagues, a young black woman in the consular section, refused to wear jeans on Saturday as she ran around doing errands, because she didn't want anybody to think she was a maid; she found she was treated automatically one way if she was thought to be a maid, but if she dressed up she was treated another way. If you had on casual clothes and were black it was assumed you were from the lowest economic class, and you were treated accordingly.

On the other hand I found that people expected to be treated a certain way. I, like every other person at a certain economic level inside and outside the embassy, had a housekeeper, an *empregada.* She wasn't a live-in maid, I never felt the need for one, although I had maids' quarters in my spacious apartment. Anyway, with my representational responsibilities I entertained quite a bit. Once when I was having some sort of official event my maid and I went to the grocery store together to shop. This was, mind you, the only time we had gone shopping together, as she usually went alone. In any case, in the store I was walking alongside her and I was chatting with her as I would with a family member or colleague. Suddenly, with a slightly annoyed looked she stopped and said in a low voice, "Let's not walk side by side, because in the grocery store

everybody will think that's strange." She wanted to walk behind me, pushing the cart as I pointed out to her the things I wanted her to put into the basket.

I understood her point perfectly. I had to remember to fit into the culture there so as not to embarrass her. But I think we Americans, when going into cultures where differences in social classes are very visible and norms regarding personal interactions very strict, sometimes find it awkward when deciding how to conduct ourselves. For example, in our language we don't have this difference between the informal and formal "you," as exists with such languages as Portuguese, Spanish or German. When you say "you" you don't have to decide which version to use. In the grocery store I had to be sure to use the informal "you" when speaking to my maid.

Q: How about fitting in as an American woman?

LEE: Being a North American woman in Brazil produced different challenges, or, if not challenges, interesting situations. I found in several of the Latin American countries that a woman living in an apartment alone caused some people to be really "wide-eyed." "Do you live there by yourself? Where's your family?" They found it unusual for a young female to be on her own in a foreign country.

Another vignette: I invited the Consulate Labor Attaché and the local U.S. representative of the AFL–CIO to attend a program I had arranged for Brazilian judges. The featured speaker was a leading female judge we had brought from the U.S. Our Brazilian hosts had us all sit on the stage. The person introducing us said, "This is Dr. So–and–So, the Labor Attaché," and then, "This is Dr. So–and–So, of the AFL–CIO," and then, "And this is Miss Lee." And I had to chuckle, because I was the only one with an earned doctorate sitting up there on the stage! But because I was a woman (I assumed that was the reason, maybe I was wrong), I was not "Dr.," and these men from the Embassy were "Dr." It was little things like that concerning women that I noticed in the more conservative countries in Latin America, compared to the U.S.

Q: Did you get any feel for how the Brazilian labor union leaders interacted with our labor leaders? Was there much unity of thought?

LEE: They were very open to interaction with our labor leaders, because at that time they felt they could learn something, that we had something to offer. It was that they wanted information. As I said earlier, they were really trying to decide which method of mediation, or negotiation, they wanted to use when dealing with management. They were very open to labor leaders coming down, from the U.S. and the programs were very well attended. We were not despised in those days. Some of my colleagues in Brazil are saying it's a lot harder right now.

Q: We're going through a very difficult time. This too shall pass.

LEE: Exactly, this too shall pass.

Q: How were relations between your operation with our embassy in Brasilia?

LEE: I think they were typical. They were the embassy, after all, but they recognized that Sao Paulo was the third largest city in the world, and Brasilia was still growing as the capital. We had a lot of activity, and our colleagues from Brasilia welcomed the opportunity to go to Sao Paulo, to tell you the truth, because there was so much going on. And I enjoyed going to Brasilia, too. It was interesting to note the differences between this relatively serene planned capital, founded in 1960, and bustling Sao Paulo.

Q: Was there the problem of operating in Sao Paulo because of crime?

LEE: Crime was a problem. We got our briefings, and you would hear of people being robbed. They weren't violent crimes, as far as people at the Consulate were concerned. You didn't hear of anybody's getting killed or shot or anything. But houses were robbed, people were robbed on the street. But we knew how to handle ourselves, we were told how to handle ourselves, in a big city.

Q: No more gold necklaces.

LEE: No more gold necklaces. One thing did happen, though, when Brazil was playing Italy for the world soccer championship. Of course the Consulate had to close because it was such a big thing. I was invited by one of the FSNs to go to her house, her family's home, to look at the game, and I stayed behind for an additional thirty minutes following the closing trying to organize things on my desk. When I walked over to her apartment, which was about six blocks away, Brazil made a goal. And when Brazil made a goal, everybody looking at their TVs were clapping, and then they would throw firecrackers out the window. I was walking down the street and someone threw a firecracker. I don't know if they were aiming at me, but it just landed right in front of me and went off. It scared me to death. I jumped into a bar full of men -- no women were supposed to be in that bar, but I was getting off that street -- so I went in there until things died down. When I collected my nerves I went back out, kept walking and prayed that Brazil didn't get another goal before I got to Maria Estella's house!

Q. Did you get to travel in Brazil?

LEE: Yes, I did -- very much! Brazil is about the same size as all of the U.S., and has about as many contrasts in people and landscapes. I delighted in visiting the different regions and noting the contrasts. One of my most unforgettable trips was to Foz do Iguaçu, a city in the state of Paraná, known for its magnificent Iguaçu Falls, one of the largest waterfalls in the world. It was magnificent, breathtaking! I had seen Niagara Falls, and it was beautiful, but I had never seen anything as magnificent as Iguaçu Falls. When I returned to Brazil on a second tour years later I just had to go back to see this amazing wonder! I traveled all over the country, and saw a lot -- to Salvador de Bahia, Recife and Maceio in the Northeast, for a completely different feel, to Porto Alegre in the South, to see yet another different part, to the interior of Belo Horizonte. And of course, to Rio de Janeiro. I saw my first Carnival there -- which I can never forget. I was thrilled by the

parades, the costumes, the captivating beat of the snare drum, or *Caixa*, the samba music and dance!!! I returned again and again -- witnessing a total of seven carnival celebrations, one of those, in Sao Paulo, during my two assignments. And I was happy to host my family while I was in Brazil.

Q. Where did you go after you left Sao Paulo in 1983?

LEE: To the U.S.

Q: What were you doing?

LEE: From 1983-1986 I worked in USIA's Office of American Republics (AR) on the desk for Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. I was Assistant Desk Officer for the first year and Desk Officer for the last two years. As Desk Officer I was the principal Washington representative for USIS programs in those four countries. Understanding how USIS related to local realities, I had to ensure that Agency elements developed policies, plans and activities that best helped the posts do their jobs. I also had to interpret USIA policy and elements' needs to the field, making sure that post requests were feasible and directed.

Q: Looking at it from the Washington angle, what sort of things were we doing with our Information Agency in Brazil that you were concerned with?

LEE: I came to the AR desk at an extremely interesting time. During my tenure there Brazil and Uruguay had their first democratic elections after years of military dictatorship, and Argentina was about to embark on its first year of its new democracy. Only Paraguay was under an authoritarian regime during my entire time on the desk. Concerning Brazil specifically, I handled many requests having to do with Brazil's transition to democracy. I've already mentioned that when I left post the military was still in charge, although there were signs even then that the country was moving towards a democratic form of government. I might add that civilian government returned for the first time since 1964 with the election in January,1985 of Tancredo de Almeida Neves as president and Jose Sarney as vice president. Neves died two months later just before his inauguration, and Sarney assumed office instead.

While I spent much of my time helping the Embassy and six branch posts (Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Porto Alegre, Recife, Salvador de Bahia and Belo Horizonte) coordinating with the various Washington offices who were responding to the posts' requests for support addressing Brazil's political and economic environment. Sometimes the posts had an urgent need which could be addressed only through AR. That's when I had to jump in and personally handle a situation. One example was when I arranged a meeting between President Sarney's press spokesman, Fernando Cesar Mesquita and President Reagan's acting spokesman, Larry Speakes. The producer of Reagan's weekly radio broadcast also attended. When Speakes' office abruptly cancelled the meeting Mesquita took great offense. It was all I could do to get the meeting back on track, explaining to Washington how essential this meeting was to U.S.–Brazil relations, and to

the Brazilian side how the enormous demands on the White House press office sometimes caused such hitches. But all's well that ends well; the meeting resulted in Brazil's initiating a weekly radio series based on the Reagan model as well as adapting the White Housing daily briefing format for their use.

Q. I see why you said you had to be prepared to jump in at the last minute to get things done. Desk Officers often have to pull strings to save the day and make sure no disasters occur on their watch. What are other examples of your work at that time with Brazil?

LEE: I met with a stream of Brazilians in the International Visitor program. I especially recall a talk I gave in Portuguese to a group of journalists who wanted to learn about the U.S. version of freedom of the press. The economy was also an issue; Brazilians were concerned about high inflation, poverty, a large foreign debt, income distribution…such problems meant that leaders were keenly interested in addressing related topics. Supply–side economics was also a hot topic as well as the role of multinational corporations. Labor issues were still of concern. I have to -- this is on the side -- but when I look at Northwest, the labor situation here --

Q: Northwest Airlines is on strike.

LEE: Right, on strike, and the fact that the unions in the U.S. are apparently not nearly as strong as they used to be, is quite interesting -- because we had a really strong labor movement back at the time I was in Brazil and immediately after I became desk officer– and Brazilian unionists wanted to study our model.

Q: Charlie Wick was the head of USIA. What was his impact, from your perspective, on the work of USIA?

LEE: I think he had a marvelous impact, and as everybody will say, it was largely because of his access to the President. He was a good friend of President Reagan from their Hollywood days, and he got the budget he wanted for USIA which enabled him to introduce superior technology into the Agency. He started WorldNet, the first global satellite television network. It was very successful at our posts abroad, where we were able to arrange conversations with high-level U.S. leaders in government or other fields, and bring them right into the rooms of the people abroad. Charlie Wick seemed to be able to get things done. He had the respect. His position was raised to cabinet level because of that relationship with President Reagan. I'm sure, though you've heard the stories, how some people feared Charlie Wick, but all in all I think it was a good time for the Agency.

Q: Did you get involved in any trips of Wick's to Brazil?

LEE: Not as Desk Officer, but he visited Sao Paulo while I was there. Remember, I was still a relatively new officer then, and a visit by the famous Charlie Wick was a big deal! And if I'm allowed to do a little aside about Charlie Wick: we had all these stories about how you couldn't make a mistake during a visit because he'd make sure you'd soon be out of a job! I'm not aware that that ever happened, but that was the story that was going

around our posts abroad. I can tell you a couple of amusing stores, if I'm allowed to mention them; you can stop me if I'm getting --

Q: Oh no, no, please do.

LEE: Here's one: I was over at the Maksoud Plaza Hotel, where the Wicks were going to stay, and my job was to meet them and the Branch Public Affairs Officer (BPAO) at the hotel's entrance of the hotel when their car arrived and escort them up to their hotel room. Just before that, however, I was to check out the hotel room to be sure the Secret Service hadn't dumped the fruit out of the welcome basket while looking for bugs -- as they were reputed to have done during other visits. So I was checking out the hotel room before going downstairs 20 minutes earlier than the time stated on my schedule -- to be sure I had plenty of time to be in place -- before they arrived. Well, I was standing at the elevator door on the top floor, waiting to go downstairs, when the door opened, and there standing in front of me were the Wicks and the BPAO! Stunned, I managed somehow to smile and act as if I were supposed to be there to greet them at the elevator on their floor! I was so glad I was at the right elevator at that moment and not in another elevator going down to the hotel entrance. So I was able to escort them to the room. I thought, there's an angel on my shoulder!

