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

AMBASSADOR ALLAN P. MUSTARD

Interviewed by: Ted MacLaughlin
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INTERVIEW

Childhood and Education

Q: Today is March 11, 2021, one pm and this is the first interview we'll do with Ambassador Mustard, but we'll probably have other sessions, because one or two hours is not enough time to cover your career. So what we'll start with, if you don't mind, is your personal life, and then we'll go into an overview of the career, including your rise to ambassador, including work in the 1990s during the collapse of the USSR, and then many other things we can talk about, specifically job by job, go through it. And then some issues that you thought would be insightful for everybody to learn about. The first question I'd like to ask, just to start with your personal life, is where did you grow up?

MUSTARD: I grew up on the West Coast, in the Pacific Northwest. My family is a microcosm of the history of the United States. I have some ancestors who emigrated from England in the 1600s, came over to the colonies, one of them as an indentured servant. Some of the others came over I believe as land prospectors. And interestingly enough one of those families, the Congers, ended up fighting in the Revolutionary War under the command of General Washington and the other family, the Packwoods, ended up in Virginia and fought on the southern front of the American Revolution under General Nathanael Green. So I have roots going back to the colonial days through the American Revolution. I have ancestors who fought in the War of 1812, in the war with Mexico, in the Civil War. We still have the musket that belonged to my great-great-grandfather. That was issued to him and he was allowed to keep it after the Civil War.

The Mustards emigrated from Scotland to Canada in the 1840s and then after thirty years in Canada, in the 1870s they moved down to Kansas, where they bought a bunch of farmland. They began farming in Kansas, but then in the 1890s my great-grandfather got itchy feet. He briefly moved to Texas and then that didn't pan out very well, so in 1912 he moved the family up to Washington state and began farming on the farm that I grew up on. That family married into various other folks who had come out there, including into the Packwood family. My paternal grandmother was descended from the Packwoods, so we have pioneer roots. The Packwoods came out to Washington when it was still Oregon Territory, also in the 1840s. They arrived in Yamhill, Oregon, in January 1845, and then after a couple years in Oregon moved up to what is now Washington state, up to the Nisqually Flats. So in 1847 my great-great-great-grandfather, Billy Packwood, settled on the Nisqually Flats east of Olympia. And like I say, I mean, this is a microcosm of American history.

Part of the family went down to California in 1849 to prospect for gold, and of course they found a little bit of gold and brought it back; and I remember in childhood seeing gold nuggets. I've no idea where they are now, where they got to. Reflecting back on my

family history it really is interesting to me that it was really a microcosm of American history.

Growing up in the Northwest, it was interesting being on a farm, living on a farm, because from early childhood you start to work, you learn how to work, and you learned that when you're raising crops and when you're producing milk and have dairy cows, cows have to be milked every day, twice a day. There are no days off. There are no weekends off. It is not a nine-to-five job. So you develop a work ethic that's a little bit different from the work ethic that people who grow up in cities develop. To me it was a valuable experience in that I learned how to operate independently. We were expected, if we saw something that needed to be fixed, to fix it, not to come running to dad and ask him permission to fix it. You simply did what needed to be done. If the fence was down, you put the fence back up. If the cows were out, you put them back into the pen or field they belonged in. You just did things because they needed to be done and I carried that work ethic throughout my career—willingness to work on weekends, willingness to work in the evenings, if that was what was necessary to accomplish the mission.

There were my father and mother, of course, in the family. My father was a veterinarian and also a dairy farmer. My mother taught school. I had two brothers and a sister, and then my grandparents, my paternal grandparents, lived across the driveway in another farmhouse. There were two farmhouses on the farm so I grew up in very close proximity to my grandparents.

Q: Did you get some nurturing from them? Did they watch after you when you were real little?

MUSTARD: Yeah, when we were little my grandmother babysat us while my mom was teaching school. Once we were out of diapers she went back to teaching and my grandmother was our caregiver during the days.

Q: When did you start working? How young were you when you started working on the farm, do you recall?

MUSTARD: Oh, yeah, well I learned to drive a truck and a tractor at age five. We had a 1939 GMC dump truck that the dump mechanism had quit working on, so my dad bought it at an auction because it didn't function as a dump truck, but it was fine for use on the farm as a utility truck. And it had a hand throttle, so he could get into the truck, set the hand throttle, put it in compound low so that it would move at about a mile an hour, and I could stand on the driver's seat and steer it between the bales when we were out picking up hay. So we would hay and my dad would be up on the back of the truck, and he hired a couple of high school boys to pitch the bales up onto the back of the truck, and then his five-year-old son was up there standing on the driver's seat driving the truck. And that was big stuff. I mean, I thought I had really grown up because I was five years old and I was driving a two and a half ton truck.

I guess around age thirteen he started trusting me to drive the tractor by myself, so I would go out and use the tractor for whatever we needed, whether it was green chopping— We fed a lot of grass to the cows in the summertime, we would do green chop, we put up silage, we put up hay, and so dad trusted me to operate the tractor and most of the equipment. The one thing he never let me operate was the grain combine. We had a very small John Deere Model 12 grain combine. He would try to raise some oats, some rye, and some barley every year. And because the Pacific Northwest is so rainy and so wet—you know, our farm got ninety inches of rain a year and some of that would come during the summer time—you could never predict when you would have rain, potentially when you were haying or when you were trying to bring in grain. So we lost every other grain crop. He would raise fifteen acres of grain and figure on losing the crop every other year.

Because the combine was an old used combine that he had bought at an auction, and it was pretty finicky, he never allowed me to touch it. I never got to run the grain combine, but I ran pretty much everything else.

Q: So where is the farm? I understand there is kind of a divide between eastern and western Washington, eastern is dry and western is wet.

MUSTARD: Right, the Cascade Mountains divide the state into roughly a third and two-thirds, and the eastern two-thirds of the state is pretty dry. It's in the rain shadow of the Cascades. Whereas the west side of course gets the bulk of the rain, the precipitation. So we were on the west side of the mountains and about ninety miles southwest of Seattle at the base of the Olympic Peninsula.

