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

HUGH O. MUIR

Interviewed by: C. Robert Beecham
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INTERVIEW

Q: This is C. Robert Beecham, retired Foreign Service officer, talking to an old friend, Hugh Muir, for the ADST (Association for Diplomatic Studies) Oral History Series. The first question I want to ask him is to give us a little rundown about his education and life and work experience before he joined the U.S. Information Agency.

MUIR: My education. Well, I was reading in a newspaper the other day that many college degrees are worthless in the present work environment. And one of the degrees high on the list was journalism.

Q: Oh, you were a journalism major?

MUIR: I was a journalism, and political science, dual-major at Syracuse University. Got my BA in 1954 and went on to the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and got my master's there. That was my academic education. But I learned that it also was a matter of not only what you know but also who you know. I went straight from Columbia to Boston to work for the old United Press [UP]. I was hired by a guy named Kurt King, whom I had worked for during a summer job in Albany, when he was UP bureau chief there, and who now ran the Boston bureau. I worked from four to midnight on radio rewrite, turning newswire copy into radio copy. When I finished my shift I took the MTA [Massachusetts Transportation Authority] subway home to Cambridge, turned on the radio and listened to "my" words come back. Heady stuff for a 22-year-old greenhorn. But UP ran low on money at the end of the summer and terminated by services, and I had to look for another job.

Q: And what year was that?

MUIR: This is 1955.

Q: That's not when it was UPI (United Press International), right? That's later.

MUIR: UP bought the International Press Service, the Hearst news wire, in 1958, and became UPI. Anyway, In September 1955 and I took a train down to New York City. I had an interview with a classic big-city editor, Bert MacDonald, of the World-Telegram and the Sun, the Scripps Howard flagship. Incidentally, Hollywood made a newspaper movie a couple of years later called "Teacher's Pet," and its main set was a copy of the World-Telegram city room. The city editor was played by Clark Gable, who for plot reasons is forced to take a journalism course, taught by Doris Day. It came out in 1958, part of my "academic journalism" experience. Fun film. And the exteriors were shot at the Columbia J-School. But I digress.

Q: Yep.

MUIR: So I sat down with MacDonald. Right off, I made the vanity mistake of wearing my Phi Beta Kappa key on my tie-chain. He (like Gable) had no use for university journalism students. We talked, but soon he said, "Well, maybe we'll call you." Fair enough. As I got up to leave, however, I knew that one of my favorite professors at

Columbia -- many of whom were full-time journalists in the city -- was a top feature writer for the Telly. His name was Allan Keller. I spotted him and went over to his desk. After a brief exchange he asked, “What the hell are you doing here?” I said, “Well, looking for a job.” “Oh.” He said. “You wait a minute.” He went off to MacDonald, sat down, chatted with him for three or four minutes. Then MacDonald motioned me over and said, “All right, I’ll give you a chance.” He paused, and then said, before waving me away, "I don't ever want to see you wearing that key in this office again." I have never worn it since.

There I was a New York City newspaperman at the age of 23. For the next 12 years I was a street reporter, a writer, and then an editor, and I had a wonderful time. I covered cops and fires, interviewed Eleanor Roosevelt and John Glenn, the future astronaut (when he set a 1958 transcontinental record as a Marine jet pilot). I covered the arrival in New York of the crippled liner Stockholm after it sank the liner Andrea Doria in a freak collision off Nantucket. I was at LaGuardia Field after the overshoot of a jet liner that wound up in the bay. I scribbled notes in the N.J. Meadowland marshes after a morning commuter train shot through an open bridge into the water. My regular beat was the subway system. I watched the last pillar of Manhattan's ancient Third Ave. Elevated pulled down. After eight years, I came inside, to be editor of the Telly's Brooklyn section for the last four years of the paper's life.

In 1966 economics caught up with newspapers in New York City. When I moved to New York in October of '55 there were seven major dailies. When I left in April of ‘66 -- after three major newspaper strikes -- there were three. The Daily Mirror had closed in October 1963. On April 22, 1966, the World-Telegram, and its Hearst competitor, the Journal-American, and the morning Herald Tribune all went down on the same day. Their managements had planned to combine the three into a daily 24-hour newspaper, with round-the-clock publication, to start the following Monday. But over the weekend the mechanical unions, thinking that the plan would cost them some jobs, went on strike. The three papers were shut down and the merger plan was abandoned. The printers lost all the jobs. The three remaining newspapers in New York were, as they are today -- The New York Times, the Daily News, and the New York Post. Five months later, in September, a daily afternoon paper named the World-Journal-Tribune (which soon came to be called the Widget) appeared. But it closed in six months. I had nothing to do with it. I had gone back to my hometown, Washington DC.

Q: To Washington?

MUIR: I was born and grew up there. My father was a proof reader at the Government Printing Office. The son and grandson of coal miners, he had dropped out of school at age 14 to become a printer's devil, for his small hometown paper in Lonaconing, in western Maryland. Finally, after being drafted to fight in France during World War One, and then work on the Baltimore Sun, he wound up in Washington with the GPO in the 1920s. So, logically -- no? -- I became a journalist.

Q: Uh-huh.

MUIR: After coming down from New York, I went to work for The Washington Post as a swing editor, on the copy desk and the business desk. But I felt kind of burned out with newspapers and I began looking for something else. Dick Walton, good friend of mine in New York, had been with VOA [Voice of America] when it was based there. It had since moved its headquarters to DC. I wondered what radio was all about. I went down to VOA, at its present home on Independence Avenue at Fourth Street in Southwest, to the basement where the newsroom first was.

Q: Who was running the newsroom in those days?

MUIR: Russ Splain. Nice guy, very personable, very friendly and very helpful. Great talker. We had a meeting of minds. But it was radio, and I had never really done radio. My writing stint in Boston? A brief memory. Russ and I talked and we agreed to meet again. But it occurred to me, "Yeah, but it's radio. I'm a print guy." So I wandered uptown, to 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue -- one of the world's great addresses -- at that time the home of VOA's parent, USIA [the U.S. Information Agency].

Q: Did you know anybody up there?

MUIR: I didn't know a soul. But I walked in and knocked on a door. I don't really remember who I talked to, but it certainly included Ed Carr, who ran IPS [the Information Press Service] newsroom in the Agency. In any case, within a couple of weeks the decision was that I would go to work for IPS. So I returned to being a writer and an editor and a reporter, which is what they, and I, wanted. An interesting thing was, they said that if I came aboard as a lateral entrant specialist (here read: journalist) I could bypass Civil Service or Foreign Service exams. But if I did that, I would have to accept foreign service status. I jumped at the chance. In October of '66, I joined the Agency.