Later during that visit I was to go with Mr. Wick to a meeting in an official car driven by a USIS driver. Because the post had heard how demanding he was I asked the driver a couple of days before his arrival to drive me along the route we'd be taking to the meeting. I wanted to make sure I knew all the buildings, all the statues, all the landmarks, in case Mr. Wick said, "What is that?" So the driver explained everything to me and I was very well prepared. Of course, that proved to have been completely unnecessary! We had a nice chat in the car -- about what, I don't recall -- and I didn't need to know anything about what this building was, or what that statue depicted! But that just shows how nervous we were, and I wasn't the only one. Everybody was on pins and needles, too, because we had heard, "With Mr. Wick, you can't mess up." It's so funny now when I recall those days, but back then, it was no laughing matter -- we all wanted to keep our jobs!

Q: At the time you were dealing with Brazil in Washington, arranging for speakers, was there the equivalent of a blacklist of those who could talk and those who couldn't?

LEE: Yes, indeed! I remember when the news hit the papers that someone at USIA had claimed that the names of speakers suggested for overseas programs were being circulated among senior agency officials, who could remove any names they so desired. He said that most of the people blacklisted were those liberals and Democrats whose views were thought to be inconsistent with Reagan Administration policy. They supposedly also removed names of some conservatives whom they didn't like for some reason. Acting Deputy Director Lenkowsky reported that he and Wick knew nothing about the list.

On a different speaker-related issue, part of my job as desk officer included being the

liaison between my four posts and the Washington program officers finding speakers to fill their requests. That meant I had to ensure the program officers understood the posts' needs, and that the posts likewise understood Washington's. I was responsible for seeing to it that the posts got the kinds of speakers they really needed to support their Country Plan goals. At the same time I recognized the difficulties program officers had trying to fulfill requests for some 500 speakers for programs abroad each year -- each post having its own program environment and its own specific needs.

I remember working with one USIA program officer who got very angry that USIS Brazil didn't immediately say "yes" to the speaker he had proposed for an economics program at one of Latin America's most prestigious institutions. I explained to the Washington program officer the cultural situation in Brazil -- that a USIS officer in Sao Paulo just couldn't take a CV of a proposed speaker to the program's organizer, expecting him to accept it on the spot. Maybe in some places that would work, but not in one of the world's largest economy, not at this business-focused university known around the world! The professor had to run the proposed speaker's resume by a vetting committee, who would determine if the speaker had the expertise they needed to address specific issues. But I guess this poor Washington guy was under so much pressure to get so many speakers on economics issues to posts world-wide that he had little time for what seemed like such pickiness! If that was doing the "blacklist" scandal -- and I don't remember if it was -- that program officer's job was even tougher!

Q. It seems that again, as with the Speakes/Mesquita incident, your ability to see from different perspectives and explain each side's views to the other resulted in an acceptable outcome for both.

LEE: That's true. A couple of other examples come to mind, too. USIA's office responsible for getting exhibits to posts wanted to cancel an important exhibit to USIS Montevideo because after several mix-ups, not all the post's fault, the Agency was convinced nobody at post was capable of handling the exhibit. It would have severely strained the post's relations with its contacts had the exhibit been cancelled. Through careful negotiations with the two offices (including advising USIS Montevideo how to respond to Washington), I had Montevideo back on the itinerary. The exhibit was a success, and both sides were pleased.

Another instance also involved an exhibit, this time for USIS Argentina. The Exhibits Office requested my assistance when NASA reneged on a promise to provide materials for an important space exhibit in Argentina. I called a meeting with NASA officials, two Argentines representing the exhibit's organizers and our Exhibits Office. At the end of the meeting NASA was on board again.

Q: Labor is a big factor in Brazil. You mentioned it before. Right now the president of Brazil has come out of labor ranks. Did you get any feel for the attitude of, what type of, labor speakers we had? Or, were we avoiding labor speakers?

LEE: No, I don't recall any issues or problems with getting labor speakers at that time. I

might add that having worked in Brazil during the time Brazil's President Luiz Inácio da Silva, "Lula," was a well-known union activist, it is so interesting to now follow him in his role as President of Brazil. After running three times for President he found his fourth time "the charm."

Q: How did you find being at the headquarters of USIA, dealing with the Department of State? They were two separate entities, obviously working together. How did you find that?

LEE: At that point I personally did not work that much with the State Department -- unless it had to do with a VIP visit. I know we worked very closely when Brazil's President came up. I remember going over to the State Desk and briefing them on what we were doing. But as Desk Officer for those four countries I didn't interact that much with the State Department. Later on, when I worked in USIA's Bureau of Management I had a lot more contact with State as part of that job.

Q: In a way, I gather from what you are saying, you kind of did your own thing and the desk officers for Brazil did their own thing and there wasn't much need for consultation.

LEE: No, at that time, no. We each had our own responsibilities and they often didn't overlap. Our issues and concerns did, of course, but not our day-to-day activities. Of course, as I've already said, when Brazilian President Sarney was in town I had extensive contact with State Desk Officers. The same was true with the visits of the presidents of Uruguay and Argentina.

Q: Brazil's military government had gone by this time?

LEE: When I arrived in AR in August, 1983 the military government, led by President Joao Figueiredo, was still in power. Both he and his predecessor, President Ernesto Geisel, had already begun the process of democratization when President Sarney took office in March 1985 as Brazil's first civilian president since 1964. I left AR just over a year later, in June, 1986.

Q: At that time, '83 to '86, were we concerned about a communist movement in Brazil?

LEE: I don't recall that we were especially concerned. During the nearly 20-year military rule there was no legalized communist party. In 1985 communist parties were again legal and in the 1990s seemed to become more influential and are still part of the political scene. Even though Brazil's present President Lula's party, the Worker's Party, is not considered a communist party, it shows that left wing politics are still influential in the country now. That said, I don't think the U.S. is concerned about a communist movement in Brazil now or when I was in AR 1983-86.

Concerning USIS Brazil programming back then, our focus, of course, was on public diplomacy, and our efforts concentrated on educational and cultural exchanges and the press activities. And with our speakers we had a lot of economics, labor, freedom of the

press, judicial and U.S. Constitution programs, supporting Brazil's move towards a stronger democracy.

Q: How about with Paraguay?

LEE: As I might have mentioned, during my time in AR Paraguay was still under the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner, who had come to power after a 1954 coup. Strongly anti-communist, he supported the USA's s stance against Communism in Latin America. He remained in control for 35 years, from 1954 to 1989.

Q: When you took over this job, you may have been the second in it, the Falklands/Malvinas war with Great Britain and Argentina took place. This must have caused some heartburn. From your perspective, how did we deal with it USIA-wise?

LEE: I didn't arrive in AR until August of 1983, so I was still in Sao Paulo when the war took place in 1982. From my Sao Paulo perspective the war was certainly a big deal. We tried to seem neutral in the beginning, even struggling with what to call it: the Falklands War, to stay on the good side of the Brits, or the Malvinas War, to stay on the good side of Argentina. I'm not aware of how AR or USIA specifically responded to the situation.

Q: With Argentina; here is a country which has never reached its potential. What were we doing with Argentina?

LEE: When I arrived in AR Argentina's seven-year "Dirty War' conducted by the military junta was coming to an end. Four months later President Raul Alfonsin's civilian government took control. As was the case with emerging democracies in Brazil and Uruguay, our posts were making use of the whole range of USIA resources relative to these countries in transition. IV, Fulbright, speaker, satellite TV and other programs relating to such topics as our judicial system, economy, press freedom and human rights were high priorities. We also invested a great deal of monies on fine cultural programs. We sent the National Symphony Orchestra to Argentina, arranged satellite TV programs between U.S. and Argentine officials, provided press support for the state visit of President Alfonsin. There was a big emphasis on the arts. Such programming gave us major and easy access to the new government officials and new players in a wide variety of fields. It was a period when we were enjoying new channels of communication in Argentina's new political, intellectual and artistic environment. We had the resources, and we used them. The U.S. Government was pleased to support the development of democratic institutions in Argentina and in all of the Latin American countries where democracy was taking hold.

Q: In the post Falkland war period, the junta was so discredited. Did you get any feel for human rights? You had during this junta the disappeared ones. I was wondering –

LEE: Human rights was a major issue in all the countries, and we had a lot of programming in that area. That's when did a lot on the U.S. judicial system and how justice was carried out in the U.S. We sent judges to Argentina, and a group of judges

came to the U.S. to meet with counterparts. Human rights programming was definitely on the agenda in all four of those countries. We wanted to set forth our system without being interpreted as trying to impose anything on these new democracies.

Q: It was an interesting period, particularly in Paraguay and Argentina, when they were getting out from under a dictatorship, the Stroessner dictatorship in Paraguay and the junta with revolving colonels and generals in Argentina.

LEE: Yes. We were trying to open up new channels of communication. They knew where we stood vis-à-vis democracy, of course, and from the USIA perspective our goal was to get speakers in, to get programs in, to promote exchanges, to get good coverage in their press about democracy and human rights and press freedom in the U.S. in a manner acceptable to our audiences abroad.

Q: During this time, with exchanges and all, was there much contact with other groups, non-governmental organizations, NGOs that did placement? American Field Service has been doing this for decades. There are other groups. Did you get involved with those at all?

LEE: Oh, definitely. With NGOs, with academic, media groups -- a whole host of groups. It all depended on the interests and background of a particular visitor. For example, an IV programming group might set up a meeting between a group of lawyers and the American Bar Association. We worked with the International Institute of Education and the Meridian International Center, for example, who arranged programs.

Abroad, our posts worked with a variety of NGOs they kept track of through our DRS (Distribution and Records System). As an aside, a lot of Foreign Service Officers criticized it because it was a lot of work and didn't always seem helpful. We first had to do an institutional analysis of each country and identify who the leaders were in each segment of the society, be it academia, press, NGOs, government, whatever. We'd identify seven or eight Country Plan issues we wanted to address, and, referring to the DRS, determine which institutions and individuals would be likely partners in programs on those issues. Keeping up with these contacts could get pretty tedious, especially when we tried to maintain an updated record of all events. Some posts viewed the DRS as a valuable tool, though, and took it very seriously.

Q: Well it's a method, a discipline, which makes sense. Sometimes the bookkeeping can get a little tedious, as you said, but the idea of having a plan. The whole thing is, we're trying to influence people who have influence.

LEE: Right, exactly. At that time we also had money for our bi-national centers, which were good program venues. Unfortunately, as the budgets got cut down the road, the first things to go were the cultural programs and the library programs. But with some of our contacts we felt we had access to them because of our cultural programs and our libraries. I think a lot of people, at least in Congress, when they were looking at the budget, were thinking that emphasis should not be put on that. I think there are still people today who

say that for good relations we need to go back to some of that.

Q: I belong to that school. While still on the desk you had a TDY in Paramaribo. What was that all about?

