

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

COLETTE MARCELLIN

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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is June 28, 2022. We're starting our interview with Colette Marcellin. So Colette, where and when were you born?

MARCELLIN: I was born at the French Hospital in Los Angeles in 1959. My parents were both from French Catholic immigrant families, so that's why they chose the French Hospital. It was a cultural connection for them.

Q: Tell me a little about the immigrant experience since it's your grandparents who came from France?

MARCELLIN: The French culture was important to my family growing up. Three of my grandparents came over as single individuals. My grandmothers worked as domestic servants for wealthy families here in Los Angeles. My Basque grandfather, on my mom's side, worked as a sheepherder in Arizona. My other grandfather, on my dad's side, was actually born in San Francisco to French immigrants.

Q: How did your parents meet?

MARCELLIN: Well immigrant families tended to stick together and socialize. My mother's parents were older than my father's. After my maternal grandparents married, my grandfather left the sheepherding business and bought a walnut farm in La Puente. They'd have Sunday gatherings for friends, and that's how my other grandparents ended up seeing each other a lot and getting together. Funny thing is, both my grandmothers got pregnant around the same time and even went shopping for baby items together. So, my parents were born and literally put in the same crib. They grew up knowing each other their whole lives. With a little nudge from both families, they started dating and eventually got married. They're ninety-one now, and they've known each other their entire lives.

Q: That's an absolutely fascinating story. Was French spoken in your home?

MARCELLIN: Actually, it was interesting. Basque was the language in my mother's home, and French was the language in my father's home. But they couldn't really talk to

each other except in English. My brother and I picked up a few phrases in both languages. Mostly, they were those secret parent code words, you know, to tell us to behave without anyone else understanding.

Q: Right, right. Now brothers and sisters?

MARCELLIN: Just an older brother. Rick is fifteen months older than me.

Q: All right. Now, you mentioned a walnut farm. In other words, they were farming walnuts. They were raising walnuts.

MARCELLIN: Yes, my mom's side of the family raised walnuts. On my father's side, my grandfather started out farming, but he did all sorts of blue-collar jobs. During the Depression, he took whatever work he could find. And, of course, the families kept socializing regularly.

Q: Lovely. 1959, as you're growing up, did you go to public school, private school? How did that work?

MARCELLIN: My mom's family lived in La Puente, and my dad's family lived in Montebello. When my parents got married, they chose Whittier, which was in between these two towns. We went to public school there. It was a wonderful childhood. I felt like my two families were really one, they all knew each other. But the education in Whittier wasn't the best. There was a lot of busing from tougher neighborhoods, where there were gangs and where English wasn't the first language. The reading standards and academic preparation in my high school were pretty poor, and they kept getting worse. Because education was declining, those of us who were serious about college knew we had to self-educate. We read a ton of books and even tried to learn calculus at a local college.

Q: I understand, were you able to take part in any extracurricular activities?

MARCELLIN: I was very involved, and I loved my school despite the academic shortcomings. I was on the newspaper and yearbook staffs, in student government, played tennis, Hi-Jinx, and joined clubs. By the end of my junior year, I was lined up to be the yearbook editor, one of the co-valedictorians, and involved in a ton of other activities. And then my father came home with the news that he was being transferred to Dallas. So it put my situation into a bit of a tailspin, because I didn't want to leave. My father and my mother agreed to let my brother and I get an apartment. They moved to Dallas, but we stayed behind so I could finish high school and he could finish community college.

Q: As you were completing high school, what was the discussion like about college? What were you looking for? What did your parents talk about?

MARCELLIN: My mom did not go to college. My father was the only one in his generation to go, he went to UCLA. But it was always expected that we'd all go. I was a top student, and as a co-valedictorian, I was aiming for some serious schools. My

counselor was pushing me to look at a few schools. But when my father had a bit of a health scare, I decided to go to Rice University in Texas, since it was the best school there. I wanted to be closer to my parents. If they hadn't moved, I probably would've stayed in California.

Q: And your brother, I assume, also went to Texas.

MARCELLIN: He was older, so he finished up at USC, and then he chose to go to dental school in Texas later. He finished his undergrad in California though, since he'd already started.

Q: Okay. What was your initial impression at Rice?

MARCELLIN: It's actually a pretty small university. It's nationally known, but at the time, it was probably about 4,000 students, so not massive. It was really tough, though, because most of the students were much better prepared. About 50% were National Merit Scholars. And I remember in my physics class, the professor asked how many of us had a full year of calculus. There were only two of us, besides me, out of a hundred, who didn't have that background. My first year was really tough, catching up. I'd always been the top math student in high school, but my very first math test, I got an F. I called my dad in tears, saying, "I'm in way over my head, send me applications to easier schools in Texas. I'm going to flunk out." He just said, "Nope, give it a chance. It was one bad test. Keep going and see what happens." And I ended up working really hard and did fine at Rice. But it was a tough first year.

Q: Yeah. When you got to Rice, and you were struggling a bit, were you able to talk to anyone? Did anyone mentor you? Try to give you the catch up that you needed?

MARCELLIN: Although I was assigned a Biology professor advisor, he gave me terrible advice. I was an "undeclared major." My advisor said "Well, at Rice, we are mostly an engineering and science school. You should take calculus, physics, chemistry, because if you decide to be an engineer and you haven't taken the big three, you'll already be behind." If anything, this counseling set me up for a horrible first year. I ended up as a liberal arts major, not an engineering student. I probably would have been better off at another school. But what I absolutely loved about Rice were my classmates. I made two lifetime friendships. Rice also happened to be next to the Texas Medical Center. And that gave me interest in what was my first career, which was hospital administration. I participated in some of the extra experiments there—hypnosis studies, other things. I even got a part time job in Medical Records there. And that helped guide me into my first career.

Q: I'm sorry, I forgot to ask you one question about college and all of your preparation. When you arrived in college, what was your aspiration? Even as for a major? What were you looking for?

MARCELLIN: Because the best teachers in my high school were science teachers, all of the good students thought we wanted to major in science. But I wasn't sure. I was good at math until I got to Rice and realized abilities are all relative. That threw me for a loop. I started taking a lot of different classes: sociology, English, psychology, anthropology, history, and accounting. I thought maybe hospital management would be something I'd like to do, as it touched on so many interesting subjects. The part-time and summer jobs in hospitals really fed that interest.

Q: Okay, so you worked through college, or at least part time or in the summer?

MARCELLIN: Yes, I worked every summer, and usually had a part-time job during college. My sophomore year, I worked at the faculty club as a waitress, and by junior year, I was also waitressing and bartending at faculty events. In Texas, at that time, the drinking age was eighteen, so I bartended for football games and weddings at the faculty club. In the summers, I tended to look for hospital jobs in Dallas. I worked as an admissions clerk in the emergency room and as an executive assistant to the administrator for a small hospital. \One summer, I worked for Pan American Airways in New York City as a reservation clerk. I had great summers and felt very lucky.

Q: At any time in college, did you think about taking a semester or travel in Europe or anywhere else?

MARCELLIN: At that stage of my life, I had no international curiosity. I'm actually shocked to have become a Foreign Service Officer. Although I took U.S. history, I never took world history nor political science courses.

Q: The jobs that you took, especially the hospital jobs, what was it that made you so interested in it?

MARCELLIN: I think my interest in hospitals started because my dad was a board member at the French Hospital, and my mom had been an auxiliary member or volunteer. As a child, I spent a lot of time in the waiting area while my parents were either volunteering or in meetings. I then volunteered as a candy striper at a local hospital in high school. I also watched TV with my grandmother, who lived with us, and she loved to see medical shows-- Dr. Kildare, Medical Center, and Marcus Welby. This may have also influenced me.

Q: I watched all of those as well. The reason I'm asking this is because often people who go into the Foreign Service begin developing certain skills or talents, at least in college, that are transferable to the Foreign Service. As you think back, are there any of those at least as you begin your work in hospitals, that you think back on and say, I'm so glad I had that hospital experience because XYZ?

MARCELLIN: In the Foreign Service, I mostly took management jobs, and I think all of my work experience, whether I was working as a waitress in high school or the yearbook editor, having to deal with my staff and the conflict about yearbook issues, helped me

become a better management officer. When you are a line employee, you learn from both good and bad bosses, good and bad peers. It all came together when I joined the Foreign Service, as management was natural for me. I really enjoyed being a management officer. I enjoyed having teams, supervising teams--promoting communication, cooperation, and coordination. I think all of it came together from a very early age.

Q: Your decision to move out of science, was it at all affected by people telling you, "Oh, women really don't do this very much, you might have trouble getting a job," discouraging you because you were a woman.

MARCELLIN: It wasn't sexism that changed my path. I remember the moment when I knew I didn't want to do science and I didn't want to be a doctor or anything clinical. I had taken an anatomy course at Rice and we did lab work at the Texas Medical Center, working on cadavers. I remember the very moment--I was tracing the nerves of the brachial plexus and thinking, "I am so bored, I hate this, I hate this, I hate this." And as I walked out of that experience, I knew I didn't want to be a doctor or scientist. This was my sophomore year. And that put me into focusing on what am I going to do next? I knew I wanted to get out of this science/engineering curriculum that I had been forced into. I started taking economics and other social sciences.

Q: One last question about your experience at college. It's at the tail end of the counterculture. Did that have any influence at Rice or influence on you?

MARCELLIN: I was so academically driven that I was immune to counterculture or any culture for that matter. I didn't get into any trouble of any sort. Rice was such a competitive, demanding school, particularly because of my lack of preparation—I had to constantly study. I didn't really understand the music scene. And years later, my daughters would say, "Yes, Mom was a total nerd. Complete nerd." Absolutely true. Generational cultural things--TV shows, music--were just kind of going over my head. I really didn't watch much, if any, TV from 1977-1984.

Q: All right. So then, as you're finishing your university studies, did you think about graduate school? Or had you been counseled about that?

MARCELLIN: Because I was ending up as a liberal arts major against my accountant father's advice, I was worried about finding employment. At that point, I was leaning towards hospital management, which typically requires a graduate degree. There are many choices of programs within hospital administration-- one can get a Master's of Public Health, a Master's of Hospital Administration, or an MBA. I opted for an MBA because, at that point, healthcare was a real mess. It still is, but I thought having a sound business background would make me a better hospital administrator.

I went to the University of Chicago to get my MBA. I credit the economics training at the University of Chicago for allowing me to pass the economics questions of the Foreign Service exam. For all the wrong reasons, I selected International House as a dorm because the rooms were bigger, not because I had this tremendous international curiosity.

However, living among international students and engaging in discussions about international events, my interest in foreign affairs started to take root. I vividly remember a tense dinner among my MBA friends when the Falkland Islands War broke out, when an Argentine friend and a British friend were suddenly jumping up at the table and threatening each other with cutlery. That was the beginning of my interest in international affairs.

Q: Fascinating.

MARCELLIN: My Foreign Service career was an accidental career.

Q: Was there anything about your MBA studies that also served as a foundation for things you did in the Foreign Service?

MARCELLIN: I felt that having an MBA was extremely helpful in the Foreign Service, because certain things came naturally to me: a love of numbers, finances, budgets, and an understanding of logistical operations. I felt it was a great background for the management officer role.

Q: And were you working at all during the graduate program?

MARCELLIN: Yes, I took a part-time job in the health administration component of the MBA program. I've always enjoyed maintaining a part-time job, and frankly, there's only so much studying one can do. Given the choice between solely socializing and balancing socializing with work, I would rather go for the balance and do part time work too. I didn't work killer hours, but light work.

Q: And by this point, it says, you graduated in '77, from high school, and then '81, from college. How long was the MBA program?

MARCELLIN: Two years.

Q: Okay. By the time you completed, what did you see yourself doing? Was it now time for hospital administration jobs?

MARCELLIN: Yes. I had planned to return to California and work for a hospital corporation and I had my life all planned out. But while I was working this part time job, our program at University of Chicago was undergoing accreditation by a national organization that accredits hospital management programs. John Westerman, who led the accreditation team, had an extraordinary reputation as a mentor. He was a nationally recognized healthcare leader--a lion of the healthcare field--and headed that commission. Unknown to me, because I was coming back from a vacation, he had talked to the faculty, asking for who they would recommend to him as a possible post-graduate fellow. I don't know exactly what the faculty said, but somehow my name came up.

And as I'm walking into the office that day, a faculty member grabbed me and said, "Be polite. We know you want to go to Los Angeles and we know you have your life mapped out. But this person is really important to the field. He wants to interview you, so please agree to the interview for us, even if you don't want to move to Pittsburgh, and this is not part of your plan." As I listened to the faculty member, I heard Westerman's voice and saw this head bobbing over the student file cabinets, approaching me, saying "Marcellin, is Marcellin here?" And along came John Westerman, an extraordinarily charismatic personality. The encounter led me to accept a two-year fellowship in Pittsburgh instead of returning to Los Angeles.

Q: Okay, how did he explain what the fellowship would be? What were you expecting?

MARCELLIN: He talked about rotations, participating in seminars and even possibly writing papers. He planned to use the Fellows to then build a first-class national team at this hospital. Whenever I approach a significant decision, I always weigh the pros and cons. I do this to educate my head, but in the end, I follow my heart and instincts. Personally, I had no interest in living in Pittsburgh, which had a reputation for being a polluted city filled with steel mills. I knew I wanted to return to California, which would offer me a better salary and the opportunity to be back with extended family and hometown friends. But for me, after a wild, crazy interview with an extraordinarily brilliant and fun character, something inside of me said, "You know what—you have got to take this wild ride with this slightly crazy, brilliant hospital management person." And so that's what I did.

Q: You move to Pittsburgh?

MARCELLIN: Yes--And John Westerman, became a lifelong mentor. Even after I left hospital management for the Foreign Service, he remained a mentor, a friend, and a surrogate grandfather to my future children.

Q: What year do you arrive in Pittsburgh?

MARCELLIN: It would have been July of '83.

Q: Did you have the sense either from him or from what you were seeing that the healthcare industry was getting more important?

MARCELLIN: Yes, it was clearly important, and it was evident that as a country, we had huge problems. Clearly, issues such as aging populations, which we are still grappling with forty years later, were already apparent in 1983. Healthcare costs were—and remain—out of control. The National Health Service in England gets so much more value. Cuba, despite being a poor country, has a good system. And Canada! Why do we have such a strange system in the United States? All of these issues were present, and I found them all fascinating. It was a good fit for me during that period.

What was interesting for me, though, was that John Westerman saw that I had international interest that might draw me away from the field of hospital management. In the early 1980s, few young American women were internationally curious, and even fewer hospital administrators were. But having lived at International House, I had developed this interest. So, John started handing me his issues of the *Economist* and the Manchester Guardian after he was through with them. He fostered that interest, encouraging me to stay informed about global events.

At the same time, I had been dating someone who was American, but who had spent years in Europe. And that summer, I headed off to Greece to visit his family where he grew up. During that vacation, I realized that I didn't just want to be a tourist; I wanted to have an adventure—an actual year of working abroad.

Q: Wow! Let me pause, right before you go overseas. As you were doing the fellowship, what were the things that most motivated you? What aspects of hospital administration did you most want to follow?

MARCELLIN: I don't think there was anything in particular that I wanted to follow except international areas. I've always found it all interesting, and in this fellowship, it all seemed very interesting. What I appreciated about my mentor was that he would hold these monthly management talks with an outside speaker so there was constant continuing education going on. I wasn't the only fellow at the hospital ; there was another fellow in my year, and others both preceding and following us. Our mentor assigned us industry-related readings as homework and sometimes quizzed us to make sure we were doing the reading. A lot of the things that he did, I used later on in my own mentoring programs when I joined the Foreign Service. I created a speaker series, sent out management articles, and encouraged interns to write articles for State Magazine, much of which was directly attributable to working with that particular boss.

Q: Okay. So you've made a decision to go overseas. How did that work out?

MARCELLIN: I looked into the Peace Corps but I also let my University of Chicago faculty know I was interested in an overseas hospital job. In 1985, they forwarded me an advertisement for summer interns at the Aga Khan Hospital in Nairobi, Kenya. In the hospital management world, there's an annual conference in Chicago in February where the Aga Khan Hospital Executive Director, Hop Holmberg, planned to attend and interview summer students. I wasn't a summer student, but I wrote Hop Holmberg and said, "Look, I know you're looking for summer students, but I would love to work for you." This was 1985-- no internet—so I didn't know if my letter from Pittsburgh had reached him in Nairobi before he traveled.

A month later, I traveled to Chicago and began contacting hotels trying to track down Hop Holmberg. After many calls to many hotels, I finally reached a hotel clerk who confirmed his stay. I left my number and a message, reiterating my interest. The next day, Holmberg called me back and invited me to breakfast. He made no promises, only agreeing to speak with me. By the end of the breakfast, he said, "Look, I don't know what I can pay you or what exactly I can offer you yet. But I can offer you room and board and

give you a lot of responsibility. What do you say?" And I said, "I'll be there and I am willing to start in early July." And he said, "It's a deal." And so again, much to the horror of my very sensible parents, and much to the horror of everybody, I agreed to work in Kenya for a Kenyan salary, or possibly no salary at all. And much to the horror of the University of Chicago, who wants their MBAs to be paid as high as possible, I took this job. I ended up taking a job in Nairobi for what was the equivalent of about \$8,000= a year—the lowest salary among my MBA cohort—turning down a job with a \$50,000 salary.

Q: Wow. Now, your relationship with your boyfriend at that time? Did it survive going?

MARCELLIN: It didn't. He had been very important in helping me consider an international career. He remained a friend to this day, but the relationship ended when I headed to Kenya.

Q: You arrived in Nairobi in '84?

MARCELLIN: No, it would have been '85. I graduated '83. And I did two years of the fellowship, and then arrived in '85.

Q: Okay, well, it's your first full overseas program. It's in a developing country. What were your initial impressions?

MARCELLIN: Well, the very first day of arrival, I was picked up by the man I would eventually marry. Yes, one of those summer interns, who had agreed to go just for the summer, ended up being my future husband, Greg Adams. He picked me up at the Nairobi airport in an ambulance. He was one of three summer interns and the four of us all hung out, and then they all left. I stayed on. But my impressions were, wow, this was incredible—Nairobi, international work. The hospital was part of the Aga Khan Shiite Muslim hospital system. I had no clue about any of this so I was very much learning about Islam—its history and its branches. I was also learning about Africa, culture, development work, embassies, and expatriates. Every topic was fascinating to me; I felt so alive. They say that your first international experience is the best, whether you're a Peace Corps volunteer or engage in any other international endeavor. Every cell, every neuron is firing. You feel so alive because you're just absorbing so much information and seeing so many breathtaking experiences.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your daily life in Kenya, because I imagine it's so different from anything else you've experienced up till now.

MARCELLIN: Yes. I had a room at the hospital's nursing school, which lacked a screen on the window and was on the eighth floor. Since the elevator frequently went out, I took the stairs every day. I ate in the cafeteria, a very simple African cafeteria with two meal choices for lunch and dinner—vegetarian or meat—usually curries, and a very simple breakfast of toast, fruit, and tea. The medical residents also lived there with the nursing

students and many of the doctors were of South Asian descent, either from Kenya or on work permits from India or Pakistan. We had a very simple daily life. In the evenings, we talked and compared lives because we were all in our 20s or 30s. On weekends, we sometimes would go into town or explore. Some of the senior management team members would invite us to their homes for a meal.

Hop Holmberg, the executive director, had the only expat salary at the hospital. He and his family lived in a townhouse complex that also housed a number of U.S. Embassy officials. The Holmbergs had a party, where they invited their neighbors and I met my first U.S. diplomats. And some of them adopted me. Suddenly, I became aware of the U.S. Foreign Service, and learned about the Foreign Service exam. I met people who would occasionally invite me over for dinner and give me a Snickers bar, which was a big deal to me, because I didn't have access to Snickers bars. It was my first insight into, "Wow! This is a career." And I felt, "Oh, I wish I had studied international affairs; I wish I had done all of these other things and chosen this field instead." This was my first introduction to embassy life.

Q: Let me go back just a second to your adaptation to the environment you're in as a non-Muslim. Were there any difficulties in adapting to this Muslim hospital environment?

MARCELLIN: No, because the Ismailis are very progressive Muslims. They don't wear Burqas or veils. During Idi Amin's time, the Ismaili population fled Uganda, but many Ismailis were still in Kenya and Tanzania. Although prosperous in Kenya, many were nervous because they felt targeted for being wealthy. There was some tension between the African and Asian Kenyan populations. Having seen the sudden violence in Uganda, they were nervous about living in Kenya, and so many worked to get dual residency in Canada, the U.S., or the UK. The Ismailis were very westernized. So I didn't have significant adaptation issues. Sometimes Ismaili colleagues would ask me, "Well, since you've been around us so much, have you seen the light? Are you thinking about converting?" And I would politely decline with a "No, thank you." One of the families thought I must be getting desperate, being 26 and unmarried. They tried to pressure me to date their obviously gay son. I felt sorry for the gay community in Kenya as there was huge homophobia in both the Asian and African Kenyan populations.

Q: And then what were your responsibilities?

MARCELLIN: I was one of two assistant administrators. I had 225 people reporting to me through four main divisions, which was a big deal for being only 26 years-old. Compared to the Foreign Service, this was significant. In the Foreign Service, one may have one or two people to supervise. I, therefore, had a big adjustment when joining the Foreign Service, having once been entrusted with basically half of the hospital's operations. At Aga Khan, I ran all the support divisions, including housekeeping, maintenance, motor pool, residences, and all of the medical residents and locum doctors. The other administrator was responsible for the lab, radiology, and physical therapy divisions. Our "Matron" (Director of Nursing) supervised the nursing staff and another person managed the finance, admissions, and billing. My responsibilities in Kenya were

very similar, though broader, to those of General Services Officers (GSOs) in Embassy settings.

Q: What were the challenges you faced in this job? And how did you deal with them?

MARCELLIN: The biggest challenge for me was when I began to have sleepless nights worrying about local labor law. This was because we had to bend Kenyan labor law a bit to survive as a hospital. In order to keep the hospital staffed with doctors, I had to hire temporary doctors without the official work permits because the Kenyan bureaucracy took months to obtain a work permit. We needed many temporary (locum) doctors to work for two months to cover when other doctors were on leave. Although we verified their medical credentials, we skirted some of the bureaucratic permitting issues for these temporary employees. We sought permits for the residents who were there for one or two years, but not for the temporary locums.

I began to worry, what if the Government of Kenya decided to make an example of me, a noncitizen who is skirting their labor laws? What if I am suddenly hauled before a Kenyan court? I was not a diplomat and would not have diplomatic immunity. And who knows what could happen, sentenced to jail, prison in Kenya? Here I was, a Chicago MBA making a tiny Kenyan salary for great experience, but possibly going to a Kenyan jail definitely wasn't worth it. I didn't really understand what this could mean but I realized it could suddenly get very bad for me. All of the Kenyan hospitals were doing the same thing. And I began to feel uncomfortable in this environment not knowing truly what could happen to me. Later, during my time in the Foreign Service, I'd see Americans get into trouble overseas, assuming local rules were not strictly enforced. Well, you never know when it might happen. That was the part that I found the most challenging.

There were other times that I would get hassled, if I left the country and was returning through Customs. The immigration officials wanted their siblings to get jobs at our hospital. I would be lightly threatened or leaned on in ways that the diplomatic embassy friends I met were never leaned on. Sometimes I would be walking in the city getting back to the hospital, and a police officer with a gun would threaten me with arrest for loitering, seeking bribes. They were looking to push expats around and were looking for the fear in your face so that they could pressure you for money. And I had to navigate that. But my diplomatic friends with CD license plates, never faced this. What I did have going for me was that our Hospital's Director of Nursing was married to one of the senior Kenyan ministers. When I would get threatened, I would say, "Well, I have to call the wife of Minister of Labor Oloo Aringo," And then the police officer would back off, because he realized I wasn't a tourist and I was claiming to have a very high level connection. He didn't want to see if this was true or not. And I truly did have that connection.

Q: All together? How long did you end up staying there?

MARCELLIN: Just fourteen months.

Q: During those months, did you accomplish anything that was sustainable? And I don't mean it in a snarky way. In other words, given the difficulties that you faced, what was the most satisfying aspect of the job for you?

MARCELLIN: Yes. As one of the few people familiar with computers at that time, I successfully automated the paper-based pharmacy formulary (drug inventory) into a searchable data base. I introduced a Quality Assurance committee to review and prevent recurring hospital errors. We looked into utilization review, to see if we could lower hospital stays. I compiled budget and funding documents, securing additional support from the Aga Khan Foundation and funding for significant renovations. I started a hospital newsletter. The executive director, who served for six years, effectively transformed the hospital from the third-best in Kenya to its current standing as the best. And I do think that I contributed to this vision. In 1985, the U.S. Embassy sent their employees to the British-run hospital called the Nairobi hospital. By 2000, diplomats were using the Aga Khan hospital. Holmberg had a vision, and I pushed very hard to help that vision. Despite colleagues' apprehension towards computers, I trained many in PC usage, word processing, database, and excel applications.

Q: Okay. Now you mentioned that the Foreign Service officers you met, sort of embraced you a bit. What did you learn from them? If anything about a Foreign Service career, what was attracting you?

MARCELLIN: Well, I was captivated by how much better their lifestyle was, and how much safer their lifestyle was. I was very attracted to how they could move from country to country and continue to have all of these experiences. I remember talking to an eligible family member (EFM) who was a US-trained lab technician in her field. I suggested she consider working at our hospital's lab instead of her secretarial position at the embassy. I told her, "You could actually work at our hospital, in your field and do all these wonderful things for Kenyans, you could be saving lives with your training. Won't you consider it, we would seek a work permit for you?" And she declined because she was making four times the salary that I was making. And I remember being sort of shocked by that because I was still in this idealistic world of prioritizing doing greater good for mankind rather than making money to help support your family.