Q: Does the family still own the farm?

MUSTARD: My little brother owns the farm. He's farming it now.

Q: So are you the oldest of the four children?

MUSTARD: No, I was the number three child.

Q: Your sister is—

MUSTARD: She's older, and the oldest is my older brother who died in 1993. My sister's alive and my younger brother is alive.

Q: So how would you describe your personality as a young boy? You had initiative.

MUSTARD: Well, I was pretty studious. I never had great coordination. I've never been really physically robust so I tended to focus on studies and on intellectual development. You know, growing up on the farm, you, in the evening once the chores are done, you come in the house and it's pouring down rain outside, not much to do outside. So in the

wintertime we amused ourselves pretty much by reading, and unlike a lot of the farm families out there, we had a lot of reading material in the house. I remember in fifth grade, my fifth-grade teacher at one point asked everybody in the class to make a list of all of the periodicals to which we subscribed in our household. So I went down the list of everything that we had in the house. My dad had his professional magazines, being a veterinarian. My mother had her professional magazines, being a teacher. My dad had some of the dairying and general farming magazines like *Hoard's Dairyman* and *Successful Farming*, things like that. We always took *Time* and *Newsweek* and *U.S. News & World Report*. We took newspapers, two local news, three actually, three local newspapers. So when I totaled it all up, everything we were subscribed to came out to seventy-nine different periodicals that we had in the household. I reported that to my fifth grade teacher, and he called me up to the front of the class and called me a liar in front of the class. He said, "Nobody has that many periodicals." I went home, told my dad. My dad called the superintendent, and he and the superintendent and the teacher sat down. They had a little chat about calling me out, calling me a liar in front of the class, because, he said, "We do subscribe to seventy-nine periodicals in our household." It was so unusual that he simply couldn't believe it.

We had a *Compton's Encyclopedia* and, if there was nothing else to do or to read, I would sit down and I would read random encyclopedia articles. And of course there was always homework from school, so I just always enjoyed reading. And my main memory of childhood is that when not working we were either out riding our Shetland ponies or we were reading.

Q: So you didn't have TV?

MUSTARD: We had TV but quite frankly, you know, my mother watched three television programs that she absolutely loved. She watched "Perry Mason," "Have Gun – Will Travel," and oh, golly, I think the other one was "Peter Gunn." So, you know, aside from those we would watch "The King Family" variety show sometimes, and of course when "Star Trek" came out in the 1960s we would watch "Star Trek," but I don't remember watching TV all that much. My dad used to watch "Gunsmoke," that was his big thing, watching "Gunsmoke." He absolutely had to watch "Gunsmoke." But TV was not that big a part of our lives. It was there, we watched the TV news, and dad watched the weather report every night. He was religious about that. He always wanted to watch the weather report because if you're a farmer your life depends on the weather, so he always stayed up late to watch the weather report before going to bed.

But we were dairying and my dad decided at one point that he didn't want to sell to the local cooperative any more. He wanted to sell under his own brand. So we started bottling our own milk and he started delivering it as a one-man operation, just us kids helping him, and it made good money. He had more money doing that than he had by selling to the co-op, but he also had no free time. Now, while he was doing that he decided we needed to advertise and one of the ways he wanted to advertise was by putting us in parades. All the little municipalities around there have parades and we

would enter something in the parade, some sort of a float, and it started out that it was just the Shetland ponies pulling a wagon or something like that with some signs on it.

Well then he and my older brother decided they wanted to break a yoke of oxen, which they did. They got a couple of Hereford steers and broke them to the yoke and my brother would drive them pulling a sledge, and as they got bigger and bigger pretty quick they were pulling a wagon. And before you knew it my dad went out, he found somebody who had an old covered wagon in his barn, traded some veterinary work for it, brought it home, and had it rebuilt. I remember we ordered wheels. The wheels were rotted out so we had to order wheels from Pennsylvania for it. So we had this covered wagon pulled by a yoke of oxen, and my sister would ride sidesaddle on one of our horses and the rest of us would carry that Civil War musket that belonged to my great-great-grandfather. And we would go around saying, You know these are all antiques but there's nothing antique about our dairying technique, our milk is perfectly safe to drink and high quality—which it was. And so those are some of my early memories there as a kid—all these parades that we were in, going around, and all the work that was involved in and decorating the floats.

Q: It sounds like that was hard work but also a lot of fun.

MUSTARD: Oh, yeah, it was fun. My dad was selling Shetland ponies on the side—anything to make a little bit of money—and of course we kids would break the Shetland ponies and as fast as we could break them he'd sell them. So we were constantly having to deal with these unbroken or half-broken Shetland ponies. Shetland ponies are smart and they're very quick to learn how to throw you off and how to scrape you off on trees and things like that. So that was the challenge, learning how to deal with the Shetland ponies and break them so that you could ride them and drive them in harness and that sort of thing.

It always broke my heart, 'cause just as we got a pony to the point and later on a quarter horse— I broke my dad's quarter horses for him, he started raising quarter horses for a little while. And I get it just broke, just right, to sell them. So I was always very annoyed.

Q: Did you get affectionate toward the animals or was it just the work that you put into it?

MUSTARD: Well, I liked the animals and I liked working with the animals, and my frustration came from the fact that just as you got a pony or a horse broke just the way you wanted it to be—I mean, teaching a quarter horse to neck rein, teaching it how to pivot, to do something—and you just get it right where you wanted it, and somebody'd come up and offer my dad five hundred dollars and the horse was gone. Of course he got five hundred dollars; I got my twenty-five cents a week allowance.

Q: What was the percentage of animals versus crops would you say at your farm?