Q: I wanted to ask you, how big was that crew? When I came on board in '52 they had an individual reporter in every cabinet building. When I came back a long time later they had cut that staff considerably.

MUIR: Considerably. When I came aboard the political beats were the White House, Capitol Hill, State, the Pentagon, Justice. My first assignment was Capitol Hill. We had two people on the Hill. I was put on the House [of Representatives] side. Tom Elliston was on the Senate. He had put in some IPS time in Vietnam, as a JUSPAO [Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office] reporter. After two years on the Hill, I was reassigned to help cover the White House, as the number two to Al Sullivan, a veteran on the IPS presidential beat and a great colleague. For me it was a two-year roller-coaster ride, covering the last year of [Lyndon] Johnson, then the 1968 election campaign, then the first year of [Richard] Nixon.

It was a fascinating time to be covering the White House. Anything before or since didn't have the quirkiness -- that's the word that comes to mind -- the quirkiness that existed back then. I mean, the big cowboy, Lyndon Johnson, was like some John Wayne

character. He was a massive presence. I remember flying once on Air Force One, at that time a Boeing 707, with him and some political VIPs and maybe half a dozen other reporters. We were doing one of the vacation runs between Washington and Johnson's ranch in Texas. In the center of the airplane was a big swivel chair where the president sat. There was a long table on one side of it. On the other side of the table, along the wall, was a bench seat, for reporters or senators or congressmen or privileged guests. Most of the traveling press sat up front. The back section of the plane was laid out as a suite for Lyndon. Later, President Nixon had the interior of Air Force One redesigned and he stuck the reporters in the back and put his suite up front, so he could emerge in spectacular fashion from the front door of the plane. Of course, we reporters knew it was always safer to fly in the tail of an airplane anyway.

Johnson was the kind of guy who would say, "I want to talk with the president of South Korea" and, on a few hours notice, we were on the planes -- he'd get on Air Force One and we all got on the chartered press plane. We flew to Seoul (overnighting in Tokyo) and got off the plane and piled into a bunch of cars or buses and drove up to the DMZ [Demilitarized Zone]. There, running east-west along a shallow valley, was a long whitewashed concrete curb, with South Korea on one side and North Korea on the other. A big observation platform was built on the southern side, facing north. Suddenly, we see Johnson going up those steps to that platform, the president of the free world emerging on top as a large target, facing who-knows-how-many North Korean troops.

The security people must have had a fit. Tensions were particularly high during that visit because we were there shortly after the infamous axing incident. A tree had grown over a pathway just north of the DMZ border, blocking a clear view at that point. The South had asked the North to cut the tree back. The North refused. So the Americans sent a military team over the border to trim the tree, and they were attacked by ax-wielding North Korean troops. Several Americans were killed before everybody pulled back. Johnson, of course, knew about that. But he stood up there on that platform and challenged everybody. There were no incidents. After lunch and an official inspection, we all drove back to Seoul, got a night's sleep, and flew home.

Q: You covered the 1968 campaign?

MUIR: Right. First, I was at the Democratic Nominating Convention in Chicago. The Vietnam War protesters flooded the city. The Chicago Hilton, which was quickly dubbed Fort Hilton because it was the Democratic headquarters hotel, was besieged by protesters. National Guardsmen were lined up out front on Michigan Avenue. Peaceniks slipped flowers down the soldiers' rifle barrels. Stink bombs stenched the hotel's lobby. Grant Park, across Michigan Avenue, was the scene of daily protest rallies. Reporting on all that and the actual nominating convention was like covering an indoor-outdoor riot, as the pro-war-anti-war party factions fought over candidates for nomination. Johnson had already announced he would not run again. His vice president, Hubert Humphrey, waited patiently out of sight for Johnson's nod of support, which he finally got at the last minute. But the shilly-shallying eventually cost Humphrey the election. A convention highlight? The convention's host, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, cussing out anti-war supporters in

the hall, much to the amusement of lip-readers watching him close up on live national television.

Then I covered the Republican Nominating Convention, in Miami Beach, where Nelson Rockefeller and Ronald Reagan slugged it out trying to deny Nixon the nomination. That split the Nixon opposition and he won there on the first ballot. I helped cover Nixon in the campaign that followed. Slickly scripted. Despite his dubious denial five years later, during the height of the Watergate scandal, that "I am not a crook," we all knew in 1968 that he was, ah, dubious. He won election, of course, with "a secret plan to end the Vietnam War." Which never panned out. I backed up Al Sullivan covering Nixon's first year in office and saw a lot of California while covering the summer White House, Nixon's San Clemente home. In another Johnson-like spur-of-the-moment trip, we flew to Wake Island, in June 1969, where Nixon had a brief, and fruitless, meeting with the president of South Vietnam, looking for an end to the war. Then, after two years at the White House, I moved on.

Q: Is that what got you to London?

MUIR: Not yet. The Vietnam Peace talks had resumed in Paris just after Nixon's inauguration in January 1969, attended by the U.S., South Vietnam, North Vietnam and the insurgent Vietcong. After months of closed talks -- which also involved the absurd public debate over the shape of the negotiating table -- IPS was tasked with sending a correspondent to Paris to cover them. Colleague Jim Aldrich, who had spent some time at the Sorbonne on the GI Bill after World War Two, went out that November for the first of a planned series of brief TDYs [Temporary Duty]. In January 1970 I was the second. Fascinating city. I passed through it many times later. Tedious assignment. There was only one official meeting a week. I reported on each official briefing. And then did a follow-up analysis piece based on a subsequent one-on-one briefing by the American delegation's spokesman. Henry Cabot Lodge had quit in December as the top U.S. negotiator and was replaced by Henry Kissinger. And the talks plodded on. I was the last Paris TDY reporter. It would be three years before the Paris Peace Accords would be signed. I left in March, but was detoured to Vienna to cover a session of the U.N.'s Law of the Sea negotiations, which had been under way for a couple of years and which I had covered sporadically, in New York and Washington and would cover again, um, four years later in Caracas [Venezuela]. The talks would eventually produce a treaty, divvying up deep-ocean resources and rights-of-passage, but it was never ratified by us. [As of this interview in 2011, it still wasn't.] Meanwhile, I was back in Washington from Paris by early spring.