But all of this was percolating, in my mind when I was still going through this year in Kenya. I wasn't planning to take the Foreign Service exam or become a diplomat. I was planning on moving back to California, finally, going back to that original plan. That was my home, where my family resided, and I intended to return there. To get married, have children, and view my Kenyan experience as a singular, one-year adventure, not a lifestyle. However, an Embassy Science Engineering Officer remarked, "I've noticed that people are often bitten by the international bug, unaware of it, until they return home. Then, the itch begins and persists." And he said, "I predict you have been bitten by the international bug, and you just don't know it yet." I've always kept that conversation in the back of my mind, because that ended up being prophetic. That is what ended up happening to me.

Q: One last question before we follow you out of Kenya. Of course, there's the embassy and the embassy employees, usually USAID [United States Agency for International Development] has a separate building and a separate office. Were you ever talking to them about the aspects of healthcare that they assisted?

MARCELLIN: Although USAID was present, I didn't meet any USAID people at that time. My interactions were limited to State Department employees, who were neighbors of my boss, and a few Marines.

Q: Oh I see.

MARCELLIN: I did meet my first management officer in Kenya. He and his wife had me over for dinner. The people I tended to socialize with were the regional Science Engineering Officers (SEOs) and their office assistant. They traveled around the region, visiting all the embassies in East Africa.

Q: Now, you mentioned that the person who picked you up eventually became your husband, as you're leaving Kenya, how did you resolve that? Or reconcile that you were leaving? Was he staying in Kenya?

MARCELLIN: Oh, no, Greg was only there for the summer. He had gone back to Minnesota to finish his graduate program and then he was going on to take a fellowship somewhere else. We were not dating—we were buddies.

Q: All right. When do you leave? What year do you leave Kenya?

MARCELLIN: I left in 1986.

Q: Okay. To California?

MARCELLIN: Yes. And started job searching.

Q: Okay. Wow! Because you've only had an 8,000 dollar a year job. Did you begin supporting yourself in California by some kind of job while you looked for the one you wanted?

MARCELLIN: Well, first I did a lot of traveling. Although the job paid \$8,000 annually, it included an open-ended return ticket, allowing me to stop at as many places as I wanted. On the way back, I stopped in Pakistan to interview at the Aga Khan Hospital in Karachi, where they offered me a position. I then went on to Nepal, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Japan, before arriving in Los Angeles. Meanwhile, during this same period, my old mentor from Pittsburgh, had moved to Los Angeles, as a CEO of the Hospital of the Good Samaritan. He wanted to rehire me. I wasn't sure if I wanted to do that, or do something else. I did a few interviews, and then I basically got charmed again, not only by him but also a group of doctors, so I was not unemployed for very long.

Q: Is it the job you wanted? Or was it a stepping stone for where you were going?

MARCELLIN: Beggars can't be choosy. It was a job. The team looked like it was going to be a very interesting team to work with. I would be the Assistant Vice President of the Heart Institute. We had the largest open-heart surgery program in California and a large number of cardiologists. My first year on the job was dedicated to constructing as many cardiac catheterization labs and operating rooms as possible to accommodate the program's growth. It was a high frenzy period. The job offered a good salary, especially compared to my previous position, and was commensurate with what my MBA peers in hospital management were earning.

But it was a hard transition, because I was so used to not wasting even a single piece of paper in Nairobi, and suddenly I was seeing tremendous waste. It was a culture shock. I began to question why I was working so hard making doctors rich. I stayed six years at Good Samaritan. Although the work was interesting, I realized hospital management was no longer the right fit for me. I became disillusioned with working with doctors. While I think the vast majority of doctors are fantastic, extraordinary people, I happened to work with a couple of really awful personalities--doctors who were very mean to people. One doctor got so mad at me, he yanked the phone out of the wall and threw it across the room at me. This was a brilliant doctor who went to Harvard and Stanford but threw violent temper tantrums. He and a few others were difficult to work with and they didn't get along with each other—I felt I was often refereeing fights in a sandbox. That's when I started looking around.

Q: All right, but before we leave you since you spent six years there, what was your essential responsibility, job description, and so on? And did it change over time?

MARCELLIN: During my six years, I had three different positions. I started out at the Heart Institute and worked there for 2.5 years. I reached the point where I was tired of working with doctors who threw temper tantrums. When I had a chance to move over to do a facilities management job, I did that for a few years and really enjoyed the work. And then at the tail end of that, I moved into a job where I negotiated contracts with managed care companies and chaired the committee that reviewed research protocols. Therefore, I had three different jobs while at that hospital. While there, I applied for the Foreign Service, which took about a year to come through.

Q: Yeah, what finally convinced you to apply?

MARCELLIN: I knew that in the long term, I didn't want to stay in hospital management. I was ready for a change. I wanted something bigger. I had started dating Greg, who had moved to California and was interested in international health. We spent time together, initially as friends, discussing how to re-enter the field of international health. By virtue of spending so much time together, we fell in love and got married in 1989. He encouraged me to sit for the Foreign Service exam. He had heard me lament, "If only I had studied the right subjects, I would have tried to be a diplomat. He said, "You're good

at tests, just take the exam and see what happens and stop talking about it." So, in 1991, after the birth of our first daughter, I sat for the exam, passed, and life took a different turn.

Q: Okay, you're still in California when you take the exam. But as much as your husband encouraged you, how did he see himself as a spouse? Or was he also taking the Foreign Service exam?

MARCELLIN: No, he wasn't taking the Foreign Service exam. But he was pretty sure that he would find something. He was also becoming disenchanted with working in hospital management with Kaiser. He was sure he could find something else.

Q: Okay. Now, you had mentioned one of the reasons that you had become disenchanted is that the personalities were sometimes difficult, but were there other factors?

MARCELLIN: Yes. When I was in California, I realized that I had indeed been bitten by the international bug. Nearly everyone around me—peers, colleagues, relatives—only wanted to talk about rising California real estate values or traffic congestion. There was a distinct lack of international curiosity. I was really feeling like a fish out of water--that this just wasn't my tribe, that I needed to get back to a geographic place that had more international curiosity. Greg had been a Peace Corps volunteer and had done other things. We started meeting other people with international interests. And we started something called Docu-Dinners, a monthly gathering of friends who had lived abroad. We would pick a speaker to share their experience and we'd have a potluck of the food from that country and sit down for an old-fashioned slideshow featuring the person's respective experience. We became a bit of a community.

Q: So there you are. In California, you have one child, and both of you have decided, okay, yes, let's see if we can get in, you pass the exam. What happens next?

MARCELLIN: I was shocked that I actually passed the exam on the first try. I had looked at the sample questions for a couple of years, and felt like I couldn't answer them. But I always felt that if I managed to pass the exam, I could somehow talk my way into the job if I was given a chance. Before I moved into the hospital contract negotiation job, I had read *Getting to Yes*--the Harvard negotiation book. During the Oral Assessment negotiations exercise in January 1992, I thought, "Oh, I'm just going to follow the principles of *Getting to Yes*, with this group of candidates, and hope the rest of them haven't read it." Nobody had. The book's negotiation model worked like a charm during the negotiations exercise.

Q: Interesting.

MARCELLIN: It made a significant difference. The assessors told me that I was a borderline case before the negotiations exercise. However, during the exercise, I blew by the other candidates with ideas, organization, and a framework for assessing proposals,

and delegation of tasks. The negotiations exercise score raised my overall score and earned me an immediate offer into the Foreign Service.

Q: There was one other exam that the oral assessment did, which is the inbox. I imagine you did pretty well with that one?

MARCELLIN: I think I probably did. And one thing I've left out for you was that I first applied to the Foreign Service as a GSO specialist, given my hospital management experience in Kenya, because I was too intimidated to sit for the exam. I passed the GSO Oral Assessment, and at that time, the FSO assessor told me that I had nailed the economic protectionism question so well that I really needed to sit for the FSO exam and consider being an Economics Officer or Management Officer. Although they would put me on the registrar for GSOs, they felt I would be a better generalist than a specialist. Consequently, my security clearance process started from the moment I passed the GSO Oral Assessment. When I passed the FSO Oral Assessment, the assessors were surprised that the clearance was already underway, which allowed me to very quickly get an offer to join in the Summer of 1992.

Q: Now you go to Washington, still one child.

MARCELLIN: Still one child, our wonderful amazing toddler, Rachel Adams.

Q: And your husband accompanies you, and you then begin your orientation class, how large was the class?

MARCELLIN: We were an A-100 class of 36. We had two Foreign Commercial Service officers and 34 State officers.

Q: And to the extent you remember, what were the demographics, age, gender and so on?

MARCELLIN: We had 12 women in the class and the age of the class ranged from 22 to 57. I was 33 at the time, probably around the median age. There was one Asian woman and one African-American woman; everyone else was Caucasian. Most of my class had studied foreign affairs. I would say there were only a handful of us who had kids. A few of the older members had grown kids, but only a few of us had young kids. Maybe half of my classmates were unmarried.

Q: Before this, had you ever taken foreign languages? Or did you feel comfortable with foreign languages?

MARCELLIN: I had taken a couple of years of French in high school, and that was it. I felt quite intimidated by my A-100 classmates. One already spoke seven languages. Two individuals had perfect scores on the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT). My own score indicated that I had average language ability for a US citizen, which placed me below average for the Foreign Service and my A-100 class. So I was quite intimidated

knowing I was going into language preparation, and I wondered if I was capable of actually getting language tenure. I was quite intimidated by the whole thing.

Q: Now, the other aspects of your orientation class are basically what Foreign Service people do, but also kind of an introduction to the corporate culture, the Federal aspects of the job? How were those?

MARCELLIN: For me, coming as a second careerist, it was a bit of a shock. The whole formality of standing up for ambassadors, and calling them “Ambassador” Was a significant adjustment. I mean, I was used to being on a first name basis with the various hospital CEOs that I worked with. The rigid, formal culture, as well as the bureaucracy, was a shock to me. I couldn’t believe how inefficient and costly the cable and paper clearance was. I was used to writing a letter on behalf of my organization without showing it to a boss. I had been entrusted in hospital management to do this correctly. However, in the Foreign Service, large numbers of people need to clear letters, documents, and cables. This level of meticulous word-smithing was incredibly costly to U.S. taxpayers. And then the real shock too was the span of control, I was used to having large numbers of people to supervise, and it took me many, many years to get back up there to supervising the number of people that I supervised at age 26.

Q: Right. Of course. Any other reactions from your husband, was he also allowed into the class?

MARCELLIN: Spouses could attend, listen in on a couple of little sessions. But at the time, and this was 1992, there were not a lot of male spouses. My husband definitely felt that when people realized he was the spouse, he felt labeled and minimized. During our first assignment, and I'm jumping ahead slightly, there were only two male spouses. There was an American Women's Association or group, but he wasn't a woman. And so he was in this oddball category of “male spouse.”

Q: Wow! All right, before we follow you into your first assignment, were there any other lessons or impressions that you had, as you began? All of the different kinds of training?

MARCELLIN: John Lindberg, the orientation director, was a former hostage in Iran. I asked him if he would tell the story in a lunch session as I thought our classmates would want to hear the story. He not only recounted his story, but also showed snippets from a movie that had been made about the incident. I was really struck by what he went through. Diane Castiglione, the Deputy for Orientation, had recently lost her husband, who drowned while attempting to rescue someone in Central America. I was very struck by the fact that two of the three key leaders in the Orientation Division had lived through tragedy and danger. Diane had a one-year-old son, the same age as my daughter. I was very much struck by this tragedy and what it might mean that we were getting ourselves into.

Q: Okay. Did they start you on a language given that you would need it eventually? Or was your training simply to become your first tour, Vice Consul?

MARCELLIN: I was being sent to Barbados. During “Flag Day,” our names were announced, and we were handed the flag of our assignment. Barbados’s flag, featuring a trident, looked like the Devil’s pitchfork and neither my husband nor I recognized it so it was strange going up to the stage and picking up a flag not knowing where we were going. But Barbados is a regional post that covers the French West Indies. I went into a French language designated position as a consular officer, and thus received six months of French training. My responsibilities included handling French-speaking visa applicants and visiting American prisoners in the French West Indies. Following French training, I received consular training, and then departed for Barbados.

Q: Did they expect you to get a 3-3? The basic fluency? And were you able to?

MARCELLIN: Yes. I worked really hard. I ended up with a 3-3+. The language instructors from France saw my name and expected a much better French accent from me. But I had a horribly strong American accent so I was a little bit of an embarrassment to them to have a French name and terrible accent. Nevertheless, I was able to get my 3-3+.

Q: Okay. Now, you also go through the basic consular training, was there anything in that that sticks in your mind, either as a positive experience or negative experience? Did you feel properly prepared from that?

MARCELLIN: That was excellent training. The simulations of prison visits, visa line interactions, and practice calls for delivering news of a loved one's death overseas were particularly valuable. I found the training to be engaging, effective, and fun. There was a strong sense of camaraderie among the participants, which continues to this day.

Q: Did they extend any of the training, language, or anything else to your husband?

MARCELLIN: Yes, Greg attended both French training and the consular course.

Q: Okay. Now, before we follow you into Barbados? Was there anything else about your training or life that sticks out in your mind?

MARCELLIN: No, I think it was wonderful training. However, Greg and I experienced a significant financial adjustment. We had both been making professional hospital administration salaries. Upon resigning from those positions and relying solely on my entry-level U.S. government salary, we took a 75 percent pay cut as a couple. Our parents were not happy about this. Moreover, we were dragging their one-year-old granddaughter off to who knows where and leaving the safety of the United States. They felt we would be exposing her (and future grandbabies!) to all these crazy diseases, terrorists, and natural disasters. We were really feeling a lot of parental judgment and were also feeling the shock of having lost two professional salaries. We went from flying off for weekend adventures to feeling that pizza on a Friday night was a luxury. It was a shock. And it took us a while until we could get to Barbados and get free housing to feel better.

Now since that time, they have fixed entry level salaries to be more competitive. But in those days, these were pretty tough salaries for mid-level professionals. And I later learned that when I had been given the salary offer, I was told negotiation was not possible. I later learned that other people had negotiated and had been given additional credit for international management experience.

Q: Just one quick question. So we're approaching the end of the two hour session. Do you want to go ahead and describe the arrival in Barbados or would you rather save that for the next time?

MARCELLIN: Let's save it for the next time. I think that'd be great.

Q: All right. So I'm gonna pause the recording here.

Q: Okay, today is July 6, 2022, we're resuming our interview with Colette Marcellin. And this is session two. And Colette, you want it to begin just with your French language training. Even though you were going to Barbados as your first tour, the French language training was to get you off of probation?

MARCELLIN: Yes—this training was to get me off language probation (essential for tenure) and to handle prison visits for Martinique and Guadeloupe and adjudicate all the regional Bridgetown visas that were in French. It was a very stressful time for me because, in my own mind, I didn't believe I was capable of getting off language probation and becoming fluent. I worked extremely hard. I was having a lot of concern that I had derailed my own hospital management career and blown up my husband's hospital management career to chase this dream, only to discover I may not get language tenure. So I worked really hard-- Saturdays, Sundays, you name it. Very intensely. My husband was taking it at the same time. And I was happy to actually get off language probation.

Q: Yeah, I understand.

MARCELLIN: I was very happy, I celebrated, getting off probation and off we went to Barbados.

Q: Lovely. Alright, go right ahead. You arrive in Barbados in 1993. And you're a vice consul?

MARCELLIN: There were four vice consuls, and I was the first of the new group to arrive. We were having a complete turnover in the section; the Consul General and the consul were also rotating out. It was a 100 percent turnover of these six Americans, and I was the first to arrive. The people who trained me were quite nice and helpful. And later on, I crossed paths with two of them in later tours. After they rotated out, the new group came in. For me, it was a good personal fit, because I had a two-year old and all of the

new vice consuls that were coming in also had toddlers. We built very close lasting friendships, and gave each other lots of help, including taking care of each other's children. We had a boss that was very flexible. Once all of the interviews were over at the last hour of the day, he would let one of us go to the daycare and bring back our toddlers. They would follow after us as we locked up and finished up the session. So we were actually very, very lucky to have such an understanding family-friendly boss. We had one mishap though—Rachel, when we were not looking, started to remove the individual unique keys that locked up the file cabinets and mixed them all up.

Q: And starting Foreign Service brats at a very early age.

MARCELLIN: Very early age.

Q: Okay, go ahead.

MARCELLIN: Yeah, so, I enjoyed the tour. Bajans had a pretty high refusal rate, probably about 33-35 percent at that time. However, Bajan applicants were very gracious when their applications were denied, unlike Jamaican applicants who would threaten vice consuls if turned down for a visa. So, it was actually a fairly good tour. In those days, we didn't schedule visa appointments or charge for visa applications. We would work the visa line until every last person was seen, even if it meant not having lunch that day. As vice consuls, we often hoped for rain, as it would cut down on the number of applications that would come through. Many turned down applicants reapplied the next day. They believed if they came back the next day and saw a different officer, they might have better luck. Consequently, we frequently encountered the same individuals as our colleagues, allowing us to review previous application notes. Because we were a regional mission, many applicants traveled from other countries for their visa interviews. But it was interesting, it was a good time.

Q: I can certainly confirm that, the experience in Jamaica where I was a Vice Consul a few years earlier than you, yes, you would be noticed on the street, people would come up to you and say, "Oh, you're that evil man, you denied me the visa" and so on. Yeah. But, it's part of the job. But I did want to ask you, so all people in all the islands that you covered, had to come to Barbados for a visa?

MARCELLIN: Well, there was a mail-in application program as well. We would work the mail inboxes after we completed in-person interviews. This was before September 11, when all visas required in-person interviews. Barbados was a cruise destination so we had a lot of cruise ships coming through needing cruise renewal visas. We also had a pretty active American Citizen Services (ACS) portfolio and a large number of green card immigrant visas as well. Each vice consul would take a rotation through the immigrant visa section. Our two bosses handled the American citizens with the exception of the prison visits or any kind of ACS issue that required a French speaker. For the most part, the job involved non-immigrant visas and immigrant visas.

Q: Did you get to travel as a vice consul to any of the other islands?

MARCELLIN: All of the vice consuls got to travel, but because I was a French speaking officer, I tended to only travel to either Martinique or Guadeloupe for the prison visits. And most of the prisoners were drug dealers, and were usually from Puerto Rico, Florida, or the U.S. Virgin Islands. These visits were actually among my most vivid memories of that time. They were not the prison visits that we see in the movies; there was no separated glass. I was actually locked into the cell with the prisoner. One particular prisoner was a large man, convicted of robbery, serial rape, and murder, with the word 'HATE' tattooed across his knuckles. I was very happy to get out of there, because he was so big, he could have snapped my neck faster than a prison guard could have done anything. That was the scariest experience. I had expected drug dealers to be hardened criminals, but many of the other prisoners were not. They were often young, frightened Puerto Rican men, who really didn't have any opportunity in Puerto Rico. They saw drug dealing as a way to make a quick buck and were shocked to find themselves in prison. They seemed to be everyday sorts of people who had lost their way. I realized then that people either have an optimistic or pessimistic orientation to adversity. I met them shortly after they were arrested. Some were upbeat about getting out soon, others seemed broken.

Q: Did you find the French preparation you had adequate for working with local populations in the French islands?

MARCELLIN: Yes, but not entirely, because many of the applicants were Haitians working in the region. Unfortunately, my formal French and their French-Creole weren't fully compatible. We had one local Bajan employee who spoke French and so she was able to communicate more effectively with the Haitians. But for the most part, yes. I would say I had good preparation.

Q: Were there any unusual cases that you had to deal with?

MARCELLIN: Well, on the French side, it was unusual because French legal procedures are different. There was a young, female U.S. citizen that was murdered in one of the French islands-- I don't recall which place it was. As part of the official detective work in France, the police removed the head off of murder victims to send it to France. The rest of the remains were released to the grieving family members. So this was a very strange case that I remember having to get involved in.

Q: Why did they want the head?

MARCELLIN: It was for forensic study. This is quite upsetting for parents, to get a headless body of your murdered daughter. So, I do remember this case vividly. Other ACS issues, not so much. However, I do recall the crazy romance stories and fiancé visa/marriage fraud cases. I imagine the same was true in Jamaica—the sheer number of naïve Americans who would travel on vacation, and be sweet talked into becoming engaged, falling madly in love with a local Bajan. Interestingly, the typical stereotype was not the older man falling in love with the young Bajan woman, but rather the older American woman who was suddenly smitten with some beach Rasta guy. Sometimes, the

Bajan guys wanted visas to the States but more often they simply wanted the American women to plan on buying them durable goods—television sets and refrigerators.

Q: Exactly.

MARCELLIN: I think that was true with all of us in the Caribbean. We also would have some very slick, very well-prepared Nigerian cases of people who were living there, who happened to call the United States to talk to one of their relatives, and their relative would put some friend on the phone, at which point they would fall madly in love with this person on the other end of the phone. And they would come to you for a Fiancé or Marriage Visa. And you knew the story wasn't true. However, the applicant had photos, and the American would even fly to Barbados, providing photographic evidence of a staged wedding, complete with gifts and a white dress. These cases were always the ones that stuck out in our own mind because, while we sometimes uncovered evidence of the deception, it was often difficult to deny the application, even though every instinct in your body said, "I don't believe this." But the evidence was overwhelmingly staged.

Q: During the time you were there, did the processing of visas change? In other words, were you moving to digitization, any of that?

MARCELLIN: We still did mechanical visas. One day, while I was locking up (as I was typically the accountable consular officer), the Regional Security Officer (RSO) entered with a stranger. I very jokingly remarked, "Oh, we must have done something wrong. Here's the RSO," because he was my friend. And the RSO gave me a "Shh!" quiet sign with a finger raised to his lips. By this point, most of the Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) were gone. But I actually realized, "Oh, no, there is something going on!" Eventually, the story came out that someone within the Bajan section was issuing visas to Syrians and we did not have a large Syrian population in our region. As the investigation unfolded, we learned that our FSN, who actually was the anti-fraud FSN, was selling visas to Syrians. We would issue legitimate visas to applicants but he would look for visas that also had a child attached and use that particular visa number to be stamped into the Syrian passport. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was eventually able to lure him to an anti-fraud conference in Puerto Rico at which point they arrested him. This created a huge stir in the Consular Section. Some people believed he was framed, while others worried it would tarnish the reputation of all Bajan employees. And it did create this strange dynamic between the American and FSN team, which was unfortunate, because we had been a very collegial section before that.

Q: You mentioned fraud, did any of your tour deal with anti-fraud specifically?

MARCELLIN: No, I was not specifically assigned to anti-fraud duties.. Obviously, if we encountered fraudulent documents, such as counterfeit bank statements, we documented the fraud, but I did not have a dedicated anti-fraud role.

Q: Okay. During this tour, if you think back, did you acquire any other skills or knowledge that would help you later in your career?

MARCELLIN: Nothing specific comes to mind. I knew that I would not want to do consular work as a career. Prior to my consul tour, I thought maybe consular work would be a good fit, but my experience in Barbados solidified my desire to pursue a management career track within the Foreign Service.. I also learned consular work was changing my political orientation. I was becoming more anti-illegal immigrant because of the nature of the fraud and the nature of the cases we encountered in the Caribbean.

It also was making me more suspicious of people. My brother was dating, or perhaps engaged to, a woman from Mexico who was coming to visit in Barbados. The story he was talking about with her visa, I thought sounded a little strange. And I so wanted to read her passport. And I thought, “No, I can't read her passport. Bad Colette, bad!” We would always lock up our visitors’ passports, in a safe that we had, so that they wouldn't get stolen while they were there. There was a fair amount of theft. And I thought no, I cannot read this passport of this potential future sister-in-law. And as it turned out, her parents were super well-established. They had a ranch in Texas, they were on entrepreneur visas. She was not a security risk at all. But I didn't like that the job was changing my personality, making me more suspicious of people.

Q: During the time you were there, did your husband work? Did you adapt or were there any adaptation issues?

MARCELLIN: Yes, when he first got there, he took a temporary EFM position in the Consular Section, which he did as a job-share with another spouse. But then once all the consular officers that arrived, the job was abolished. He was eventually able to land a contract position with USAID, as a kind of a health expert. It was a wonderful job and he was able to do a lot of traveling all over the Caribbean , as my role was largely confined to the visa window. This experience also provided him with the necessary background to later join USAID as a health officer. At that time, we decided we wanted to have another child. I got pregnant and then miscarried. I ended up being hospitalized for a few days. Towards the end of our tour there, we got pregnant again.

I was able to complete my tour and then head to the US for necessary training for our next assignment, Singapore. Greg stayed on longer and we kept Rachel with Greg since we didn't want to disrupt her child care routine for only a few months. We saw ridiculous embassy inefficiency and waste during this transition. State and USAID had two furniture pools and Greg and I belonged to two different agencies. On the day that I packed out, trucks arrived to take out all of my State Department furniture and that afternoon USAID brought in USAID issued furniture for Greg to use for two months. I thought, “Wow, what a waste to our U.S. government, with these different agencies managing different furniture programs.” Happily, this problem was corrected worldwide within the decade.

Q: Your second pregnancy I hope was not troubled.