MUSTARD: Well, we dairied until 1973. In 1973 Dad sold out the herd. We were running a milking string of about thirty-six cows and that, it's hard to say, Ted, because we were growing green chop for the cows, and we also put up silage, but he bought ninety tons of alfalfa hay from eastern Washington, from the Royal Slope, every year. So how much of the land was in crops? A lot of times he would contract out some of the land, lease it to people to grow potatoes. There were some people in the valley who grew potatoes and they would lease land from him. The cannery would come around and want to plant peas and so we would lease land to them. They would plant peas for canning. Things like that. So I can't really say how much was crops. I mean the problem, too, with that is normally you would say, Well, we made this much money from crops and we made this much money from dairying, but the farm broke even. The farm never turned a profit the whole time we lived there. It was a breakeven proposition the entire time that he was dairying. After he got rid of the cows in 1973, he went back to full-time veterinary practice and he was still growing crops and we had the horses. He was raising Clydesdale horses at that point. When he turned fifty he decided he wanted to have Clydesdales.

Q: He shifted from Shetland ponies to Clydesdales?

MUSTARD: Exactly, so he started breeding Clydesdales and he had those Clydesdales from, I guess he got them in 1972, he got his first Clydesdale mare, and he had them up until around the year 2000. I was in Vienna serving at the embassy when he decided he needed to start selling off the Clydesdales, 'cause he was getting old enough that he couldn't lift the harness up to harness them anymore, he was losing his upper body strength. So he said, "Aw, I need to advertise and I don't know how to do it." And I said, "Well, have my brother-in-law, Howard"—who was living at the farm with my sister at the time—"Have Howard take photographs of them and scan them and send them to me and I'll advertise for you." So I put together a website and advertised it in some online horse magazines and people started calling Dad and they bought his horses. Dad at one point wrote me an email, he said, "I don't understand how you're doing this. You're in Vienna. How in the world are you advertising my horses when you're halfway around the world?" I tried to explain how the Internet works, that you can put things on the web and people all over the world will see them.

Q: When did you leave the farm to go to high school or college?

MUSTARD: I went to high school locally in Montesano and then I did two years in the local community college, Grays Harbor College, in Aberdeen and after two years there, I was nineteen, I transferred to the University of Washington. In those days you could transfer to the University of Washington from any community college in the state without having to take entrance exams, so I never took any entrance exams. I never took the SAT or any of that stuff as I started out in community college and then transferred. I was nineteen when I moved up to Seattle and I have supported myself ever since. My parents didn't have enough money to put me through college, so I had to work my way through college and once I left the farm I was pretty much on my own from then on.

So moved up to Seattle to the university, started out majoring in political science, ended up dual majoring in political science and Slavic languages and literature, and the one Slavic language that I studied formally, of course, was Russian. And that is because at Grays Harbor there was a professor of Russian, Elmer Wagner. Grays Harbor, being a community college, wasn't a large place, and they only had about eight hundred day students, total enrollment of two thousand including the night school, and they taught two foreign languages, German and Russian, so I studied both of those languages. I'd had German in high school and picked up some Russian at Grays Harbor and when I transferred I had done my homework, I realized that the University of Washington at that time had the largest undergraduate program in Russian language in the United States and one of the best, so I decided to go ahead and continue my studies in Russian and ended up dual majoring in Russian and political science.

Q: That seems amazing because the rest of the country did mostly French and Spanish. Was it because there were a lot of German and Russian people living in the Northwest, or what was it that made it—?

MUSTARD: I can't tell you why Elmer Wagner was there and why he was teaching Russian. I never got around to asking him and it never occurred to me to ask him why he had learned Russian and why he was teaching at Grays Harbor. But it was just a fluke. If he'd been teaching some other language I would've learned that but as it turned out I studied Russian and then when I got to the University of Washington discovered that it had a really very highly rated program in Russian studies, in Russian language in particular. The University of Washington was one of the first three universities in the United States to teach Russian. Columbia was one, I've forgotten what the other one was, but they started teaching Russian I think back in the 1930s. So it was a program that had been around for a while and was well established. They had the Russian House and so I moved into the Russian House, and the rule was in the Russian House you had to speak Russian any time you were inside the house. So you either learned Russian or you kept your mouth shut.

Q: What was it that got you into political affairs in addition to Russian? What was it in your childhood that inspired you?

MUSTARD: A friend of my father's, Carolyn Granstrom, loaned me a book when I was in my early teens by Bill Lederer and Eugene Burdick, *Sarkhan*. *Sarkhan* is the sequel to the first novel that they wrote together, *The Ugly American*, and of course *The Ugly American* was later turned into a movie with Marlon Brando but I read the sequel first and then went back a couple years later and read *The Ugly American*. And when I got done reading those two books I thought to myself, you know, the people that Lederer and Burdick describe as American diplomats sound like real idiots and I could do better than that. I could be a better diplomat than the idiots in these books. So that got me interested in studying international affairs and political science and one thing led to another, first at Grays Harbor College, and then on to the UW. I still have my copies of those two books,

and I've gone back and reread them a couple of times, and I'm still convinced that I was a better diplomat than the people who are described in those books.

Q: Well, those guys were total dummkopfs, yeah. They really, really, messed it up. I'm sure you were. Well, that's interesting, that was always the standard, "I want to be better than those guys."

MUSTARD: Yeah, at a bare minimum, it's a low bar, but that was the bar I wanted to get over. And of course when I was a senior in high school and was trying to figure out where to go to college and was looking for scholarships, 'cause we didn't have any money and my parents had made it clear they could afford to send me to Grays Harbor but after two years at Grays Harbor I was going to have to find someplace else to transfer to. The high school had a guidance counselor, who was also the basketball coach. He didn't like me because I'm six foot four, you know, I was one of the tallest boys in school, but I because I'm a klutz and have no real hand-eye coordination I had not turned out for any sports including basketball. He held that against me, that I had refused to turn out for basketball knowing I'd be catastrophically bad at it.

So I went to him, asking him for advice, and he said, "What do you want to do?" And I told him, "One of the things I want to pursue is the possibility of being a diplomat." And he said, "Nobody from Montesano ever amounted to anything. You should just give that up because you won't be able to compete with the big city boys. Nobody from Montesano has ever amounted to anything, so you should be a veterinarian like your father or maybe a pharmacist like one of my other classmates' fathers, but you shouldn't even think about going off and being a diplomat." That made me pretty angry. I decided I'd give at least a shot and if I failed, I failed. But if I did manage to do what I wanted to do, great, that'd be terrific.