Q: Yeah, but are you saying you went to London not necessarily because you were dissatisfied with what you were doing, but because ...

MUIR: Because something opened up. A month after I got back from Paris, my personnel officer, Frank Savage, called me in and said it was time I took a post overseas. The resulting conversation was almost surreal. Frank said, “So, where do you want to go?” I said, "You name it." "OK," he said, "but where do you WANT to go?" I said, “Well, I’d

like to go to, um, I'd like to go to Paris, I'd like to go to London, I'd like to go to Tokyo." He said, "Now, wait a minute. Name the one place where you want to go." And I said, "I'd like to go to London." He said, "You've got it." Just like that.

Then he said, "There are two openings there. You still have to talk to the London PAO [Public Affairs Officer]."

Q: And who was that?

MUIR: William Weld.

Q: Oh, the old timer.

MUIR: The old timer indeed. Bill Weld had been head of the European Office for USIA in Washington. After a tour there he gave himself the job of PAO London, which I'm sure he deserved. He was a splendid guy. He was in Washington right then, for some sort of meeting, so I sat down with him for an hour. He, indeed, had two slots: the AIO [Assistant Information Officer] and the SAO [Student Affairs Officer]. We talked. I rambled on. "AIO?" I said. "Sounds right. I've been a journalist for 15 years." We mused on that bit. Then he said, OK. And two months later, off we went to London. Me, my wife, Phyllis, and our three children. They were all teenagers then -- 11, 15, 17. We snatched our oldest child out of high school in her senior year, which you're never supposed to do. But they all loved London. It was a two-year tour, 1970-72. ("There's a line-up for this post a mile long," someone told me as my tour came to an end.)

Q: And what was your routine in London at the office? Whom did you work with?

MUIR: I had a British staff, half a dozen or so, who edited and wrote material, and a team that ran the print shop. I would come in every morning from our flat, about a five-minute walk away from the Embassy. I would first meet with a couple of my editorial staff to talk about the Wireless File, which came in overnight, by radio of course, from Washington. A raw transcript of it would be on my desk. We would go through it and decide which parts to put out and to which clients, to Fleet Street, to major regional newspapers, to select magazines, and appropriate contacts.

Q: In printed form.

MUIR: In printed form. In England, we were spoiled. First of all, we were in a country that spoke English, no translation delays. And we had a receptive audience, they wanted to know what we had to say, even if they didn't necessarily agree with us.

Q: Yeah, of course.

MUIR: That's what being in-country was all about. We regularly talked with these people on the phone, or in person. We answered inquiries. The whole point of being out there, the whole point of USIS [United States Information Service, the name of the overseas

operations of USIA], was to answer the questions triggered by Washington's official answers. By the way, even though I was the AIO I had most of the responsibility for the day-to-day printed output because the IO [Information Officer], Bill Miller, was tasked with the radio and television contacts, mostly the BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation]. And that was because the guy running USIA at that time was former CBS executive Frank Shakespeare, who, of course, had a thing for electronic communications. That suited me just fine.

Q: And what use did the British recipients of this do with it? Did they use it basically as background?

MUIR: Rarely were we used verbatim. The major statements came from the ambassador and his staff. Our background items usually became "informed sources." It was not, as I tried to remind our contacts, propaganda. Our British audiences had spent a whole war, from 1939 to 1945, listening to propaganda from the Germans -- and from their own people -- that were lies. No one's disputing that. I just said, "We're not in the lying business. We're trying to tell you what our side of the story is. And then you can take that and put it up against your knowledge from other sources. You've gotten where you are because you're a people who have a sense of what's going on. We're in the information business." So that made the job initially very straightforward. Did they want to know what Washington's position was on A, B, or C? And if they, the British Press, were writing about A, B, and C, they could take our material and say "this is what Washington really says about that." And they would know that they were using accurate information. Information, of course, is not always truth, or beauty either, for that matter. Um, Keats? But lies are always ugly, and usually found out.

Q: How many people in the embassy read the wireless file?

MUIR: We're not talking about big numbers. I mean --

Q: It was a big embassy, of course.

MUIR: It was a big embassy, one that had a large Political Section, a huge Commercial Section, and an often overwhelmed Consular Section. Each received a few copies. We would send a couple dozen copies of the File up to the ambassador's office.

Q: Do you think the ambassador read it? Or had somebody shown him parts that he should read?

MUIR: The ambassador had somebody who made sure that he would see those parts that he should know. My ambassador was Walter Annenberg. All new embassy members would have a brief welcoming chat with him. For my meeting I was told, "You'll be placed on his right-hand side. He can't hear in that ear. You're not supposed to have to say anything, Just sit and listen and nod." So I did.

We put out things in addition to the Wireless File. We published and distributed the President's annual State of the Union Address to Congress, annotated by me. With the help of our artist, a Brit staff member, we wrote, edited, designed and printed the "These United States" pamphlet for distribution to students, libraries, etc. That sort of thing. It was later translated and used by USIS worldwide.

Q: Whom did you report to directly?

MUIR: The IO (Information Officer), Bill Miller.

Q: A good man.

MUIR: A good man. By the way, he once ran a trucking operation in Alaska.

Q: How much time did you spend associating with British journalists?

MUIR: Not a heck of a lot. My contacts were mostly through print. I met with the political and military writers in the pubs occasionally, the ones where journalists hung out, across the street or around the corner from their offices, mostly on Fleet Street. There is NO Fleet Street anymore, only a street with that name. The papers have all moved elsewhere now. The one time I had extensive contact with a group of major journalists was when NATO [the North Atlantic Treaty Organization] organized a tour of some of its key facilities in Europe for the Fleet Street military press. I guided it, with the help of one of the young Brits on my staff. We invited a dozen major military correspondents for a 10-day swing on the continent, including NATO headquarters near Brussels; to Oslo, where NATO had a huge communications center inside a mountain; and to East Berlin, where we got the Checkpoint Charlie treatment from the guards at the [Berlin] Wall. The guards used mirrors to look under the bus for spies.

Q: Your ambassador, he was appointed by President Nixon?

MUIR: He was a Nixon appointee.

Q: Where did Annenberg's money come from?

MUIR: Publishing was the principle source. He owned the Philadelphia Inquirer, TV Guide and Seventeen [magazine] and later founded the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California. While Annenberg was in London he hosted Nixon's only state visit to Britain. A big do indeed. USIS put out a nice background packet for the press. My final assignment for the visit was to be at the alternate landing field in case Heathrow got socked in, and to be the Embassy's official greeter at the bottom of the Air Force One steps. So, on the big day, there I was alone at Brize Norton, Britain's largest RAF [Royal Air Force] base -- some 80 miles west of London -- ready to shake the presidential hand.