LEE: In June and July of 1985 I was in Suriname at the request of the Director of AR. The Public Affairs Officer there had to go on medical leave and the Ambassador asked USIA for a temporary replacement. Although it was only for two months, I found the job eye-opening and the experience, fascinating. Unfortunately, there was a personal downside but I was nevertheless happy I had the opportunity to go to Paramaribo.

Q. Tell me about that experience.

LEE: There were two things that happened immediately after my arrival there that gave me pause. On my first day I learned that the Ambassador was in the U.S. So after finding my office and meeting the five members of my USIS staff I called on the Chargé d'Affaires, the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM). I wanted to introduce myself and get his take on USIS operations. Right off the bat he told me he wanted me to fire two or three of the USIS Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) because they weren't doing a good job. Somewhat surprised by this request, I told him that I had not come to make significant staff changes in the PAO's absence; rather, it was my understanding I had come to keep the USIS program going for two months while he was away. Used to bullying the officers at post (which I later found out), the DCM leaned forward and said, "If you want to get a 'C' you'll do it your way; if you want to get an 'A' you'll do it my way." The DCM was visibly surprised when I calmly replied, "With all due respect, Sir, I didn't come to make a grade; I came to help out during a difficult staffing period." I could see a change in his demeanor when he realized he couldn't bully me; he sat back and seemed to "mellow out" somewhat. We continued to talk a while, and when I left the office I wondered how working with him would be for the next two months!

The second thing that happened concerned an officer from another Agency. When I approached the Embassy my second day I noticed a man standing near the entrance. I had seen him the day before, so I knew he was part of the Embassy. He asked if he could go into the building with me because he was frightened. It turned out he was terribly afraid of the DCM and was obviously having other problems. After talking with him a few minutes I recommended that we go together to the Administrative Officer and discuss his situation; he definitely needed help and that officer had the resources to get it for him. When he didn't want to do that I asked if he had a physician back in the U.S. we could call to discuss his obvious anxiety. We phoned the physician, I talked with him first and then the officer spoke with him. The physician recommended that he get out of town for the weekend for a change of scenery and the opportunity to de-stress. The man then turned to me and said, "I don't have any money for that." What did I do? I gave him $200 from my little book of traveler's checks.

On Monday he was back in the Embassy and sought me out. It was even clearer to me then that he needed some serious help. I finally convinced him we should go to the

Administrative Officer to see about getting medical help for him; I felt he needed to be medevaced. The Amin Officer agreed and called State Med. The physician there said he definitely needed to leave post but that a doctor couldn't get to Paramaribo until a week later to accompany him back to the U.S. The problem was that there was only a weekly flight between the U.S. and Suriname, and besides, that doctor needed to take care of a medical situation in Mexico first. He also told the Admin officer to make two additional arrangements, both of which ended up involving me: get the man immediately to a Surinamese doctor for interim help and find someone to stay with him for 24 hours a day until the U.S. doctor arrived. The man said he would only allow me to take him to the local doctor, and I was the only person he would stay with for a week until the U.S. doctor arrived!

I called AR and told them the situation; they agreed to my being willing to help out. I took the man to a Surinamese doctor the Embassy found, and he then moved into the PAO's home (where I was staying for the two months), where he and I remained until the doctor arrived a week later. The USIS staff transported materials back and forth to me as needed so I was able to work from home. During that week the man and I had several conversations -- that seemed to help him stay calm -- and a couple of times I got up during the night to comfort him when I heard him crying through the walls.

The local doctor reported later he thought I was a nurse because of how I had handled the situation, and the Embassy had nothing but praise for me. They said they didn't know what they would have done had I not arrived on the scene -- as I was the only one this troubled officer would trust.

I might add that a few months later the man I'd helped, looking healthier than when he had departed Suriname, tracked me down in Washington. He wanted to show his appreciation by presenting me with a Resident Association membership at the Smithsonian. And no, he never mentioned or repaid me my $200; I decided that was the cost of keeping peace at the Embassy!

Q. What was life like once you were back in the USIS office at the Embassy?

LEE: It was very interesting getting to know the staff and the programs and visiting contacts in the city. We had a couple of speaker programs and did the media reaction reports on schedule. I also briefed a couple of IVs preparing to go to Washington. I even took two months of Dutch language training at the Embassy -- I was eager to see how it compared with German. The DCM announced he wanted to attend one of my staff meetings, and he sat in the back as I conducted my meeting. I think he was curious about this woman who had stood up to him -- but in a nice and professional way, I assure you!

Q. Due to its history Suriname has an interesting mix of people, right?

LEE: Yes, there are several distinct ethnic groups in the country. You'll find, among others, descendants from East Indians, Africans, Indonesians, Chinese, and Dutch. That reminds me of a funny story. When I first arrived at the airport in Suriname there

appeared to be no-one there to meet me. I waited and waited as the airport gradually cleared. Finally, there were only three people left in the waiting room: two people, still waiting to claim their arriving passenger, and I. It dawned on the three of us at the same time that we three belonged together! The problem? The two USIS FSNs thought that surely the "Miss Lee" they were expecting was Asian-American; after all, there were many of Asian background in their country, some with the name of "Lee." Indeed, one of my greeters was a descendant of Asians (the other, of Africans). They certainly didn't expect to see a 6-ft-tall lady looking the way I did! We had a big laugh, a great way to break the ice!

Q. You were there for only two months. Were you able to travel any outside the city?

LEE: I made friends with a couple of Surinamese families. One friendship developed when I stepped into a little shop to look at their wares. The lady behind the counter was the store owner and since it was lunch time, invited me upstairs to have peanut soup with the family. Later the family invited me to go with them on a weekend into the countryside. We were about eight in a van made for six, but I managed to fold up my legs and fit into the vehicle okay! That was such a fun day. And one weekend I traveled by car with three other Embassy officers to French Guyana; that was a popular shopping trip for Embassy folks, especially because they could get fruits and root vegetables not available in Suriname.

Q. It sounds as though you had an interesting time during those two months. Before we turn to your next assignment, tell me how your relationship with the DCM was by the end of your TDY. You also mentioned something at the outset about a "personal downside." Do you care to elaborate?

LEE: During my last days in Paramaribo I wrote a report for the DCM with results of my analysis of the USIS staff. I pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of each FSN as I saw them. I said they were all intelligent, dedicated, personable workers. I said some, indeed, lacked some necessary skills to do their jobs, but it was not for any lack of ability. I said that firing them was not the answer; giving them proper training was! With USIS Jamaica's consent I recommended they be sent to Kingston to learn from their counterparts the skills that they lacked to do USIS work. The DCM thought that was an excellent idea! By the way, I got the equivalent of an "A" from both the Ambassador and DCM in a write-up of my performance for AR.

Regarding the "personal downside:" When I was asked to spend June and July in Suriname I knew I'd have to suspend my part of the preparations my two brothers, my sister and I were making for our parents' 50th anniversary celebration, to take place in Huntsville, Alabama on August 29. That meant I wouldn't be able to do the VCR story of their lives I had planned. Instead, with the help of a friend, who converted photos into slides while I was away, I prepared a slide presentation upon my return. It did the trick, though I would have preferred a VCR presentation.

Q. In June of 1986 you moved over to career counselor. What was your impression of the

new crop of officers who were coming in?

LEE: I was career counselor for Junior Officer Trainees ("JOTs," each letter pronounced separately, "J–O–Ts"), as new officers were known back then. The first thing I noticed was how many of the officers coming in were transitioning from other professions. There were those just out of college, of course, but there was a significant number of JOTs in their early to mid-thirties. They were lawyers, they were university professors, they were journalists, they were from other government agencies. Those just out of college were often journalism, political science, sociology or international affairs majors.

Immediately after they came on board I would interview them, spending at least an hour with each. I'd ask, for example, why they had joined the Foreign Service, what their hopes and expectations were, and what their impressions were so far. I wanted to get to know them individually so I could better advise each according to his or her special situation or needs.

As I was listening and writing notes I got clues which led me to think: "Sounds as if this person is in the right career," or, "It appears this person might get frustrated, because his expectations are not realistic," or, "Sounds like this person has the right attitude to make a good Foreign Service Officer," or, "I believe this person might be disappointed, as what he's looking for and what he'll likely get are two different things." For those whose perceptions and expectations seemed a bit off track I tried to paint a more realistic picture of what likely lay ahead in their first assignments.

One topic that continued to come up concerned what a "dependent spouse" -- as they were called back then -- could do abroad. In those days you had a lot of people coming in married, who had spouses who had had jobs in the United States. They had their own careers. And naturally, the Foreign Service Officer (FSO) wanted to know, "What can my spouse do?" While most of the spouses were female, you also had women entering as FSOs with dependent husbands.

Q: As the young officers came in, did you find any interest in, "This is USIA, I was wondering, maybe I should be in the State Department?"

LEE: No, not at all. In those days, both for State and USIA, people found out about both organizations before applying, and made their choices at the time they took the written exam. When I came in everyone took the Part I general exam and then had to choose a Part II exam -- for either State or USIA applicants. Of course, the nature of the exam has changed several times since then–both the written and the oral. So, no, I didn't find anybody still wondering when they came to USIA whether this was the right course for them; they had already done their research.

Q: One of the things that has been said, and I speak from my thirty years in the Foreign Service, I came in in 1955, was always, "Oh, we're getting these bright people but they come up against the bureaucracy, and they're only in for a little while, and then they'll leave because they are too bright." But I've always been very dubious about that because

I think that the foreign travel and the work we do, speaking broadly in the Foreign Service, both USIA and State, is sort of addictive. It's fun. Did you find a big dropping off of people taking a look at it and getting disillusioned after the first tour or two?

LEE: Occasionally I would come across people in both State and USIA who were very disillusioned. When I interviewed my JOT counselees I could more often than not tell who was going to be gone in a year, or be disillusioned in two years. It sometimes depended on their reasons for entering and whether or not their expectations were realistic. If they entered because they believed in the mission of the Foreign Service, that was one thing. If they entered just because they liked to travel, that was another thing; they would certainly get to travel, but if they might not like the bureaucracy. Or, if they joined because their family had immigrated from some country and they thought, "I'm going to enter the Foreign Service and hope to be posted there for several years so that I can look into my background," that wasn't a recipe for happiness -- because they certainly couldn't spend their whole career in that one country! That's different from entering because you want to be a diplomat and you want to promote good relations between the U.S. and other countries. The people who wanted to promote international relations would adjust to whatever. Those who entered for one reason only, maybe to travel, could always say, "Well, I don't like this institution so I'm going to join some other one - there are plenty of organizations out there where I can travel."

Q: Looking back on my career and how I approached it, I realized more afterwards than at the time, that we have a great emphasis on recruiting minorities. And yet, during my time, an officer who might have been brought into the Foreign Service in a minority program or special recruiting was kind of tossed to us, and we weren't told to do anything about any special mentoring or training. How did you find this during your time?

LEE: Regarding minority recruitment during the time I was a career counselor there was a great emphasis on getting Arabists into the Foreign Service; USIA had a program to bring in people who already spoke Arabic. Perhaps there was an emphasis on other minorities, say, on African Americans or Hispanics, but I don't recall that that was the case during my two years in that office. I do remember such an emphasis during the early 2000s -- and maybe before, but I don't know the years. At any rate, our career counseling offices would not have been involved in recruiting new officers -- just in counseling those already in the Foreign Service regarding assignment choices and bids.