MARCELLIN: For me, I have always held the philosophy of life that you always face difficulties—no one gets a free pass in life. When I knew I was miscarrying, I found

myself talking to the Almighty, saying, "Okay, I accept this. I'm fine with this. But please, don't touch my living child. I can accept anything; don't touch my living child." And I know you're not supposed to bargain with God, but I did, and I felt okay. I was fine.

Q: And the second child delivery was okay.

MARCELLIN: Katie's birth was fine, without problems and perfectly timed. I was able to finish my GSO training, get to my parents' home in Laguna Beach, Greg arrived from Barbados and she came perfectly on time. And then we were able to head off to the next tour.

Q: GSO training, after having been a hospital administrator, and having dealt with all kinds of administrative issues and management. And so what did you think of the GSO training?

MARCELLIN: Well, again, I continued to have the impression that the Department hires intelligent individuals but then exhibits a lack of trust in their judgment. In GSO training, I felt a sense of being micromanaged, with responsibilities considerably less significant than those I had held previously. However, the training modules themselves were well-designed, and I appreciated the incorporation of creative elements. For instance, they had a jeopardy acquisitions training, and at that time, a lot of the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) training didn't do that. I made friends in GSO training, particularly with an officer who was heading to Malaysia. With me in Singapore, our families became lifelong friends.

Q: The only other question I have about the GSO work is whether some GSOs get the ability to be a contract officer. Not everyone does. Did they give you that?

MARCELLIN: Yes, I was able to get a contractor's warrant. In Singapore, we had a Regional Procurement Services Office (RPSO), so all the serious contracting was done by RPSO.

Q: Okay. And I imagine personal liability insurance since, when you sign on the dotted line, even if you make a mistake, there can be consequences.

MARCELLIN: In those days, they weren't pushing liability insurance. I didn't get it until years later, as a management officer, when I was more afraid of disgruntled employees deciding to sue and make life miserable. But as a GSO, I didn't get insurance.

Q: Okay. Now, your assignment to Singapore, you have the GSO training, your husband is now ready to join you. Were there any other issues in traveling there or in arranging the assignment?

MARCELLIN: When I first got the assignment in Barbados, Singapore wanted me to join immediately, but I was pregnant, so this wasn't going to work. I was very fearful of

calling and letting Washington know of the pregnancy for fear they would cancel my tour. Singapore had an immediate vacancy because their prior GSO had curtailed. When I ended up calling the assignments officer, Florita Sheppard, she immediately said "Oh, congratulations, I'm so happy for you. And sure, we'll make this work. And by the way, I'm going to be the Human Resources Officer in Singapore." She ended up being my best friend in Singapore.

Q: You arrived in Singapore also in 1995.

MARCELLIN: I left Barbados in July of 1995. I went into twelve weeks of GSO training and then flew to California in September to wait for the baby. Katie arrived on November 22, 1995 after a C-section. Eight weeks later, in January 1996, I was able to get to Singapore. But the government had closed down due to a budget impasse so I couldn't get a diplomatic passport for Katie. A week before I was supposed to travel, the government reopened, and we joined an extremely long line in Los Angeles, to get a regular expedited passport for Katie so that she could travel with us. The diplomatic passport arrived about six months later.

On the day that we stood in line for the personal passport, I was supposed to audition for the 'Jeopardy!' test in the afternoon. However, the line was so long and the person who was processing my application was so unhelpful, I wasn't able to get to the audition. When I asked to speak to her supervisor, she put me "on ice,"—a tactic we used in Barbados for troublesome customers. She deliberately disappeared and didn't come back for a very long time. And it blew the time to get to my Jeopardy interview. I remember having this feeling of "Oh, this is what it feels like to be on the other end of the receiving line." It was both frustrating and somewhat ironic. The agent's deliberate obstruction extended our wait time considerably, especially with a baby in tow. We did eventually obtain the passport that day but I never sought out an audition for Jeopardy again.

Q: Okay. Then let's go ahead and so now when you arrive in Singapore, is it embassy-provided housing or did you have to look for your own?

MARCELLIN: The Embassy provided housing. We were immediately brought to an apartment; it was all high rise apartment living. My supervisor, Martin Hohe, a fantastic boss, greeted us and showed us around. In Barbados, I felt like an average Consular Officer. But I realized that my skills and experience were well-suited to the GSO position in Singapore since I had done a lot of facilities work in hospital management. The Embassy was undergoing the construction of a new office building and the relocation from one ambassador's residence to a newly constructed replacement residence. The previous GSO and management teams had been dysfunctional, necessitating a new team to address various outstanding issues. And I just felt very comfortable diving straight into it.

During my first week there, Emil Skodon, the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM), had chided the management counselor that the move was approaching, and nobody seemed to be organized to communicate information on the move. He was unhappy with the

management team in terms of how they were managing the move. During my very first management meeting, the Management Counselor asked if anyone had any move experience. I raised my hand and noted that I had coordinated lots of moves in hospitals including ICUs and I was happy to help. The Management Counselor was nervous with my volunteering because I was brand new to Embassy management work. He kept looking right around the room for anyone else to raise his hand. Finally, he asked me what do you need to accomplish a smooth move. And I responded that the key to a smooth move is constant and full communication, showing occupants the floor plans so they can start planning their office move. One has to be completely transparent with this information. Immediately, the Construction Project Director and the Site Security Manager protested that the plans are classified and can't be shown to anyone. I held my ground and said then one needs to make a choice—no shown plans means a poorly planned and chaotic move. Shown plans equates to smooth moves. It's very simple. You need to show people and even give them tours to best prepare them. Since I was so new to government work, I didn't really realize the hierarchy, I was just speaking my mind without regard to the overall food chain. The management counselor was stunned to hear a newly arrived junior office disagree with a fairly senior project manager. Eventually, they conceded, persuaded by my logic--let's see what we can do to declassify some of the plans to the extent possible to have this move.

At the time, I appreciated my boss, Martin Hohe, convincing the more skeptical management counselor and other team member to trust me. He told them, she was a former hospital administrator, she is not a fresh-out-of-college entry level officer. Ultimately, the team handed the move coordination to me. We made presentations fun and entertaining, gave tours and had newsletters. At the same time, I realized there was not a Department model to use—no templates—so I built templates as we conducted our move and at the end of the move, created a booklet entitled “Tips to a Smoother Move” which became the global model for future embassy moves. It was a real success. I hate to brag, but it was considered an exceptional product. I was told that the Assistant Secretary for Administration had a copy on his desk and ordered the bureau to make many copies to be sent out to other embassies planning moves. I was told, people were grateful.

Q: Yeah. And at that time, just to clarify, Pat Kennedy was the Assistant Secretary for Management.

MARCELLIN: The Bureau of Administration.

Q: And was a very well known manager within the department.

MARCELLIN: Yes. He was the Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Administration at that point. I had not met him, but I was told that the Move booklet was on his desk.

Q: The one part I'm most curious about is the security part, moving security, safes, and communication equipment and so on. So you have to have sort of twenty-four hour protection of all of that. Did that end up being a difficulty? Because you have to bring in people who are cleared who can manage that whole thing?

MARCELLIN: No, it was all manageable. Some of the equipment and containers for the classified area were different from the non-classified area. Consequently, the classified items required stricter security protocols, such as being locked, unsealed in a controlled manner, and escorted. However, our classified section was not extensive. It comprised the front office, regional affairs, the pol-econ section, and RSO. All other agencies and sections were unclassified, so the process was not overwhelming and remained manageable..

Q: The other question I have about the move is usually when you get into the new place, there are always glitches. Did you have to deal with a lot of those? Were there any significant ones?

MARCELLIN: Yes, the most notable unexpected challenge arose when the political appointee ambassador decided, at the last minute, to advance his move-in date much faster than planned. This necessitated a shift in our plans to accommodate his request, resulting in some last-minute disruptions. Minor glitches are inevitable in any relocation, and we anticipated them. I had proactively prepared each section's move coordinator by instructing them to compile 'punch lists' of any issues requiring attention. I had established a system with a move coordinator in each section and conducted numerous training sessions to equip them to handle glitches well. With the exception of the Ambassador wanting to move things along faster and a secretary making a fuss about paint smell, I don't remember anything that really went wrong.

At one point, I do remember experiencing discouragement. I had an excellent Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM). However, shortly before the move, the ambassador's chauffeur developed a conflict with the motor pool dispatcher. The chauffeur had suggested to the ambassador that the embassy did not require a dispatcher and that the dispatcher's duties could be absorbed by a regular driver, with Colette, as the General Services Officer (GSO), also assuming the dispatcher role. The ambassador, trusting his chauffeur's assessment, proposed this change to the DCM, citing potential cost savings. It was evident that the ambassador had little understanding of my extensive responsibilities as GSO. Upon learning of this proposal, I expressed my concern, stating, "I am currently managing the relocation, drawing upon my experience as a former hospital administrator, and have numerous other duties. Please protect me from being assigned as the GSO vehicle dispatcher." The DCM reassured me, saying, "No worries, I knew it was a terrible idea too. I thought there's no way we have capacity and I just wanted your help in giving me the right evidence, arguments to refute this."

Q: The wonderful thing, of course, about your creating the template is you get a significant award for it.

MARCELLIN: During the award season, that time, I was the only superior honor award that the mission gave in that cycle for my work on the move.

Q: And superior is the best one, the highest one you can get short of some of these named awards. And so that says a great deal about a second tour officer that already you are understanding the nature of how the State Department works, how to make it work better. And that's impressive.

MARCELLIN: It was a fun, wonderful tour. We pulled off another amazing achievement. Upon my arrival, we were renting an expensive warehouse that lacked shelving or forklifts, resulting in inefficient storage of furniture. I knew I wanted to fix this problem. Meanwhile, the US had a military base an hour away in Sembawang, which offered excess warehouse space.

When the Ambassador learned of my intention to address the warehouse inefficiency, he learned via a golf outing with the military leadership that they had surplus warehouse space. Consequently, we pursued this opportunity and successfully persuaded both the U.S. military and our own Overseas Building Operations to allocate funding for the renovation of one of these warehouses. This was achieved even during a budget freeze. The Department paid for the renovation costs, while the Embassy found funding for forklifts and shelving. We were able to get much better space and improve our efficiency at no cost, saving the Department hundreds of thousands of dollars in annual rent. It was a big win. Management leaders heard that I was responsible for pushing this initiative. It wasn't my idea but I pushed both bureaucracies—State and Defense--to make it happen.

Q: Sure. Just a quick funny question. Singapore is mostly Chinese in origin. Every once in a while I hear of people who have lived in Singapore, being told by Chinese friends or even officials, that the Feng Shui of your buildings is very bad, and you must change them, it will bring very bad luck.

MARCELLIN: When we moved into the new embassy, OBO paid for Feng Shui experts to come in. We held a 'hungry ghost' ceremony to convince the local population and our local employees that everything was fine. So this was all taken into account.

Q: Fascinating. Now, of course, the other thing that a GSO has to do, is during VIP visits, is sort of manage all of the flow of the VIP in terms of the logistics, how did that work out for you?

MARCELLIN: Madeleine Albright, as Secretary of State, visited Singapore. We also had a World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial meeting over the Christmas season, where we were all working really hard. But I don't remember those as particularly heavy lifts, at least for me. I mean, during the Albright visit, I was in charge of the motor pool arrangements. Other people on the management team oversaw other aspects, but it was not a heavy lift.

Q: The other thing that GSOs might have to manage over this period of time, '95 to '98, is the entry of computers, laptop and desktop computers into the embassy and running those. Was that an issue for you as well?

MARCELLIN: We had a really strong information management team and they had it all set up. They did a great job training all staff. Moreover, our local staff in Singapore were very strong. It all went very smoothly. In fact, I would say the entire management team, American and local, were all very strong. I developed a strong rapport with the Management Counselor, who was initially hesitant about me as a newcomer, but I liked him and very much respected him. We also had a very sharp Financial Management Officer, and my Senior General Services Officer (SGSO) supervisor was a truly remarkable individual. The entire management section was characterized by a strong work ethic and exceptional cooperation among its members.

Q: How about work for your husband? How did that work out?

MARCELLIN: Singapore has tremendous employment opportunities. Greg initially received an offer to be a hospital administrative person in the private sector. But Singaporeans work Saturdays for half days, and Greg didn't want to work that many hours. So because he had consular training, he took a job as a consular associate and worked in the consular section. So he was able to be employed, pretty much the whole time.

Q: And school, well, your kids are still in preschool.

MARCELLIN: Our oldest daughter started kindergarten and did first grade there. We had a Filipina nanny, who was wonderful and made life easy. And so our second daughter was completely spoiled by all these loving, Filipina nannies who just carried her around, and we would come home and she'd have little lipstick kissy marks on her cheeks. And it was a kind of post that anytime we were out there in public with our kids, people would come and say, "Can I hold your baby and have a photo with your baby? Can I take your blonde little girl and have a photo?" And so they felt very loved during that tour.

Q: Have I missed anything in terms of your development as an officer during the Singapore tour?

MARCELLIN: I think we've covered it except that I helped launch a mentoring program and a monthly Speaker Series, both of which were popular initiatives. I arrived in Singapore in January, during the winter-bidding cycle. The Department decided to try to eliminate off-cycle bidding so I was given a choice: "You can choose to do a one-and-a-half-year tour, or you can opt for a two-and-a-half-year tour. But you cannot rotate at the two-year mark." I chose to extend for another six months. Right before my scheduled departure, Indonesia experienced an evacuation. I found it very interesting to be on the supporting side of this evacuation supporting US Embassy Jakarta and consulate staff, as well as Americans that were coming through. But I was a participant line employee assisting, I did not have any kind of lead role.

Q: The only other thing that happens sometimes for the GSO as duty officer, sometimes you can have a sudden emergency, did that ever happen to you?

MARCELLIN: Not really. Singapore was a much larger mission, we had hundred Americans, compared to Barbados, where there were only thirty-five of us. And a lot of the thirty-five didn't pull duty. Consequently, I did not serve as duty officer as frequently in Singapore. While I recall a few minor incidents, I don't have any particularly dramatic duty-related anecdotes. The duty experience in Barbados was much more intense, due to the smaller staff size and the occurrence of more unusual events.

Q: Going from Barbados to Singapore, you now were a supervisor. And even if it was local staff, you began to have the ability to organize your staff and so on. But did you have any personnel issues that you had to resolve with your staff?

MARCELLIN: Yes, one unfortunate one had happened. Singaporeans are extremely honest; A remarkable 97 percent of lost wallets are returned with money in hand. During my tour, the Office Inspector General (OIG) was scheduled to conduct an inspection, so I decided to proactively review questionnaires to identify any potential concerns before OIG raised them. I went to the dispatch office and announced that I was doing a surprise cash count. The employee in charge of the shuttle pool, where employees purchased shuttle tickets, was the subject of the count. So when I did a surprise cash count on him, I learned he didn't have sufficient cash—it was clear he must be taking it. And I was very horrified by this discovery. The dispatcher had had a baby recently and so I felt horrible that he could lose his job.

Our Human Resources Officer reached out to Washington personnel to get guidance on our options. We were told in this circumstance, if this is the first offense, we can be lenient and suspend but not fire him. But when the word traveled up to our Front Office, the new political appointee Ambassador said to fire this employee immediately. And before word came down, the FSN and I were going over things together. And I was apologizing to him for having created an environment where maybe this temptation had occurred. And he was apologizing to me for bringing shame upon the system. And then we were told, he had to be terminated and it was just terrible. I've terminated people before in my hospital management career but this one was really hard, because I had worked closely with him and I knew he had a new baby; I knew that the shame in this society would be extreme. Shortly thereafter, he moved his family to Malaysia to get away from the stigma and start all over. But I remember just feeling terrible about that.

Q: If that covers all of the major things that you did in Singapore. One last thing. Were you tenured? Since this is your second junior officer tour? Were you tenured at this point?

MARCELLIN: I got tenure while I was in Singapore. Very happy about that.

Q: And you're off of language probation, you're now free to bid on anything, in your grade and so on. What were you thinking about?

MARCELLIN: I had bid on a management job in Paris with the Financial Service Center of Paris (FSC Paris). The Embassy in Paris had its own management team; we were a

separate, satellite center that reported to the financial bureau in the State Department. The Embassy was part of the European Bureau, so we had different reporting structures. I had met the center's director during French training. When I later applied for the job and sent in my resume, he picked me based on my hospital management experience, not my consular or GSO work. So we did not return to Washington and went straight to a third overseas tour.

Q: Okay. For this job, did you need additional warrants or additional permissions in order to be able to manage significant funds?

MARCELLIN: Normally, yes. I only had the GSO course. My training was limited to the GSO course, and management officers are generally expected to have completed the HR and Financial Management courses. But because FSC Paris was facing a big gap between my predecessor and myself, I was told I would not get further training. The directive was: "We need you here immediately. You're an MBA; you can figure it out. We have finance officers at the Financial Service Center, so there is no problem."

And so off I went. It was fine. The challenging aspect was the strained relationship between my boss, a Senior Foreign Service Management Officer, and a management counselor at the embassy. These were both senior Foreign Service Management Officers who really had bad chemistry, big egos, and butted up against each other. And so when I first arrived, I did face what I felt was a hostile environment from the embassy management team. And so that was a difficult beginning.

Q: Okay. Now, you arrive there, can you describe what the section is and what its responsibilities were?

MARCELLIN: The center itself had 125 employees, including approximately thirteen or fourteen American positions and the remainder Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs). My management team was relatively small, consisting of only nine positions, as we relied on the embassy for certain support functions. Human Resources support came from the embassy, while we handled our own procurement, motor pool, and mailroom. We supported the financial operations for all embassies in the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. We were twice as big as Financial Service Center Charleston at that time. Charleston had absorbed the Financial Service Center in Mexico, and the Financial Service Center in Bangkok handled Asia. But we were the largest of the three centers.

Q: Where did you fit in the hierarchy? Were you literally the boss of the whole one hundred and twenty-five section?

MARCELLIN: No, I was in the lowest ranked American position, I was in an FSO-3 position. The director was a Senior Foreign Service Officer, and we had a bunch of FSO-1s in charge of accounting, payroll, and disbursing. The disbursing office handled all the currency purchasing for the supported embassies and provided cashiering support. As a FSO-03 Management Officer, my role was to provide infrastructure support to keep our sections operational.

Q: At the time, were they ever talking about privatizing any of these functions?

MARCELLIN: Well, when I first arrived, there was a rumor that Charleston was going to take over FSC Paris functions and that our center was going to close. Our director was a very strong advocate to keep FSC Paris open, stating "this will never happen; over my dead body." He was making a strong case for FSC Paris being indispensable. But in the context of this, the French labor law changed their workweek from a normal 40 workweek to 32 hours. This was the nail in the coffin for the center as salary costs clearly made it more expensive to operate in Paris.

During my last year there, Washington made the decision to close FSC Paris. This caused enormous trauma to these longstanding employees. The French have a tradition of striking for any cause. If Harvard Business School were to develop a case study on poor management practices, our situation could have served as an excellent example of poor judgment. Washington announced to a culturally sensitive workforce, prone to striking, that the center would be closing, their jobs would be eliminated, and employment at the main embassy could not be guaranteed. Meanwhile, Washington hit us with a hiring freeze. So when we lost people, we couldn't replace them. This meant that our labor force would not only eventually lose jobs, but we were going to work them to death up until the time that we terminated them. Washington planned to handle this issue with sheer stupidity.

My boss and I realized that if these French staff decided to strike, it would mean none of the FSNs in Africa, the Middle East, and Europe would get their paychecks. In Africa, where many FSNs relied on their paychecks for daily sustenance, this would have caused significant hardship. We were outspoken with Washington, urging better planning and more generous support for our staff and the center. We urged the need for a collaborative approach, empowering employees to contribute to the planning process and implementing a gradual transition."

And we were successful in persuading Washington to take a much more measured approach. I was given the permission to work with a group of volunteer FSNs to come up with ideas on how we could preserve as many jobs as possible. The European Union was forming, could they work in these other embassies? Could they be absorbed? Could Charleston take some of these people with their language skills? What kind of other soft skill package training could we give them? Ultimately, we were able to pull together a much more successful transitional plan.

Now, I was fortunate that I got to leave before people were actually being handed pink slips and shown the door. Washington did agree that they were going to keep fifteen positions. So there was also this feeling among the people there that some of them would be preserved to be this regional support team. And we were able to eventually do it gradually. But I was actually very fortunate not to be there during this awful, awful time. But even during the planning process during my last year, there was weeping in the halls, a lot of anguish, and I spent much of the time just trying to help support them.

Q: Was this management of the downsizing the reason that you received the Superior Honor Award there as well?

MARCELLIN: Yes.

Q: The reason I asked is that it sounded like it was a huge task, including rewriting position descriptions, and trying to figure out not only what was needed now, but would be needed downstream.

MARCELLIN: Yes.

Q: Wow! And so now, once again, am I missing something in your responsibilities that you consider salient during this time?

MARCELLIN: I wanted to learn as much as I could from the embassy. But the Embassy Management Counselor was hostile to my boss and suspicious of me since I worked for my boss. I went to the Deputy Management Counselor and told him that I was really horribly disappointed. I had never interacted with Senior Foreign Service Management Officers and had been so excited that I was going to meet three of them here in Paris. But what I actually saw reminded me of watching my toddler in the sandbox fighting with other toddlers. I explained that I was debating how to handle the situation, given the Management Counselor was making disparaging comments about FSC Paris in meetings. I explained that I was perfectly capable of refuting these comments and blowing up the Management Counselor's meeting. Alternatively, I could inform my supervisor of the disparaging remarks, which would likely exacerbate the situation. I asked for his advice for how I should handle these really snide and undermining comments about my organization, because the next time it happens, I'm going to choose one of these options.

When the Deputy Management Counselor talked to his boss, the Management Counselor called me and apologized for some of the accusations and snide comments he had made to me. After he apologized, I didn't have any further trouble. And I was always looking for ways to help the Embassy team and learn. So when there was a presidential visit and multiple Secretary of State visits, I always helped.

My favorite memory in Paris occurred during a Secretary Albright visit. Yassar Arafat was also in town along with Israelis for Paris Peace talks. Albright was supposed to leave the next morning, necessitating a 4 am baggage collection. I showed up at 2 am in the control room and chatted with a very smart HR FSN (Brigitte Rey) who was in charge of the twenty-four hour control room. The Peace talks were going on at the ambassador's residence. When I showed up, Brigitte received a call from the ambassador's residence to send over 100 sandwiches immediately because the delegation was hungry. But the hotel kitchen was already closed and various restaurants nearby were also closed. Brigitte was making all these calls to try to find someone to make sandwiches, salads, anything and she was hitting brick wall after brick wall.

And then she said to me, "Can you help me as we storm the kitchen? I need you to ask other Americans to help us create a sandwich making assembly line. And we will make our own sandwiches." And so I recruited other Americans on hand and we stormed the kitchen and the hotel kitchen employees let us in and handed over ingredients and we created this sandwich making assembly line. Brigitte and I didn't mention our thoughts aloud but we were both thinking "Hopefully nobody gets sick with food poisoning. We're going to be responsible for this and we don't want an international incident on our hands." We were successful—we quickly put together and sent 100 sandwiches to the ambassador's residence and the peace talks continued. And for me, I always greatly respected the capabilities of our FSNs, particularly Brigitte's leadership and abilities. She clearly had the capabilities of running the entire HR section, if not all management operations at Embassy Paris. But because of our security clearance system, FSNs never can get to the top of organizations.

Q: Wow! Fantastic. Were there any as in Singapore, were there any times when you needed to either discipline or actually fire someone for cause?

MARCELLIN: I was not aware of any in my section. Other sections did have to discipline their employees, I did bring that to my boss's attention. There were a number of incidents of catching the vouchers, or the overtime submissions, where there was abuse including long distance overseas expensive telephone calls. We would do these spot checks. When I had French interns, I would assign them tasks such as reviewing overtime records or comparing time clock data with overtime submissions. These analyses frequently revealed discrepancies or outliers. I would then report these findings to my supervisor. But my own staff were very honest and didn't need any disciplinary actions.

Q: Now, you are there from 1998 to 2001. Obviously, 9/11 happens, but I imagine you've already left. What happens with your departure and 9/11?

MARCELLIN: So, we had left Paris and I had started as a post management officer in the Western Hemisphere Affairs executive office. I had probably been in the position for about a month when someone announced, "Everybody watch TV; a plane has just hit the World Trade Center." And my boss, Pat Hayes, the executive director, was really sharp. He had been a Vietnam helicopter pilot. And he said "no pilot accidentally flew into the building." He said, "We're under attack." And about the time he said, "we're under attack," the second plane went through and hit. And then he said, "Okay, everybody prepare to evacuate." He was calling all this stuff before we were hearing it. And I remember, somebody said, "Oh, close the blinds. This department is under attack." As if closing the blinds means a plane's not going to hit. These were some of the crazy comments that people said. I remember everybody being nervous, and leaving. And I remember again, this executive director calmly walking through every office checking if the safes were secured, and then making sure all of us were out. We waited for the signal to go.

I had planned to meet with one of the senior people in the Financial Management Bureau about the Paris downsizing. When I ran into him in the evacuation spot, he said, "Look,

my car is inaccessible, and you're unlikely to secure metro transportation for several hours. Shall we discuss the situation in Paris while we wait?" And so we ended up having this very surreal time of talking about the Paris downsizing while watching the news, as more and more developments occurred.