Q: And?

MUIR: He landed at Heathrow, of course. I got back to London that night and never saw him during the visit.

Q: OK, so when your two years ran out, did Washington have a job waiting for you when you came back or did you have to negotiate that?

MUIR: I came back to IPS. But soon I got a call from Bob Baker, who was the Student Affairs Officer in London. He was organizing a trip to the United States for a group of British Young Conservatives, a political club with ties to the Conservative Party. They wanted to have a close-up view of the then-upcoming 1972 U.S. national elections, and they were willing, and able, to pay part of their way. The U.S. would pay the rest. Baker was arranging for a group of some 20 young people -- in their 20s to 30s -- to come to the States to tour the country and see candidates in action, listen to speeches, go to rallies, etc. Wonderful idea. Bob wanted me to organize and run the trip once they got here.

Q: What did you do?

MUIR: I had gotten back from London in August. The Brits were arriving in October. The Agency put me in a room in the State Department with an unlimited telephone, a bunch of airline schedules and fares and a list of private citizens, scattered around the country, who belonged to a State Department-sponsored group called Coserve. Its members, at the State Department's request, hosted visiting foreign tour groups of all sorts -- people-to-people programs, as they were known. I also had regular access to major candidates' campaign schedules and events.

Q: So what did you do with the tour? Where did you go?

MUIR: First of all, I organized it. I sat there with a map of the country. I looked at cities. I looked at airline schedules. I looked at where the Coserve people lived. I looked at the campaign schedules, lists of key elections.

Q: You did all the planning of it?

MUIR: I did all the planning. I divided the visitors into five groups, five or so in each group. Then, with the Agency's advice, I lined up four people from USIA, one to lead each group, with me as the fifth. Then I split the U.S. into five areas: Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, Far West. Then I matched interesting campaigns and candidates with major cities in each area and the schedules of the airlines that linked them. I lined up the available Coserve person in each city. I had to -- and this was tricky -- make sure the total airfares for each area tour were pretty much the same. Despite the State Department supplement, the Young Conservatives were expected to pay their air fares. And it all had to fit into 10 days, including two in New York, where they all arrived initially from Britain, and the last two in Washington before flying home.

Q: Really? Wow.

MUIR: One group, for example, went to Jackson, Mississippi; Miami, Florida; Savannah, Georgia; and New Orleans. Another went to New England, including Boston and Hartford, Connecticut. Another to Chicago, Indianapolis, Iowa City. I took the group that went to Tucson, Las Vegas, Seattle, San Francisco, San Diego. Each would attend a rally, a speech, gathering -- a political event by a candidate. It worked beautifully. The Brits weren't just sitting in the audience listening to the speeches and then getting up and leaving on the buses. Each group also got to meet the candidates, talk with their staffs..

Q: And what was the upshot of that? Was there follow-up?

MUIR: All I know is that when we finally got the whole group back to Washington and we had a big debriefing with all the Brits and a panel of State people in the main conference room on 23rd Street, it ended with a long, loud round of applause.

Q: (laughs) So you, you figure it was a success, right?

MUIR: It was a success. Whether it was a political success or not --

Q: (laughs) How much time did you put into that? How long did that last?

MUIR: Well, I got back from London in August. The tour was in October. A couple of months.

Q: So what from there, how did you go about finding another assignment in Washington?

MUIR: I went back over to IPS and helped create something called the National Security beat. It included covering the National Security Council -- that's a closed door, not much there -- the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], some Pentagon security people.

Q: Oh, you did? And how long did you stay in that?

MUIR: Well, it must have gone on for six months. It was tricky, depending on whom you worked with -- CIA people of course didn't want to talk. It turned out that it was not the sort of thing IPS could handle.

Q: Yeah, that's why I'm so surprised that somebody -- and I'm personally surprised that I don't remember anybody doing that.

MUIR: Well, that's what I did for a relatively short amount of time. The next thing I did was involved in the same subject. Let's just say that the national security beat was an attempt -- a very early attempt -- to pull things together for reporting organizations that dealt with national security. Just didn't work.

Q: And you don't know whose idea it was originally.

MUIR: No.

Q: So let me -- let me go through this now. You came back from the State Department back from that tour, and who was your boss? Your direct boss? Who did you report to?

MUIR: Ed Carr.

Q: So presumably then that, that activity, that new activity of drawing all of this stuff together was under Carr's direction. Obviously he had some other direction over -- directors over him too.

MUIR: Yep.

Q: Although above Carr's level frankly.

MUIR: Whatever. The next thing that happened though is interesting. I was asked to go over and be part of INR at State.

Q: INR, is that Intelligence and Research?

MUIR: Yes. It's based in a 24-hour room up in Main State, called the Op Center. Huge amounts of raw material from embassies and agents around the world funneled through there. I was asked to go up there and acquire -- on a daily basis -- acquire the material pertaining to Latin America. I came in about 4 in the morning and sat down and read. You talk about a top-secret clearance. I must have had one for sure.

Q: These were incoming cables? Were all of these coming from the embassies? Political reporting? Economic reporting?

MUIR: Not economic, we're talking --

Q: All political stuff, uh-huh. And what did you do with it?

MUIR: This is the intriguing part. I became an editor. I came in at 4 in the morning, read all the relevant overnight traffic. Then I typed a synopsis of it. At 8:30 in the morning I took the synopsis to the Office of the Undersecretary of State for Latin American Affairs, one-to-two-pages-long at most, and read it to him.

Q: Was it -- did it show the classification of the material?

MUIR: You know, I don't recall if there was a --

Q: You only made one copy, right?

MUIR: Yes. The one copy that I had typed, which I left with the Assistant Secretary. I kept no copy. But then, after I was on the job for a few days, this daily piece of paper

began to multiply. People began to copy it, not me but people in the assistant secretary's office.

Q: Yeah.

MUIR: And it began to circulate as a document of the day.

Q: Mm-hmm.

MUIR: A highly classified piece of paper, for Pete's sake.

Q: How long did you do that?

MUIR: I had the job for six months.

Q: And were you happy doing it?

MUIR: Oh, I thought it was intriguing. There were guys out there risking their necks for some of this stuff. And here I was, boiling it down, saying so-and-so says this or that on a given subject, and then sometimes finding another report on the same subject in which so-and-so says something else.