Concerning mentoring in general, I remember at the time there was a program where a new officer was encouraged to find a mentor after leaving the initial counseling and training for JOTs -- after getting their first overseas assignment. But that was completely at the officer's discretion. Both minorities and non-minorities sometimes chose to participate.

My opinion is the same as yours regarding special mentoring of minorities who entered via a mid-career program. There didn't seem to be any such mentoring or special training, based on my experience with someone who served with me during my first assignment in

Sao Paulo. We were both ACAOs (Assistant Cultural Affairs Officers) handling different portfolios. We both had PhDs, both had taught at universities before entering the Foreign Service. The difference was that he had joined USIA via a mid-career recruitment program, and I had chosen instead to come in as a junior officer, recognizing I was entering an entirely new work culture. Because he entered mid-career I think there was some resentment towards him by some other officers who had come up through the ranks. Plus, I think his expectations were off, thinking he wouldn't be treated as a junior office since he was coming in mid-career. He resented "being told what to do like a child," as he expressed it to me when he complained about our supervisor. But I explained to him what was going on. I said, "There are certain things you have to be told how to do, because you didn't learn them as a junior officer." I think the fault was on both sides -- on USIA's, too, for not preparing him correctly, for simply saying, "You're mid-career, you go out into the field and do that job."

Q: I was just thinking that being identified from the African American, the term keeps changing, but one of the traps is that you might find yourself being set up to always deal with the situation. There is tremendous pressure from outside, from Congress, the legal side and all, to recruit more people. Did you find yourself getting into the trap of –

LEE: No, I never felt that way. Later, as a Diplomat–in–Residence (DIR), where I was posted at one of the HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), one of my responsibilities was to encourage students to consider a career in the Foreign Service. But I bid on the DIR job, knowing I would be doing that. Back in the Agency in whatever position I was in I would sometimes serve as a mentor to minorities within USIA or State, but it was at their requests or at the recommendations of persons who knew me, and I delighted in doing so. When I later worked as Special Assistant to the Head of the Bureau of Management I volunteered to be a counselor in the EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) office, where I often got involved with conflict resolution concerning both Foreign and Civil Service employees. But I was never pressured by any Agency "higher up" to deal with any particular situation. It was always at my initiative or at the request of an employee or colleague.

Q: When I came in they had just had the Wriston Program which had amalgamated many of the people in the Civil Service into the Foreign Service, and the idea was to make it more democratic and stop this business between civil service jobs which dominated Washington. The problem was, many of the civil servants who came in really weren't suited to be going overseas. They were fine, they were in their place, but they were brought in and expected to perform, and some did brilliantly but a significant number just didn't like to be overseas and weren't prepared for the job, and eventually dropped out. It was not a well thought-out program.

LEE: I can understand that maybe a Civil Service person might not be suited for overseas work if he or she weren't hired at the outset for that. What surprised me, though, as a junior officer when I first went abroad was that I found some Foreign Service people who didn't like being abroad! I didn't find it with USIS officers, quite frankly. I think anybody that had read up on USIA/USIS before joining knew what to expect -- they

would be dealing with lots of people in an international setting, and they welcomed that opportunity. When I decided to join I chose USIA because I read what other Embassy officers did and what USIA officers did and concluded I was better suited for USIA. I thought that people with my background -- a foreign language major, a university professor interested in educational and cultural exchanges -- would gravitate towards USIA -- not that when we got abroad we didn't focus on specific issues. I ended up being a USIS economics and labor program officer early in my career and loved it. I took a course at FSI before I went -- studied up on micro– and macroeconomics and labor, etc. But my job was all about getting out into the society, speaking the language, interacting with the people.

So it's not that you can't switch, and you are supposed to be generalists. But what I did find was that there were some people who were not prepared to interact within a foreign culture and they were miserable. They had joined, perhaps, because they had an interest, say, in particular topics or issues, but were maybe uncomfortable working in an international setting on those issues. I found only a few like this, but still, I was surprised by even those few! I remember writing home about that, that I didn't understand why people would join the Foreign Service if they didn't want to learn the language, get out there and interact with people. Later on I realized how that could happen. But in the beginning, as a neophyte, I really was shocked.

Q: Did you get any feel for the training of the junior USIA officers? Were they prepared to go out? Were you picking this up when you talked?

LEE: USIA had an excellent training program just for junior officers. Just as we had a career counselor for junior officers we had someone in charge of the training program. Robin Berrington was in that position when I was career counselor. We worked so well together and were so excited about our work.

The training lasted several months and introduced the new officers to all of USIA -- its mission, its resources, its people. When the JOTs completed their training they knew about the operation of all of USIA -- and what Bureau, what Division, what Office was responsible for what. We also had an excellent offsite training program with State Department's new officers. It was a fun time that allowed officers to bond and to learn about each other's agency.

And after the JOTs got their initial overseas assignments they had language training and area studies training at FSI. As an aside, USIA officers as a rule got more language training than some of the other agencies' officers; as public diplomacy officers we had to be prepared to interact with the host country citizens on a daily basis. The JOTs also spent time in the Area Bureau for the country to which they were assigned.

All in all I thought the training for USIA junior officers was superb! And, of course, when I as in that office USIA still had the rotational program for JOTs in their first assignment abroad. I explained how that worked when I talked about my assignment as JOT to Mexico City. At some point down the road -- I don't recall when -- junior officers

going out for the first time no longer had the luxury of learning on the job while "rotating;" I think by then resources did not allow for that.

Oh, another thing I'd like to mention concerning JOT training while I was career counselor. While still new on the job I got very interested in why some junior officers were not successful when they came up for tenure after their initial five years. So I got permission from the Office of Personnel to examine the OERs (Officer Evaluation Reports) of officers who in the past couple of years had not been tenured and had had to leave the Service. I thought knowing the main reasons for non-tenuring would help me better advise my "clients," as counselees were called. I found my study very interesting. There were two main criticisms, it seemed, that continued to crop up: poor writing skills and poor interpersonal skills -- the inability to get along with or communicate well with others. Often, with the guidance of a good supervisor and additional training, the successful new officer gradually adjusted to the "writing culture" of the Foreign Service and could learn good writing habits. It didn't appear so simple a matter in the case of poor interpersonal skills.

Some people seemed to have an innate ability to interact with and communicate well with others, both within one's culture and in a "foreign" cultural environment. For those who lacked that ability the question was, "Are such skills teachable?" My next step was to investigate what type of training in intercultural communication and interpersonal skills was available to our officers. I learned that although in the past such training had existed, both in USIA and the State Department, at that moment no such training existed. Indeed, I remembered my JOT class had had a session on cross-cultural communication led by the author of a book on the subject. I decided the best thing I could do right then was to develop a session, a "mini-class," on interpersonal and intercultural communication skills for junior officers before they left for their first overseas assignment. To prepare for that I took an evening course at American University on cross-cultural communication to get an overview of how they were teaching the topic.

My resulting session addressed the importance of developing excellent interpersonal and intercultural communication skills and how they -- or the lack thereof -- could have a profound effect on their officer evaluation reports. I also gave JOTs guidelines for communicating effectively, both with people from their own culture as well as with people from a different culture. Based on my mini-course USIA decided to invite the professor from American University who had taught my course to develop a larger course that eventually ended up in USIA's training division and was available to all officers. The State Department also adopted such training shortly thereafter, using the same professor. Nowadays, of course, the Foreign Service Institute has such training readily available.

Q: Looking after the junior officers, did you have much contact with the supervisors in the field? "Miss X or Mr. X is coming out, and they need some help with their writing, or with interpersonal skills." Were you able to do that?

LEE: Here's how I handled that. In the case of an officer going out to post for the first time, I'd say, "If you notice you are having a difficulty, go to your supervisor and ask for

help. Your supervisor will appreciate the fact that as a new officer you are trying to learn." If the person were returning from an assignment abroad and had undergone an evaluation cycle or two I would go over the evaluations with him or her and I would say, "When you go to your next post, focus on this. Go to your supervisor and let him or her know you would like to work on strengthening this skill or that skill. Most supervisors will appreciate it. Go and have your mid-report conversation, or even before then." And, no, I never called a supervisor abroad. I couldn't have done it for every person, and the supervisors might not have appreciated that. I told each officer the onus was on the individual to "keep up with" their skills and with how they were developing,. I advised them to pay attention to their evaluation reports, to notice the skill or skills a supervisor indicated needed improvement and to ask for help. "That's the only way you're going to develop or get promoted," I told them. Even after I had left that office people would come to me years later for advice -- people who were disappointed because they were not being promoted. And I'd say, "Let me look at your last five evaluations and let's see if we have a pattern here." And I would advise them that way.

Q: In 1988, where did you go?

LEE: I went to Barbados as Public Affairs Officer for the Eastern Caribbean, which included eight independent island nations and three British dependencies. Included in that area were three separate U.S. embassies -- in Barbados, Grenada and Antigua.

Q: You were there until when?

LEE: Until 1991.

Q: Tell me about your impression when you arrived, what was happening in Barbados at the time?

LEE: Generally the United States and the Caribbean countries were enjoying friendly relations. It was a period of calm and quiet for the most part. Of mutual interest were trade and economic development issues as well as narcotics-related issues, and much of our programs were related to these topics. USIS also did a lot of programming with the media; they were especially interested in training and press freedom.

An overall concern was trying to reassure the Caribbean nations that the Caribbean region was important to the U.S. For example, we had to explain the closing of the U.S. Forces Caribbean Command in Key West, Florida, the cancellation of Voice of America plans to construct a relay station in Grenada, the closing of the VOA relay station in Antigua, a reduction of U.S. sugar quotas, and the cancellation of a bilateral double taxation treaty.

During the Gulf War a small number of people demonstrated in front of the Embassy. The ambassador called us into the embassy to meet, to see how we might proceed, depending on developments. But there were no serious incidents.

Q: Which islands did you deal with?

LEE: I oversaw USIS activities on the islands of Barbados, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Grenada, Dominica, Antigua/ Barbuda, St. Kitts/Nevis, Anguilla, Montserrat and British Virgin Islands.

Q: Who was your ambassador?

LEE: Well, for my first two years we didn't have an ambassador. When the first person was nominated for the position, a woman, many in the Eastern Caribbean were up in arms. Local reporting complained she hadn't even graduated from college. They were saying, "How could you send us someone like that?" She was a political appointee and quite wealthy. She and I had lunched together in State's cafeteria before I left for the post, and I found her to be quite affable; she sent me a lovely hand-written thank-you note for my briefing. But then a mini scandal arose -- I won't go into that -- about something back here in the United States. So when she went before Congress, she was not confirmed. The second person who was nominated was a podiatrist from -- I forgot where he was from -- but again, the people from the Caribbean said, "How can you send us somebody who doesn't know anything about the Caribbean?" They felt insulted that people were being nominated whose backgrounds did not indicate they knew anything about the Caribbean islands. He likewise was not confirmed by Congress.

Q: Well this is, of course, part of the tendency. What do you do with a political appointee? You put him on a Caribbean island and forget about him.

LEE: Exactly. And they think that the people of the Caribbean don't mind. But they felt insulted. Barbados is, after all, a sophisticated place, which is surprising to many, and it plays an important role in the regional affairs of the Eastern Caribbean. The ambassador who finally came after two years was G. Philip Hughes.

Q: What was his background?