Q: Did you ever go back to a high-school reunion and tell him?

MUSTARD: I've been back to a couple high school reunions and there are a number of people in high school who know that story, some of my classmates. They get a real chuckle out of it because he gave bad advice to some of the other kids too. There were some kids he told that they shouldn't even go to college. He didn't think they were smart enough to go to college. And these were kids who were honor roll students, but he said, "No, nobody from Montesano ever amounted to anything," which I knew was not true. I think it's important to have role models and to know people who have accomplished something.

There was a fellow from Montesano, from the town where the county seat is, where I went to high school, by the name of Reuben Fleet. Reuben Fleet was a major in the Army Air Service in World War I. When he was discharged he decided to move from Montesano down to California and found a company to build airplanes. Everybody just laughed at him and said he was crazy and was gonna go down and lose his shirt, he'd be back up home pretty soon, working in the woods as a logger again. Reuben Fleet founded

Fleet Aircraft, which then a few years later merged with a bunch of other companies to become Consolidated Aircraft, which then merged with Vultee to become Consolidated Vultee, and in the 1950s was renamed Convair, and Convair of course eventually morphed into General Dynamics.

One of our family tragedies is that Reuben Fleet knew my grandfather. My grandfather was also a pilot in the First World War, although he never saw combat, he never made it all the way to France, but Major Reuben Fleet knew my grandfather through the air service and invited him to get in on the ground floor as an investor in this company. My grandfather didn't have the money and so he could not, and another fellow on the Harbor who invested a thousand dollars, the same amount of money that my grandfather was asked to invest, was worth forty-three million dollars in General Dynamics stock when he died in the 1970s, so you know, we kept telling my grandfather, "Grandpa what were you thinking, why didn't you do that? We would be millionaires now!" He would just throw up his hands, but really Reuben Fleet of course was somebody I knew about, I knew he was from Montesano and I knew he had amounted to something. So I was not put off by the guidance counselor.

Q: Describe a little more about your college. It must have been encouraging because you'd already had an inkling of going into foreign affairs, and as a language student, did it encourage you because you did well there? What happened to encourage you?

MUSTARD: Well, as I said, I had always been fairly studious all the way through grade school and high school. I had always tried to get good grades, and figured that was more of a future for me than working in the woods as a logger or farming. I knew I didn't want to be a farmer; I knew I didn't want to be a veterinarian. My dad used to take me out to help him with veterinary work. I remember one night, two o'clock in the morning, he got me out of bed. There was a cow that had swallowed a potato, and the problem with that is that cows' gullets get narrower as they approach the stomach and so the potato had lodged. So he said to do a rumenotomy, which means you make an incision on the left side of the cow, you go into the rumen with your arm and try to pass a garden hose back up through the esophagus to push that potato back out of the cow's mouth, and we worked on this for about a half an hour. My dad anesthetized the cow around the incision and I put my arm in there and in her rumen, tried to reach all the way up to one of the other chambers of the stomach. They have a four-chambered stomach, and I didn't have enough flexibility in my arm to do it, so we ended up having to put the poor cow down. There was no way we could save her.

And then for the next two weeks I had to sleep in the same bed with this arm that had been inside the rumen of a cow. And it stank to high heaven, you know, because the rumen is where the grass ferments, okay, and so it's one of the stinkiest places on earth. And I literally would sleep with my nose pointed in the opposite direction from my arm and sleep with it stretched out. I washed it with Listerine and everything I could think of, and the smell would just not go away. After that experience I said I am not going to be a veterinarian.

Q: That was a lesson, and it put you in the direction you needed to go.

MUSTARD: And you know in high school during the winter time on Saturdays I would plant trees. I was trying to make money. My objective was to go to Europe. I was studying German in high school and I wanted to go to Europe. So at the age of seventeen I made my first international trip on money that I had earned by planting trees for Weyerhaeuser for three cents a tree. Three and a half cents on hillsides. If it was level ground it was three cents a tree.

Q: How big are these trees?

MUSTARD: They're saplings, you know, they're about two feet tall. So you carried a bag of five hundred on your hip, and you carried a shovel or a hodag, and you went around and planted trees six feet apart. I did that for a few years, a few winters every Saturday and then saved enough money that I could buy a charter ticket and a rail pass, and took an air charter out of Boeing Field in Seattle to Brussels, spent a month bumming around Europe. I bought a copy of *Europe on $10 a Day* and slept on a lot of park benches, and of course with the rail pass you can sleep on railcars, go someplace on an overnight train. You can sleep in the sleeper compartment and turn around and come back the other way. So all kinds of these tricks that you learn, but it was a marvelous experience and really exposed me for the first time to what it was like in foreign countries, and that really whetted my appetite for an international career.

Q: What year was that?

MUSTARD: That was 1973, that was the year that I graduated from high school.

Q: You went totally by yourself, no buddies?

MUSTARD: Yeah, totally by myself and while I was gone one of my mother's friends asked her if she'd lost her mind. She said, "He is seventeen years old. You're turning him loose for a month in Europe." And of course this is before the days of cell phones and the Internet, anything like that. Once you were there, you were there, and then I could send letters back to them and they could send letters to me poste restante, general delivery, if they thought I was going to be someplace I could go in and pick it up, but otherwise there was no communication. We couldn't afford international phone calls, that was too expensive, so I was for all intents and purposes on my own for a month. My mother's comment was, "I wasn't worried about it because he is smart enough that if he doesn't know what's going on, he'll ask and he'll always ask questions." So she didn't worry about me.

Q: What inspired you to do that? Somebody must have done that?

MUSTARD: I wanted to, you know, I had been studying German in high school and I wanted to go to Germany to practice my German and see if I could actually communicate in German. And what I discovered was that no, I actually could not communicate very well in German. And because there are so many dialects of German, I could understand the people who spoke High German, but as soon as I got someplace where they spoke in one of the dialects I was completely lost.