Q: Now, let me ask you this. I want to get the chronology. You had done, for a brief time at least, this national security coverage. Then you went from that to what you just described. Is that -- and then it was discontinued shortly after you left?

MUIR: That particular practice. I'm sure there were other ways the Assistant Secretary of State of Latin American Affairs, and his counterparts, continued to be briefed on a regular basis but --

Q: The location of the office that you were using, was that in an area that was an op (operations) center?

MUIR: It was up in INR in the Op Center, sixth floor as I recall. But I had nothing to do with the other staff up there. I was completely disconnected.

Q: Were you ever asked to go back and check something? Double-check something?

MUIR: No.

Q: Or amplify?

MUIR: No. Once that piece of paper went to the assistant secretary, that was it for that day.

Q: And how did -- how did that duty end, I mean in terms of --

MUIR: Well, somebody else replaced me.

Q: I see, ah-ha.

MUIR: The assistant secretary continued to be briefed.

Q: That was probably a State Department person rather than -- wasn't anybody from IPS, right?

MUIR: It wasn't anybody with a journalistic background, I can tell you that.

Q: Ah, yeah. So then what happened?

MUIR: This was the summer of 1973. Things were coming unglued at the White House as Watergate [the June 1972 Democratic headquarters break-in scandal] began to collapse on Nixon. I did political general assignments: hearings on the Hill, some Pentagon, filling in at State, and more White House. I didn't cover any of Watergate.

I went back to the White House briefly on a lucky twist. Watergate forced Nixon to resign [in August 1974] and Gerald Ford assumed office. For his Christmas vacation he decided, because he was a skier, to go to Vail, in Colorado, for two weeks. I was the only skier in IPS so I was picked to go. Our families were allowed to accompany us because of the inconvenience of being away from home during Christmas. I have a signed photo I took of Ford as he got up after taking a fall during a schuss down the mountain, surrounded by Secret Service guys, on skis, nervous, of course.

I also continued with the sporadic U.N. Law of the Sea talks. This international treaty was trying to define nations' rights in sharing international waters and resources. It had been initiated at the United Nations in 1973 and the talks dragged on until 1982, when it finally became international law. But the United States has never ratified it. The last session I covered was in November 1975, in Caracas [Venezuela]. Eventually I went back to political reporting, and then organized the Wireless File's coverage of the '76 campaign.

Q: Wasn't that Carter?

MUIR: Yeah. Jimmy, running against Ford.

Q: And you were working under Carr at that time?

MUIR: Yes. With Ed's oversight, I set up a rotating list of which IPS reporters would cover which presidential candidates and when. I went out on the road myself for some of them. I saw a great deal of Jimmy [Carter] and of Plains, Georgia, his hometown. Everybody got a shot, including colleague Wendy Ross, who was seven-months pregnant the time she went out. I got some raised eyebrows by assigning her because of her

"condition." She did a fine job. I covered Carter in the last week before Election Day, a swing to California, Michigan, New York and home to Georgia and Atlanta for an election-eve rally.

Carter won of course, narrowly, with Walter Mondale as his vice president. Three days after his inauguration [Jan. 23, 1977] Carter sent Mondale on a week-long diplomatic trip to Europe and Japan to meet with national leaders. I was assigned to go. There were stops in Brussels, Bonn, Berlin, Rome, Vatican City, London and Paris, and then we went over the pole, with refueling stops in Keflavik [Iceland] and Anchorage, to Tokyo. And then home. Amazing. There was little "news" in the trip. It was mainly a good-will tour. The trip itself became the story. The groggy press plane people tumbled onto the tarmac in Anchorage at midnight and serenaded Mondale's Air Force Two, beseeching him to join us for a stretch. He didn't show.

Q: How can you top that?

MUIR: Well, it turned out that I did. Two months later [in March 1977] I was up on the Hill covering some hearing when Carr called me and asked if I could fly out that night. Carter was sending Cyrus Vance, his secretary of state, to Moscow to try to revive talks on the first SALT [Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty] agreement. Normally, of course, our State Department reporter, Marie Koenig, would make the trip. But she had suddenly come down with a bug and couldn't go. Ed said the Soviet Embassy had been asked to prepare a visa for me. I got his call about 11 o'clock. The plane left at 8 that evening. I took a cab to the embassy -- actually to the consulate, in upper northwest DC -- picked up the visa, went home and packed, and drove to Andrews Air Force Base in time to catch the secretary's plane. There were maybe a dozen reporters on the flight.

Q: That was a thrill, wasn't it?

MUIR: That was a fascinating three days, but the reporting was thin. The Soviets rejected any substantive agreement and called the talks "one-sided." But that trip opened the door to further meetings. [High-level sessions continued over the next two years, finally leading to SALT Two, signed by President Carter and General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev in June 1979.] But that trip was also a sightseeing adventure. Aside from seeing the inside of the Kremlin, the press was taken to Lenin's Tomb and down to see the waxwork corpse itself. We also were guests at the Bolshoi for a ballet version of Anna Karenina. I bought a lambskin hat in Gum -- the big national department store across Red Square from the Kremlin -- and put a cheap red-star badge on it, imitating an officer's cap. Later, I was standing in Red Square with it on when a soldier spotted me, marched up to me and looked suspiciously at my hat. Then he broke into a laugh and said, "Ah, tourista!"

Q: (laughs) But there was still vodka, huh?

MUIR: Still vodka. The Soviet press threw a reception for us after the talks ended. The Americans were late to it because the final briefing at Spaso House [the American

ambassador's residence] ran long. When we got to the party we could see there had been a big spread laid out -- caviar, cheeses, vodka. But the Russian journalists had scarfed down all the caviar. Left us plenty of vodka, though.

Q: Mm-hmm, yeah. Now, all of this is pre-VOA, right?

MUIR: All of this is pre-VOA. Late in '78 I went down to the Voice of America offices, still on Independence Avenue at Fourth Street. The newsroom was up on the second floor by then. I met with Bernie Kaminski, the legendary chief of the newsroom, and Alan Heil, deputy director of VOA. I guess they had read some of my stuff. They invited me to come aboard. So in the spring of '79 I moved.

Q: Did you go there because you were dissatisfied with something you were doing?

MUIR: No, dissatisfied is the wrong word. I just felt I'd done everything I wanted to do after 12 years at IPS and was looking for a change.

Q: And so what did you do in the Voice when you first started there?