LEE: He, I think, came from the Midwest, from Ohio. He had attended Dayton University and Tufts and had a background in political science, if I remember correctly. I do remember, too, that he had played the organ at one point and might have briefly considered some kind of music–related career. He had had stints in the Commerce Department, State Department, and NSC. He was a young guy, 38, I believe, at the time. His wife, a very nice person, had been with one of the think-tanks.

Q: What type of work were you doing in Barbados, and what did we do on the other islands, USIA-wise?

LEE: USIS issues and programs on the various islands was not a one–size–fits–all affair. The political importance of these small nations far outweighed their limited population and resources. They were all members of the United Nations and other regional and international fora, and their support for U.S. initiatives was important to U.S. foreign

policy objectives. And the Caribbean, of course, was having an ongoing strategic significance to our country. We had to make sure we viewed each island as unique and that we carefully addressed issues or conducted programming accordingly. While some of the issues naturally overlapped, the types of resources utilized and frequency of activities often didn't.

Take the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative (EAI). Noting that the Eastern Caribbean had not benefited much from the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI), many West Indians viewed the EAI as just one more U.S. plan that would not work as advertised. To help get the facts out, in Barbados, the only island where we could conduct satellite TV programs, we featured the Treasury Undersecretary discussing the EAI. For some of the other islands we put together information packets to distribute to media outlets.

Speaking of TVRO satellite programs, I arrived in Barbados in the middle of a long-standing problem between the USG and the Government of Barbados regarding the use of our satellite dish to receive Worldnet programs. Our dish atop our building violated regulations prohibiting satellite dishes in downtown Barbados. During my entire tenure I worked with the Town and Country Planning Office to gain extension after extension so we could continue conducting our programs. All the while we were identifying places where we could relocate our offices. The problem was not resolved until some three years after my departure when Washington came up with the money and approved a move to a new location.

While exhibition facilities in Barbados allowed us to bring the Jacob Lawrence exhibit, accompanied by the artist, to that island, we had to find other resources to use in Nevis, Anguilla and Montserrat and the other islands. In St. Vincent the Prime Minister attended one of our cultural programs -- I believe it was featuring a guitarist -- and came up on the stage with me, full of praise about USIS activities. While media-training programs for journalists in St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Dominica and Grenada made a lot of sense, a seminar in the Leewards -- where our audience of professional journalists was much more limited -- wouldn't have been cost effective.

Narcotics-related activities were high on our list, as drug abuse problems were seen as a major threat throughout the Eastern Caribbean. Examples included programs on media-involvement in drug awareness campaigns, and using the Voluntary Visitors program to send community leaders to the U.S. interested in initiating drug counseling programs. And when government officials approached the Chargé in Antigua for anti-drug materials, we were able to provide them.

And, of course, we had our share of VIP visits, including those of Vice-President Quayle and Senator Ted Kennedy, as well as CODELS (Congressional Delegations), such as those of Representatives Rostenkowski and Grey. And I traveled to Martinique to set up and run the White House Press Filing Center during the summit of President Bush and France's President Mitterrand.

I must add here that Dan Quayle and Ted Kennedy came at a time of great sadness at our

post, and they played a role in helping us cope.

Q. Oh? What happened?

LEE: Our FSN Cultural Affairs Specialist, Susan Walker, a young woman who had been with USIS for 14 years and was a media personality before that, died suddenly at age 31. A very popular, vivacious, vibrant person, she was the true backbone of our office, and her death had a devastating effect on us all. She died a couple of weeks before the Vice-President and Senator Kennedy were due to arrive. They had put off their trip about three or four times and the dates had changed, but this time the date was permanent. There was a real outpouring of grief across the Eastern Caribbean. She was so well–known and so well–liked, and condolences came from all the islands. Media coverage filled with expressions of grief and accolades was widespread throughout the region. Over 3000 people from around the Eastern Caribbean -- including high-level government officials -- attended her funeral, testimony to her outstanding qualities as a professional and a friend. She had traveled a lot for us to carry out our programs, sometimes alone, sometimes with me or the CAO (Cultural Affairs Officer) or IO (Information Officer). Two of her "babies" were the Dare and the Youth–to–Youth programs, which she promoted to help discourage students from using drugs. And on the morning of her death she was scheduled to go to the airport to pick up an AMPART, a film producer, whose program she had arranged.

Following her death I wrote a newspaper article about how much she had meant to us and also a nomination for a Superior Honor Award to be given posthumously. I went to the Chargé and I said, "Do you think we can get Vice-President Quayle and Sen. Kennedy to present this to her family?" And he said he thought Washington could include that on their Barbados schedule. When they arrived a few days later, they did present this award to her family. A photo of the presentation with the VIPs and two family members along with my article appeared in the media. I think we really showed that if our Vice-President and a well-known Senator could do this for someone at the embassy, we really did have respect for the Caribbean. Susan truly represented the Caribbean in the eyes of West Indians across the Eastern Caribbean.

Q. That was a real difficult time for you and your staff -- coping with the death of a beloved employee while handling a VIP visit.

LEE: Indeed, it was. And Susan's untimely death wasn't our only misfortune at that time. The day following her death the CAO had to depart suddenly for the U.S. because his mother was dying. Our IO slot was vacant, and we were expecting the new IO to arrive any day, in time to assist with the Quayle-Kennedy visit. But then news came that the IO-designate had resigned from the Foreign Service! This brought to three the number of vacant positions. Add to that the fact that the FSN Information Specialist fell ill for two weeks, and you can imagine the pressures at the post! Washington was able to rush to us an IO from a neighboring post to help with the VIP visit, and my versatile, resilient and supportive staff jumped in to take on extra responsibilities. Somehow we managed, and managed exceedingly well, a fact noted by other Embassy agencies and our Washington

office as well. And on an extra–personal note, I had to phone my sister that I could not travel to Minnesota as planned to be in her wedding, so her marriage ceremony took place without her Maid of Honor. She and her new husband came to Barbados soon afterwards, a most welcomed visit!

Q: You mentioned the media and freedom of the press. In your area of responsibility, what were some of the media questions?

LEE: Actually freedom of the press wasn't really an issue, because they did have press freedom there. The interest was more in development of the media, on training. All the islands I visited placed great value on education and training as a way to fight provincialism. Media contacts remembered very well previous USIS/USAID co-sponsored seminars on basic news writing and radio broadcasting and were eager to get additional exposure to the U.S. way of doing things. While we did a little training on Barbados, most of it was on the other islands.

Q: In Grenada, this was six, seven years after the -

LEE: Intervention, invasion -

Q: whatever you want to call it. What was the situation there?

LEE: There didn't seem to be animosity towards the United States. U.S. students were still coming in to study at the university, I met a lot students enrolled in the medical school there. I think it's correct to say that the events which led to the intervention caused people to be wary of any leftist tendencies that might have threatened to reemerge. Though Maurice Bishop's 1979 coup ousting Eric Gairy was greeted at first with relief, enthusiasm let up as Grenadians gradually realized the political effect was to replace a rightist dictator with a leftist one. While I was there I wouldn't say that the region remained entirely free of leftist tendencies, but it didn't appear that the left had great support. You could occasionally notice a Marxist-oriented voice at the University of the West Indies or in a local newspaper column. Or one could read of a group of journalists or students going to Cuba for privately organized programs or seminars.

One thing did happen, very sad, while I was there. Our political officer there, John Butler, was killed. He was calling on someone in one of the government offices and a deranged person shot a couple of the people. As the papers reported, John tried to stop the gunman, and he ended up being killed. That was a sad time for us. And you don't think of that in the Caribbean, that our officers are really at risk. But I guess it can happen anywhere, everywhere. We received a lot of phone calls from the press across the islands requesting background info on John and personal anecdotes as well as assurances that the U.S. didn't consider his death politically motivated. Our IO attended his funeral, carrying an award presented to his family posthumously.

Q: You mentioned that there were some demonstrations against our involvement in the Gulf War, this was '90, '91. I'm surprised. This is actually a small country that had been

invaded by Iraq, so we were responding to that. I can't see why, who would be demonstrating?

LEE: All the ambassadors had called in their people to their embassies on a Sunday afternoon because of directions from Washington, to be prepared for whatever might happen because of the Gulf War. When a small group showed up the next day at our embassy and wanted to speak to the Ambassador, he was not there, so our information officer went outside and spoke with them. "Demonstrations," I guess, was really the wrong term, as it wasn't anything really big. A bigger issue at that time was narcotics. People from Washington were interested, were coming down, DEA people.

Q: Were they a way-stop?

LEE: Apparently. There was transiting, coming from South America through some of the Caribbean countries, going to the United States.

Q: How did you find the media there? Sort of sensational? What was your impression of it?

LEE: The largest newspapers were the two on Barbados. They covered international news as well as the local news. They had a couple of good editors for each of the newspapers, and we had excellent relations with both. One time, this would be criticizing our own embassy, and I guess I don't want to do that on tape…

Q: There's no reason, this is -

LEE: Okay. One time, a problem arose, a simple thing having to do with a visa. The editor of one of the newspapers wanted to go to the United States to attend a conference. He hadn't focused on the fact that his visa had expired, so when he got to the airport he couldn't get on the plane. He called me. He was a good contact, he covered the embassy events, etc. It was on a weekend, and I know that our consular people go in sometimes in emergencies and give visas on the weekend. I called someone in the consular section, and that person didn't want to go or authorize someone else to go to the consulate to give the editor of this newspaper, who wrote often about the United States, a visa. Yes, I agreed with the officer, that he should have checked before going to the airport, but mistakes can be made. He's an important contact, I said, he writes about the U.S. The consular officer refused to help. Well, I knew that our Chargé would not want this to happen, nor did USIS, so I called the Chargé, who, in turn, called that consular officer, who then sent somebody in to the Embassy to give this man his visa. Sometimes we have to do these things. Even if the person isn't a journalist who can write about us, sometimes to keep up good relations if they are good contacts we need to help.

Q: I'm a consular officer and I did this all the time. Sometimes you cursed, but you go in. Other times it's because there's a crisis in the family and you have to get the - it's just done.

LEE: If somebody's going up for tourism, we say, "Come back in on Monday." But, this was the editor of a local newspaper attending a conference.

Q: Did you travel much?

LEE: I did, in the various islands. During the initial months on the job I traveled to all the islands to familiarize myself with them and to meet contacts; I wanted to get a feel for the programming environment on each island. And later I attended many of our programs, although sometimes an FSN or the CAO or IO traveled alone. But I was present at many of our events. I've mentioned a few of the types of media and cultural programs we did on the various islands. I must say our programs were very popular and, I think, very important to our relations.

Q Was there much of an exodus from these islands to the United States? Would tourists from these islands come back?

LEE: Oh, definitely. They're proud societies, and rightly so. The island - well, I can speak more of Barbados, because I lived there and just visited the others – it was well-run, there was emphasis on education, good schooling, it was a very clean island. So people traveled abroad and returned. Of course, you could find in Canada, U.S. and the United Kingdom people from the Caribbean who had settled abroad, and there seemed to be a lot of back and forth between friends and families. And other tourists flocked to Barbados, despite the high living costs. At that time, it was among the top 20 most expensive countries in the world. That was reported on the front page of the *New York Times* while I was there. People traveled there for conventions and on vacation despite the high prices.