But that was an interesting year, because right after that, the anthrax scare occurred and eventually the DC/Virginia sniper attacks. During staff meetings, the executive director would address the prevailing anxiety. He would say, "Okay, how many of you are really afraid you're going to open up an envelope containing anthrax? And how many of you are really afraid of the sniper?" A number of people actually were very worried. And he would say, "Well, in Vietnam, we would talk and wonder whether we would rather be crippled for life or die outright in battle. And we figure we had a certain high percentage of either of these things happening, whereas you all have practically zero percentage of being an anthrax or sniper victim." And I just really appreciated this calming leadership perspective that he continued to reflect during this crazy time in Washington.

Q: I am so sorry, to begin with all the sad things. Let's go back a moment and describe what a post management officer does in a geographic bureau.

MARCELLIN: We were all given a geographic region, and I was given the Caribbean and Central America. Later on, during a staffing shortage, I was also temporarily given Peru and Cuba. So I had about fourteen posts to look after. We served as the primary point of contact for any issues requiring Washington intervention or support. We would weigh in with other offices to help problem solve. We would brief incoming ambassadors, DCMs, and incoming management people, keeping them apprised of personnel, financial, and logistical issues. I likened it to a 'problem sampler platter', where we offered assistance but we didn't really actually own any of these problems. So it was a fascinating training job as to how Washington works and how the field works with Washington.

Q: Yeah. Also, it gives you the opportunity since this is the first time you're going back to the Department to do some networking, to meet people who might be helpful in your career, either right then as a post management officer (PMO), or later on, were you able to develop these networks or find people who could be mentors.

MARCELLIN: I have always been an extrovert and like meeting new people. I was always reaching out to other PMOs. My very close friend from Singapore, the Human Resources Officer, had moved into the deputy executive director job in the East Asia and Pacific Bureau (EAP). We would get together and walk during lunch.

My hospital administration background encouraged me to ask tough questions, think out of the box and push on issues. I would ask questions in the management conference of all the management officers in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA). At that time, Bill Eaton was the Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Administration . I directed questions to him as well as the Undersecretary of Management.

What I didn't realize was that Bill Eaton was always trying to figure out who different Management Officers were. My questions at the conference, combined with his awareness of my contributions to the move in Singapore, placed me on his radar. He had started something called the Center for Administrative Innovation, essentially his think tank, which was developing a move template. They had obtained my 'Tips for a Smoother Move' guide and so they reached out to me to request my input. On another occasion, while representing WHA at an overseas school meeting on homeschooling, I was again asking lots of questions. I was unaware that Bill Eaton was also present and was impressed by my inquiries. So this Post Management tour allowed me to network, either through prior work, or through prior people. It was a really good tour. And my boss, the executive director, Patrick Hayes was exceptionally supportive, always encouraging me to run with new initiatives.

Q: So it sounds like you were reaching out beyond just your Post Management Officer responsibilities to actually take part in initiatives, novel things, and so on. Are there any that you recall now that were sustained? And developed from that?

MARCELLIN: The 'Tips for a Smoother Move' guide was basically made into an intranet site and enhanced. I also collaborated with other colleagues to develop a mentoring guide for DCMs to launch entry-level mentoring programs. As someone who had benefited from a great hospital management mentor, I believed in the power of mentoring. Given my experience establishing a mentoring program in Singapore, I convinced our boss that since WHA had the highest concentration of entry-level officers due to the Mexican and Brazilian visa mills, we should create a DCM mentoring guide. This guide was distributed to all deputy chiefs of mission, as well as entry-level coordinators and Human Resources personnel, to promote increased mentoring in the Western Hemisphere. This guide was utilized by the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs for several years until it was eventually superseded by an electronic resource. This project was a collaborative effort; we worked in conjunction with FSI to push this mentoring guide.

Q: But in the process, you all apparently, you also gained an ability for team building.

MARCELLIN: Yes, while I did not directly supervise staff, I actively promoted team-building principles and provided resources to facilitate effective teamwork. I engaged in lateral team-building with my colleagues. But again, I was very lucky to have a very strong boss who had a very good corporate culture. We all got along. It was a good team of PMOs.

Q: Was this also, being back in Washington, a good opportunity for your husband to be employed.

MARCELLIN: Greg initially had not worked in Paris. He had received an offer but did not want to take it. So when he returned to Washington, he faced scrutiny as to why he hadn't worked in three years, and kept changing jobs every two years since leaving Kaiser. He suddenly wondered if he had destroyed a future career. Although things

worked out really well in Barbados and Singapore, the chickens had come home to roost and it was not working out very well for him with this job search. We had to figure this out; either he needed to start looking to join the Foreign Service through USAID as a health officer or I needed to become a civil service employee.

And this was a conversation that we had quite a bit at home. We didn't realize our daughters were listening in. Our oldest daughter was painfully shy and decided she wanted to be "a normal kid" and not a Third Culture Kid. And I remember her saying to me, "Mom, if Dad gets a good job here, let's stay. Don't be selfish." And this was hard, because I didn't want to give up the Foreign Service. He did start working first at L.L. Bean, just to have something to do. But then he did find a health management job running a clinic in Washington, DC. And it was a decent job. But at the same time, USAID started looking for health officers and he applied and was accepted. He was able to make the transition into USAID. This was a fortunate moment, because Colin Powell became Secretary of State. And with his stature, Congress provided additional funding for new officers for both State and USAID.

Q: Whereas in the 90s, they had a reduction in force.

MARCELLIN: Yes. Big reductions.

Q: Yeah, so I mean, that was a sort of a good moment to be in Washington.

MARCELLIN: Yeah. And Colin Powell had brought in Bill Eaton; he reassigned Pat Kennedy and appointed Bill Eaton. Powell also had brought us the internet. Prior to Powell's tenure, State did not allow internet access, although other agencies were using it as a tool. Colin Powell managed to bring us out of the dark ages into this new era.

Bill Eaton in the Bureau of Administration was also pushing initiatives like post profiles and pushing for partnering with the Information Resource Management Bureau. So we were populating some of these things that were coming out of the Bureau of Administration, partly through the Center for Administrative Innovation.

Q: All right. So fortunately, you were able to stay in the Foreign Service and your husband did get a job with USAID. Even so, as a tandem, it's not always easy to find a post where both of you can work. How did that work out?

MARCELLIN: Well, in between, before my husband joined, it was time to bid. And I got an email from Bill Eaton, saying, "Would you consider coming to be my staff assistant?" And I literally almost fell off my chair onto the floor, because Bill Eaton, to me, was this innovative God of the Foreign Service. And I didn't know he even knew my name. When he asked to interview me, I was absolutely terrified. Although I had confidence as a PMO, I still had this, "How did I get in the Foreign Service?" self-doubt. Here was this person who was brilliant and innovative and was asking me to be a special assistant. So I had a bit of a crisis of confidence, even going to interview with him. But we clicked immediately and he offered me the job. I spent two years working with Bill Eaton, my

top mentor in the Foreign Service. And to this day, I worship the man. One of the saddest days for me, and I think for management officers in the Department was when he left the Foreign Service.

Q: Today is July 15, 2022. We're starting session three with Colette Marcellin. Colette, you left off when you were a special assistant in the Bureau of Administration. And I think you were going to explain the end of this tour. Then we'll move on to Indonesia.

MARCELLIN: Bill Eaton was the person I respected most in the Foreign Service, above all others. And there are many extraordinary people in the Foreign Service. But I would put him in a leadership class at the very top. Everybody who worked for him in those days felt that way. We were doing cutting edge things. Bosses either bring out your best or can suppress you. But there's no question in my mind that Bill Eaton brought out everybody's best. We engaged in numerous innovative initiatives, including partnerships with Disney and the City of Phoenix, and the implementation of shared services, which was a cutting-edge management theory at the time. Our objective was to modernize and encourage embassies and departments to adopt best practices, standardized templates, and management engineering principles. And it was magical.

During this time, my husband became a USAID health officer. So we needed to get a joint tandem assignment. And we went to the Bureau of the Office of Overseas Schools in the Bureau of Administration and asked, "where are the best high schools out there?". We were given a short list. When attempting to identify a suitable location for my husband's initial USAID assignment, we encountered the challenge of 'the tail wagging the dog,' as he was an entry-level officer while I was a mid-level officer. Ultimately, he secured a position in Jakarta, Indonesia. I then explored the available FSO-02 positions, which included the Environment, Science, Technology, and Health Officer (ESTH Officer) and the Human Resources Officer. And I thought, well, if I'm ever going to go out of cone, this is the time to do it. So I took the ESTH job. It came with Indonesian language training. But because my husband was going to be immediately assigned to Indonesia, I was able to go through the Foreign Service Institute program that allows you to learn your language overseas, because housing was already going to be paid for with his assignment. So off we went to Jakarta. We needed four years to get our daughter all the way through high school (freshman through senior year) and our other daughter would be starting fourth grade and complete seventh grade. So off we went. Upon arrival, I enrolled at Atma Jaya University, a Catholic university, to study Bahasa Indonesian, while Greg immediately went to work at the embassy.

Q: I have to admit, I don't know very much about Indonesian. Is there a single Indonesian language or did you learn one particular dialect?

MARCELLIN: Bahasa is considered a trade language in the Southeast Asian region. Bahasa Indonesian is very similar to Bahasa Malay and the Bahasa spoken in Singapore. In many ways, it was an easier language for me to learn, because they were much more forgiving about the accent. It was more memorization, so FSI gave you nine months instead of six months to get to the 3/3 level. But because they were very accepting, it was a much easier language for me than French had been.

Q: Okay. Okay. So you felt by the time you finished the nine months, capable of doing at least the basic language that you needed?

MARCELLIN: Yes. And because very few of the expats would bother to learn Indonesian, people on the street would just light up. Our housekeeper was so proud that our whole family could speak Indonesian. Greg had also been trained in Indonesian, through his USAID first assignment to get him off of language tenure. Even though he spoke Spanish from Peace Corps experience, he was trained in Indonesian, I spoke Indonesian and both our daughters started studying it in their classes. And so it was just a really wonderful opportunity. And since we ended up being there for four years, our language got pretty strong.

Q: As a city, in Jakarta are there traffic problems, so on?

MARCELLIN: There were horrendous traffic problems. When we arrived, there was an anti-American feeling. President Bush had invaded Iraq during his administration and Indonesia was a Muslim country. There had been prior instances of terrorism, including a foiled plot to bomb the U.S. Embassy and attack the U.S. Ambassador. There had been various bombings in Bali and other sites. So we had to be careful in terms of being apprehensive. If we were in a taxi, we didn't admit to being American, and the diplomatic plates were hidden to try to look more like Indonesian cars. But the traffic itself was horrendous. And where we lived, we always faced traffic. From our home, our oldest daughter faced an hour on the school bus to get to her high school. We faced an hour and a half of traffic to get from that same house to the embassy. But if we had lived closer to the embassy, she would have had an even longer commute. I think the shortest time we ever made during Muslim holidays might have been about thirty minutes. The longest was four and a half hours during heavy rain because the flooding closed the roads.

Q: Did the embassy accommodate anything in terms of your being able to work on the way or, and deal with this delay.

MARCELLIN: This was the time when BlackBerries came out. Blackberries had been piloted when I was back in Washington, but the Department started to roll them out in Jakarta. So yes, we were using BlackBerries during the work commute. But for the most part, no, people just worked really long hours. If you were on the shuttle, you could leave a little bit early. However, this did not mitigate the impact of severe traffic congestion. Commute times varied depending on residential location. Our residence, located in the Kemang Villa complex, was the closest to the high school, resulting in the longest commute. Most people didn't live as far out as we did. Those without children or with

young children attending the closer elementary school had significantly shorter commutes. But Kemang passengers were watching others get dropped off much earlier. One would hope that certain people wouldn't show up because that would be one more stop that would be required. That said, we lived in a wonderful housing complex, we could walk to restaurants, a bakery, shops, and a grocery store. It had three pools to choose from and tennis courts, so the housing life itself was really fantastic. And our family loved it.

Q: Okay. Now, give us a sense of the section that you were in charge of the oceans—

MARCELLIN: ESTH—Environment, Science, Technology and Health.

Q: ESTH, sorry.

MARCELLIN: Yes. At the time that I got there, the ESTH section was within the economic office and was staffed with one officer and one Foreign Service National. However, ESTH issues were gaining prominence, with numerous U.S. agencies seeking to expand their activities in Indonesia. The tsunami had just hit in January and I arrived in July and started language training. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) was heavily involved in tsunami-related initiatives. There was a growing interest in establishing more ESTH programs, and the embassy had successfully advocated for an additional officer to join the section. During my initial year, I would be the sole ESTH officer, but a second officer was scheduled to join in years two and three. I would then assume the role of senior ESTH officer, with the new officer reporting to me

My first nine months were spent in language training at the local college but then I started to work. On my first day, there were two different scientific engagements that I had to be a part of. The schedule I was given on my first day had me starting with one delegation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and then jumping out of a car and joining another car for a different delegation from the State Department's Biosecurity Engagement team. This biosecurity engagement team wanted to do more biosecurity in Indonesian labs to minimize the risk of accidental viral releases that might cause a pandemic. At the time, there was significant concern regarding avian influenza, and Indonesia had experienced cases, so ensuring safer laboratory practices was a priority. Simultaneously, the CDC group sought to establish a stronger agency presence in Indonesia, also driven by avian influenza concerns. So they were out there on my first day, and it was very apparent this was going to be a 'tiger by the tail' sort of job. Because I had a 'management officer brain,' I approached questions of support with a request for resources. When the Biosecurity Engagement team asked "Well, can you take this on?" I answered, "Well, I could take this on, if you could give me the resources to create family member or local employee positions who would work under me. I will recruit, and then we would be able to help your delegation." My instinct, as a management officer, was to accept the responsibility contingent on adequate resources. By the time I left, we had two officers, three American family member positions and two Foreign Service National employees. I had ASEAN fund one American family member position, the Avian Influenza State office fund an Avian Influenza position, and the Biosecurity Engagement

team fund both an American family member position and a local employee. The programs took off and ESTH became the hottest section in the Embassy. We needed additional office space. I had two great consecutive bosses at that time. The first was only going to overlap with me for a year and he was terrific. And then another boss came in, and he was equally terrific. And they were both extremely supportive of the growth in my program and the importance of that particular portfolio.

Q: Let me ask you to go back, just one second. You mentioned the tsunami, it was indeed, one of the worst in recent memory certainly, and it hit all of Southeast Asia on sort of the western side of Southeast Asia. To what extent when you were there, did that affect your office? Did you, were you doing anything about it? Or was the principal the USAID or so on?

MARCELLIN: Yes, both ESTH and USAID were working on tsunami issues. The tsunami triggered National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) interest in buoys. And yes, there were casualties in 15 countries, including Sri Lanka and Thailand, but Indonesia was hit the hardest. You know, I remember 130,000 plus deaths for Indonesia alone. And that's where you saw the photos of the ships that had been carried up and tossed miles onto land. And the only thing left standing was a mosque and all these crazy photos were coming in the newspapers at that time. NOAA was my contact, because I would be the official Embassy control officer while USAID was willing to help out on the funding.

During my initial year, a presidential visit by George W. Bush was planned. As is customary, there was a search for deliverables to present during the visit. One of the proposals under consideration was an agreement with the Indonesian government to establish their own tsunami warning system, potentially accompanied by a \$1 million contribution from NOAA. So we approached my NOAA counterpart, David McKinney, who had extensive experience with Pacific buoy systems, and he was all for it. He sold NOAA on the idea. This initiative, comprising a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement and \$1 million in assistance, became the sole successful deliverable from the Bush visit. So it was a really exciting time. And it was really exciting for me because I'd never done this stuff, I hadn't worked on MOUs. I didn't know how to do them. My supervisor, Bill Heidt, was simultaneously working on a separate trade agreement MOU. We collaborated from different locations, with him in one building and our team in another, communicating by phone for guidance during late hour negotiations. It was a frenetic period, with both teams working until midnight to finalize their respective agreements. While our tsunami agreement was successful, the trade agreement was not, but Bill provided invaluable support throughout the process. So it was really a fun experience.

Q: Wow! Extraordinary. Alright. And you also overcame the logistical problems of traffic and so on in Jakarta. One and other environment science and so on. And question about being in Southeast Asia, of course, there's the famous huge amounts of plastic floating around in the Pacific and so on. Did you work on anything related to that as well?

MARCELLIN: We did not so much deal with debris, but NOAA became a huge part of our partnership. I worked under two ambassadors. My first year coincided with the departure of Ambassador Lynn Pascoe, a well-respected career officer, followed by the arrival of Ambassador Cameron Hume. When I got there, environment, science, technology and health issues were not part of the mission strategic plan whatsoever. They weren't even a footnote in the plan. In my opinion, this was crazy. Indonesia was an environmental superpower with its rainforests, threatened endangered species, and the Coral triangle--which is the most biologically diverse marine place on the planet. Next to the Amazon, we were #2 in terms of tropical rainforests. Fortunately, USAID had a very strong environmental officer who came in and we teamed up and he was able to put together a presentation as to why Indonesia is the environmental superpower. The objective was to persuade Washington of its significance and to convince our new ambassador that these issues should constitute a priority in the Mission. We also had a tremendous opportunity: the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP-13), originally scheduled for Thailand, was relocated to Bali due to political unrest in Thailand. This presented us with a unique chance to engage visiting dignitaries, including senators, former Vice President Gore, and Mayor Bloomberg. Ambassador Cameron Hume said, "This is a real opportunity. We're going to get all these visitors, we're going to corral them into a conference room, and we will push our agenda on them as they are our captive audience."

When we showed him the environmental presentation, which detailed the compelling reasons to prioritize environment, science, and health, particularly environmental concerns, he was all for it. He became a huge champion and made ESTH among the key, strategic priorities for the mission. And it really became a huge priority. This shift in focus led to a significant expansion of NOAA's involvement in research initiatives. We worked hard to bring in NOAA's flagship ocean research vessel—the Okeanos Explorer—and created partnerships with the Indonesians. Avian influenza continued to be a huge priority during this time. And through the Tropical Rainforest Conservation Act, we were able to get millions in funding, so this topic also began to explode. All of our issues were red-hot. Two years after I left, ESTH was up to three officers, four family member employees and even more FSNs. Indonesia's volcanic activity also attracted interest, and we hosted geological service representatives. NOAA sent their endangered turtle specialist to conduct research on leatherback turtles. We also initiated the Science Fellows program.

Q: Okay, one thing before we go further, you got the additional assistance in a number of at least part time. How did you divide up the responsibilities in your section once you had everybody in?

MARCELLIN: My first year, I had it all. The second year, I shared the portfolio. I kept health and science, while the new officer assumed responsibility of environmental issues, including oceans and rainforests. The ambassador wanted me to stay on avian influenza and the biosecurity engagement programs. We were also working on a science and technology agreement MOU, with me taking the lead on certain aspects. The eligible family members I hired were exceptionally capable and independent. Many times eligible

family members are every bit as smart, if not smarter than officers, and we were able to get some superstars. They were very capable, independent, and ran their own issues with minimal guidance.

Q: Okay, so you continue to follow avian, the avian flu very closely. Curiously enough, your husband was also working on health issues. Did you end up overlapping with some of the things he was doing?

MARCELLIN: No, he was not. USAID had four different health officers working on different health issues. Greg was focused on family planning—not Avian influenza. We did not have any overlap in that respect.

Q: All right, then go ahead with a little bit more on what you did in terms of avian influenza. And you had mentioned the CDC and so on, where did that take you?

MARCELLIN: In the midst of these avian influenza cases that were springing up, we were afraid of the next big pandemic. The Indonesian Health Minister exhibited erratic behavior and decided to stop sharing samples with the CDC. Consequently, the World Health Organization (WHO) intensified its efforts to pressure the Indonesians to resume sample sharing, aiming to proactively prevent a pandemic. The scenario we feared with avian influenza mirrored the subsequent events with COVID. During this period, the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) had a presence in Indonesia. These were scientists that were doing partnerships with Indonesian labs and were virus hunters looking out for what might be outbreaks occurring in Indonesia. This erratic Health Minister decided she wanted to kick NAMRU out of the country. A significant portion of my work involved facilitating discussions with the minister and exploring strategies to prevent NAMRU's expulsion and to encourage the resumption of sample sharing. A lot of cables were going back and forth. Washington had its own avian influenza team of people who were constantly asking for information. And so I was feeding the paper beast. At the time I left, the Indonesians still had not shared samples and the minister still wanted to kick out NAMRU. While I was there, Indonesia also got its first cases of swine flu. NAMRU's laboratory capabilities enabled them to diagnose swine flu more rapidly than the Indonesian labs, whose diagnostic capabilities were less advanced. We had to delicately inform our Indonesian contacts, emphasizing that we did not want to cause unnecessary friction with the minister by revealing that we had identified swine flu before the Indonesians did. Predictably, these circumstances fueled crazy rumors that NAMRU was artificially creating swine flu, implanting microchips in Indonesians for mind control, and that NAMRU sought avian influenza samples to enable the CDC to profit by developing vaccines that Indonesians would be compelled to purchase. The Health Minister didn't want to share samples as she felt she was giving away genetic resources. These arguments, some with a degree of validity regarding vaccine production, and others less so, created a complex situation. The minister herself was perceived as eccentric, known for making late-night phone calls and publishing unorthodox articles. The CDC director of the infectious diseases unit came in and the Minister agreed to have her for tea at her house. I accompanied her to the Minister's house, and it was the strangest sitting room that I had ever seen in a house—lots of mirrors and portraits of the

Minister. Most striking was an enormous portrait above her couch which was as large as the couch itself. In the center of the portrait was a large painting of the Minister. Surrounding this figure, were various groups of Indonesians from different ethnic groups-- Balinese, Javanese, Sumatrans, etc) that were kneeling before miniatures of the Minister as if they were worshipping her. The sitting room felt like it was a temple of narcissism.

Q: Wow. Yeah, I don't envy you.

MARCELLIN: Yes, very interesting--Jakarta was one of my favorite tours.

Q: Even with all of the headaches that came with dealing with that ministry.

MARCELLIN: Yes, it was very interesting. And my sense of her is that she meant well but she had issues. Eventually, she was replaced. But while she was there, she was firing people right and left. So we were constantly having to work with new people until they too were fired. In many cases, this was very sad, because some of the people she was firing were actually very good, well qualified people.

Q: In terms of being able to manage at least the public side of things, did you have to coordinate with the public diplomacy office? Were they helping you put out the truth?

MARCELLIN: Yes, the avian influenza working group, comprising representatives from USAID, CDC, the State Department, and the Department of Agriculture, included a public diplomacy representative.. We also had public diplomacy reps on our environmental working groups. We had successfully conveyed to our ambassador that ESTH issues were perceived as positive and beneficial for Indonesia. We emphasized that we were not engaged in political-military affairs or lecturing the Indonesians on democracy but rather offering scientific partnerships and assistance. Public diplomacy wholeheartedly embraced this perspective and actively collaborated with us on various initiatives. We jointly organized prominent Earth Day events, including mural painting with Indonesian schoolchildren and a fair, which generated positive coverage in regional newspapers. The following year, for Earth Day, we adopted a marine theme at the Indonesian aquarium and arranged for Ambassador Hume, who was a diver, to enter a shark tank. We invited the press, and the ambassador's shark tank encounter was featured on YouTube. So we were constantly doing these sorts of things. Public diplomacy had many of these ideas and was pushing on that front for us. It was an interagency partnership the entire time.

Q: Did you also conduct any other besides avian influenza? Did you become involved in other aspects of the ESTH portfolio?

MARCELLIN: Since I was the ESTH Chief and the supervisor, I had my hand in all of it. I primarily led health and science initiatives, while the other officer focused on environmental issues, including climate change, rainforests, and oceans. The issue of volcanoes presented a challenge in categorization—was it science or more closely related

to my responsibilities? During the Bali climate change talks, we both actively participated. The other officer worked with the official large ESTH delegation, while I served as the control officer for former Vice President Gore during his two-day visit. I also attended meetings involving then-Senator John Kerry, who was present at the talks.

Q: So a quick question about Kerry, because of course, he'd go on to become Secretary of State and has always been very interested in ocean. To the extent you were able to observe him, how did you, what was your take away from his attention that he paid his understanding of the issues?

MARCELLIN: Very impressed. He came in and originally, we were supposed to have a large congressional delegation (CODEL) of over twenty members to arrive on a chartered flight, but these plans were canceled at the last minute. Senator Kerry instead traveled on a commercial flight and had a relatively brief stay before returning to the U.S. However, he made the effort to be present and demonstrated a strong commitment and engagement. And I was extremely impressed; he was very down to earth. I had also just met Al Gore, and quite frankly, prior to the COP 13 talks, I had thought Al Gore and John Kerry were very similar people. They were leading Democrats, both interested in environmental issues and both had run and lost against Bush. But Al Gore was standoffish to our embassy staff, limiting interaction to a handshake and directing communication through his staff. Whereas John Kerry was extremely personable, offering to hand us bottles of water and engaging with all of us as human beings. I respect Al Gore. But to me, they were very, very different people. And I was very impressed with Kerry, every aspect of Kerry.

Q: One of the reasons I asked you is because I never saw much of him. But I was in the Department for a little while, while he was Secretary of State. And he spoke to a town hall. And what absolutely astonished me about him was he spoke without notes. And he didn't need them. He was, you know, from beginning to end, he didn't need to pause. He didn't have talking points. He knew exactly what he wanted to say, how he wanted to say it, and came across lucid, down to earth. I was really very impressed with it.