MUIR: The first thing I did was drop my middle initial -- O -- from my byline. On radio it would sound like I was an Irishman. My father's ancestors were Scots. Anyway, I was first put on the overnight news desk, four-to-midnight. I helped edit the output from the regional desks. Crazy hours, but the whole 24-hour buzz was fascinating. VOA went out pretty much around-the-clock, to different areas, of course. It was always, you know, dinnertime -- prime listening time -- someplace in the world. This was in the pre-computer days. The edited copy went to the teletype ladies and they punched it into the tapes that went to the various language services, and to English, of course.

After a couple of years on the overnight, Bernie called me in late one afternoon and said it was time I went overseas. He said the current bureau openings were Bangkok and Nairobi. I said I'd like Nairobi.

Q: How come you took Nairobi over Bangkok? Had you been in Thailand?

MUIR: I'd never been to Southeast Asia, nor have I since. Nor had I been to Africa. But that part of the world appealed to me. I'd read about it, you know, Hemingway, the search for the source of the Nile, Robert Ruark's stories, Egypt, the Congo's Heart of Darkness. Bernie said OK, and in the late spring of '81 I went out. There was an overnight stop in Paris. That's where the VOA's administrative people processed correspondents heading east. They set up your salary payments, processed the costs of running a bureau, handled your bills, etc. The next day I flew to Cairo and changed planes in the middle of the night, during which the air terminal's lights went out for a couple of hours. That's probably how they lost my luggage. I got on a plane to Nairobi while my gear got on a plane to Yemen. It caught up with me two days later. Meanwhile, my predecessor, Bob Chancellor, met me at Nairobi International Airport. He gave me a quick intro to the VOA residence and then bustled me downtown to get to work. It turned out that Kenya

was hosting the Organization of African Unity annual presidents' summit and it opened that day! Bob taped a few actualities -- tribal music, a few speech excerpts -- to send back to Washington, and then he was gone. I was left with the conference. The bureau was all mine, and would be for two years.

But two months after I arrived, on August 14, a terrible tragedy occurred. A friend and colleague from my USIA days, Everly Driscoll, came to Nairobi on an agency assignment to cover a United Nations energy conference. She was the principal science and aerospace correspondent for USIA and had written extensively on the U.S. space program, covering all of the Apollo flights. One evening, I offered to take her out to dinner at one of Nairobi's tourist favorites in the suburbs. As we left the lights of downtown I noticed a white Peugeot was following us. I was driving the VOA sedan, also a Peugeot, dark blue. By now we are on a darkened road, heading west toward the Ngong Hills. The white car stuck with us. Becoming concerned, I decided the closest safe place was the gated, and guarded, VOA residence. As I finally pulled up to my gate, the pursuers pulled in behind us. The Masai guard, fearing the worst, dropped his spear and ran. I got out to open the gate and four men leapt from the white car. As my car door swung shut, Everly hit the locks. One thief, carrying a pistol, took my wallet and demanded my car keys. I said they were locked in the car. He went around to the passenger side and smashed the window with his pistol. It went off. The bullet hit her in the head. The gunman reached in and opened the door and pulled her onto the ground. Then the four climbed into my car, backed it around their original vehicle, and drove off. Their car, it turned out, had also been stolen. A banging sound later came from the trunk. The car's owner and his passenger were found inside, unharmed. Meanwhile, a neighbor across the road had heard the gunshot and telephoned the police. They arrived half an hour later. "I'm sorry we are late," the officer in charge told me. "We did not have any petrol and had to send for some." I then phoned Washington and told the desk what happened. The neighbor across the street put me up for the night, in his guest room. The next day I was taken to the morgue, where I formally identified the body. Later in the week I accompanied her casket home to Austin, Texas, and told her parents and friends, gathered in the family living room, what had happened. After a few days back in Washington, I returned to duty in Nairobi. A month or so later I met President Daniel rap Moi's chief of security at a social event and asked him if he knew anything more about the carjacking. Yes, he said, adding, "They will not be bothering anyone anymore." The car had been found. The carjackers were dead.

Q: Um. You did a lot of traveling in Africa, right?

MUIR: I was responsible for nine mainland countries and four island countries in East Africa, from Khartoum [the Sudan] to Dar es Salaam [Tanzania]. During my tour I got to the nine [Sudan, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and Kenya]. -- but not the four island nations [Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius and Seychelles], although I did change planes once in the Seychelles on my way back to Kenya from a VOA correspondents-and-visiting-VOA-brass meeting in Cairo. Ever the occasional tourist, I spent a free afternoon taking a bus out to Giza, where I climbed the smallest of the three Great Pyramids [Menkaure, at 203 feet]. No one else was around.

From the top I saw the sun set into the Libyan Desert, and, turning east, looked down at the rump of the Sphinx, half a mile away.

My travels including hitching a plane ride with U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Jeanne Kirkpatrick when she came through Nairobi, having been sent by President [Ronald] Reagan to observe the 20th anniversary independence celebrations of Burundi and Rwanda. This was a decade before the horrendous Rwandan tribal massacres, but tensions already were festering in that area.

I went up to Mogadishu during Somalia's border dispute with Ethiopia and rode in an overnight truck convoy to the front lines where troops faced each other perhaps a couple hundred yards apart. I gestured across the empty red-dirt space between the trenches and glibly suggested, "I guess that's no-man's land, colonel?" and he shot back, "It is NOT no-man's land, it is OUR land!" They eventually settled the matter without firing a shot. Later, on another truck-ride, to eastern Somalia, I fell in with a team from Doctors Without Borders heading for an isolated village, where they treated infections, sewed up wounds, delivered a woman with complications during childbirth. They drove home at the end of the day playing a radio cassette of "Bridge Over Troubled Waters."

I hitched another plane ride with a medical group into southern Sudan where refugees were beginning to pile up in a remote camp, seeking medical help for wounds suffered during that country's north-south war. The misery was bad enough then, and it was, of course, to grow exponentially in the decades to come.

I made a number of flights over Lake Victoria into neighboring Uganda, still recovering from the ouster of President-for-Life Idi Amin by Tanzanian troops in 1979. Two years after that, when I first got there, buildings on the main streets of Kampala [the capital], were still riddled with bullet holes. And the roads leading away from Kampala were lined with piles of human bones, retrieved from the bush and placed there by Ugandans as a memorial to the hundreds of thousands of civilians murdered by Amin during his eight-year rule.