Q. What about life for FSOs at the embassy? How did they like working on the islands?

LEE: Two post inspections before my arrival had cited poor morale at the embassy. The Chargé asked me to chair a Morale Committee consisting of members appointed by him to investigate the situation and make recommendations for improving morale. Over a period of several weeks we interviewed Embassy FSOs and sometimes spouses. One common complaint was "island fever," especially for FSOs whose jobs did not require travel to other islands. And many spouses felt isolated and stayed within their own little circles. A few families also complained they found it difficult to "get into" the Bajan culture; although they were on an English-speaking island they couldn't understand the Bajans if they were speaking a dialect. They therefore didn't go to cultural events or try to make friends with Barbadians. We heard a variety of reasons as we interviewed a significant number of people. But the most common complaint had to do with how those at the top were running the Embassy. When we had completed the interviews and written a summary of what we had found, I took the results with recommendations to the Chargé. Country team members used those recommendations to make changes in how things were being done. Meanwhile, Embassy families were given suggestions as to how to become more integrated into the local society; we made clear that they had to make some efforts to get involved -- that it didn't just happen naturally.

Q: You explained, essentially, it was a problem of management.

LEE: Yes. That was one of the biggest problems that came out of our task force interviews. That was the feedback.

Q: Morale is generally kind of low for a lot of people in London and Paris. Or, small garden spots. It's usually much higher in hardship posts.

LEE: Indeed, I agree with that.

Q: Did you get hit with any hurricanes?

LEE: Not on Barbados, but Hurricane Hugo went straight through Montserrat, Dominica and the Leeward Islands, six of our 12 islands.

Q: Montserrat: that was a volcano, wasn't it?

LEE: Actually Montserrat was hit by both -- in 1989, by Hurricane Hugo, and in the 1990s, I believe, by a volcano.

Q: What happened?

LEE: I suppose they rebuilt, but a lot of Montserrat was destroyed by the hurricane -- about 90% of its structures. The FSN press specialist and the FSN cultural specialist who died suddenly - those two and I went over -- and also our Information Officer. We took some supplies, including fruit and water, to one of our most important media contacts, Radio Antilles. The Hurricane forced us to rethink and re–plan programs scheduled for the hardest-hit islands. We arranged a press conference for the USAID director regarding a large AID package.

Q: You left there in 1991. Where did you go?

LEE: I was called back to Sao Paulo, where I had served early in my career. Actually, I had extended for a year in Barbados, but Washington needed somebody there immediately in the CAO slot. Although I regretted having to leave close friends I had made in Barbados, returning to Brazil turned out to be an excellent career move -- plus I loved living in that country! And my closest friend in Barbados visited me twice in Brazil. I stayed in Sao Paulo for one year. Then I got a call from Brasilia asking if I would move over to Rio de Janeiro as the BPAO (Branch Public Affairs Officer/USIS Director) there. So, after one year back in Sao Paulo I went over to Rio. It was during this second Brazil tour that I was promoted into the Senior Foreign Service.

Q: So that was '91 to '92 in Sao Paulo, and then -

LEE: '92 to '95 in Rio.

Q: What were you doing in Sao Paulo?

LEE: I was the Cultural Affairs Officer (CAO).

Q: How did you find things when you went back?

LEE: The staff was pretty much the same. I loved the staff and was glad to be back with them. Of course, U.S. personnel had changed. The issues, surprisingly, hadn't changed that much. We still had Lula running for president each time. One thing that had changed was there was this interest in Brazilians of African descent, how they could advance. One ACAO worked very hard on that, and we were trying to bring in people from the United States who could talk about the progress of African Americans. Human rights had remained an issue.

Q: I've heard Brazilians pride themselves on their equality, and yet in reality they've got essentially as bad a race problem as we have. I would think that our coming in and talking about our problems as being similar to theirs would annoy at least the powers that be who were touting the wonderful harmony of the races.

LEE: Actually, we focused on how much we had progressed without comparing ourselves with them. By bringing in people who could show how the U.S. black situation had advanced, we were giving hints to them of what they could do so they could progress. Brazilians like to say that the people who are at the bottom are there because of economics, not because of discrimination.. But then, when you look at who is at the bottom you wonder. People are categorized according to appearance, so you can find in one family someone who is classified as Afro-Brazilian, another who is a white Brazilian, another, a mulatto. In the United States, the "rule" was -- and that, I think, goes back to why we were all in the same boat in the South -- one drop of African blood classifies you as black, no matter your appearance.

Q. What else about your year in Sao Paulo?

LEE: By the time I returned the city had grown to be the second largest in the world. It is the only city in Brazil where major cultural presentations can find a large enough audience with the financial means to support them. One major project I took charge of right after my arrival was the 1992 Bienal, the most important art exhibit in Latin America. It was far more difficult than usual, partly because the official U.S. representative, a well-known installation artist, chose to combine thousands of pounds of church candles, a quarter million copper tags, two turkey carcasses and an unknown number of flesh-eating beetles to create her message. I had to insist, despite the artist's financial objections, that we needed a beetle keeper, a taxidermist and an adequate ventilation system, all things for which we were later extremely grateful.

Another memorable USIS-sponsored cultural event during my year at post was the six sold-out performances of the Virginia Opera Company's *Porgy and Bess* at the Sao Paulo

Municipal Theatre, where I had especially strong ties.

And I can't forget Brasilia! On one trip there I brought back an unanticipated souvenir -- a double fracture in my ankle obtained when I stepped off a curb into a hole on the eve of a meeting in Brasilia to discuss the post's Country Plan. Although I was unable to attend the meeting to give a presentation and defend my ideas, my suggestions emerged amazingly unscathed from what I later learned was an intense debate among officers from the six Brazil posts. The fracture proved to be a major inconvenience for over four months, but I managed to keep up with my work.

Q: You went to Rio; you served in Rio from '92 to '95. How did you find Rio?

LEE: Rio was known for crime, drugs, all of those things. But I found it a beautiful, beautiful city -- the people and the landscape. I liked both the Paulistas and the Cariocas, but there was a difference in the atmosphere of the cities. Rio is a city that is serious and fun-loving. There is that nice combination that I found. You can relax when you want to be relax, and you can be serious when you need to be serious.

Q: What kind of work were you doing there?

LEE: As BPAO Rio I managed an operation that was one of the largest branch posts in the world, equivalent in staff, budget and responsibilities to many PAOships worldwide. I was responsible for planning and supervising all of USIS Rio activities and for managing a staff of three Americans and 41 Brazilians.

My jobs at the helm of USIS operations in both Barbados and Rio de Janeiro allowed me to use my managerial and interpersonal skills to the maximum extent. I could focus more on advising or managing people who were managing programs than on the intricate details of carrying out the programs themselves. Although I had loved using my organizational skills to keep lots of balls in the air while handling lots of programs at some of my previous posts, and I liked using my communication skills and policy sense to move programs along, I discovered I felt especially useful when I could advise my staff on the best programming practices, or help resolve conflict between individuals or organizations or call on my ability to empathize to advise others how to improve a situation. In those management positions I had found my true calling! At the same time I could interact with contacts and enjoy my extensive "representational" responsibilities. I enjoyed friendships with so many Barbadians and Brazilians, and I am still in contact with several of them.

Q. What types of managerial issues did you handle in Rio?

LEE: By far the most significant had to do with a huge downsizing of FSN staff. When I first arrived I was supervising 44 people, three Americans and 41 Brazilians. Several of the Brazilians worked in our big press printing shop, as we produced a lot of publications in Portuguese for our six posts. We also had the press section and the cultural section, and a library headed by a regional librarian.

During those days USIS posts around the world were downsizing because of significant budget cuts. At USIS Rio we had to downsize in two stages. During the first stage I had to cut 17 people, many from the print shop, such as editors and translators. The following year I had to dismiss another group. It was a very painful period. I was determined to make the cuts as easy as possible on the affected individuals, if one can ever make such an undertaking "easy." I took the time -- at least an hour with each individual -- explaining the rationale for his or her cut and assisting each to think through his or her next steps. That I was successful in comforting them was revealed in an open letter one of the senior editors sent to the PAO in Brasilia praising me for my empathy and sensitivity to their situation. That brought tears to my eyes, as they were the people suffering job losses -- yet this person took the time to recognize my efforts. I was very proud of how I handled that situation; as USIS Brasilia told me, if anybody had to make those cuts, they were glad I was there to do it. I later had to let a driver go after having met with him periodically over a year, documenting his performance and making him aware that his work was not up to par. When the time came for me to dismiss him, he understood why and took the news well.

The whole time I kept my eye on the needs of the individual staff members, both those who were being let go and those who were staying behind. They appreciated my obvious concern about their well-being; I couldn't have done it any other way.

Q. What were some of the program topics did you addressed?

LEE: One was drug trafficking and had to do with a delegation led by Secretary of Commerce Ronald Brown. Raytheon, competing against a French company, won the contract for satellite monitoring of drug trafficking in the Amazon.

Q: Were the Brazilians interested in what we were up to?

LEE: About the drug trafficking? Yes, as it was a mutual problem. And we mounted programs in a variety of other areas of interest to both the U.S. and Brazil: human rights, the environment, nuclear technology, trade policy, relations with Eastern Europe, administration of justice, a whole host of issues. As in Sao Paulo Brazilians in Rio were interested in the progress of African Americans in the U.S. I remember when they criticized us about the Rodney King treatment by police in Los Angeles.

Q: The police were filmed beating up a large black man, sort of violent, with drugs. There were riots in Los Angeles.

LEE: I don't recall that he was violent, and I don't believe drugs were involved; I think alcohol was. He was with two friends speeding down the freeway when the Highway Patrol gave a chase. The three were reported to have been drinking and watching some kind of ball game on TV before getting into the car. The police caught up with the car and ordered the men out of the car. Someone from a nearby building filmed the incident, showing King on the ground being beaten and not defending himself. It seemed to be an

excessive use of force. Riots broke out in Los Angeles when the police were acquitted of wrong-doing. Brazilians were critical of the police treatment of an unarmed black man.

Q: Were there other public relations issues that arose?

LEE: Yes. One big public relations problem concerned what the Brazilians perceived as bad treatment in the consular section. We had to mount a big PR campaign, inviting the press in to see our operations. There was one consular officer in particular that had a reputation for being downright rude to the Brazilians. We were trying to see how we could handle that situation; one way was to invite the press in to the consular section and give them a tour, and also talk to this consular officer and say, "Look, you can't use profanity, you can't be mean to the people, they're very sensitive to that, as anybody would be." That was a big press issue for us.

Q: What was the response of the head of the consular section to this?

LEE: That person really cooperated with USIS. He, too, wanted to improve the relationships with the press and the Brazilians. So we had an out–and–out campaign, in conjunction with the head of the consular section: going on TV, describing how the section functions, inviting the press, giving them a tour, talking to this one person who was one of the main problems in the section, saying, "You really represent the U.S. government. You just can't talk to people like this." This just shows how one person can really sour the atmosphere.

Q: Were you able to get rid of the person?

LEE: He eventually left when his tour of duty was up; nobody moved him out. This is sort of an aside, but I have always thought that the two major PR organizations are USIS and the consular section. Our consular sections are sometimes under so much stress, with all the people they are interviewing. They are given just one minute or two minutes. I was thinking, how can we change this? Because I can see how some officers would get tired and irritable. There is no excuse for what this guy was doing, though, how he was talking to people, but I always thought our consular people need to take breaks, that we need more people in the consular section, to relieve others when they get tired. And we should make sure consular officers recognize the effect they have on the outside public. They play a big role in creating the image the host countries have of us. And that's what USIS is all about, looking at our image abroad.