MARCELLIN: I was very impressed as well. During my time there, Barack Obama was elected President. Prior to Super Tuesday, Indonesians were somewhat anti-American. However, when Obama suddenly took Super Tuesday, we realized that we potentially had a President who had lived in Indonesia and spoke Bahasa. The Indonesians felt Obama was somewhat Indonesian as he had an Indonesian stepfather, and a half-sister who was Indonesian. Following Super Tuesday, there was a surge in pro-American sentiment among the Indonesian populace. When Obama was elected, the pro-Obama enthusiasm was overwhelming; there were magnets made showing a photo of Obama and labeling him as a "Child of Menteng." Various Obama tchotchkes were being sold because they were just so excited about Obama being elected. And very soon, Secretary Clinton came to town, and I was very impressed that she knew her notes, she had read every single memo we had prepared. She hit every point that we wanted her to make. She was incredibly hard working. And I ended up just being really, really impressed with her as a secretary as well.

Q: Now, the other thing I wanted to ask you about your job is, did it take you out of the Capitol into some of those larger islands?

MARCELLIN: Yes, for the climate change talks, I spent two weeks in Bali providing support for the negotiations and the U.S. delegation. I also staffed the World Oceans conference in Manado, where we had a huge NOAA delegation and a Google partnership going. We were there for a week. Additionally, I undertook several other support trips. I served as the control officer for the head of the U.S. Forest Service and accompanied NOAA VIPS to Sumatra to assess the tsunami aftermath. I regularly traveled for the job which is why they had trained me in Bahasa.

Q: Because of the size and also the strategic importance of Indonesia, were there other embassies that had a big presence that you also worked with?

MARCELLIN: I knew all of my counterparts who handled ESTH issues and I knew which ones had the best expertise. For example, my Singaporean counterpart possessed in-depth knowledge of the annual haze problem caused by deliberate burning in Indonesia, which affected Singapore. The Germans were very involved in the tsunami side, so we would compare notes. I was seen as the avian influenza expert among all of our embassy counterparts, given our collaboration with NAMRU and CDC. So we were constantly meeting, sharing notes, coming together. This was particularly important during the climate change talks again, because they had delegations and their people wanted to meet some of our people. And so we were the go-betweens exchanging numbers and setting up meetings.

Q: To the extent you were able to follow it, how would you say the average, Indonesian or even Indonesian influencers, were concerned with any of the issues out of your office?

MARCELLIN: Educated Indonesians were aware of avian influenza because the World Health Organization (WHO) was saying this is a problem and it was in the newspapers. One of the things that I found fascinating was our Ambassador was just really brilliant with strategy. He had a vision of this strategic dialogue between Indonesia and the United States that would be built on seven different themes. And he had little note cards made up that described this vision. He collaborated with the Public Diplomacy section to create cards outlining this vision, which he strategically distributed during meetings with Indonesian officials and in Washington. He used the COP climate talks to educate all of our visitors on these ideas. Well, pretty soon, the Indonesians were themselves writing articles appearing in Indonesian newspapers and editorials, basically asking for all of these things that were part of Ambassador Hume's vision. He had sowed the seeds and it looked like Indonesia was approaching the U.S. to ask for these things. It was all Cameron Hume working both sides of the ocean, the U.S. and all over Indonesia, and pulling these things together. While our office contributed to this overall effort, the ambassador's vision extended beyond environment, science, technology, and health. Prior to his arrival, Indonesian interest in partnering with the U.S. was limited, and traditional political-military dialogues were not particularly fruitful. However, the focus on these

'soft' issues significantly enhanced Indonesian engagement. With the subsequent election of President Obama, Indonesian enthusiasm for partnership reached unprecedented levels, with strong interest in a presidential visit. I regret that I had already rotated out and missed Obama's visit. It was the only time I really hated to end a tour because we knew Obama was coming to town. I worked hard to bring NOAA'S Oceanic Explorer to Indonesia but it wasn't going to be on my watch. I had worked hard on this science and technology agreement and it was going to be signed, but not on my watch. So it was really hard to leave that tour because of all these things that were going to come through in the next year. But it was also fun to have been a part of it and later watch as it continued to grow.

Q: You've been talking about how the bilateral relationship began to bloom. One of the ways we improve bilateral relations is through these exchange programs. Certainly Fulbright, but others as well. I imagine you sent or you selected some people to go to the U.S. and have professional tours and so on and so on. When they came back, were they at all helpful for U.S. influencers?

MARCELLIN: Yes, we were always putting together proposals for the International Visitor programs with great success. We also advocated for Science Fellows and hosted two NOAA scientists for a summer residency. And we knew who we wanted because they were passionate experts-- a marine biologist and a tsunami expert—and they helped develop important partnerships. Whenever visiting scientists came through, we would work with Public Diplomacy to have them do speeches and get press coverage. We would just use these opportunities to further leverage our ability to influence. While we were there, Microsoft and Gates Foundation became partners. We engaged with these organizations, and I had the opportunity to meet Bill Gates with the ambassador during a Microsoft leadership conference. We linked our ambassador to travel with Thomas Friedman, who was working on another book which our ambassador was mentioned in. Just lots of extremely interesting opportunities came along. Although not part of my portfolio, the ambassador also sought to reestablish the Peace Corps presence in Indonesia. He initiated the groundwork, and while this did not materialize during my tenure, the Peace Corps reopened in Indonesia approximately six months after my departure.

Q: Okay. Now, I have asked you about cooperating, how you cooperate with other embassies and countries. In the meantime, China is becoming a Pacific power. I'm interested in all kinds of things in every country there. What did you see China, becoming interested in, at least in any of your fields?

MARCELLIN: China really wasn't on my radar at that time between 2005-2009 in Indonesia. I'm sure they were there. But they were not on my radar. Literally, once I got to Uganda, they were all over Africa. And they were clearly on my radar at that point. But Indonesia? Probably if I had been smarter, I might have been looking for them, I'm sure they were already there, but much more quietly on the sidelines.

Q: And then this is my final formal question. Of course, there was the tsunami and its result. But while you were there, were there other natural disasters that you had to deal with?

MARCELLIN: Nothing on that scale. Indonesia had constant earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Given its vast archipelago of 17,000 islands, something was always going on, but nothing like the tsunami. Indonesia did have mudslides and also a mud volcano that was a result of an oil and gas drilling accident. Unsafe drilling practices triggered the eruption of mud, which engulfed entire villages. We brought in United States Geological Survey (USGS) experts to advise on containment strategies, but the solutions they proposed were deemed too expensive by the company responsible. The company opted for alternative measures, which ultimately exacerbated the situation. That mud volcano lasted for years but didn't have the death toll of the tsunami. The company that created the accident had political connections, and was powerful. Those responsible were untouchable. Huge damage was done—environmental and social in terms of displaced villages but there was very little accountability.

Q: Have I missed something, was there something that I haven't asked you about?

MARCELLIN: I would say our family loved it. We were there for four years. Our kids loved it as it was exciting to visit different places throughout Indonesia. We had the chance to see orangutans in their natural habitat, visit Bali and Sumatra, and go diving in Manado. We didn't want to leave the country because there was still so much to see. My first two years there, I had a 'good mother job,' but my last two years, I had a 'bad mother job' because of how much time I spent at the office, relative to how much time I could be with the kids.

Q: If only there had been a good high school closer to the embassy, that may have made all the difference.

MARCELLIN: It could have helped a bit. I still worked quite a few weekends.

Q: I see. Okay.

MARCELLIN: You know, the sheer volume of work, driven by events such as the climate change talks, Secretary Clinton's visit, and President Bush's visit, was considerable. My portfolio went from sleepy backwater 'nobody cares' portfolio of issues to super hot issues. And that made it both fun but also a bit of a tough situation for the family.

Q: Then one last question about your portfolio that also strikes me, since it grew, one of the simplest ways of measuring how much a section grows, how much money did you direct, was your dispersible?

MARCELLIN: The substantial funding associated with my portfolio was attached to USAID, NOAA and CDC. My direct financial authority involved operating funds, which

supported the expansion of the ESTH position growth—Americans, FSNs and family member positions.

Q: So then, as you're approaching the end of your tour, you and your husband are in tandem. How did you decide where you would try to go next?

MARCELLIN: Well, Greg decided he really wanted to go to Iraq and go to a PRT [Provincial Reconstruction Team]. Rachel, our daughter, was heading off to college, and Katie, our youngest, would be entering eighth grade. They weren't going to be going to Iraq. So I was going back to Washington. I chose a job as the Orientation Director for the Foreign Service Institute. And I thought that would be a much easier job after a very demanding job. I thought that would be a job that would allow me to best support the one daughter, who was going to be living with me, and manage the house without my husband. I took that job. This was right as Secretary Clinton was coming in, and she was bringing in all of these new officers. I was therefore coming in right as the 3.0 hiring wave occurred. We were going to have to take the normal, A-100 schedule and compress it down and re-engineer it so that we could bring in more orientation classes. It wasn't just generalists. We were hiring more specialists. So we were having to also add more specialist classes. We therefore had to hire more deputy coordinators and staff the orientation division to accommodate this massive wave of hiring.

Q: Wow! Since you're acquainted with human resources, what's the difference between the generalist Foreign Service officer and the specialists?

MARCELLIN: Generalists are individuals who enter the Foreign Service through the Foreign Service exam and are assigned to various cones (career tracks). They typically undergo a longer orientation program. Specialists, on the other hand, represent a diverse range of specialized fields—I believe there are over twenty—a number much larger than most people realize. Their orientation program is generally shorter, lasting approximately three weeks. The orientation division also conducted orientation for Civil Service employees, a one-week program, as well as a diplomatic history course and other specialized orientations for specific groups. So we had more classes than people realized in the orientation division. It wasn't simply A-100 specialists.. And then we had some distance learning that we were also teaching at that time.

Q: Wow! That is really significant. As you recall it, how did you reimagine the program? What were the key changes?

MARCELLIN: The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) director at the time was deeply involved and took a very hands-on approach to this process. The objective was to condense the orientation program. While some of the initial proposals for the A-100 curriculum were developed before my arrival, there was ongoing collaboration and refinement of the changes. The aim was to reduce the program duration to approximately five weeks, although it has since been expanded again as hiring levels have decreased. We endeavored to incorporate as many essential elements as possible. It was a challenging task, and there was some disagreement about the optimal balance. However,

the urgency of onboarding a large number of new officers necessitated the streamlining of the program. We recognized that this was a potentially unique opportunity to expand the Foreign Service, and we sought to accommodate as many new hires as possible while preserving the core components of the training.

Q: Okay, so you were talking about the extent to which you were changing the program, shortening it, and so on?

MARCELLIN: Yeah, I think, we did our best to retain the most critical elements of the program, although this required some difficult decisions. There was inevitably some disagreement about whether we achieved the ideal balance. It was a compromise, driven by the need to expedite the onboarding process. Many of us felt a sense of regret that we had to make these reductions, as there was concern that we were compromising the depth of the training. However, the overarching objective was to accommodate a large influx of new officers, as there was no guarantee that such a hiring surge would be repeated. We endeavored to preserve as much of the original content as possible. For instance, we managed to retain one offsite session, although A-100 previously included two. In some cases, the duration of individual sessions was shortened, but we did the best we could.

Q: Sure. At the time you were working there, though, you continued to separate the specialists and the civil service and so on. Okay, because at some point, they do bring them all together. But that's later.

MARCELLIN: Yes, we proposed a more integrated approach, drawing inspiration from the CIA's orientation model, which employs a layered system. In their model, all new employees begin with a common orientation before branching out into their respective specialties. My team advocated for a similar structure, believing it would foster greater unity and address the hierarchical divisions that had historically plagued the Foreign Service. However, this proposal was rejected by the FSI director and others, who deemed it impractical during a period of intense hiring. To my knowledge, the orientation programs for A-100, specialists, Civil Service, and Pickering Fellows have remained separate, although I am not certain if any changes have been implemented since my departure.

Q: What was the average intake, at least of the generalists, the people who-

MARCELLIN: The classes were designed to maximize room capacity, often accommodating approximately ninety-eight specialists, while generalist classes might have been slightly smaller. I wish I could remember that now. Regardless, the size of the classrooms imposed a practical limitation on the number of attendees.

Q: Wow. Incredible. And this was basically because with the Obama administration coming in, and the influence of-

MARCELLIN: Hillary Clinton.

Q: Yeah, that took place.

MARCELLIN: Yes, it happened under Secretary Powell and it happened under Secretary Clinton. And so what ended up happening is you had these two periods of significant expansion, followed by periods of reduced hiring, creating what some described as ‘the pig and the python’ effect. There were these two bulges and then it was lean time in between.

Q: Now, so this is two years. During this time, also, did you add things? Obviously, not lengthening A-100. But add classes or even suggest that you want to add?

MARCELLIN: We pretty much maintained the workload, but we did work on a few distance learning courses and we started a morning optional speaker series to offer additional interesting discussions we were not able to have because there just wasn't the time. These sessions were open to all participants, including generalists, specialists, and others interested in attending. The speakers addressed a variety of compelling subjects, such as Pru Bushell's account of the Nairobi bombings and insights into the Rwandan genocide. I don't think the Speaker Series continued after I left, but I'm not sure. I would often also always try to have a student intern, and give them a project. One intern conducted research and compiled a photographic display titled 'Orientation Over the Years,' which showcased historical images and artifacts related to Foreign Service orientation. This display, featuring photographs of individuals and language proficiency tests, and even an original employee evaluation report (EER) that included an assessment of a spouse's contributions, remained on exhibit outside the orientation division for years and might even still be there, providing a point of interest for new hires.

Q: Do you survey the students, the new hires on how well they liked it, what they liked most. What were the conclusions you found?

MARCELLIN: At the time, FSI surveyed every class. The FSI Director would always read A-100 reviews. And in general, most people are favorable, but some people are horrible in what they say. If the Director saw trends, she would come down to ask us what were we going to do to fix the problem. Sometimes we would get feedback on specific speakers. However, we generally avoided sharing negative feedback directly with guest speakers, as it could be discouraging and deter them from future participation. If we saw consistent terrible feedback, we would not bring the guest speaker back. But the feedback at times was quite brutal, which made you wonder if these people should be diplomats. They would be unnecessarily insulting. It could be brutal.

Q: And the other thing is, as you were looking at the new hires, what trends were you seeing? I mean, aside from diversity, let's assume that the classes were diverse, but in terms of the professional backgrounds, or the skills they brought, and so on.

MARCELLIN: Well, on average, entering officers were getting older, so the class was more mature. But the biggest shocking trend that we saw was the helicopter parenting

that had entered the State Department. When I went through A-100, and we had our flag ceremony, it was just our class. But over time, this has been built up into inviting your parents, inviting everybody. The auditorium was full as we called out names to hand out these flags as their assignments. My own staff did not get accosted by parents, but some of the career development officers (CDOs) would be accosted by parents. "How could you send my baby, the valedictorian, to this post, this border post instead of this other more important assignment?" The other thing that was sort of generational was the entitlement issues of entering officers. When I came into A-100, we were told we needed to be worldwide available. You don't complain, and you're lucky to get in. No one would dare question their first assignment. But some of this new generation felt entitled or would emotionally break down with disappointment when receiving their assignments. The career development officers would ask my staff to discreetly go into the bathroom to see who's crying after the flag ceremony. They wanted a heads up on who might be asking for a change of assignment or threatening to quit.

I remember this one woman, lobbying me for her perfect dream first assignment. My staff and I stressed that we had nothing to do with assignments—this was a different office. But she continued to lobby and explain why she had to get the one staff assistant job in London, because her husband was so specialized in his medical career, that England was going to be the only possible place that would accommodate her husband's employment. And so even though she wasn't in the right cone (specialization) for this assignment, she had to get this job because of her husband's career. And I thought to myself, this does not bode well for a successful career. These expectations are out of line with the priorities of the department. I told her that "I'm sorry, but the department is unlikely to make assignments based on her spouse's employment options. That's not how this career works." While we attempted to be diplomatic and manage expectations, it was not our responsibility to address these issues. However, career development officers frequently encountered such unrealistic and demanding requests. There were several instances where individuals, both generalists and specialists, resigned within a week of receiving their assignments, based on where they were being assigned.

Q: Yeah, yeah and that happens. I mean, it happens with every class. Even when I entered, we only had about forty-two in my class, and two or three quit after a second tour; they just realized it wasn't for them after all.

MARCELLIN: Yes. Well, these were people who didn't make it to the first tour.

Q: Yeah, I understand.

MARCELLIN: They quit because they really expected much more accommodation for their spouse or because of their own special interests and egos, and they were not getting that accommodation.

Q: Often in the past, A-100 has been a bonding experience. Many people make friends that they stay in touch with throughout their career. Did you find that to be still happening when you were directing it?

MARCELLIN: No, because of the shortness of the course and the size of the class, I don't believe the bonds were as tight. When I went through A-100, classes were about 10 weeks. There had already been cuts from our era. And so FSI's A-100 went from eight to seven to six weeks and then to five and now it's back to six or seven weeks. Consequently, some participants barely remembered their classmates. Interestingly, when I served in Afghanistan, I encountered several individuals who had completed orientation during my tenure as director. We would reconnect and reminisce about our shared experience. They had done their other tours, and they happened to be in Afghanistan at the same time in different divisions. I only remembered some of them but they remembered me because of my role as Orientation Director. I was always doing opening remarks, leading sessions, and serving as the master of ceremonies for the swearing in ceremony. I also would do an occasional lunch lecture on some topic, but not the structured sessions.

Q: Sure, sure. I ask you this for a somewhat broader consideration, which is, in the past, the Foreign Service has had a camaraderie, has had an esprit de corps. But many of the people that I interview now who are retiring say it's going away, that the sense of being an organization with a mission that everybody is behind, and everybody really feels part of is diminishing. Did you have that sense?

MARCELLIN: Certain aspects have undoubtedly evolved. For instance, the tradition of officers and their families hosting gatherings in their homes has significantly declined. So you see a little bit of it, but it may be a generational shift. The younger generation appears less inclined to undertake the effort and expense associated with home entertaining. The strongest sense of camaraderie tended to exist within the smaller missions, or the really tough missions. But in the large missions like Paris, there wasn't much camaraderie. It was a huge mission. Everybody had so many choices on weekends and lots of visitors from home. There was no camaraderie there. And all of our missions have become that much bigger. But in those small missions, is there still close camaraderie? Yes, I think there still can be very close camaraderie.

Q: Here's a crystal ball question. In any of these orientations, did you see people that you thought, oh, yeah, this person is going to be an Ambassador?

MARCELLIN: There were people who stood out in the kind of questions they asked. So, yes, I would see certain people that I thought were standouts. Not in every class, but in some classes. Consequently, there were also some people who were quick to screw up and I thought they would never get tenure. If one of these officers was exhibiting poor judgment while they were still in A-100, I would be asked to counsel the person. And this was a generation that was blogging even on their first day. One of our initial tasks was to review the Department's blogging policy, but some officers were already blogging prior to this review. For example, one officer posted a blog entry criticizing the Director General as 'really boring,' which was a remarkably disrespectful comment about a high-ranking official. I would have to be the disciplinarian. There once was an A-100 student who had to go to the CON GEN course and was angrily banging on the door of

the Consular Training Director. The Director knew me and told him that he would immediately call me. The officer ran down the stairs and was in my office as the CONGEN Director's call was coming in. The new officer was panicked and started telling me that I would need to listen to "his side of the story." He had realized he had overstepped in angrily banging on someone's door. I also had to get involved with students who locked dogs in cars in the parking lot and specialists who decided to bring their guns into the specialist classroom. FSI has a policy of "no guns in classrooms." So yes, there were standouts who were excellent and standouts who showed poor judgment.

Q: Yeah, one of the things A-100 is supposed to do is introduce everyone to the corporate culture of the State Department. And to let them understand that it may not be a private company, but it is, in some ways, a company and it has a corporate culture. And if you're going to succeed, you have to accommodate yourself, at least in some ways to how things are done. Do you think with your five weeks, by the end, you felt reasonably successful that they at least had learned that much?

MARCELLIN: We certainly hit on those topics. Do people absorb it? Some. But we hit on suitability and conduct topics, ethics, and the informal corridor reputation.

Q: And now that you mentioned that, did you also explain the evaluation system?

MARCELLIN: Yes, these were considered extremely important parts of the discussion. And we also would push that new officers should proactively look to learn from everyone at post. Entry levels, whether specialist or generalist, have a license to learn. They should use these years to ask questions and learn. Often people coming out of the private sector don't really realize how important evaluations are. They think it's just paperwork. We would do these informal discussions and suggest people mix it up at the lunch table when they get to post and try to learn from people from all these other agencies. We suggested they don't look at their A-100 colleagues as competitors, but as long-term colleagues. We would try to build this "continuing to learn" value system to make them better officers, as they moved along. Furthermore, we consistently highlighted the importance of positive relationships with Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs), our local employees. If FSI had FSNs being trained in other classes, we would try to bring some of them in and we would say, "what really upsets you about your American boss? What do you really like?" And the entry level students would hear from FSNs. "We hate it when the Americans put down our country. Many Americans act better than us--some don't even say good morning." They would say, "We see many Americans come through, and we only remember the really bad ones or the really good ones. And this makes a really bad officer and this makes a really good one."

Q: Sure. One tool I don't know if it had been introduced by the time you were at FSI, but one tool that could at least begin to get them thinking in that way is the 360.. So the 360 is when either colleagues or supervisors or others are encouraged to provide answers to general questions when someone bids, especially when someone bids.

MARCELLIN: Yes. We discussed 360s and we stressed that corridor reputation was very important.

Q: Okay. Okay. Yeah, because, once again for corporate culture, these are key. You can begin to get a bad reputation. And it really can harm you in the long run.

MARCELLIN: Yes.

Q: Okay. Once again, I've come to the end of my formal questions, but you still may have other recollections about this position that you want to share.

MARCELLIN: No, it was a very enjoyable tour. It was different than I expected, but it was a very enjoyable tour. And I worked with good people.

Q: Okay. And now as you approach the end of it, your husband had been in Iraq, I assume it's just one year. So he's now back in Washington?

MARCELLIN: Right. Greg extended a little bit. At that time, we began discussing our next assignment. I needed to return to a management cone position, as I had been out of cone for six years, which can negatively impact one's career trajectory as a management officer. I had to secure a management officer position, and he needed to find a USAID health officer role. But the only place we could line up at our levels in our specializations with a good high school was Dhaka, Bangladesh. Our daughter, Katie, was in ninth grade at the time. She had made the varsity tennis team and so she had a really nice situation in high school. And we gave her a choice, "Katie, we can continue to be in Washington for three more years for you to finish high school in McLean or you can finish high school in Dhaka, Bangladesh. That's it—the only two choices. What do you want to do?" And she said, "I want to go to Dhaka, Bangladesh. I want to have the same experience as my sister." And so Greg, immediately after he finished in Iraq, started doing TDYs [Temporary Duty] in Dhaka.

Q: Up until now, since you're mentioning how you do work life balance and family balance and so on. Had either of your daughters begun considering the Foreign Service as a career?

MARCELLIN: At that point, no. In fact, once we were in Dhaka, Bangladesh, my younger daughter said, "Mom, I want to be an Exxon housewife when I grow up, because they don't have to work as hard as you do. They get to shop, they get to be involved with the PTA, and go to lunch together. You said you were a smart student, but I think they're the really smart ones". And that was like a dagger to my heart. Here I thought I was such a wonderful role model for my daughters. And my youngest is saying she wants to be an Exxon wife.

Q: Right. Okay, we'll find out where she goes. And all of that at the appropriate time. But meanwhile, okay, your husband is going TDY; you're getting ready to go to Dhaka as well. As the management counselor?

MARCELLIN: Yes.

Q: As you're approaching departure, you're going to do consultations, you're going to talk to everybody. What were they saying would be from the Washington point of view would be your most important goals or your most important responsibilities?

MARCELLIN: They told me I was going to have a brand new team, everybody was turning over. I was also told that Ambassador Dan Mozena's top priority was to address the issue of seismically unsafe housing. If Dhaka faced a big earthquake, most of our housing was going to collapse, and there'd be fatalities. So he really wanted to get the housing straightened out. While Dhaka was not as seismically vulnerable as Nepal, it was still his number one concern. Additionally, the differential had also just been lowered from twenty-five percent to fifteen percent and Embassy staff were up in arms because it is a difficult posting. And I was being told that I was going to be coming into a very unhappy place because of this differential. But the hardest issue I faced was the FSN salary freeze, which was a worldwide phenomenon. There was a lot of anguish that was going on in Bangladesh with the FSNs. So those were going to be my main issues.

Q: The only thing I want to mention about the seismic security of housing is, of course, sure an earthquake is bad. But in Bangladesh, when there's an earthquake, there's also usually tidal waves and mudslides, and all sorts of other things that make people vulnerable, make their housing vulnerable, was the housing other than earthquake vulnerable to these sorts of things?

MARCELLIN: Where you get the monsoons and flooding in Bangladesh was not so much in Dhaka but in the hinterlands. But Dhaka is one of the most densely populated places on the planet. If there was a big earthquake, it would be terrible. Happily, none of that happened while we were there, but those were the issues. Because I was orientation director, I had the opportunity to meet with officers who were assigned to Bangladesh. We were beginning to get together and talk. Before we went out to a post, Greg and I always hosted a get-together so that incoming employees and families could bond even before arriving. We organized a barbecue at our residence for the Dhaka-bound group to initiate these relationships. This event took place before Ambassador Mozena's appointment was announced, so we could not invite him. However, once his appointment was confirmed, we also did a happy hour for those people who were enrolled in Bangla language training. I therefore knew many of the management team and many others before we arrived. It helped ease everyone's transition.

Q: And one other question about prep, did you get Bangla, yeah, Bangla language training?