Q: So in Germany in those days not everybody spoke High German, they spoke those regional languages.

MUSTARD: That was my experience, was that most of the people were speaking regional dialects and of course I went to a few other places, and you know, I ended up in Austria and of course Austrian German is completely different.

Q: Was that High German or Low German?

MUSTARD: Well, I guess it's High German but it's a Bavarian-style accent, it's a very kind of a southern accent, and so the phonetics are different and there are some peculiarities in terms of vocabulary. There are certain things Austrian say that Germans don't say.

Q: So what was the funnest experience during that month that you were in Europe at seventeen?

MUSTARD: The funnest experience, golly—

Q: And then you can say, the most valuable experience.

MUSTARD: I think the funnest experience was one evening in Brussels. I was going around trying to find a youth hostel that could put me up for the night because I really needed a shower and I'd been bumming for a few days and I needed a shower. I needed to get cleaned up and the youth hostels were full up, nobody had any room. I went to a couple or three, and finally had the last one on my list I was going to go to. I was a little bit lost, so I stopped a guy on the street and I asked him if he knew where this place was. He started to explain to me in English where it was, and I said, "Thank you," and then he said, "Come, in my car." He had a little Simca so I got in his Simca and we went to that youth hostel in his car, and they were full up, too, and so I was stuck with no place to stay. He said, "Come with me," and so he put me up for a week in his apartment and that was an experience, 'cause I got to meet his family and they treated me like family and I was just, that was a marvelous experience, as being kind of taken in as a refugee by this Belgian family. I unfortunately lost touch with him. He moved later on in the pre-Internet era and I've never been able to track him down. I've tried, but that was a marvelous experience.

In terms of probably the most valuable experience, I happened to land in Vienna, took the, you know, I was taking the train everyplace with this student rail pass, and I ended up in Vienna at one point and happened to be there on the Fourth of July when they were having the Fourth of July community picnic for the American community. And I looked at Vienna and I looked at the fact that we had an American embassy there and I thought to myself, You know what, this would be a really sweet gig, being assigned to the American embassy in Vienna sometime, wouldn't it? I always had that in the back of my mind from that summer of '73, of thinking about how, gee, I'd like to get back to Vienna and work in the embassy.

Q: Did you ever think about the Peace Corps? With the farm business, and the international, that's sort of the classic FASer.

MUSTARD: Well, sort of, because my older brother went in the Peace Corps to stay out of Vietnam. That was 1970 and he did the Peace Corps in India very briefly because while he was there the Indo-Pakistani War broke out so all the Peace Corps volunteers were evacuated in 1971. So he wasn't in the Peace Corps for a full gig, but I was aware of the Peace Corps and I thought about it, but of course when I was at the University of Washington, because I was in Russian language studies, I was aware that the U.S. government had programs for people who studied Russian that were something other than the Peace Corps, and that was the exhibits.

Now, you may or may not be aware of the so-called kitchen debate between Nixon and Khrushchev in 1959. That was when Nixon was vice president. He went to Moscow and presided over the opening of the American National Exhibition in Moscow, where he and Khrushchev had an argument over who had a higher standard of living standing in front of a model kitchen at the exhibit site. That resulted in exchanges of exhibitions up until the Carter era. We would do one or two or three exhibitions in a row on a particular theme and I was hired by the U.S. Information Agency out of college to be an exhibit guide on an agriculture exhibit in the Soviet Union.

Q: That's interesting, as we go through your career.

MUSTARD: You wanted to talk a little bit about my education. You had your question number eleven: what courses did you enjoy most, which became the most valuable courses to you in your career and maybe we could talk about that a little a little bit.

Q: Please, that would be great.

MUSTARD: I reflected on that when you asked that question. One of the most important courses I ever took in my career was journalism in junior college, when I was at Grays Harbor College, because the instructor of that course was a fellow by the name of Robbie Peltola, who was sports editor for the local daily newspaper, *The Daily World*. Robbie took his job as a teacher very seriously and taught us how to collect information and how to write it down, how to record it, and then how to reiterate it in a news story reflecting

what people actually told you, not what you thought you heard, which is very important, because most people don't have very good listening skills. It is really surprising, and people you think should have good listening skills do not.

You tell them X and they hear Y and then go around and tell people, well, Mustard told me Y. Well, I know I didn't tell them Y, I told them X but he didn't hear X, he heard Y, because he wasn't paying close attention to what I was saying. That journalism course came in very, very handy when I became an overseas officer, actually, even before then, when I was working in Dairy, Livestock and Poultry [DL&P], and they would send me off once a year to the Middle East to collect information on what was going on in countries where we did not have agricultural attachés. We had ATOs [agricultural trade officers] and ATOs were not required to report in those days, so we weren't getting reports out of the Middle East on poultry. I was the guy who was going out—and the ATOs knew everybody, they would set me up with all the contacts—and I would talk to all of the contacts and write stuff up and come back with these tremendous trip reports that would lay out everything we knew about the poultry market and industry in those countries, everything that we were able to collect, and that all went back to this journalism course. The journalism course taught me how to collect information, how to parse it, and then how to regurgitate it in written form in a manner that can be easily digested, and that combined with the English courses I took in high school—because I took all the usual English composition courses in high school. I never took English in college. My English writing skills all came out of high school and in the journalism courses I had at Grays Harbor, so I think those courses were extraordinarily valuable.

Reflecting back, too, I think courses I had in high school in chemistry and in biology—And then I took both invertebrate and vertebrate zoology at Grays Harbor. And later on working as an agricultural officer, knowing biology, knowing chemistry, when you're dealing with agriculture and you're doing the crop science, you're having to be an amateur agronomist when you're doing crop assessments. This all came in very handy and the knowledge that I acquired was very important.

Q: That was a theme throughout your whole overseas career, your reporting, and you had a reputation for great reporting, and high standards for reporting, for teaching other people how to develop that skill. So that really began at that time, in your journalism and your science classes.

I missed a little bit, if we can go back to your childhood and what religion, for some reason this is an interest to me. How much was religion a part of your childhood?