The border between Kenya and neighboring Tanzania had been closed since the collapse of the East Africa Community in 1977. The community had been an effort to create an economic power in the five-nation region. But greed, corruption and incompetence led to its failure after a decade. I got into Tanzania once, but only when a U.N.-sponsored event seeking to revive national relations was held in Arusha, which turned out to be all show and no go.

Most of my day-to-day reporting was based on the wires, phone stringers, official handouts, and reading the Kenyan newspapers. Considering the heavy hand of African governments in general, Kenya's were surprisingly free. Also, Mombassa was the main liberty port for the U.S. fleet on patrol in the Indian Ocean. There was the occasional news conference. The journalists dressed informally for almost all occasions, open-necked shirts, safari vests. One minister finally objected to this and demanded we wear

coats and ties. But at the next press meeting he called, nobody came. He rescinded the dress-code rule.

Q: And you had -- did you have a staff? Did you have a secretary, for instance?

MUIR: Yes. And an office assistant, a [member of the] Kikuyu [tribe], the dominant people in Kenya. I once asked him where he had been during the Mau Mau rebellion for independence from Britain [attained in 1962]. All he would say was, "in the bush." At first, the only regular stringer I had was a young UPI [United Press International] American free-lancer based in Kampala [Uganda]. Later I took on a young Ugandan who had friends in government and who could pass things on to me by phone. Eventually he was arrested by order of President Milton Obote and imprisoned. He was freed a few years later, and I eventually learned he died of AIDS. VOA also bought the main wire service tickers -- AP [Associated Press], Reuters, AFP [Agence France Press]. All the western-oriented journalists in East Africa were based in Nairobi. It is the only civilized city between the Cape [South Africa] and Cairo [Egypt]. Sharing the office block with me in Nairobi were the self-proclaimed "hacks" for the AP, Reuters, the BBC, the London Times, and the Los Angeles Times. The AFP had ensconced itself in another building nearby. I had nothing to do with USIS or with the U.S. Embassy [its building was destroyed in 1998 in a terrorist bombing] -- except to attend the ambassador's Fourth of July party. I did, in the line of duty, interview a few AID [Agency for International Development] people. They talked mostly about "sending money down a rat hole." Not useful, you might say.

Q: And the stuff you were sending back, was it -- was that played back by the services? English to Africa, the language services?

MUIR: Yeah.

Q: Did you ever file by cable as well as voice?

MUIR: Everything I wrote was voiced first. I had a nice little closet studio in my office that sent my broadcasts to London. London then would process the transmission and send it on to Washington. And I sent a backup text to Washington via a telephone-box hookup. Crude but effective communication, hardly what the coming computer age would offer in the field.

Q: Uh-huh.

MUIR: Despite the time zone differences with Washington -- seven hours -- it was usually a normal 9-to-5 Nairobi-time job for me. I would finish feeding Washington around 5 o'clock in Nairobi, sit down for dinner at home or in a restaurant by 7, turn on my little short-wave radio on the table and, bingo, there my voice was coming back. It amused those sitting with me.

Q: (laughs) And you were there how long?

MUIR: Two years.

Q: And your family wasn't with you?

MUIR: My wife, Phyllis, was with me, coming out six months after I did. Our three children were all grown. But while we were in Nairobi, our youngest daughter got married, in Vermont, and we told her we were sorry we couldn't get to the wedding but asked them if they would like to spend their honeymoon in Kenya. They jumped at the chance. Then -- this was August 1982 -- on the Sunday before the Thursday they were due to arrive, there was a coup attempt against Kenya's President Moi. He was a couple thousand miles away in Tripoli, at the annual Organization of African Unity [OAU] meeting. So was I. The conference turned into a debacle because host president Muammar Qadhafi was trying to jam his particular brand of socialism down his fellow-president's throats, and also because the Nairobi coup attempt, led by the Air Force, had sent a number of shaky African presidents scurrying home in mid-session. The western reporters finally got out of Tripoli three days later, after the coup was brutally quashed and the airports were reopened. I arrived in Nairobi, by way of Athens, 12 hours after my daughter and her new husband. They had landed on the first flight allowed in after the coup attempt. But they had a marvelous honeymoon.

The conference had produced little news, except for the deadlock itself. Early on, the Reuters and Associated Press correspondents and myself had wangled an interview with Qadhafi, and we were escorted into his presence by four young female bodyguards, in uniform and armed with AK-47s. Qadhafi was known to be able to speak English, as well as Arabic of course, but he chose to conduct the interview in French. The Reuters man was fluent enough to translate for the three of us. We got a spiel about The Green Book, which was Qadhafi's Mein Kampf, and heard his pitch for unifying Africa under his leadership. One had to admit he did have one thing backing him up. Thanks to Libyan oil profits, he was financing not only the OAU but also most of the anti-government guerrilla wars under way in Africa at that time.

Q. Did you ever cover the OAU again?

MUIR: Early in the next year, briefly. The 1983 Organization of African Unity conference was in Addis Ababa, where I was kicked out by the Ethiopian government on the second day. I had broadcast nothing by then on the conference, but had filed a piece on the OAU's then-25th anniversary, back to Washington, through the government censors, of course. That afternoon two men in civilian clothes knocked on my hotel room door and said they had come to take me to the airport. I packed and we went. They never said why. Ethiopia's leader was Mengistu Haile Mariam, a Marxist who had led the ouster of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1975. Mengistu was finally overthrown in 1991 and he ran away to Zimbabwe. He was convicted in absentia of genocide.

That was my last major assignment during the tour, which ended a month later when I rotated back to Washington, in the late spring of 1983.

Q: So you rotated back. And then?

MUIR: And then the editor of the Africa News Desk retired and I got the job, editing newsroom copy written for the Africa Service, which I pretty much kept until I retired.

Q: Pretty much?

MUIR: In 1986 I did go back to Nairobi for a month-long TDY while my successor, Jim Malone, was on home leave. As Africa Desk editor I was given the chance on my brief return to Nairobi to swing through the two other Africa bureaus, in Ivory Coast and South Africa. [Cairo was not considered an Africa bureau because of its focus on the Middle East.]