MARCELLIN: No, not as a management officer. I wouldn't have used it because my team and our FSNs spoke English.

Q: Okay, this is session four with Colette Marcellin on July 19. And Colette, I think you've already mentioned briefly the arrival there, so why don't we begin with how large was your section? How did you divide the work?

MARCELLIN: I want to say, we had about fifteen American direct-hires, six family member positions, and several hundred foreign service nationals. It was a typical management section, encompassing General Services, Facilities, Finance, Human Resources, Information Management, the Community Liaison Office, and the Medical Office. What was really nice was the entire American Management team was turning over within the first four months of my arrival. We were also getting a new ambassador, who was extremely focused on management, as well as the policy side. He was one of those rare ambassadors that had two master's degrees—one in management and one in international affairs. He took both sides of the house very seriously.

Q: All right, let me ask here, because Bangladesh shows various challenges and so on. Were there unique aspects of your management section that weren't generally, apparent or typical for other sections?

MARCELLIN: Yes, for example, due to the limited availability and quality of services in Bangladesh, we handled our own vehicle maintenance. We maintained our own repair shop and performed tasks like reupholstery in-house, rather than outsourcing them. This involved a greater degree of hands-on work than is typical in many other postings. This was the most impoverished country that I had ever lived in. It was a two-year tour. However, to incentivize personnel to serve there, the State Department offered a service needs differential: an additional 15 percent of salary per year for those who extended their tour to a third year. And my team pretty much elected to do that. There were very few who kept to the two years; almost everyone elected to do the three years, except for those who were untenured, who were not given that choice. We also had two associations—one for the commissary and one for the club. Both of these were large, complicated organizations and so our Management team spent a lot of time and energy on association issues.

Q: You mentioned differences because of services. But what about the question of climate? Did that also affect how you did business?

MARCELLIN: Not so much. Traffic was so terrible that we offered shuttle services. I would say the majority of people wanted to be on the shuttle. They did not want to have to drive. Unlike Jakarta, though, everybody lived fairly close. You could choose to walk home, and you probably would get home faster than if you were taking the shuttle on many days.

Q: Also was the security situation—either personal security for crime or other aspects of security. Did that also affect either your life or your work?

MARCELLIN: There was something called hartals, which were strikes that could get

very violent, when there would be different political dynamics going on. Bangladesh had two principal political parties and so sometimes a hartal would be called and so we would be restricted to not leaving a certain diplomatic enclave area. But in general, the three years I was there, we didn't have too much trouble. As we approached the election, the frequency of hartals increased, and incidents such as bus burnings occurred. An embassy vehicle was damaged by bricks thrown during one of these hartals. And we did have a few of our own personnel at the Embassy who got into vehicle accidents. Some Americans were not psychologically prepared to live on their own in Dhaka. In general, our security was pretty good. That said, the year I left, the situation flipped in a pretty terrible way and so my successor was not as lucky. They faced a much more difficult, harsher, terrorist-laden environment. But when I was there, things were calm.

Q: This incident with the car puts me in mind of a general question, which is how was your communication within the embassy and without? Were you able to stay in touch with officers more or less within Dhaka?

MARCELLIN: Yes, communication within the embassy was generally efficient. Most personnel were equipped with BlackBerry devices and mobile phones, and radio checks were conducted regularly. A unique challenge in Bangladesh was the state of the infrastructure and safety standards. It was a developing country, and the infrastructure was not great. So our staff, we felt, were a little bit more in danger, just the way the houses were constructed. For instance, residential gas lines lacked odorants, making gas leaks undetectable. The ignition of a pilot light in a gas-filled residence could trigger a dangerous fire. We had a number of fires. Americans were not injured within our community but we did lose some FSNs to some terrible, horrible fires. My Human Resources Officer colleague and I continue to pay school fees for two children who lost their father, an embassy employee, in a fire. We also did have some TDYers [temporary duty travel employees], who were staying in a hotel and were hospitalized because of fires. We also had an incident where an employee tripped over her dog and fell through a plate glass window. Her husband, utilizing tourniquet application training, likely saved her life. We had some very close calls while we were there.

Q: Had you gone to a single management office for all of the different agencies represented in Dhaka?

MARCELLIN: We did share some functions with USAID. However, USAID maintained its own Human Resources and Finance departments. There was occasional tension, as USAID historically offered higher salaries for comparable positions, leading to a pattern where our local employees would gain experience with the embassy and then be recruited by USAID. In general, I got along really well with the USAID executive officer, and we did fine. It was a harmonious mission.

Q: Now, you mentioned that the new ambassador arrives and is certainly interested in management. How did he set the tone—or she—set the tone? Or what goals and objectives did they give you when they had arrived, and understood everything?

MARCELLIN: The ambassador was Dan Mozena. He was an exceptionally energetic, personable, and warm individual. His wife, Grace, was also wonderful. Ambassador Mozena came in with long lists for every section of things he wanted to do. And as I indicated before, when we had met with him, he had made it clear housing was his number one priority, but he had other priorities. My management team, however, was highly driven and action-oriented. We had inherited a management section that had lots of challenges and difficulties. We inherited a lot of problems that the Department asked me to address. For example, the relationship with the school was very strained, because even the embassy board members were not standing up for US Embassy interests. They didn't understand the importance of the embassy's equities in international schools. Consequently, the Board was being hostile to the embassy, and we were not getting our guaranteed students in certain classes. Because our own members were saying, "Oh, why should we be special, shouldn't we line up like everybody else".

Meanwhile, overseas schools had explained that the school in Dhaka was the second most integrated school with the Embassy in the world. The school was dependent on the embassy, we were doing the work permits for their teachers, we were doing their shipping, we were providing their vehicles, it was completely interdependent, and yet we couldn't get our students in because of misguided family member board members. The Office of Overseas Schools asked me to turn this situation around. Also the Office of Commissary and Recreations Affairs said Dhaka was the only post in the world that still had two boards—one for the commissary, one for the club. And managing two boards in a place with short tours made everything very difficult. The Office wanted our team to consolidate these associations into one association and make this more manageable. And so these were some of the things that we were inheriting. Additionally, the Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) informed us that the club was situated on a valuable piece of land. Given the embassy's housing needs, a more effective utilization plan was necessary, as the current arrangement was not an efficient use of U.S. taxpayer resources for our relatively small American community. There were all these other objectives that were being handed to us from Washington.

Q: Now a management officer, by the time you got there. No longer was the supervisor for the regional security officer—I believe they reported directly to the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission]. However, any security changes to the building and so on, you would need to be involved. Were there—since it was an old embassy, I guess it didn't have much setback. Were you involved in security upgrades?

MARCELLIN: Yes, to a certain extent, management and the Regional Security Office (RSO), work hand in glove. The increasing presence of USAID also led to a significant Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) project, funded by USAID. However, exterior expansion of the embassy was not feasible due to space constraints. This construction project was therefore a 'tight-sizing' initiative, aiming to maximize the number of people accommodated within the existing footprint through an open-plan layout. This meant during this period, we were losing half of our cafeteria because we needed the swing space for offices while the project was being done. OBO had a project director and site security manager. We worked closely with them.

Q: Was there any intention to create a new embassy to move the embassy to a more secure location?

MARCELLIN: That was a pipe dream for us for the distant future. With the density of Dhaka, there was no real estate available. The plan was the consular section definitely had to be tight sized as well—we were outgrowing everything. We were tight sizing and tight sizing. And so there was some thought of, "Okay, we had an annex across the street, could we better utilize and create some space there?" We were nowhere on OBO's priority list for a replacement embassy.

Q: Were you able to better utilize the space, because you had mentioned the property on the club and so on. Did that begin to change?

MARCELLIN: Our team came up with a housing plan with OBO. However, the implementation process was lengthy, and we rotated out before the plan could be realized. Years later, while working with the Office of Inspector General (OIG), I learned that elements of this plan to relocate the club were being revisited. We purchased a missing piece of property that would have been required to create the housing. But my team was rotating out before OBO could really pull it together.

Q: Yeah, in tight sizing—other than people getting smaller and smaller parcels to work in—were there other building challenges, maintaining air conditioning, or anything like that?

MARCELLIN: There were a number of challenges because a previous facility manager decided he was not going to wait for the Department's permission to renovate the Consular Section. Although the renovation allowed for more staff to occupy the space, it created major air conditioning problems. The Department was reluctant to help us, given this transgression from years before. In a hardship post with frequent staff turnover, problems often remained unresolved, as individuals serving short tours had less incentive to address them. We were actually lucky that so many of our team decided to make this a three-year tour. I was extremely lucky that so many members of our team were high energy and really wanted to make a difference. They were not just 'checking the box,' and they were very customer service-oriented. And we liked the ambassador, and he liked us. I was very proud of how much the team accomplished in the three years we were there.

Q: Now, you have mentioned the ambassador's ambitions. Were there other activities in the management section that he wanted you to address and that you had time to do? Were there others that we've missed?

MARCELLIN: We developed a top ten Management Goals list, which served as a visible focus, and we conducted highly effective team-building offsites to facilitate the implementation of these goals. My own special project was FSN empowerment. To bring out the most of an entire staff, you want the FSNs to give you their best. And you want

the Americans to create an environment to encourage the FSNS to do their best. Many of my American officers were relatively new to supervisory roles, overseeing entire sections. Consequently, a significant portion of my effort was dedicated to mentoring them in effective supervisory practices. Initially, during the first six months, we encountered some minor conflicts with more senior American officers who were resistant to reporting to the energetic and innovative younger officers. And so I had to coach everyone on 'how to play well in the sandbox,' but the team ultimately did come together. Dhaka was one of my most favorite tours, despite it being one of the harshest environments that we were in.

Q: You've mentioned a number of things you did, including with the ambassador, to build a good team and team spirit. Were there other things that you did in team building that helped make your own activities easier, and also made the embassy happy?

MARCELLIN: My own management style includes a lot of entertaining and I am comfortable spending my own cash to do so. I made sure every single member of my management team, every driver, every maintenance person, every housekeeper, at one point, was invited to a luncheon at my house. We would do this with every section and I would give them a tour of the house since this was often the first time they had ever been to an American officer's house. We had two big early wins that we accomplished as a team, both of which were high priorities for the ambassador, although he considered one to be unlikely. One was to restore the hardship pay differential for Americans which had been lowered to 15 percent prior to my arrival. Dhaka is a very tough post. People were up in arms because they had taken a pay cut. We succeeded with this quickly. The other challenge was that the FSNs had not received a pay increase in many years. And because they had had some very weak human resources officers in the past when some of these benefits surveys were done, the FSNs had been shortchanged. Their pay was significantly below market value, and previous American officers had not taken the necessary steps to correct this. Compounding the issue, there was a worldwide pay freeze, meaning that increases would only be granted if rigorous criteria were met and thoroughly documented. During my initial month, this issue dominated nearly every meeting. I was told that FSNs were choosing which of their children would get school tuition paid for since there wasn't money to pay school fees for them all. Lower paid FSNs would rarely be able to eat meat. Retirement accounts were being tapped to pay for a loved one's funeral. It was ironic because USAID had a poverty program but if these stories leaked to newspapers, we would be seen almost as abusive to our staff with such desperate circumstances. And so early on, I said to the ambassador, "we're going to do our best because I could not get through a meeting without these horrible things being said to me, to help us—we're desperate." And the ambassador said, "I'm afraid you're going to waste your time, and you might get people's hopes up only to be told no because it is impossible for Washington to grant this. And I said, "Maybe, but if we aren't showing that we're at least trying and giving it our best, they'll say, 'we're not even trying.'" And that's what the old management team was doing. And we have to try." To get a waiver for a pay increase, there was a strict formula of inflation and currency changes. If the data met these stringent criteria, it was possible to persuade the State Department's Bureau of Human Resources (M) to grant an exception to the pay freeze. We started putting the paperwork

together on both projects and I got volunteers to help me for both. Unfortunately, success came quickly with the hardship differential increase for Americans which made FSNs more bitter as Americans celebrated. But we continued to work the paperwork to justify the FSN increase. Ultimately, we were able to convince M Pat Kennedy to give our people a 26.5 percent pay increase, across the board. Every single employee got 26.5 percent. So this was a massive win for the employees. It happened, I think, within my first six months there. After that, they started calling me 'Mother.' And that set the tone for the rest of my tour, because they knew I was leading that effort. And we were successful. And then we were getting calls from other posts—"How'd you do it?" The success hinged on our meticulous monitoring of currency fluctuations and our prompt submission of the request at the precise moment the data met the required criteria. A delay of even a week would have rendered our application ineligible due to subsequent currency shifts. And to a certain extent, I felt higher powers were looking out for us to make this happen.

Q: That's how you finally managed to give the local employees a raise. What were the actions you took to get the hardship differential back?

MARCELLIN: The American hardship differential was much easier. Before he arrived at post, our Ambassador had gone to the Bureau of Allowances and told them that the old team had made a terrible mistake. I had also contacted the Bureau of Allowances and said, "Look, I think there has been a problem here. Can we resubmit?" And they said "Yes, you can resubmit." I had helped Honduras do this years before when I was a Post Management Officer. Allowances told me that "Yes, clearly there's a problem. Dhaka is much harder than Jakarta and Nairobi and other places who are earning higher differentials." They advised to resubmit immediately. We gathered information carefully, followed instructions clearly, and made sure everything was well documented. Our hardship differential was restored. My guess is the problem had been that someone had been placed in charge of the annual survey without paying careful attention which is why the differential was lowered in the first place.

Q: Sure. And in those surveys, you include cost of food, cost of fuel, I guess medical treatment.

MARCELLIN: Cost of food, etc is more of a Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) survey. The hardship differential survey, in contrast, focuses on factors such as limited access to goods and services, the lack of entertainment, adverse medical conditions (poor air quality), traffic, and the overall hardship of living in a place. In our appeal, we included a picture of a body that was in front of the Embassy that wasn't being picked up immediately, that our staff would see as they entered the premises. We had pictures of the terrible traffic and pollution and documented the lack of internet consistency, and the blackouts. We vividly described horrendous medical issues that one gets, the fact that people were losing hair quickly due to the chemicals in the water. This wasn't a cost of living survey, it was a hardship. We even pulled something from *The Economist* that ranked Dhaka as one of the most challenging cities globally. I actually don't understand why the Bureau of Allowances requires every post to conduct its own survey when

readily available reports from reputable independent sources, such as The Economist, have already conducted thorough research. Nevertheless, we included the Economist ranking as part of our evidence.

Q: Was air pollution and air quality also an issue?

MARCELLIN: Yes. Buses spewed out black smoke, and the dense population contributed to air pollution through widespread burning. The place just always smelled. Just getting off the plane and just walking anywhere, the smell was overwhelming. The lack of adequate sanitation and public toilets meant you couldn't walk down the street without passing multiple males who were urinating on the street—that was the kind of post it was. And that was what we needed to reflect in our hardship differential.

Q: When you were considering ways of increasing FSN wages, were you also considering subsidizing a few of the services, at the cafeteria or helping them with transit or so on?

MARCELLIN: We implemented a tiered system, in collaboration with the commissary and recreation association, to subsidize the cost of local Bangladeshi meals in the cafeteria. We also subsidized tea service that served tea and little snacks. Given that Bangladesh was a predominantly Muslim country, our bar at our club and our commissary were both extremely profitable. Other embassies, who had diplomatic privileges, could also buy liquor from us. So these two operations—the club and the commissary—were very, very important—not only to the morale of our mission, but to all these other embassies. We were making a lot of money so we could subsidize some of these cafeteria offerings and also contribute to embassy-wide morale parties. Following the success of the pay increase initiative, we proceeded to conduct a benefits survey to address FSN medical benefits, funeral expenses, and other benefits. Having had poor HR leadership in the past, these benefits were also very out of whack. So we followed up the 26.5 percent increase, six to eight months later with benefits increases in all categories. The prolonged absence of effective Human Resources management at post had resulted in widespread neglect of these areas. We were fortunate to have a very committed HRO, Tammi Comisky, who was partnering with me every step of the way.

Q: Good. You mentioned other embassies, and that was a question that I wanted to ask you—in the average daily activities, did you also consult with other embassies on how to make lives better?

MARCELLIN: We had a monthly lunch of all the management officer counterparts, and we would be exchanging information. They had the same tough situations that we did. So our clubs—the number of those embassies also had clubs, they had reciprocity, and we were always doing everything we could to improve things and make them joint activities. These included events such as rickshaw races, relay races among different embassy teams, and rickshaw Christmas caroling. And so there was a lot of cross pollination of ideas and events.

Q: One other area where you typically have to have some consultations is with the host

government. Where did you interact with them? And were you satisfied with how you were able to get them to support you?

MARCELLIN: Yes, we had a few interactions. I think the most sensitive one was on LGBT issues because this was a homophobic society, they did not technically recognize our same-sex domestic arrangements. We had same-sex couples so we had to handle some of these things very carefully. We also engaged in some consultations regarding the international school, but for the most part, our interactions with the host government were primarily related to school matters or the accreditation of our officers. I don't really remember anything else that was particularly touchy.

Q: Sure. Now, as the management officer for Dhaka, did you also need to go out to any other distant, subsidiary locations to keep them up and going?

MARCELLIN: My job didn't really travel. One time, three of us traveled to India to understand their consolidated commissary operations so that we could do the same thing when we got back. And that was the only trip that we took. New Delhi's commissary and recreation association helped us as we consolidated the two boards and made it one organization. But I mean, the surprising thing was that Dhaka was the fourth most profitable association in the world due to our alcohol sales. Kabul, Baghdad and New Delhi were ahead of us but then it was us. Our club facilities were not exclusively for embassy staff; they were also utilized by personnel from other embassies and American teachers. Other American citizens could join the club if sponsored. We had a very large number of American Bangladeshis who joined the club. Culturally, they were more Bangladeshi than American but they were also part of our club. And they really liked being part of that club. The club had a restaurant, bar, tennis courts, fitness center, squash courts and pool. It was a nice club.

Q: You mentioned going to India, but were there any other regional meetings with managers, that—management officers—that were effective or useful?

MARCELLIN: The Bureau held an annual management conference that I would attend. One year it was in Ankara, the next in Washington, DC, and one year it was cancelled. I also partnered a bit with Nepal on greening ideas and seismic housing, where we were trying to learn from them. So there was a little bit of back and forth. Additionally, other embassies in the region were reaching out to me, asking, 'How did you get a pay increase for your FSNs? Or 'how did you do this?' So, there was a significant exchange of ideas, although we did not have any formal regional responsibilities. We were independent entities but shared best practices.

Q: You've already covered team building, but related to that is training. Did you send people on training? And was it effective?

MARCELLIN: Yes, we would maximize our training budget, and we would send people—FSNs—on training and we would bring in trainers from other places to be able to do some of our own training in-house. Bringing in trainers meant many more people

were trained. But yes, it was very important to have the training.

Q: Did your overall and once again, making your job a little easier—did your IT ability to create templates and make things easier, did that improve during the time you were there?

MARCELLIN: I'd say yes. One of our Bangladeshi IT staff members had been so innovative that he won a worldwide award for templates. Furthermore, we had several individuals who were considered experts in their field and the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA) would borrow them to train in other places. Our top Financial FSN had also received the Best Financial FSN of the Year award. We had these absolute outstanding FSNs and our team continued to develop best practices. The primary job of our American officers was to create the environment to allow these people to continue to flourish.

Q: Did you have VIP visits that were also a challenge?

MARCELLIN: VIP visits—we had Hillary Clinton come through. We had not had a Secretary of State visit in a very long time. The biggest challenge was the bandwidth offered by the hotel. The Advance team expressed considerable frustration with the inadequacy of the IT infrastructure at Dhaka's most prestigious hotel. There was a little bit of unhappiness with us on situations we couldn't control. But the visit went well. That was really the only true VIP that we had. And that was a lift, because we were a very busy embassy. But it was a very successful visit.

Q: Good. You mentioned Nepal being on a fault line. But were there any other physical, natural disasters? Or problems that you had to deal with while you were there?

MARCELLIN: No, I talked about just the infrastructure challenges. But we faced huge emotional hits. I've never been to a post where we had more funerals. We had lost this FSN family—the employee and his mother-in-law died but the children and wife survived, with burns and scars. They were hospitalized for a long time. We also had one of our American Embassy family teenagers take his own life. That was a big emotional blow for the mission. He was probably the most gifted, smartest, kindest kid in the entire school and his parents were extremely devoted to him. So this was a huge blow for the mission. They ultimately decided to return to post, which surprised us. But they had another child who didn't want to be a new kid again at a new school. This situation also presented challenges, as some embassy staff members were ill-equipped to comprehend the parents' grief and the profound personality changes that happens during grief. I had to coach people on how to be patient with them and how to support them. We had a couple of other tragedies—someone who worked in the food service dropped dead of a heart attack in the cafeteria, in a moment where no Americans were around who knew CPR. And that hit the community. Then we had a couple of Americans that didn't realize how seriously ill they were, and went to the med unit. Our doctor was very, very sharp—picked up on the illnesses and arranged medevacs. They never came back. And we had to pack them out. So we had many funerals. As a community, we bonded very

closely. Because you do that in grief and sadness, and trying to support other people.

Q: Were there other less serious medical problems that were sort of endemic that you had to deal with?

MARCELLIN: There was dengue—I got it as well as my oldest daughter. We had a lot of dengue. We frequently arranged medical evacuations, not for dengue itself, but for pregnancies and any other medical condition that was deemed potentially risky. A lot of our visitors got sick because of the water, the contamination, and poor sanitation. So there was a usual challenge of GI. People would get “the Dhaka cough” upon arrival as the air quality was so terrible that it took lungs a while to acclimate. But at any given time, we knew we would have TDYers who would end up ill.

Q: Given all these challenges. How did you manage your work life balance? How did you encourage others to manage their work life balance?

MARCELLIN: I think that the first six months, I didn't manage it very well. And I had to go in on weekends all the time, which often comes with a new job. But I think it was the kind of post where you worked hard and you played hard. And some people hated Dhaka. They wanted to leave as soon as they could. But the club had these tennis courts. I like tennis—my husband and I played tennis every weekend. Usually those days in the morning, there was a group that would come together. We had a tandem bike, so we could move much faster in Dhaka traffic on a tandem to get around. Our daughter Katie, who was in high school in Dhaka, was also very happy. It was a very accepting, welcoming school, so she was very happy and busy and she liked the adventure. And our oldest daughter, Rachel, who was in college, graduated, and she came back and took a job in the consular section during our last year. She worked as a fraud investigator, and she was traveling all over Bangladesh, and she had a wonderful time. So it was a great family posting for us. We became very close to people in the community, and we adapted in ways that we could still find happiness, despite the limited choices.

Q: What would you say were the most important professional skills and development that you got from this particular tour?

MARCELLIN: For me, it was to have a larger team and encourage Americans to empower FSNs. I also learned a lot more about managing sideways because some of the other section heads had some challenges with their own team. And some of their own team would come to me and complain and really didn't like working there. I felt we had a few clear personality disorders among some of the Americans so I paid attention to the psychology. I believe personality disorders can thrive in the Foreign Service because of the constant rotations—unlike in organizations where length of employment can reveal the problems. I had to navigate interactions with a peer who was particularly difficult towards their staff but cultivated excellent relationships with superiors. I recognized what appeared to be narcissistic tendencies in this person's behavior. Sometimes, some of these section heads were doing things that they really shouldn't be doing. And I would have to be careful about how I would approach them, because some of them did not want to be

told that what they were doing was wrong. I'd have to pick my words carefully because of the nature of the personalities. I also got the Regional Psychiatrist involved in intractable problems.

Q: Interesting. But that kind of advice giving, that kind of sort of gentle schooling is also done by the DCM. How did you work that out with the DCM?

MARCELLIN: The first DCM was conflict averse—this was not his strength. Consequently, I addressed these personnel issues independently, rather than coordinating with him. It's possible that he was providing his own guidance, but I was not privy to his individual sessions with my peers. For example, a peer section chief was trying to make an untenured person be a temporary supervisor of a tenured officer. This isn't permissible under regulations. This person was also neglecting key responsibilities related to management in the section. I had to diplomatically caution this person, emphasizing that I was trying to prevent this person from encountering difficulties and outlining the potential personal consequences of pursuing these inappropriate actions. The best way to approach this kind of person is finding a way that the person thinks a course of action is in their best interests, because they're not going to accept a mere peer management officer telling them how to run their section. I also had my own supervised employee who was extremely passive aggressive, and that required a different approach. The DCM was hands off during these times

Q: Okay. You just described some of the smaller human resources discussions you had to have. Were there any that were bigger, all the way to curtailing someone?

MARCELLIN: I had numerous personality conflicts in my large section but one real serious problem. An American employee was in conflict with his supervisor, very set in his ways and refusing to take orders, disregarding directions the Department was setting, and was mistreating a particular local employee. But he was going to rotate out in the summer and had helped post during a difficult prior summer. He also had children in school and a working spouse so I didn't want to have the ambassador remove him from post and create trauma for the family. The DCM that year was conflict-averse and staying out of the fray. My approach, which deviated from standard Foreign Service practice, was to remove the employee from his line responsibilities and assign him to special projects reporting directly to me. And I took out liability insurance because I was expecting a lawsuit. I didn't get the lawsuit. Most State Department Management Officers usually just let a poor performer finish the tour, regardless of if FSNs suffered. They tolerate the chaos. The FSNs came and thanked me for getting them out of this hell. Years later, the wife of one of the FSNs who was being picked on told me that she felt I saved her husband—that he was on the verge of a breakdown. I did what I thought I had to do for the mission and am proud that I did the right thing.