MUSTARD: Well, we went to Sunday school, and we were members of the Presbyterian Church. My patriarchal line is Scottish, so we were good Scots, Presbyterians. My mother's side of the family was mostly Lutheran, so far as I can tell, mostly because of the German influence. She had some German ancestors and they were Lutherans but she attended the Presbyterian Church with my dad. We were all baptized into the Presbyterian Church.

Yeah, I mean, Sunday school, but once I went off to college I pretty much stopped going to church. I didn't go to church much after I started college.

Q: And you didn't raise your daughter in any kind of religion?

MUSTARD: Well, my wife is a Methodist, and when our daughter was small she took her to the Methodist Church, so my daughter was raised as a Methodist, baptized Presbyterian, but she spent more time in the Methodist Church than the Presbyterian Church.

USICA 1978–1979, Jewish Family Service 1979–1980

Before I went off on that exhibit I did a summer at Leningrad State University in a very intensive Russian language program. This was after I graduated from the U and it was six weeks of very intense Russian study at Leningrad State. A hundred and fifty students from the United States, all over the place, lots of different people from a lot of different universities, but a pretty good contingent from the University of Washington, and I came back from that. I had already applied for the exhibit. I was selected for the exhibit. It was pretty competitive. There were I think twenty-three of us who were hired. I don't know how many people applied but it was in the hundreds because these were considered really, really kind of a sweet deal, that you were to go over to the Soviet Union and you're going to live there for several months, be immersed in the society, not in the embassy. We were out in other cities, interacting with Soviet citizens in their language, in the Russian language, six days a week, and you got paid for it, which was great.

So I did that and you might think of that as having been done in lieu of the Peace Corps. So I did that, our first city was Kishinev, which is now called Chisinau, capital of Moldova, then Moscow, and then the last one was Rostov-na-Donu down in southern Russia.

Did that for seven months. Came back from that and then spent a year working for Jewish Family Service of Seattle, resettling Soviet émigrés, Soviet Jews who'd been allowed to leave. We were resettling them in Seattle. That was interesting because I really didn't know very much about Jewish culture. I was baptized Presbyterian and raised as a Presbyterian, so there was a lot I just didn't know about Judaism. And the head of Jewish Family Service, Irv Goldberg, decided that because I knew so little, that he would have to start every staff meeting with a joke, and so I learned a fair number of Jewish jokes over the course of my year working for Jewish Family Service. Sometimes it was something where he would tell the joke, everybody else would laugh, and I'd say, "Okay, you're gonna have to explain that to me, that I didn't get it."

So I learned about that and then while I was there I applied for graduate school because on the exhibit I had a fateful meeting while we were in Moscow. You have to remember

on the exhibit we were under constant pressure from the KGB, the state security apparatus of the Soviet Union. They had professional agitators who would come up and harass us while we were on the stand answering questions. They were in our stuff. They'd come into our hotel rooms when we weren't there and would rummage through our stuff, looking for, heaven knows what they were looking for, and we didn't have anything, but they were going through and trying to find out who we were in contact with.

Just, it's a paranoid society and the KGB was paranoid about us. So the one place we could go and we could have a drink and unwind a little bit was at the Marine bar at the embassy while we were in Moscow. So one night I was in the Marine bar having a drink and sat next to a guy by the name of Jim Brow, who was one of our agricultural attachés in Moscow back then in '79. Jim said, "You know, your Russian is really good, and you grew up on a farm. The only thing you're lacking is a master's degree in agricultural economics. If you were to go get that, you could be an agricultural attaché, come to work for FAS."

I thought that sounded pretty good, because trying to find a job with a degree in political science and in Russian language up to that point had been pretty fruitless. Nobody really wanted a political scientist with Russian, dual bachelor's degrees just weren't attractive. So I thought, Maybe I'll go get this master's degree.

We had had some training before the exhibit at the University of Illinois. We had been brought out there 'cause most of the people on the exhibit had no farm background. There were only, I think, five of us on the exhibit who really had any kind of a farm background and the rest of the guides were city folks. We'd been given this crash course in Midwest agriculture that was organized by the University of Illinois under contract to USIA. One of the professors there, Jim Millar, we got to know him and his wife during this crash course, during this training. His wife was Russian and so we were working with her and we were working with Jim on getting people up to speed on agriculture.

While I was at Jewish Family Service I wrote to Jim and asked him, "You know, what would be the prospects of getting into the University of Illinois into the ag econ program?" And he wrote back and said, "Well, I think you should apply and certainly if you apply I'll give you a good letter of reference and so why don't you give it a shot?" So he sent the whole package, he pulled everything together for me—was kind enough to do that—and mailed it to me. Again this is the pre-Internet era when you could not just download stuff. I filled out all the paperwork and there was one box in the form that said, "If we do not offer you financial aid, will you come anyway," and I wrote, "No," because I didn't have any money. I couldn't afford graduate school, but mailed it off and crossed my fingers and waited to see what would come back.

Let's go back to my first real job for the government, which was working for the U.S. Information Agency [USIA] right out of college, because that's Foreign Service and we talked about it briefly, but we didn't really talk in detail about some of the stuff I learned in that job. It was a temporary job.

In 1959 Nixon and Khrushchev met at the American National Exhibition in Moscow, had their famous kitchen debate, and in the wake of that of course the U.S. Information Agency began operating exhibits that were staffed by Americans, usually young Americans, many of them just immediately out of college, most of them Russian speakers. We had a few people who didn't speak Russian really very well and who were brought in for technical expertise. But they would then go around to various cities in the Soviet Union and maybe 10 percent of the questions would be about the theme of the exhibit, 'cause the exhibits were thematic, but about 90 percent of the questions were about life in America.

So I knew about the exhibits. They had posters up in the Slavic Department at the University of Washington and I applied and was one of the guides who was selected for the second half of Agriculture USA. We went to three cities: Kishinev, which is now the capital of Moldova, at the time it was the capital of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic; after that we went to Moscow; and then from Moscow we went to Rostov-na-Donu, which is more or less the southern capital of Russia. It's a major metropolitan area in the southern part of Russia, and major center for agriculture, industry, and finance. So the exhibit really was quite interesting, because it was a rare opportunity for Soviet citizens to be able to talk to a real live American who spoke Russian well enough to be able to answer questions and debate and discuss issues and talk about pretty much anything we wanted to talk about.