Ivory Coast included a strange adventure. After inspecting the Abidjan bureau, I hopped a bus up-country 125 miles, to the country's administrative capital, Yamoussoukro, which was also the home village of the country's reigning president, Felix Houphouet-Boigny. As a monument to himself, he had ordered the construction there of a huge basilica, Our Lady of Peace, whose dome was to be big enough to contain that of St. Peter's in Rome. I walked out of town to get a close-up look at it. A military patrol emerged from the bush and held me at gunpoint. I stood in the hot sun while they decided what to do with me. They finally took me to an air-conditioned trailer where a French engineer in charge of construction was sitting behind a desk. He told me, with a sigh, to surrender the film in my camera. I had taken some pictures of the unfinished, pink sandstone immensity. He then told me to go away and take the first bus back to Abidjan. I did. I noticed that the soldiers were miffed. Five years later, the basilica was finished. When Houphouet-Boigny died in 1993, he was buried there with great pomp, with 7,000 people crowded inside for the service.

The major event of my Johannesburg bureau stopover was a trip out to Soweto, the huge slum suburb for blacks, the wretched epitome of apartheid. I had seen teeming slums in Nairobi, but this ocean of humanity was appallingly greater. Since I had no government journalist card for my bureau visits, I could report neither from Ivory Coast nor South Africa. I could only let the experiences burn in. My Nairobi working tour was quiet.

I didn't see Africa again until two decades later, after I retired, when Phyllis and I took a vacation trip to Egypt in 2006 and traveled from Cairo up the Nile to Abu Simbel on Lake Nasser, and back.

Q: Nairobi was your last assignment overseas?

MUIR: Well, in 1988, they sent me out on a special project to India.

Q: Mm-hmm.

MUIR: VOA wanted to send a team to India to teach real journalism, western radio journalism, to third world journalists. They hooked me up with a guy from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and he and I met in New Delhi that October to help teach a six-week course. Which we created from scratch, by the way.

Q: How many students?

MUIR: We had 14, as I recall.

Q: Where did they come from?

MUIR: They were all radio journalists, adults in their 20s or 30s, from five countries.

Q: They were chosen by whom?

MUIR: It was a government-level decision, arranged by the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi. The students were nominated by their national radios. They came from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, South Vietnam and, of course, India.

Q: Was it VOA sponsored?

MUIR: I think officials from VOA and the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] got together over drinks on day and said, "Hey, this should be going on."

Q: Uh-huh.

MUIR: Anyway, we were talking to intelligent people, but who knew little about the first-world concept of news.

Q: These were broadcasters though, not print media.

MUIR: All radio people. We offered what you might call Radio Journalism 101. We discussed what "news" is and how what looks like news can actually be propaganda. We talked about how you present news in a less flexible society without insulting people in power. We pointed out the difference between facts and truth and suggested that a country could be stronger sticking with truth, and not just putting out a bunch of facts, like steel production figures or education scores or election results -- which could be factual but wrong. We picked stories out of the daily papers to press home our points. We tried not to preach. The students were attentive and polite.

At the end we had a reception and thanked them for their interest in our ideas. One lady, from Nepal Radio, said it had been a "wonderful" experience. "But," she added, "you must remember. In Nepal, what King wants, King gets." [Some years later, that King was shot during an intra-family bloodbath in 2001. And, after years of civil strife, the country voted to oust the monarchy in 2008.]

Q: Did you write that up for anybody?

MUIR: I wrote a report for VOA.

Q: That was your last job?

MUIR: I left the Africa Desk and wrote science pieces for the back of the broadcasts. By late September in 1991 I had spent 12 years with the Voice, and nearly 25 years in the foreign service with the Agency. I felt that it was time to retire.

Q: And what did it all add up to?

MUIR: It all added up to that I had a wonderful experience doing what the United States should still be doing on a regular basis, doing what President [Dwight] Eisenhower envisioned in his people-to-people concept when he created the Agency in 1953. But USIA has been shut down, its output replaced by State-speak, facts often blurring truth, as I warned my students in Delhi. I had been involved with some fine people and some information mechanisms that could make a lot of difference in the world. But that's now all gone.

Q: You say it's all gone, but of course the Voice is still in business.

MUIR: The Voice is still in business and working hard, but Congressional politics, world affairs and communications technology have all affected VOA's role by reducing or redirecting its message. That's reality, I guess. The news business everywhere isn't what it used to be, and not necessarily for the better. After USIA was folded into State in 2001, the United States doesn't really talk to regular people much anymore.

Q: No, I know. I realize that. Yeah. It's very unfortunate.

MUIR: And it's tragic. The Congress and the executive branch just don't like information going out that they do not directly control on a regular basis.

Q: But as that process was taking place, the end of USIA, were you in a position to be aware of what was going on?

MUIR: I guess not. I knew certain elements on the Hill didn't trust us. Once, when I was at an embassy reception in Nairobi, a visiting U.S. senator took me aside and asked me about a piece I had recently done quoting a president of a small African country. He had been critical of some U.S. policy in Africa. The senator chided me for doing that, and then asked, "We both work for the same President [Ronald Reagan] don't we?" I didn't say "so what," but I did tell the senator that he and I had different jobs to do.

Q: But I wonder if even the people who were in the Agency's upper levels were privy to the deals that were being struck.

MUIR: I certainly didn't know of any deals to eliminate the independent agency.

Q: Right. Well, I have a feeling that that could have been done differently, but not by somebody like you or Dick Carr [who was the editor of IPS at the end]. It had to be done at the upper level. But those people at the upper level had two problems: one was that there were a lot of people who aspired to be ambassadors or deputy chiefs of mission, and the prospect of going back into the State Department put them that much closer to their -- that kind of goal. And there were a lot of people there who didn't really care very much about the media elements in the agency, and didn't -- not only didn't care, didn't understand them.

MUIR: Didn't understand, because the number of journalists who were involved in this operation became fewer and fewer.

Q; Of course. That's true.

MUIR: It had originally been very much a journalistic enterprise.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

MUIR: And nobody outside of that field could accept that.

Q: Yeah, right. Right.

MUIR: Journalism requires having certain rights as well as taking on certain responsibilities.

Q: Yes, independence.

MUIR: And independence is the key word there. More and more I came to admire President Eisenhower.

Q: Yes, Eisenhower really had a feel for that, but he brought that out of World War II with him.

MUIR: He was a military politician who could talk to people and make them understand the importance of communicating.

Q: Yeah, I think Eisenhower's take on it, from his war experience of having to make different countries work together, or, in his case, fight together for a common cause. He saw the establishment of USIA as a peace-time outgrowth of that.

MUIR: Yes.

Q: It's terrible, as you say, a tragedy, that we let it slip away.

MUIR: Absolutely. And we're paying the price every day.

Q: Yeah, without realizing it. Do you have anything else to say in closing?

MUIR: I was very lucky.

Q: I agree with you. You had a very interesting career.

End of interview