Q: This is that kind of behavior. If it gets on to an evaluation, they're going to be recommended. They're gonna be low ranked and recommended for—

MARCELLIN: Yes, and this was a tricky thing, because the DCM did not want to see

that happen. I was not the employee's supervisor; I was designated as the reviewing officer. The rater was extremely conflicted about what to include in the employee's Employee Evaluation Report (EER), specifically whether to provide a negative assessment. The DCM did not want a strongly negative evaluation. And so the employee, whose brother-in-law worked for a HR search firm, drafted an EER for the rater, that was so strange and bizarre, that the rater said "Fine, I will sign this." Because the rater knew it was just a terrible, terrible EER. It did make the rater sound a little bit crazy because it was dropping HR corporate lingo but this is what the guy wanted. And so the problem was averted. And the DCM was happy that it was not this absolutely damning EER.

Q: Okay. So many things that you've described that till now sound like your previous experience as a hospital manager came in handy. Are there particular examples of that?

MARCELLIN: I was fortunate to have had a lot of management experience before I joined the Foreign Service. I was also fortunate that I worked as a kid in high school and in college, as I had been a subordinate for good and bad bosses. This background provided me with a clear understanding of what I valued in management—namely, open communication, readily available information, and employee empowerment. I liked management and it played to my strong suit.

Q: Okay. Those are all the questions that I had planned, but have I missed anything?

MARCELLIN: I don't think so. We all worked hard, we played hard, we became very, very close. We continue to have Dhaka reunions years later. And I'm still very much in touch with a lot of the people on the team—more than any other team I've worked with.

Q: That's lovely. Okay, so also you're progressing up through the Foreign Service. Had you been promoted at this point?

MARCELLIN: Yes, my Counselor (OC) promotion occurred after my first year in Dhaka, and the DCM asked, "does this mean you're going to try to curtail?" And I said, "No, I'm sticking around." Subsequently, I was asked to serve as the Deputy Executive Director in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA) upon my departure from Dhaka. This position seemed well-suited to my interests, as it involved Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the rest of South Asia. While still in Dhaka, Washington sent me on my first orientation trip to Afghanistan and Pakistan to understand what I was getting into. Little did I know that a year later, I would be asked to actually go to Afghanistan as the Management Counselor. I went back to Washington with a plan of doing a two-year job as the SCA Deputy Executive Director. However, this became a one-year assignment due to a reorganization in Kabul, where the intended management counselor (a former ambassador) was asked to serve as an Assistant Chief of Mission. And so that's when I was tapped to head to Afghanistan as the Management Counselor. So it was good to really know the area and to have had some of the familiarization already with Afghanistan.

Q: The one thing I forgot to ask—your husband, did he get to—Oh, he was with the

USAID. Okay. Yes.

MARCELLIN: Yes, Greg was the Deputy Director for USAID Health in Dhaka.

Q: And then as you're going back to the U.S., does his tour end as well or?

MARCELLIN: Yes. The USAID Dhaka tour is usually two plus two, four years in total. State Department was two—so we agreed that we would do three years, which got our youngest daughter graduating from high school. We then both went back to Washington. He had landed a training assignment at the War College, and I was going to be the SCA Deputy Executive Director.

Q: Okay, so just for one second, the alphabet soup. OC means you entered the Senior Foreign Service—

MARCELLIN: Yes

Q: —and SCA was the South Asia bureau. Yeah, South Central Asia. South Central Asia. At that time, when you got there, what countries composed the South Central Asia bureau?

MARCELLIN: SCA included all on the South Asian side. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

Q: But not Burma. That—

MARCELLIN: No, Burma/Myanmar was the EAP. That was the EAP—East Asia Pacific.

Q: So, alright. You're going back to a bureau—to the South Asia Bureau—South Central Asia Bureau. You're only there for a year, but what were you told to do? What were your responsibilities?

MARCELLIN: The plan was for me to remain in that position for two years. The biggest priority the Department had at that time was Afghanistan. While not a complete withdrawal, they were significantly reducing their presence, transferring equipment, and closing bases. Meanwhile, the State Department was ramping up a huge billion-dollar construction program of housing and new buildings. So Afghanistan was a tiger-by-the-tail job. There were frequent interagency meetings, sometimes held weekly or biweekly, depending on the topic. One weekly meeting addressed the extensive building program, while another focused on military planning. I participated in quarterly trips to Afghanistan alongside military personnel and the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Logistics Management. We would often head there as a team. The other part of my job was managing the management leadership meetings for SCA. The Department had a single Executive Director overseeing both the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) and the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs. Each bureau then had a deputy executive

director. Our Executive Director focused on NEA meetings and NEA issues which had more crises going on. So I was really the one focusing on the front office matters for the SCA side. I was more likely to see the Assistant Secretary and the Deputy Assistant Secretary and the Special Representative of Afghanistan and Pakistan. I also managed the executive support infrastructure for our combined bureau, overseeing General Services, Facilities, and IT for all domestic offices within NEA and SCA. In addition to my PMOs who helped in the field for all SCA posts, I also managed the functional support administration and the Afghanistan-Pakistan construction projects..

Q: All of this within the single year 2014?

MARCELLIN: Yes-- August 2014 to July 2015. I think by March, we understood that the person who was supposed to be the Management Counselor in Kabul needed to be moved up to help the front office in Afghanistan. As a result, I was asked to assume the Management Counselor position in Kabul during the summer turnover. Even before this had happened, my husband was being considered for an assignment in Afghanistan, although he had already worked in Iraq. USAID requires officers to always have to put these war posts on their bid list. One of Greg's bosses in Jakarta saw his name on Afghanistan and said, "That's who I want." So he was being assigned to Afghanistan. And when Pat Kennedy understood that my husband was being assigned to Kabul and that I had been working on all these Afghanistan issues and came out of Bangladesh, he chose to send me to Afghanistan as well.

Q: Okay. And so Afghanistan was not an unaccompanied, but, or—

MARCELLIN: We went as tandems because our youngest daughter, Katie, had gone off to college in Oregon. Our older daughter, Rachel, had gotten a job in Washington. I ended up getting to Afghanistan three months before my husband, and then he got there. We had a small one-bedroom apartment because we were tandem officers. It was an excellent tour. And because I had learned so much that prior year, I was able to move a little faster than if someone was just landing in Afghanistan the first day. I understood all of the complicated construction issues and knew all the cast of characters, including military. It was a very smooth transition for me.

Q: Now. Okay. What were your responsibilities? What did they expect you to accomplish when you got to Afghanistan?

MARCELLIN: I ran the entire Management platform and had a few thousand employees/contractors. Washington was driving all the big long-term decisions and directions, and our team was responsible for implementing the building program, keeping positions filled, and providing on-the-ground feedback and recommendations. One of the recommendations we came out with was to lengthen the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) to two years. We knew the one-year SIV program wasn't working. Afghanistan was already downsizing. The department was already downsizing the American footprint. Upon my arrival in Afghanistan, I received my Minister Counselor (MC) promotion, becoming the fourth-highest-ranking individual in the mission. The ambassador, DCM and Assistant

Chief of Mission were also MCs. However, when any of these individuals were temporarily absent, the remaining MCs would assume acting roles. I frequently served as the Acting Assistant Chief of Mission, which entailed receiving security briefings regarding high-risk movements. It would be my call if the movement would happen on a given day. We would have the intel of what and where the bad guys were. Do we allow our employees to have their requested movements? This responsibility was also part of my orientation, stemming from my rapid promotion to MC.

Q: Fascinating. This thing would be the first time you had to deal, in a very serious way, weighing security issues, if I'm right.

MARCELLIN: Truly serious security issues. Yes.

Q: How were you advised? Or what was the group that you worked with for this?

MARCELLIN: Well, it was pretty much all the players who knew anything that was going on in terms of the security movements. Some were military, and so there would be daily briefings. We had a number of agencies there who were watching and seeing and helping us gather information on what was appropriately secure for a movement, and what was not. On the management side, the two primary security-related challenges I addressed were airport security protocols and embassy air service operations. When I first was going to Afghanistan, it was safe enough that we would be picked up at the airport in the shuttle and could move around the city in vehicles. But while I was in Washington, the security was deteriorating to the point where the Department did not want anybody driving around in vehicles unless you were heavily escorted. Embassy personnel would now fly into the commercial airport, transfer to a military base via shuttle, and then utilize a helicopter for transportation to the embassy. This shift in transportation was a significant aspect of my management responsibilities in Kabul, which included oversight of the embassy's air service, encompassing both helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft. At this juncture, there were only two places in the world where the Management Counselor oversaw embassy air assets—Iraq and Afghanistan. Management also had social workers, in addition to a doctor, physician assistants, multiple nurses, and lab technicians. The presence of social workers was deemed necessary due to the high stress levels associated with the post. Consequently, the Management Counselor role in Kabul was considerably more complex than in many other locations. I also served as the de facto 'disciplinarian,' so that if anybody got into real trouble, they had to speak to me. For example, if they were really outrageously drunk, I would be the one that would pull them in and talk to them. I was the "heavy" who took care of any bad behavior going on. I was okay doing this because I believe it's really important. I believe also that particularly dealing with alcoholism and various things, you might be doing somebody a favor and certainly their family a favor. Maybe they would get their life together if you actually would address that. So I was very comfortable in that role in general, but it was strange to be in this role in Kabul, when you are constantly having breakfast, lunch, and dinner with some of these people. Someone else would ask, "Have you met so and so?" when we would encounter each other. And I would say, "Hello X, nice to see you again." And the third party had no idea that we'd had some of these tough conversations. It was interesting. I found the

whole thing to be a fascinating year.

Q: Given that your husband was there, in your chats with him, were you both able to provide useful information? You from the management side, him from the aspects of USAID that he was working in?

MARCELLIN: A little bit. Because I had been around USAID so much with so many tours, I was considered a USAID Executive Officer's dream as I understood them. The relationship between State Department Management Counselors and USAID Executive Officers is often characterized by antagonism, but I did not share this sentiment. I didn't resent them because their FSNs had higher salaries. I actually understood the rationale behind those higher salaries, which was tied to differences in supervisory structures. It was consistently a productive partnership. However, I believe that having both of us at the same post has always been an advantage.

Q: Given how high up now you were in the ranks, were you in some way, supervising FSNs or was that handled by people a little further down?

MARCELLIN: At this point, I was only supervising Americans and knew very few FSNs. I knew a few of the Community Liaison Office FSNs and the housekeeping staff who came through our office, but there were just too many layers between me and most FSNs at the Embassy. For example, within American officers, we had a supervisory human resources officer, then a deputy, and two additional HROs. In General Services, we had a Supervisory GSO, and three GSOs. The organizational structure had too many levels for me to have direct oversight of FSN employees.

Q: Sure. Another thing I imagine you encountered there was both the State Department OIG, and then the special OIG, the SIGAR [Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction]. How did that work for you?

MARCELLIN: Yes, we had three separate agency OIGs-- USAID OIG, State OIG, and SIGAR. The State OIG was a bit of a nightmare at one point. A very well-meaning but totally misguided OIG lead became convinced that we were about to open new embassy apartments that would be less safe than the collapsible trailers (tin cans) that people were living in. He decided there had been some technical reviews that hadn't been done right. And he was convinced that we were going to endanger our employees. So this OIG lead made a stink in Washington to delay the opening of these much safer apartment units. The Office of Building Operations in Washington, responsible for this expensive construction project, was highly critical of the OIG's actions, and we at the Embassy in Kabul also weighed in. When a high-ranking representative from the State OIG came to discuss the matter with me, I said, "Quite frankly, this is an OIG misguided problem. This person is endangering lives and if I'm called to testify because lives are lost, I will say that this person causing this delay is endangering lives." And so eventually, we got through the delay and opened up the apartments. On the other hand, I liked what I saw in SIGAR leadership. Two junior, young SIGAR employees did some really, really stupid things. They broke into an area they should not have been in and when caught, hid their

badges and ran away. Our staff tracked down and identified who they were. The SIGAR Director immediately rebuked these employees and made them talk to me and apologize. We had been ready to kick them out of post. So I was happy with the responsibility and the accountability shown by the SIGAR Director.

Q: It's an enormously challenging place. What did you find to be the biggest challenge?

MARCELLIN: The biggest challenge involved two major projects. The Embassy was missing a key piece of real estate that the government of Afghanistan owned and that OBO wanted. And so we had to close this property deal really quickly to better secure the compound because we were doing our own downsizing and pulling things together. And so I put a lot of effort into this property issue. Additionally, our team invested significant time in developing a safer alternative to using the commercial airport terminal, which our security personnel deemed unsafe. We had this superstar Assistant GSO, who successfully implemented a solution that many had deemed impossible. The initial consensus was that such a project was unfeasible and would take at least five years to complete. This particular GSO, however, achieved this goal before his departure from post, and I was extremely impressed by his accomplishment.

Q: In order to do all this construction, were you using principally American contractors who brought all the stuff in? So generally not Afghans, or?

MARCELLIN: They weren't Afghans. It was an American construction team that hired Turkish employees. Unfortunately, a fire broke out in one of our buildings because the Turkish employees were smoking and accidentally started a large fire. Others outside the Embassy thought we had been bombed because they could see this building under construction was going up in flames and it was quite a sight. That was about a month before I left. And it was a Turkish worker, being a little too casual and tossing a cigarette in a can of oil instead of an empty can that caused the problem.

Q: Sure. I think that's everything I can ask you. Well, the last thing is you're working there, the year 2016. Were you beginning to hear anything about a complete removal or complete departure of American presence there?

MARCELLIN: We knew these days were limited. Everybody knew that the American public would sour on supporting Afghanistan. And so even as we were undertaking this massive building program, with all of this housing, we knew we would be leaving. I remember the ambassador saying 'the Taliban will enjoy these nice apartment buildings in ten years.' Well, it wasn't ten years, it was five years. But we all knew it was inevitable. And I'd say all of us were very much in pain years later, watching how everything unfolded. Because once you've been there, you know the places and the people. To see Bagram Airfield fall, and then other key locations, was very difficult. There was also a sense of cynicism, given certain past experiences. One time, the embassy air service had an extra spot on a plane for an International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) flight. The pilot was showing Washington visitors the poppy fields to understand the drug situation in Afghanistan. They had a spare spot on the plane for me. So I saw

and heard how our U.S Army Engineer Corps laid out these wonderful fields and irrigation systems for pomegranates, but the pomegranate program didn't work because transport systems for pomegranates didn't work, and now the farmers had turned all these wonderfully laid out fields into poppy production. This meant we had made the Taliban far more efficient, in their ability to grow poppies. We saw it, and it was painful, and it still is painful for me to hear about Afghanistan--what's happening with women. One of the really hard things that occurred while I was there was the mandatory lie detector tests that our FSNs were subjected to. Some of these questions were, 'Do you know anybody who's with the Taliban?' Well, among Afghan families, many employees might have a second cousin who may be married into a family with a Taliban member. Consequently, numerous employees failed these tests, leading to their sudden unemployment and the revocation of their Special Immigrant Visa. This was the worst of all worlds because when the Taliban would take over, they would be identified as having worked for the enemy. And so this was tough. Our HR staff had a hard time with the RSO's security requirements, knowing that some of these questions didn't mean an employee was collaborating with Taliban. If an employee went to a wedding and happened to see a Taliban member, it might mean a failed lie detector test. So that part was very hard.

Q: Yeah. Once again, I think you've answered all the questions that I have. Have I missed anything that still stands out in your mind as really important or salient from Afghanistan?

MARCELLIN: I have powerful memories of when we would hear "incoming" which meant an aerial attack. We had to put on flak jackets and helmets and the management team had to do accountability to make sure everyone was safe. At times this occurred at night. The sirens would go off and everyone needed to find an inner corridor. My husband and I would be in there together thinking, 'Well, we thought this was a great idea being here, and if we survive, we'll have great stories to tell our grandchildren someday.' What we were really thinking is maybe this wasn't the best idea for both of us to be in a place where we could be killed. In retrospect, there were never any close calls. I was never in danger that I was aware of. My husband had to do more movements than I had to, which was probably the most dangerous part of our jobs. He got to know the Afghan Minister of Health well and accompanied him to the United States. We were back on Rest and Recuperation (R&R) leave in the States so we had this Minister of Health for dinner in McLean, Virginia. Our oldest daughter, Rachel, was there for a small dinner party. This kind of thing hadn't happened to me before. Having a minister of a country coming over for a family dinner, in Virginia, so we had some very special memories. Years later, when Afghanistan fell, we worried about the people we knew. Now, we did hear this particular Minister got out and some of the people we knew got out, but we don't know about everyone we worked with there.

Q: As an MC, of course, you have a relatively limited amount of time left in the Foreign Service depending on whether you can get very high level, perhaps even ambassadorial appointments. What are you and your husband thinking now about your careers?

MARCELLIN: Well, Greg wanted to retire as soon as possible so that he could move to a

ski town and enjoy life. I was not sure what my career goals were but I wasn't ready to give up the overseas life. I was bidding both DCM jobs and Management Counselor jobs. But there were only two DCM jobs that had USAID health jobs for Greg—Kampala, Uganda, or Monrovia, Liberia. I had met with the Bureau of African Affairs (AF) before I left for Afghanistan to alert them to my interest. I had been tipped off by someone that I was being considered for Liberia but not Kampala since the AF Front Office had a preferred AF-experienced favorite for Kampala. I was advised to really focus in on Monrovia, Liberia. I was therefore putting all my lobbying efforts to reach out to Monrovia. Since I wasn't even likely to be on the shortlist for Kampala, I wasn't spending any time lobbying. Meanwhile, offers as Management Counselor were coming in for both Jakarta and Tel Aviv. And both of these would have been great management jobs. But I was afraid that after being in Kabul—one of the two biggest US Missions worldwide—with Embassy air service, huge departments, social workers, and all sorts of other unique services that I would feel a letdown to return to a normal post like Jakarta or Tel Aviv. I preferred to try to be a DCM. I reached out to my Career Development Officer and said "When are they going to be doing the shortlist for Liberia, because I've got these other job offers in hand, but I have to let them go. They're not going to hold out for me. And I may end up with nothing." And she said, "Well, Liberia is a smaller post. We don't get to those interviews for a long time, but you're on the shortlist for Kampala." And suddenly, I'm trying to reach out and learn what I can on Kampala. I then received a call from AF's Front Office, informing me that they want to interview me with the incoming ambassador for the DCM Kampala position. What I didn't realize is that the incoming ambassador to Kampala had been the outgoing ambassador in Liberia. She had already seen my resume for Liberia and liked what she saw. She believed that my skill set would complement hers, and she preferred me over the AF Front Office's preferred candidate. As a result, after completing the interview in Afghanistan for DCM Kampala, I received an offer for the position the following day. One never knows how life will turn out.

Q: Okay, today is July 27, 2022. We are in session five with Colette Marcellin. And Colette, you were just beginning to talk about your next assignment in Kampala, Uganda, that begins in 2016.

MARCELLIN: We decided it would be great to try out being a DCM and bring the family back to Africa, where Greg and I had met. We also knew that he would be able to get a job. What we didn't realize was that it was going to take a very long time for the nepotism waiver to come through. So that was a bit of a surprise. Once I got there, I was pretty much alone for the first six to eight months before the nepotism waiver came through. Greg was able to join me for Christmas, as were our two daughters. But the loneliness was a big surprise for me. Although I felt greatly honored to be the Deputy Chief of Mission and to have this interesting mission and beautiful home, I realized that for me the true joy of being in the Foreign Service stemmed from sharing the adventure with my family. Being alone for six months made me realize that I never wanted to put myself into this situation again. It was a very clear signal in my own head that this would

be the last overseas tour. It was time for me to say 'Fantastic overseas career, but this is it.'

Q: Yeah. Let me ask one quick question. The nepotism waiver is for people who are in management, potentially having to manage their own spouse. How did you get around it?

The plan was for USAID to place Greg in a regional position that would report to Washington. This arrangement was intended to circumvent any direct reporting relationship between us. However, this arrangement still required review and approval by various legal entities to ensure its acceptability. The protracted review process—lasting approximately six to eight months for a process that I believe should have taken no more than five minutes—was frustrating. Especially considering that they had nine months before we even got there to work on it. Perhaps it was a legal backlog for waivers, or who knows what was involved, because I certainly wasn't privy to seeing what was happening. But it took a very long time. We knew we'd have a three month separation, because I had come to Afghanistan three months before he did. But we were surprised it really turned out to be closer to an additional four or five months beyond that.

Q: The only other question I have about this is potentially as DCM you could be sitting on some committee that might have some oversight of funds or benefits that would be strictly for your husband or something related to his work. But was that at all true or not?

MARCELLIN: No. Because he was on a different budget since he reported to Washington. He was handled differently so there was never any conflict of this kind.

Q: Now, how did you and the ambassador divide your responsibilities?

MARCELLIN: The ambassador was a seasoned Africa expert, and she was a political cone officer. She was very comfortable with political-military issues. She had been in the Department for over forty years. She was very comfortable with almost everything but she wasn't particularly patient with staff and gave very direct feedback. Why did she select me? She was attracted to my management background because she felt the management section was the weakest office within the embassy. She also was attracted to my healthcare background beforehand, my ESTH tour in Jakarta, and the econ experience. She wanted me to focus on the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) HIV funding program, which constituted the largest portion of our assistance portfolio. Despite receiving enormous funding from Washington, Uganda was seen as one of the poorest-performing PEPFAR posts. PEPFAR programs are highly metric-driven, and we were not achieving the desired impact in Uganda. So the Ambassador wanted me to focus in on PEPAR, management, and morale. Also, she knew her own skill set, and saw me as a complement. She was very hard working, very smart. Entertaining the community and fostering a positive internal atmosphere were areas where she preferred me to take the lead.

Q: I see. The only other question about dividing responsibilities is often the DCM will review all the cables, all the memos that go to the ambassador, which in a big post like Kampala, is a challenge. How did you divide the paper flow?

MARCELLIN: I reviewed cables and other correspondence extensively. Her expectation was—and we were both old school, traditional officers—that I would take a look at everything going through, which I did. And that part wasn't a problem. She knew again, though, that because this was my first tour in the bureau, she wasn't expecting me to be picking up on some of the additional political flavoring. I was very fortunate that I had an extremely strong political section, and an extremely strong public diplomacy section. The paper that came through the office was pretty much perfect.

Q: Okay, very good. All right, then turning to—should we begin with PEPFAR, because that is certainly a fascinating and important aspect of our relations with many countries in Africa, I guess, particularly Kenya.

MARCELLIN: Sure, we can talk about it. It was our biggest program. Uganda, at one point, had a huge HIV/AIDS problem—we heard stories that years before, roadsides were lined with coffins daily. Everybody had remembered those days—remembered losing family members. With US assistance, deaths had dropped, but Uganda still had a very large HIV positive population. Because of the drugs provided by PEPFAR, their health was now being maintained—fewer deaths—but still lots of infections. PEPFAR programs focused on providing antiretroviral drugs, implementing communication campaigns, and promoting behavior change. Uganda also had a very strong health surveillance system up. The Zika virus, in fact, was initially discovered in Uganda. They discovered a number of viruses, and they had a very robust program. We had a large Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) presence in Uganda, which contributed to this vigilance. In addition to PEPFAR and HIV, we were always on the lookout for Ebola and other diseases. And there were a few times that we had an Ebola outbreak coming from the DRC. Now, some of the investments that we were putting into the PEPFAR program also benefited these broader health initiatives, such as enhancing disease surveillance capacity.

Q: You had mentioned education. Were there other aspects of prevention that you were involved in?

MARCELLIN: I'm having difficulty remembering exactly what the program was and how PEPFAR works. Different entities within the embassy managed different parts of it. We had USAID health personnel, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) staff, and even Peace Corps volunteers involved, with PEPFAR funding supporting some of Peace Corps' community outreach efforts. This division of limited resources often led to interagency competition, creating tension, particularly between USAID and CDC.

Q: Did the embassy and all the parts that were responsible for PEPFAR believe they had a good handle on the extent of AIDS and the extent of what needed to be done?

MARCELLIN: Yes, I believe we had a vision and we worked hard on getting that vision realized. The ambassador wanted us to convene an offsite, specifically on PEPFAR so that everybody was immersed in it. Because we were in the Washington PEPFAR offices' target list for poor performance, they were looking at us closely. Ambassador Deborah Birx, who later gained prominence during the COVID pandemic, was in charge of PEPFAR. She is a brilliant woman who knew all the details. She conducted regular quarterly phone calls, rigorously assessing our performance against targets and expressing her dissatisfaction when we fell short. Consequently, meeting these targets became a paramount priority for our mission, and we collaborated intensively across agencies in communication, follow-up, and close partnership with our outreach partners.

Q: Was malaria a problem? And the reason I ask is because they've been developing a malaria vaccine that in theory, at least should protect a significant amount of people at a reasonably high level. Was that beginning to filter into Kenya?

MARCELLIN: Yes, we had malaria in Uganda. Malaria was a huge problem for us. While malaria vaccines were not yet a central focus, we were heavily involved in malaria prevention efforts, primarily through the distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets and public education campaigns. We had a fairly robust malaria program and we had the U.S. malaria czar, who was in charge of some of these issues coming through. But even with the work we did in malaria, it was much smaller compared to the PEPFAR budget.

Q: Okay. And then, finally, often when there are health problems, there's maternal child issues ensuring nutrition, ensuring vaccination, and so on. Was that also part of your health plan?