We were not on diplomatic passports or visas, we were on official passports and visas, so we didn't have diplomatic immunity, but nevertheless we did sort of have an agreement with the Soviets tacitly that although they felt like they were free to sic the KGB on us and harass us and try to pester us at the exhibit, that as a general rule we would not be sanctioned and certainly were not under any credible threat of arrest for anything we said. Which was very rare in the Soviet Union, that you could have free conversations like this without somebody, somewhere, being under threat of arrest.

That point was driven home one day in Rostov-na-Donu when one of the guides, a fellow by the name of John Stepanchuk, was coming out of our hotel. A woman walking by in the street happened to turn to him and ask what time it was. He looked at his watch, told her what time it was, and went on into the exhibit to work. Three days later the woman showed up at the exhibit looking for John and informed him that she just spent the previous three days in the police station in the jail being interrogated as to what secrets she had passed to the American spy. And so we were under constant observation and this was one of the features of life in the Soviet Union. You were constantly being observed. You were constantly being eavesdropped on.

And in Rostov-na-Donu—it was funny you know, I had been a firefighter back in my youth, back home on the farm. I was a volunteer fireman for two years. So I've always been very conscious of fire safety and I was aware that most of these Soviet hotels were fire traps and that the fire escapes were usually blocked. So I would explore in every

hotel, how do I get out of this building in case it does catch fire? So I went down the fire escape of the hotel in Rostov, and got down to the bottom and discovered that, yes, the doors were chained shut, there was no way you could go down this fire escape and actually get out of the building. So if you were going to escape a fire you had to find some other way out than the fire escape. So I was trapped in the stairwell and started to go back upstairs and was trying the doors to come back in, and the only door that was open was a door between the second and third floors. This floor was only about four feet tall, so I had to bend over to go through the door. I'm going through with this ceiling, it's only four feet high, and there were a bunch of doors going off to the sides. The door to one of the rooms was open. When I looked inside, sure enough, there's a guy in there with headphones on with a reel-to-reel tape recorder going, and they were recording somebody's conversation in one of the rooms. So I was standing there looking at that and the door to another room opened up. A guy came out, saw me standing there, ran over, grabbed me by the arm and hustled me out of there, and shoved me out into the main stairwell of the hotel. So all the hotels had this sort of apparatus. They were listening to us all the time.

But the exhibit was a marvelous experience from a couple of points of view. First of all, I actually did some travel in between the exhibit cities. It was my first trip to Ashgabat in 1979 between two of the cities. I traveled there with John Stepanchuk, and so we made it to Ashgabat. The KGB didn't want us there, they tried to prevent us from going, and when we arrived, we discovered that we were booked on a flight that was to leave in twenty-one hours, so we only had twenty-one hours in Ashgabat before we had to fly out. We didn't get to see much of the city or much of Turkmenistan, but I at least was able to say, when I went back in 2015, I was able to say, "Yes, I've been here before, if only for twenty-one hours."

So that was the exhibit. The other big thing that the exhibit helped with was that you were on a stand talking about agriculture, or about life in America, about any subject that anyone wanted to raise, for six hours a day. The other two hours a day I was in the library interpreting for our specialists. We had subject matter specialists who would be brought in, usually university professors from somewhere, who were experts on a particular topic of agriculture. So if an exhibit guide got a question that the guide couldn't answer, we would give them a pass to the library and they would come into the library, meet with one of the specialists, and then they could pester the specialist. Of course the specialists didn't speak Russian, so those of us with good Russian served as interpreters, and I have to say after seven months of speaking Russian six hours a day plus interpreting two hours a day, six days a week, my Russian was extremely fluent by the end of the exhibit. It was pretty good going in, having come out of the University of Washington and then having done a summer at Leningrad State, but after seven months on the exhibit I had really a massive vocabulary in Russian, particularly in agricultural terminology. So that was a big help.

I came back from that job, came back to the farm, stayed with my folks for a couple of months and then a friend up in Seattle called up and said, "Jewish Family Service is looking for somebody. They need a Russian speaker who owns a car. They don't care if

you're Jewish or not." I said, "Well I'm baptized Presbyterian." And he said, "Well, it doesn't matter, they need somebody, they need somebody now, because Jewish Family Service was working with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society [HIAS] to resettle Soviet Jews whom Brezhnev had started letting out of the country." This was 1979, émigrés were starting to come out of the Soviet Union, and rather than all go to Israel, some of them were coming to the United States. Jewish Family Service was getting two families a month, and it was too much for the one person they had working with them at the time, so they hired me and I spent a year helping resettle these Soviet Jews.

Which was an interesting cultural experience. For some of them it was a real culture shock, because they had never lived some place where you didn't have to stand in line for food. And they had never lived some place where you could buy any food you wanted and go back to the store the next day and the shelves were replenished, the food was there. So we learned pretty quickly, you could not take them shopping, grocery shopping, right after they arrived. We would stock their larders and we would do everything for them. We would take them to the Social Security Administration to get their Social Security cards. Because they were indigent upon arrival, we would take them to the Department of Health Services of the state of Washington and get them their medical coupons so they could get medical care. We would get them on food stamps.

We would get all this stuff all lined up and help them with their job searches, and only after about two weeks had gone by, that we got them busy doing all of this paperwork and starting the job search. We would then take them grocery shopping for the first time. And the reason for that was the first few families that came in, when Jewish Family Service would take them grocery shopping, every member of the family would grab a grocery cart and they would immediately go to the meat counter and they would start loading the cold storage, putting everything in the shopping basket and then heading to check out. They were going to take all this meat and we said, "No, you can't do that. You don't even have enough refrigerator space for all of this meat." And they would say, "No, we're going to call our friends and our friends will come and buy it from us, because this is such a wealth of meat and you know it's not going to be here tomorrow." We would assure them, "No, it will be here tomorrow, put it back," and get into a huge fight.