Q: Were you there when the American federal government shut down for a while because of Congress?

LEE: No, I was back in the U.S. then.

Q: How about crime; did that impact you?

LEE: No, I never was robbed in Brazil. I think I mentioned that in Colombia, I was.

When I was invited to move over to Rio from Sao Paulo, my first thought was, "I've heard so much about crime there. Do I really want to go?" But I accepted the Rio position. During my last week in Sao Paulo, though, robbers came to my apartment building, overpowered the doorman and went from apartment to apartment. I was in my apartment, not knowing what was going on. Somebody knocked on my back door. It was probably about 9:00 pm. I wasn't expecting anybody, so I did not answer the door. The next day I found out about the robbers in the building going from floor to floor looking for people to rob. They were discovered when a man drove up to the building, and seeing someone through the window tying up the doorman, he called the police. When I heard what had happened I just had to chuckle to myself, not in a funny way, but thinking, here I was considering not going to Rio because I thought Sao Paulo was safer. And here the crime is right in my own building! But it was an isolated incident. In Rio I knew I had to be careful. You didn't go out wearing expensive jewelry, for example. Some jewelry I had bought in Sao Paulo I kept in my safe the whole time I was in Rio. You knew how to carry yourself so as not become a target.

Q: Did carnival time cause problems for you? People descending on you?

LEE: No, there was never a problem. I had a lot of visitors to my apartment, which, incidentally, was a beautiful large one–apartment–per–floor dwelling in Ipanema overlooking the beach -- a great apartment for carrying out my official representational responsibilities. One time I had three different sets of visitors, no group knew the other, and they were sleeping on the beds and on the floor. At that time I really didn't need a live-in maid, so they were sleeping in the maid's quarters and everywhere they could find a spot. But it wasn't a problem. They didn't just come without asking. They said, "Can I come?" And then they would bring along a friend. So I said, "Well, you can sleep on the floor." (Laughter)

Q: You left there and came back to Washington in 1995?

LEE: Right. I had been assigned as Deputy Public Affairs Officer in Bonn and was going there in the summer of '95. My major, as I mentioned in the beginning, was German. So I came into the Foreign Service speaking fluent German. So they called me in Washington and said, "Look, we need you over there. Would you bid on this position?" And I agreed to do so. I hadn't served in Germany before that. My goal at the outset was to learn as many languages as possible and learn new places. And I had spent so much time in Germany before joining the Service that I had not yet sought out an assignment there. But by then I decided it was time to take advantage of my former training. But a posting in Germany was not to be, because I asked Washington to break that assignment because my brother was terminally ill with lung cancer, and I wanted to return to the U.S. USIA was very understanding. I broke that assignment and came back home in June 1995. I went out to California immediately to spend time with my brother. He died three months later. That was such a sad period. I was comforted by the fact that in the summer of 1994 I had asked him to fly from California to Minnesota to accompany my mother to Rio for a six-week visit (my father had died in 1985), and the three of us had spent a glorious time together. He was diagnosed with cancer two or three months after they returned to

the U.S.

A few months after my brother's death Washington asked again if I would bid on another job in Germany, this time as USIS Director/Branch Public Affairs Officer in Berlin to oversee the move of USIS offices to the new capital. My mother was almost 90, and I didn't want to leave the country, so I turned down that second chance to go to Germany.

Meanwhile I had bid on the job as Special Assistant to the Head of the Management Bureau (M), which I got. Around that time I was also approached about a possible Ambassadorial position, but I said "no" to that offer, too, as I really wanted to remain in the U.S. And for some reason I had never had a burning desire to become an Ambassador anyway, which often surprised my Foreign Service colleagues; so many people would have desired filling what many considered the "ultimate" Foreign Service job! Looking back, I think I would have done a great job as Ambassador to the right country -- and I don't know what country that would have been -- but I had never spent any time thinking about that; I guess I was getting so much satisfaction from doing what I was doing from year to year, no matter the position.

Q: You were in the Management Bureau job from '95 to when?

LEE: '95 to '98.

Q: What type of work were you doing?

LEE: My responsibilities included being a "devil's advocate" and advisor to M's Associate Director and Deputy Associate Director. I also was the point of contact and overall coordinator for M Bureau issues, and I had to coordinate with USIA's General Counsel, Chief of Staff and the Washington Press Center re USIA's costs for official White House travel. I arrived when federal agencies were tasked with "reinventing government," so I spent a lot of time working with the M Bureau's several Divisions in response to GPRA, the Government Performance and Results Act -- when government agencies had to reexamine how their organizations did business in an effort to make the federal government work more efficiently. I also was responsible for drafting M's quarterly Management Issues cable to the field and for the M Bureau's monthly newsletter.

In addition, I served on the Commissioning Board for junior officers, and teams studying the Agency's awards programs and USIA's recruitment practices. The State Department also invited me to serve on their panel promoting civil servants into the Senior Executive Service. And I often found myself "managing" conflict, motivating individuals throughout the Agency to come to agreement whenever I was made aware of a problem.

Q: GPRA was an initiative of Vice-president Gore's. How did you find that program? Did it make sense?

LEE: Yes, it did make sense. I think it was Vice-President Gore who asked in a press

conference, "Why do we need ten pages of regulations for ashtrays?" We really had to ask ourselves, "What are we doing? What are our missions? What are our goals?" Some of it seemed like busywork, trying to chart this, that and the other, sort of impossible to do. But I thought basically it was an exercise that any organization should be doing -- asking, what are your goals, how do you plan to carry them out, what are the results, and how do you measure the results?

Q: Were you feeling also the budget pinches, too? This was a time when the Congress was rather hostile to the federal government.

LEE: Yes, oh yes. We were constantly reviewing the budget and trying to see where we could make the cuts. I would say that took up a lot of time during my entire three years, a lot of time. One example: Our Bureau, the M Bureau, was responsible for approving the resources of USIA people going on presidential trips. There seemed to be a lot of such trips. That was a bone of contention often times, that we were paying, we thought, too much to go on trips. And all of them weren't people from USIA. We seemed to be paying for people the White House added that we thought did not add the benefit to us for our operations abroad. That was a big issue, trying to work out with the White House about what we paid and what the State Department paid.

Q: The head of USIA at the time was who?

LEE: Joseph Duffey.

Q: People I've interviewed have said he was not the right person to head USIA at the time. He seemed disinterested, or almost hostile to the mission of USIA. Did you feel this?

LEE: Well, I think the general feeling was that he didn't fight for USIA to keep us from being folded into the State Department. But I'm not sure that people felt he was disinterested. We thought he was not the personality type to oppose Jesse Helms and his determination to make USIA merge with State. It might have been disinterest, or it could have been -- as he ended up going to this educational institution -- that he was just not the type to get out there and lobby for USIA as Brian Atwood did for USAID. You have to be a certain type to get out there, command attention, and get your way. But whether it's disinterest or whether you feel uncomfortable doing that is another matter. I have no way of knowing what his real motivation was. But you are right -- a lot of people thought he didn't care what happened to USIA.

I stayed in M's Special Assistant job for three years and then moved over to be Chief of the Division of Career Development and Training (M/HRT). That would have been 1998.

Q: This is just about time that USIA was getting merged into the State Department.

LEE: Exactly. Upon my arrival in M/HRT, I focused largely on three things: the first was to provide Public Diplomacy training for USIA officers, the second was to collaborate with FSI (Foreign Service Institute) on just how we were going to merge the public

diplomacy training operation into their training program, and the third was to prepare our USIA people to cope with everything associated with any huge change -- not just our Division of Training, but the whole Agency.

Regarding planning the move of public diplomacy training over to the Foreign Service Institute, we worked very closely with FSI officials. My staff went over to FSI for several meetings, and they came to us for briefings. Our office was very fortunate to be able to work with Ambassador Ruth Davis, head of FSI, and her deputy, Ruth Whiteside. Those two women worked hard to make sure their offices made us feel welcome. They wanted to learn from us, also. It wasn't that they were going to take over our operation and fold it into FSI without our input and recommendations; they listened to our concerns and perspectives. We received a lot of care and respect under the direction of those two ladies, and our office appreciated that so much. I've heard that not all USIA offices had such a smooth and problem-free transition to State.

Q: For training of incoming people, new Foreign Service Officers were brought in, and public diplomacy was one element of it?

LEE: Yes. As a separate Agency, USIA trained its new officers in the art of public diplomacy, our specialty, our "cone," to borrow from some "old-time" language of State's Foreign Service. When our training operation moved to FSI, public diplomacy training was still a separate type of training, just as was, say, language, area studies, or economics training.

Q: This is '99?

LEE: Yes, that would have been 1999. When M/HRT merged with FSI, FSI's new public diplomacy training section continued to use the modular trainings we had set up at USIA that had proven to be so effective. And FSI adopted for their training one of our best practices, and we had pushed hard for that: bringing FSNs to the U.S. for training, for which USIA had had a really decent budget. We told FSI we thought that FSNs needed to come to the U.S. because they were representing us in their countries, explaining our programs and policies to the host country audiences. Some of them had been working at our embassies for years and years and had never traveled to the U.S. We were pleased that FSI saw the need for FSN training in the U.S.

Q: Well particularly in public diplomacy, the FSNs have far more public responsibility. Although it's important for FSNs in other areas to come here, much of it is more technical. But for public diplomacy you rely on the Foreign Service Nationals to a great extent.

LEE: Yes, I agree. And I can make a big argument for the other sections, too, for FSNs' coming to the U.S. Some of them go out into the public and discuss U.S. interests and programs. The econ section, political section FSNs, for example -- they interact with contacts, sometimes discussing our IV programs, our speaker programs -- as well as U.S. economic and political issues. They've got to know our systems as well as their own

country's. They advise our contacts.

Q: Were you able to get them on trips to the States?

LEE: Yes, they would come, have their training in Washington, and then FSNs would go to other parts, to two or three other cities in the United States -- which was especially valuable for those who were helping set up programs for people coming here under the IV program.

Q: With the USIA officer corps, this amalgamation must have hit them hard, didn't it?

LEE: It did, at our embassies and consulates abroad, as well as in Washington. Concerning my own personal experience, I didn't find the merger difficult for some important reasons, the main one being I never had to get used to yet another layer of bureaucracy! Although I was in Washington during the planning stages before we merged, I wasn't in Washington, nor was I in an assignment abroad, when the merger actually took place -- although I'm certain I would have had a positive experience at FSI.

The opportunity arose a month or two before the official merger for me to go off to Spelman as Diplomat–in–Residence (DIR) in the Fall of 1999. Although I was in my element, so to say, in the Training Division, the possibility of returning to a college campus after all these years really excited me. The person who was supposed to be my deputy at FSI was nominated to move into what was to have been my position as head of FSI's public diplomacy training. He had a great reputation and I knew that he would do a wonderful job. So I went to FSI to explain that after all the time we had worked so well together planning our merger I wouldn't be moving to FSI with the USIA training division after all. I assured them that the person who would replace me was very familiar with our move preparations -- that he was an excellent officer who had been involved in a lot of the discussions concerning USIA's merger with State. Although he was not in our training office, he was in our Bureau's career assignments division, and he knew exactly what was going on. FSI was very understanding of my decision and was satisfied they were going to get a well–qualified person to fill "my" slot.