MARCELLIN: Yes, maternal and child health was a big focus. This emphasis was closely intertwined with outreach initiatives, as educating women and promoting informed choices could contribute to the prevention of various health problems. One of the biggest problems that we had in Uganda was that the HIV infection rate was most pronounced among the teenage girls, many of whom were being abused by school teachers, uncles, and relatives. Older men were infecting young teenage girls often through rape. And if these young teenage girls gave birth to babies, it was a compounding effect. A substantial portion of our efforts was directed towards educating and empowering young girls and women to recognize the dangers of these situations. But some of this was cultural. And it was the hardest thing that I had to accept, to watch a society that culturally went to church, but didn't seem to have a problem with the level of sexual abuse that was going on within their society. And even talking to educated women about this didn't get us far. There was a sense of an underlying secret that no one was willing to openly acknowledge. I gained the impression that this behavior had become so ingrained in society that it lacked the stigma associated with it in the United States. The situation was further complicated by factors such as financial dependence, where an uncle abusing his niece might also be providing her with school fees, creating a reluctance on the mother's part to report the abuse, fearing the loss of financial support.

Q: Sure. In a lot of embassies in developing countries, there are small democracy grants as well. Did you have that program?

MARCELLIN: Our political section had small democracy grants. USAID also had a more robust program, because we were in a country that really was not a true democracy. The President had been president for many, many, many years—had changed to the constitution to remove the age limits. Every election, he would win. It was very clear that we felt there were some uncertainties in some of these election results. While election polls consistently favored him, there were credible concerns about the fairness of the margins. I left before the Ugandans had the next presidential election. But the leading candidate, who was a rock star turned politician, while we were there, was getting beaten up and hospitalized and thrown into prison for various reasons. Our ambassador, along with representatives from the UK and other Western European embassies, actively intervened to ensure his safety and access to necessary medical treatment. These challenges in promoting democracy persisted after our departure. And it was really heartbreaking to witness the obstacles to democratic progress, despite our investments in democracy promotion initiatives. In many African countries, once a President is in power, he and his relatives and supporters do not want him to relinquish power.

Q: Yeah. Had the U.S begun working with Uganda on any Millennium Challenge initiatives?

MARCELLIN: As I recall, there was some talk about that, but we didn't have the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) program at that time.

Q: Yeah. And often, the reason I mentioned—often it's difficult if you have very bad governance problems. You don't even get considered until there's at least a basic level of good governance.

MARCELLIN: Yes, there's a number of different criteria you have to meet and we weren't quite there.

Q: Okay. Aside from the health things, what were the other top activities or objectives that you had to follow?

MARCELLIN: Another area that the ambassador also wanted me to watch closely was facilities. We had a very large construction project that was going on. This primarily involved a substantial expansion funded by USAID and the relocation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to office space within the embassy compound. This was a priority. Beyond that, our responsibilities encompassed the routine operations of the embassy, including consular services, American Citizen Services, visa processing, press relations, and public diplomacy, as well as maintaining overall embassy morale. We also had a large Peace Corps program, which occasionally presented challenges related to staff or volunteer misconduct. Although the ambassador took the lead on the policy and external relations, I would need to step in as chargé when she was not in town. So I would have to know enough to step in when needed. Upon my arrival, the ambassador's

father passed away after only a week of overlap, requiring her to return to the United States. Consequently, I was thrust into the chargé role after just one week, which was a sort of baptism by fire. I was on my own. I was even the master of ceremonies for the reception she had planned to host for me. Somebody introduced me, but I was really kind of hosting it too, at my own events. So it was very much a baptism by fire.

Q: And in Uganda, you use English as the lingua franca.

MARCELLIN: Yes, that part wasn't a problem. I've never really enjoyed public speaking. But that would come part and parcel to the job. Sometimes we had enough demands that she would be giving a speech in one spot, and she would be sending me off to give a speech for a different event. And that was something that I just became very accustomed to—never really enjoyed it—but could do it. And so this was very good for me because when I first sought out the DCM job, I thought, 'Do I want to think about becoming an ambassador someday?' I realized that I didn't. In addition to the loneliness, I didn't like much of an ambassador's job which included constantly making speeches and constantly doing the cocktail party circuit. I had a little voice in my head that was saying, 'It's fun in a certain way; it's a great honor in a certain way. It's nice to have a nice house and driver, but no, this is not for me.' Fairly early on, it became clear to me that I was going to enjoy being DCM but only once. I would not seek out another DCM job, principal officer job, Chief of Mission job. I didn't have the fire in my belly to pursue this and it was not particularly personally enjoyable.

Q: And of course, in considering an ambassadorship or any chief of mission, chief of consulate, you live in a fishbowl, aside from being on twenty-four hours, you live in a fishbowl. Everything you say and do is observed and commented on and you have to be ready for that.

MARCELLIN: You have to really want it. But for me, it was clear. The other telling moment that I had when I first arrived was when two very talented tandem officers were talking to me. They sought my candid perspective on the State Department, specifically regarding promotion practices and the perceived influence of internal politics. And I realized that I was answering with a certain amount of cynicism. It struck me that leaders should not be cynical; DCMs are not supposed to be cynical. But at the same time, I didn't want to lie to people, if my own view had cynicism built in. So I realized this would be the last leadership tour. It would be time to say goodbye to the overseas career. And at the time, I didn't know, did I want to say goodbye to the career entirely? I began to think that when I left that DCM job, I wanted to return to Washington for a job and then retire. This was another time of self-reflection.

Q: Sure. Another thing the DCM is responsible for on a day-to-day basis and shares with the ambassador is the security of the embassy and U.S. citizens. How did that work in Uganda? Did you have episodes or issues related to that?

MARCELLIN: Yes, just as the ambassador was returning from her father's funeral, we had one of the crisis management exercises going and so we were working on this. But in

terms of actual dangers, I think the biggest dangers to American citizens that we faced were car accidents and residential crime. We did have some residential crime in some of our own embassy residences. We had one situation where the woman actually woke up in the middle of the night and could hear robbers in her residence. We also had a carjacking. Occasionally, there was American citizen violence. Additionally, we did have a kidnapping of a tourist for ransom who was out on a gorilla safari, which garnered international media attention. Fortunately, we were able to secure the woman's release and apprehend the perpetrators. But in terms of big security issues, Uganda had terrorism threats similar to Kenya and so we were always on alert for that kind of thing. We did not have an attack while I was there but the threat was real with Al Shabaab.

Q: Yeah, that's certainly one of the biggest in Somalia, although perhaps not the only one.

MARCELLIN: We knew they'd want to go for a target with expat casualties. So we were always vigilant. Prior plots had been uncovered years before, but nothing happened during our time.

Q: You said the ambassador was the one that more or less covered POL/MIL and exterior. Did anything fall to you about our request to Uganda for peacekeeping troops or for other aspects of its involvement in Africa?

MARCELLIN: She took the lead on all political-military (POL/MIL) matters. However, I had to know enough that when she was away, I could step in. On one occasion when she was away, President Museveni requested the immediate presence of our highest-ranking U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) official to discuss Uganda's intentions to reduce its troop deployment in Somalia. This was going to be the first time that I met with President Museveni. At the time, the Ugandan police had raided several NGOs who were promoting democracy, taking computers and smashing things up. I was given the talking point to raise as part of this meeting. President Museveni immediately put on a shocked expression and said, 'Oh, you are admitting to helping the stooges create unrest, here is proof you Americans are working with the troublemakers.' My immediate thought was that I was going to be thrown out of the country based on my first meeting with the President.

Q: Okay. Now, of course, when you mentioned, one of the reasons the ambassador chose you is because she felt you needed to oversee, manage the management section. Did you need to make changes there?

MARCELLIN: The Ambassador was frustrated with her current Management Officer who still had a year left on her tour before retiring. The Ambassador felt the entire Management section was weak. I therefore prioritized coaching this person to hang in there for the year. Sometimes conversations would get pretty tense, publicly. And I was always trying to smooth things out with the entire staff. Our ambassador was very direct, and didn't mince words. And I was frequently having to help people not to take things personally. The ambassador was not a mean person but she was not always self-aware enough to realize how some of her comments made people feel.

Q: And over the course of your career, you acquired a lot of skills in mentoring, counseling, and so on. How did they end up playing in an embassy that's under a fair amount of stress and had a relatively big role in Africa?

MARCELLIN: Mentoring has always been my favorite part of any job. We had an active first- and second-tour officer program but also, we also launched a mid-level mentoring program. One of the things that I've always been a believer in and my husband is, too—creating the kind of community that people look out for each other. I held regular welcome dinners. Every time there was a group of newcomers, we always invited them in together from different agencies. I opened up the Deputy Chief of Mission's Residence (DCR) pool to community hours because not everybody had access to pools. On weekends and on Wednesday afternoons, families could come over and use the pool. I told the community that the DCM's house was their house. They could use it to hold representational events if they would prefer to have it at the house and not at a restaurant. I didn't have to be there. One year, I wasn't there for Thanksgiving, but we hosted Thanksgiving for anybody who didn't have a place to go. The person who was my Office Management Specialist (OMS) stepped in for me. I still provided the turkey and my cook/housekeeper did the work.. I think the ambassador liked that I was so willing to host and be focused on morale. The ambassador and I ended up having a very productive working partnership. We recognized each other's strengths and weaknesses, and our skill sets proved to be complementary. I think people on the surface thought she'd picked a clone, because she picked another high-ranking female who had been an interagency tandem. But actually, our temperaments and our experiential skill sets were very complimentary. And I think it worked out well.

Q: Everything you've been talking about, just in this recent issue, addresses the question of morale. Were there other aspects that you needed to do on the question of morale?

MARCELLIN: As a management counselor, I was aware that employees and their family members frequently encountered adjustment challenges. We did have two times that I had to come in for possible domestic violence allegations. And that's very awkward in a small mission. I had to actually be physically present on a weekend when the male nurse practitioner wished to examine one of the wives where abuse had been reported because a female had to be present and discretion had to be handled carefully. In this case, there was no evidence of abuse and the wife denied the abuse.

Q: Sure. This is a time when if the local telecommunications permitted, the embassy was beginning to do more social media, Facebook, maybe even Twitter. How did that develop while you were there?

MARCELLIN: It was already being pursued on a robust basis before I got there, and continued. We had a very strong Public Diplomacy section. That was something the ambassador really didn't get involved in. She let them do their thing. We had two successive, very strong public diplomacy officers and the ambassador kept out of their way and said 'Yes, yes, yes, and keep on going.'

Q: Okay. Did your job involve travel through the country or did you have to support travel through the country?

MARCELLIN: My job occasionally involved travel, usually when substituting for the ambassador. She'd like to travel but there were times when she was out of the country and I needed to go. Once I flew into the Presidential Ranch with a high-ranking general. I also traveled for PEPFAR-related engagement outreach or making necessary speeches.

Q: Okay. And just to complete the public diplomacy aspects. Often we conduct Fulbright exchanges, professional exchanges. Were those from as far as you could recall, were they useful either as finding influencers in the society that could amplify our messages or entering positions that would be useful for us as contacts?

MARCELLIN: Yes, I would say so. But the one program that really took the spotlight was YALI, the Young African Leadership Initiative. It was very popular in Uganda, and we would have YALI alumni meetings. This was probably the star program.

Q: Yeah. Did you have a commerce department representative? Or how did that work—the commerce side of things?

MARCELLIN: We did not. Our economic section took charge and there was a foreign commercial representative from Nairobi who would occasionally fly in. We had a few Nairobi regional players that would come in from other agencies on specific issues. But otherwise, our POL/ECON section followed these issues.

Q: Again, to your recollection, were there any big wins? Did any American companies manage to increase exports or any other aspects?

MARCELLIN: Yes, our ambassador worked really hard on an energy initiative and she did such an outstanding job that she won the Cobb Award for this initiative. It was a big win.

Q: Yeah. It's often not seen publicly how much U.S. embassies do to promote any kind of U.S. commerce, regardless of where, including in these developing countries where it's often not easy, not only because of infrastructure, but as you mentioned, because of bribery and other things.

MARCELLIN: Yes. The ambassador devoted considerable time and energy, including late-night phone calls and persistent advocacy, and her efforts ultimately proved successful.

Q: Excellent. Okay. Now, in terms of all of the management side, I think I've addressed all the formal ones. But there are a lot of other things behind the scenes that I might not have asked about. What are some of these others?

MARCELLIN: No. I think you've covered it pretty well. Many of our Americans, across USAID, CDC, and the State Department, had been former Peace Corps volunteers. We did a lot of weaving of interests with the Peace Corps alumni events. I think the Peace Corps did some creative things in terms of the outreach. It was a reasonably happy mission, with the exception of a few people who would come in and it just wasn't the right fit. Maybe they were overseas for the first time, but I think for the most part, it was a pretty healthy mission while we were there.

Q: Now, you received the superior honor award while you were there. What did that entail?

MARCELLIN: I think the ambassador gave it to me in recognition of my overall support as DCM. As you reach Senior Foreign Service ranks, some bosses don't think it is necessary to provide formal recognition, so I was actually surprised that she went ahead and did this. It was her way of saying 'Thank you for being my partner.'

Q: Yeah. That's great. And for your family, for your children, and so on, adapting to the local schools and the local environment—that went well?

MARCELLIN: My youngest was already in college, and the oldest was working. They would come in periodically for Christmas. One worked for two summers at the Embassy. And I think that went well. I think they were thrilled that we were overseas. They were upset when I indicated that this would be our final overseas tour, as they always enjoyed visiting these unique locations. Our youngest daughter met some Peace Corps volunteers while in Uganda, and she decided to pursue becoming a Peace Corps volunteer coming out of college. And that was helpful for her having visited a Peace Corps volunteer's house and hearing about it. Our ambassador's daughter made the same choice. Our two daughters were the same age, both were named "Katherine". And they would hang out a little bit during the summers. Our Peace Corps director loved the fact that our own daughters were serving in different African posts.

Q: Sure. Sometimes VIP visits can make a major contribution to the post's objectives. Did that happen at all while you were there?

MARCELLIN: Compared to other posts, our VIP visits were few. We had a couple senators and an agency head come through, but nothing compared to other posts—no Secretary of State visits occurred. Were they helpful? Yes. But these were not heavy lifts for us.

Q: Any significant cooperations with other foreign embassies?

MARCELLIN: We partnered frequently with European embassies and Japan, aligning on various issues, particularly during periods of political unrest involving attempts against the leading opposition rival, Bobi Wine, or advocacy for LGBT rights. We were also in touch during the Ebola outbreaks. Uganda had a lot of refugees coming in from the DRC and the South Sudan refugee population was also growing. We learned about the fraud

that was going on with refugee assistance. Our diplomatic counterparts collaborated to hold the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) accountable and demand action to address the fraud. We also had USAID OIG present in Uganda because of the high fraud. While I was leaving, Peace Corps was doing their own investigation into allegations of fraud involving some of its staff—not the volunteers. Uganda had a pervasive problem with corruption. Anything that wasn't completely nailed down, was a temptation for fraud. So that was always something we were looking at.

Q: Wow. Yeah. Not all that uncommon. Many years before, I'd been a refugee officer as well. And yeah, every quarter, I was out, talking to all of the refugee organizations that we were donating money to. We do take a very close look at how they spend the taxpayer's money. All right. As you're approaching the end of this tour, have you seen trends—because you've been in Africa before—had you seen trends that indicated anything was getting better, anything was getting worse? Or how would you characterize that?

MARCELLIN: I'd say that, I felt things were getting better in many respects. Clearly, every metric we looked at on health and education was getting better. However, one of the most significant differences we observed in Ugandan perspectives compared to other countries was their approach to population growth. I had been in other countries that had embraced family planning as important. In Indonesia and Bangladesh, the average family size was 2.0. In contrast, when I got to Uganda, I think the average family size was 7.3. As we were leaving, it had dropped a little bit, but you would talk to educated women—my counterparts—who still wanted four kids at least. They did not understand that Uganda would not be able to support this continued massive population growth. The official statistic was 50 percent of the country was under the age of thirteen. We could see this trend was going to affect jobs and everything else. We did not see progress on family planning. We also were not happy with the growing threats to democracy. We watched Zimbabwe, with the elderly president eventually having to be forced out because he would never relinquish power. We hoped that Uganda would not follow a similar trajectory.

Q: And then, you had talked about how you were just in your own mind, trying to decide whether another tour, a different kind of tour. And as I guess, as you approach the end of Kampala, you've made your decision.

Midway through Kampala, I got approached by someone to throw my hat in the ring for executive director of the Secretary's staff, a position which travels with the Secretary of State and is often a stepping stone to becoming an ambassador. I was told that I should apply—that I had the reputation of being a good fit but I would have to curtail a year in Uganda. 'And that was this interesting period of self-reflection, 'Do I want to try to even look at this or not?' Ultimately, I concluded that I did not. My parents were facing increasing health challenges, and I felt I should not extend my time away from them. Curtailing my assignment would also mean leaving my husband in Uganda and disrupting the embassy's operations. The ambassador had selected me for the DCM position, and it would not have been fair to her to depart prematurely. For all of these

reasons, I turned down the opportunity. Other opportunities came at me that similarly could lead to ambassadorships, but I again declined. I wasn't sure if my parents' health would allow me to take a two-year job, or if I should be looking at one-year jobs. And I zeroed in on OIG as a good fit, because I always thought it would provide valuable experience for potential reemployed annuitant (REA) jobs if I wanted to do that later on. I had been told that the OIG offered a degree of flexibility to accommodate family emergencies. I took this final OIG job.

Q: Lovely. And your husband did—where was he in his professional considerations?

MARCELLIN: He was set on retiring. He was ready to go and he would have preferred that I retired at that point. I just wasn't quite ready. And in fact, when the OIG offer came through, I composed two responses: 'Thank you very much, but I've decided to retire,' and 'Thank you very much, I am happy to accept.' I looked at these two and listened inside, and I said, 'Nope, I'm not ready to retire' and hit send. But I actually did write two responses, and I just couldn't send the other one. I was very much on the fence. I had even inquired with the OIG about the possibility of a one-year tour, but they indicated that they required a two-year commitment. . That's what I signed up for.

Q: It's not altogether surprising because it is—although you have all the background skills. There are a few things any new inspector will need to learn about the extent of things and what to look for and so on. All right. So you go back to Washington in 2019. And then you begin with the OIG, do you get training for the OIG office?

MARCELLIN: Yes, OIG requires a lot of training. New officers undergo two weeks of initial training and one week of refresher training, along with an additional 40 hours of mandatory annual training required by either the Department or the OIG. I came in and immediately went into two weeks of training. I was being assigned to the London inspection, which was great since it meant that Greg and I could meet our future British son-in-law's parents. The London inspection was scheduled for the fall, and following that, I was slated to inspect Benin and Togo in the spring, which I was pleased about because my daughter, Katie, was a Peace Corps volunteer in Benin. Hamilton, Bermuda would be the winter inspection. That was the initial plan, and I was genuinely enjoying the work. However, in March, the COVID-19 pandemic led to widespread lockdowns, and the Peace Corps evacuated all its volunteers. I really only was able to travel for two inspections, London, and Hamilton, Bermuda, and then the rest ended up becoming online remote domestic inspections.

Q: Wow! What was the major difference between in person and going online?

MARCELLIN: In-person inspections provide a significantly greater opportunity to engage in candid conversations with officers and gather firsthand insights into the prevailing atmosphere and issues. In London, the ambassador was a very politically influential billionaire, and his leadership style had created a lot of morale issues. And so we certainly got a lot of information on the morale front. The report for that inspection did make the Washington Post, because it was critical in some ways of the ambassador's

leadership style. Nothing unethical but the leadership style demoralized staff. The ambassador had fired his first DCM, who was a highly respected former ambassador. This fired DCM had done an interview for GQ Magazine. Other embassy employees were also being thrown out—so there was a lot of negative press between our own report being published and some of the other articles that came out about decisions he made. We made a couple of very important management recommendations there that had some serious savings for taxpayers. And it was a report that got attention. My second inspection--Hamilton, Bermuda—did not create much attention.

Moving to online and remote inspections actually worked out really well for me, because at that period, both my parents ended up being hospitalized. And my brother said, 'I need you to retire, I need you to be here now to help our parents.' Because we were now remote, my fabulous boss, Barnaby Walsh, let me go out a number of times, and work from California. So I drove out three times in one year, pre-vaccination time, to help with my parents. And then the next year, I was able to fly out and help with my parents for a large chunk of time, so I was able to complete my tour instead of having to retire early.

Q: Wow! That is remarkable. And certainly a benefit of online working. As you approached retirement, were you also thinking about a post-retirement life—professional life, I mean.

MARCELLIN: Yes, I took the job search program, which I thought was wonderful. I had already talked with my boss very early on about my interest in being an REA inspector and he was in full support. So my plan has been to return as an REA inspector and I have my offer now to do so. I anticipate participating in an inspection in the spring. That aspect of my post-retirement life was going to be sufficiently engaging. My main part of my retirement and the reason for doing it then was to provide hands-on, six-month-a-year elder care support to my parents. The psychological transition to retirement was easy because helping my parents was paramount in terms of what I needed to do—they had been fabulous parents. My husband wanted to retire to Montana so we had a lot of logistical tasks—selling the house in McLean, Virginia, buying a Montana home, fixing up the new house, that pretty much has been this first year of retirement.

Q: Unless there are other significant things that I've missed that you want to mention about the foreign service and so on. I always conclude interviews with two basic questions. The first is, looking back at your own professional career, if you were advising someone now about joining the foreign service, about how to prepare, and that sort of thing, what advice would you give them?

MARCELLIN: I think that's a great question. I would first tell them that it was an incredible privilege, extraordinary opportunity to come into the foreign service in any capacity. It's a life full of adventure. I've always felt the best preparation is to stay well read on everything you can, to remain curious, to always read, to be a lifelong learner. I would tell them to really do their own self-reflection to see if it's a good career fit. Because I think it is a great career fit for those who really know themselves. And to make

sure that if they are coming in with a partner, that it's a great career fit for their partner, because I think that is something that people don't fully appreciate.

Q: Now, of course, in your experience, you came with significant talent skills and so on from a previous career. Do you think that, at this point, people coming into the foreign service are well advised to have a few years of private sector work or other public sector work, just in order to be able to better manage their careers and have a more professional background?

MARCELLIN: I don't know the specific advice they receive. But it's very clear that the age of the average generalist coming in is much older than it was when I came in. And just by virtue of the competitiveness of getting in, it's harder for younger people without the experience to be able to get in. There was somebody who was a Georgetown graduate with a strong background in international relations policy and foreign policy, who also spoke multiple languages. He was the son of a DCM. He had the passion, this is exactly what he wanted to do. And he passed the written exam, but just couldn't get through the interviews. And I was shocked. This is somebody who grew up in this life and he just couldn't get through the interviews. And I think part of it was, it's got to be the experience because everything else he had. It's just a reality of getting in. One thing to say—both of our daughters have chosen at this point in time, similar paths. When the Peace Corps brought Katie out of Benin, she took her noncompetitive eligibility and landed a civil service job with the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs (EB) and she has since transferred to the Bureau of International Organization Affairs (IO) in the civil service capacity. And she's thought about starting to look at the foreign service side of things, but she's very attached to her dog. And she knows many of the postings we were at aren't optimal for pets. Our older daughter is a personal services contractor, a Humanitarian Assistance Officer for USAID. She's married to a British guy that she met when he was on vacation in Thailand and she was doing an internship in Thailand. He is not sure about the foreign service as a lifestyle. So they're figuring out how long she will remain in humanitarian assistance. But it's been fun for me to see both of our daughters in this line. Occasionally, there's some overlap, or my daughter with State Department will say 'I met so and so.' And I'll say, 'Oh, yes,' She has a different last name than I do so people don't always pick up that we are mother-daughter, but it's come up enough that there's still some overlap there. That's been fun. The batons have been passed to the next generation.

Q: Now, since you have been involved in morale issues, and just managing personnel, has AFSA [American Foreign Service Association] ever approached you to run for one of the vice presidencies or the presidency of AFSA?

MARCELLIN: Years ago, I was on an AFSA awards committee. And that was fun. But no, I have not been focused, nor would I want to jump into the whole election officer of AFSA. I think it's very important. I admire people who do it. But personally, I don't see myself doing that.

Q: And my last question is, more broadly, if you were advising the State Department or the foreign service, on improvements or changes, what would be the most important ones in your mind?

MARCELLIN: That's an excellent question. And I wished you'd given this to me early on, so that I would have an excellent answer prepared. I don't know. I think we do have a lot of self-inflicted wounds on the bureaucracy. And if we could tame the bureaucracy and the bureaucratic beast, we should. I do think that our whole assignments process is very excessively resourced and crazy. And if taxpayers really understood it, they would be up in arms like Tillerson, but he didn't last long enough to take a crack at it. But I think that that's kind of a crazy system in terms of how resource intensive it is. One of the things that I've always been kind of upset by is my own personal issue or belief—the MED department. I think there's a lot of data out there that we don't capture. And if we captured the data, and we looked at it, we would learn a lot more about it. And we would possibly be better able to avoid some of the problems that happen, particularly the mental health issues that the young family members face. I think we don't understand this issue. I do believe that statistically, State Department has more problems than average society because of the stressors that we put our kids through. But in terms of the big picture and international relations—clearly what I saw in Uganda, we didn't talk about this, and the role of China and Africa, and the role of China in the world, we're losing that battle. So on a policy standpoint, I think we are under-resourced relative to China; we're losing that foreign policy battle. Is it inevitable? Maybe it's inevitable, just sheer volume populations. But that's not a very coherent answer, but those are the things that hit me.

End of interview