Q: You went to Spelman from when to when?

LEE: From 1999 to 2001.

Q: How did you find Spelman?

LEE: Oh, it was very refreshing. I encountered very bright students. It was the first time I had been on a campus for an extended period since I left teaching at Ohio State when I joined the Service in 1976. Of course that's a huge university. Spelman is a small liberal arts university for women, mostly African American women.

Q: This is in Atlanta?

LEE: Right. I was so impressed by the quality of students who came there, by their backgrounds, too. So many of them had traveled and studied abroad. My office was in the International Affairs Center. The students I was seeing, who came into the Center, and were in the classes I visited, were students very interested in international affairs, and who had a lot of international experience. Spelman had a wonderful Study Abroad program, and I was asked to be a member of the committee that selected students in the various programs for studying abroad. It was a delightful experience for me, just to see the energy there, the interest, the intelligence of the students.

Q: One of the assignments, for Foreign Service Officers assigned to a Diploma–in–Residence program, is to try to do some recruiting. How did you do?

LEE: Oh, I definitely influenced students to consider joining the Foreign Service. I did so often by introducing them to our various programs and activities and talking to them about the goals and missions of the Service as a natural outgrowth of those programs. Of course, I also talked about "Careers in the Foreign Service" at events organized for that purpose, and I answered questions about Foreign Service careers at career fairs at different colleges and universities in the region. I did the latter in conjunction with Washington's recruitment officer responsible for the Southeast region.

Q. Talk about some of the programs you organized to showcase our resources and activities which led to discussions about careers in the Foreign Service.

LEE: One of the first things I did was to call on the Atlanta Council for International Visitors. Such Councils around the United States helped us set up program for visitors coming to the U.S. under our IV program. I said, "You know, when our international visitors come through, I'd like to them to lecture whenever possible at Spelman or the other schools of the Atlanta University Complex; I want to work closely with you so when visitors come to town, let's see if we can plug them into classes at the various institutions." I wanted to get a foreign journalist, say, to speak in a journalism class, or an author to speak in a literature class, or a politician to speak in a political science course. You get the idea. In addition, I instituted a series of talk at the International Affairs Center called "IAC Presents," allowing an IV grantee to lecture on a subject we couldn't fit neatly into a scheduled class. We would simply announce the speaker's talk across the AU campuses, and we always got a nice audience. At the beginning of each event I would describe the IV program as I introduced the speaker, in the IAC or a classroom. That invariably led to students' approaching me after the program with questions about the Foreign Service -- and to requests for appointments with me later on.

I've always felt that in addition to bringing IVs to the U.S. to learn about us we could gain a lot of ground by showing them that the U.S. is interested in other countries. As you know, we have the reputation oftentimes for not being concerned about anything beyond the borders of the U.S. By inviting the IV guests to lecture on their countries or specific interests, not only would U.S. audiences gain knowledge but the guests would see how interested U.S. citizens can be in learning about others. In other words, the IV program provided a great opportunity for a two-way exchange of ideas -- it wasn't just "show and

tell."

Q: It appears you got a lot of mileage out of the International Visitor program, that it was an excellent way to pair visitors with the right audience while at the same time giving you the opportunity to recruit for the Foreign Service. What else?

LEE: Our satellite TV capability provided me another way to introduce students to the work of the Foreign Service. I approached a professor of Spanish literature and asked if the class was studying any author in this hemisphere who was still alive. I figured having a live satellite TV dialogue in a class would be a novel way to peak the students' interest -- and for that I needed an author in a similar time zone. I discovered the class was studying the works of a Costa Rican - actually, the man was born in Jamaica but living in Costa Rica -- in one of the Spanish classes. I contacted our cultural section in Costa Rica and said, "Can you find this author and work with us to set up a program in which he can come to the embassy and have a dialogue with us using your WorldNet facilities?" I was able to propose that because Spelman had satellite TV capability, too. And our post in Costa did just that. It was a wonderful exchange, because the students had read the author's work and could ask questions about his novel. And in introducing the satellite feed to the class I got to tell them about the Foreign Service and how we made use of satellite TV to facilitate dialogues between the U.S. and other countries around the world.

Q. Another innovative way to recruit students!

LEE: I also gave talks on various subjects in the schools in the Atlanta University Consortium. Sometimes it was a general talk about Foreign Service careers; other times I lectured on a subject which specifically tied in with a class. In one political science class I spoke on U.S.–Brazil relations. In a sociology class I talked about the history of women in the Foreign Service. In a journalism class I talk about communicating in foreign cultures. In each setting I had the opportunity to introduce myself, talk about my role as Diplomat-in-Residence, and invite students interested in careers in international affairs to stay in touch.

Another State Department resource I took advantage of was our TPC, TelePress Conference, a telephone conversation, which I mounted when the Embassy didn't have satellite TV capability. In the case of a Spelman class studying African Politics, with Ghanaian politics as one of their segments, I contacted our embassy in Ghana for help. I got the Chargé, the Political Officer and the Public Affairs Officer to participate in an hour–long telephone conversation with the class, who asked question after question about U.S.–Ghanaian relations. Spelman's audio-visual office had set up loud speakers in a large auditorium so we were able to invite several class sections to the event.

So I was able to introduce a variety of ways to make students aware of Foreign Service work. A number of students applied for and received internships in both U.S. embassies and State Department offices in Washington. And several went on to take the Foreign Service exam and enter the Foreign Service.

Q: You left Atlanta in 2001. What happened then?

LEE: I returned to Washington. Instead of bidding on an overseas job I decided on an assignment at BEX, the Foreign Service Board of Examiners, conducting the oral exams of candidates who had passed the written exam. I had wanted to work there since my time as Junior Officer Career Counselor to see just how officers were being selected for entrance these days.

Q: And you did that until you retired?

LEE: Yes. I did that for one year. Then it was time for me to go abroad again, because I had been back in the U.S. for six years (the maximum time, without requesting an exception). So I had to make a decision -- to either go abroad, seek an exception to remain in the U.S., or retire. At that point I was bidding for the first time since the USIA/State merger -- in other words, according to State Department regulations. My Career Development Officer (CDO) suggested I bid on the Public Affairs Officer slot in Japan -- without Japanese language training. Of course, USIA would not have considered sending me abroad without Japanese, and I certainly wouldn't have considered going into such an important job without the language. Even if State had been willing to train me the old USIA way -- that is, a year of Japanese at FSI, followed by a year at a language institute in Japan -- at that point in my career I did not want to invest two years in language training, which wasn't even an option since the PAO position was opening that very year. Since I didn't care to bid on the other job the CDO suggested, a job in the Department that would have permitted me to stay in the U.S., or consider other alternatives, I decided to retire, something I had been thinking about anyway. So I retired in 2001, at the end of that one-year BEX assignment. I knew I could continue to work as a BEX examiner even after I retired, since several of my retired colleagues had returned as a WAE (When Actually Employed) contract employee. So the decision to retire wasn't a difficult one; I could have my cake and eat it to, so to say! So, following my two-month retirement course I came back to BEX as a WAE-er. After two additional months with BEX, though, I decided to retire fully -- there were too many other delicious options tugging at me!

Q: How did you find dealing with candidates for the Foreign Service, who passed the written exam? What was your impression?

LEE: Oh, they without fail they were very bright. When I interviewed some, though, I could tell that their motivations for wanting to join the Service probably would not make them happy in the long run -- the same type of feeling I got when I interviewed new JOTs when I was JOT career counselor back in the 1980s. Being a BEX examiner isn't easy, because you know that despite what you think about a candidate, you don't have control of any one candidate's fate, because you are working with other examiners, and their input matters -- and that's as it should be. No one examiner should be able to determine whether or not a candidate is ultimately hired. Each candidate is scored by several examiners, and the final score is an average of the examiners' individual scores. It can be heartbreaking sometimes, though, when you think somebody really has the capability, but

for whatever reason your colleagues don't give as high a score, but there is really nothing you can do. And likewise, you see somebody get an overall passing score and you think, "That person's going to have an interpersonal skills problem. We don't need somebody like that." But they've scored high on other parts of the exam, and somehow they pass. So you go home thinking, "Boy, did we do the right thing?" And you never know until years later.

Q: I have to say, one of the most difficult things is, there are a large number of very bright people who just don't have interpersonal skills. This is probably the most important thing you need for a diplomatic career. You are working in a bureaucracy, you're dealing with foreigners.

LEE: My feelings, exactly! But I hope with the continuing tweaking of the examination process they'll figure out how to best test for interpersonal skills. I know that periodically State brings in outside experts to review the examination process along with seasoned BEX examiners, and they are constantly redoing the exam. I think I told you during one of our earlier interview sessions that when I was a career counselor for junior officers I did the study about why officers didn't get tenured, and the lack of good interpersonal skills was a major reason. I then introduced a mini-training session to address that problem as much as I could during the limited time I had. I'm happy to say for some years now FSI has been offering classes on intercultural and interpersonal communication. But also significant is the fact that the BEX oral examination process now includes sections that better allow examiners to judge a candidate's interpersonal skills. Examiners do the best they can to weed out people who are not talented in that area, but it's not always possible to do it during the oral exam; it's down the road when they don't get tenured for lack of good interpersonal skills when that is most obvious!

Q: Well then, you retired in 2002. Briefly, what have you been up to since?

LEE: As I mentioned earlier the first two months I did go back to BEX as a WAE-er and examined in two or three cities, in "off-site" locations. Then I decided that I did really want to retire fulltime, as there were so many things that I wanted to look into and to do. One of the main things was to continue researching a book I want to write on intercultural communication. Over the years I've been collecting from newspapers, magazines, everyday experiences examples in all areas showing how the lack of an intercultural sensitivity can be a problem, no matter what the area. Whether it's in international affairs, diplomacy, medicine, education, science, the arts, whatever -- we need to train somehow, if it's trainable, our people at a young age to be sensitive to others' situations. And when I say "culturally sensitive" I don't mean just with people from other countries or "foreign" cultures; I contend that to be successful, to be happy in life, one needs to be "culturally sensitive" to other people from your own background., speaking your own language, even if you've grown up in the place and you look alike -- just being sensitive to others' perspectives, others' feelings.. It's fascinated me how some people can be so talented that way while others can be so oblivious to the need for that. Some people can empathize, others can't. As part of my research I want to consider if it's something you can learn to do, or if you are born with that ability. If you can learn it, how is it best

taught? My approach is you've got to show people the benefit of being able to be skilled in that area -- so they'll say, "Okay, it's important to me, so I'll learn it."

Q: Well, I'm looking forward to reading the book.

LEE: So that's one thing, and I've been traveling to so many places that I hadn't yet seen. I had never been to Africa. So one of the first things I did was, I went to West Africa -- to Ghana, Senegal and Ivory Coast. I'm leaving Saturday to go to South Africa for the first time. I went to Fiji, to Italy; I went to Alaska, Vancouver, Victoria, I'd never been to any of those places before I retired. And in the U.S., I've traveled quite a bit. And I've got plans down the road: I'm going to Malta in November, and I will continue to travel.

Q: Well, that's great.

End of interview