So you had to let them acculturate a bit before you could take them out shopping. One of the other issues that came up was that when the Soviets came in 1917, of course they tried to do away with religion, so you didn't have Jews, you didn't have Christians, and you didn't have Muslims in the Soviet frame of mind. It existed but it was suppressed. One of the things you have to do in a society is you don't completely destroy all customs, you try to co-opt them, so the Soviets, the Communists, co-opted certain features of Christmas, one of them being the Christmas tree, which became the New Year's tree. You didn't celebrate Christmas anymore, you celebrated New Year's, and the other was Grandfather Frost, who was the Soviet version of Santa Claus.

Well, these Jews arrived from the Soviet Union and Christmas time came around, and guess what you find in shopping malls. You find Santa Claus taking photographs with

children. So what do they do, they get in line, line up with all their kids, and they start showing them around, all their Jewish friends. And the Jewish society in Seattle just blew up over this, that you know, you hired this Christian guy, this Presbyterian, and now look what he's doing. He's converting all of these good Soviet Jews to Christianity. Which is not what was happening. To them it was a secular holiday, they were celebrating New Year's and Grandfather Frost. It wasn't Santa Claus and Christmas.

So we had to kind of negotiate around that, to make clear that, no, I was not actively trying to convert anybody to any other religion.

Q: If you don't mind, if you could go back to when you were in the Soviet Union with the U.S. Information Agency, what kind of Soviet people came to these things? Anybody could come?

MUSTARD: Anybody could come, and they would stand in line for hours to get into the exhibit. Our one millionth visitor came while we were in Rostov-na-Donu. I remember that and, no, we had all kinds of people. We had elderly people, we had middle-aged people, people with their kids. We gave away souvenirs. You came, you got an exhibit brochure. I still have copies of the exhibit brochure in Russian, talking about American agriculture. You could get a Marlboro plastic bag, and until we ran out of them, we gave away ballpoint pens. And you also got a little badge that showed that you had visited the exhibit. Russians were big about collecting badges, a kind of national hobby, so we gave away buttons, little buttons.

Q: And most were interested in farming.

MUSTARD: Well, not necessarily. Again, Agriculture USA was the name of the exhibit and the big attraction was USA, not agriculture, so 90 percent of your questions, if not more, had nothing to do with agriculture. One guy came, I'll never forget. He walked up to me and said, "Young man, I have a question." I said, "Please, go ahead, ask your question." He said, "What exactly is American whiskey?" Everybody around him started laughing at him, saying, "Oh, you know, old man, that's a stupid question, go away." And he turned around, he just puffed his chest out, he said, "I got on a bus last night and I rode all night, overnight, to get here from Odessa so that I could ask this question, and this man will now answer my question." He turned to me and said, "Please." I explained what whiskey is, "It's made from sour mash corn, a corn-based alcoholic beverage, same proof as vodka. It's, you know, forty to 50 percent alcohol, 80 to a 100 proof, typically." Described it to him as best I could. He said, "Thank you," and turned and walked off. The guy had traveled overnight to come ask that question, that one question. He got the answer, was satisfied, went back, got on the bus and went back. So it took all types.

Q: Would the people get in trouble? Would they be asked, why are you interested in the U.S.? Are you a traitor?

MUSTARD: No, because there were too many of them. There were just too many of them and the KGB tactic was not to try to prevent people from talking to us but to try to provoke us by saying things that were patently false, by telling lies, by trying to put words in our mouths, and things like that. It was the typical KGB disinformation tactics. You know, after a while you start recognizing the agitators when they show up, and you start realizing who they are and what their tactics are, so it was a bit of a cat-and-mouse game. But no, they didn't really try to stop people from coming. It was more let's harass the guides and try to make them lose their cool.

Q: Did the Soviets have a similar thing, to the United States, where people would come?

MUSTARD: Yes, they would send exhibits to the United States, but typically you didn't have young Soviets manning them. They would not have as many as we did. We would have approximately two dozen guides on our exhibits. They would have maybe three guides, and they would be middle-aged men who had been thoroughly vetted by the party and could be trusted to say only the party line. Whereas we were not told what to say. We as guides were free to express our opinions and to say, "Okay, well the government line may be this, but I don't agree with the government's position on this. I think we should do that." And that was actually encouraged, because we wanted the Soviets to understand that we have freedom of speech in America.

Q: You went to China and Mongolia after your time with the U.S. government exhibition in 1978 and 1979.

MUSTARD: In January 1979 the exhibition opened in Moscow. That was our second city on the second half of the exhibit and there was a bit of a stir because Ambassador Malcolm Toon decided to hold a diplomatic reception on the exhibition site for the diplomatic corps. All the ambassadors with whom we had diplomatic relations were invited to this reception and the stir occurred when the Chinese ambassador showed up because up until 1978 of course we didn't have diplomatic representation in China. We were in the process of shifting from Taiwan to China and we had opened the liaison office in China at that point, so the Chinese ambassador attended this diplomatic reception.

I should back up. I had worn my kilt. I brought my kilt along for the exhibit as I'm partly of Scottish descent and on a dare, someone dared me to wear it on the exhibit site for this reception, because Malcolm Toon, the ambassador, was a Lowland Scot and he had had derogatory things to say about the Highland Scots, who wear kilts.

So I was standing in front of the milking parlor stand. He came through with the UK ambassador and saw me standing there in my kilt, and said, "Who is that?" And the exhibit guide, Vicki Grinenko, who was accompanying him, said, deadpan, "That's the Scottish ambassador."

Q: So a 19-year-old boy—

MUSTARD: I was twenty-three at the time. So Toon laughed, he thought it was funny. His wife did not. She looked daggers at me. Elizabeth Toon was not pleased with that. The UK ambassador thought it was uproariously funny.

So anyway they walked through the exhibit, visited all of the stands. We all did our little two-minute spiels about the stand we were standing in front of, and afterwards we just mingled with everybody else. John Beyrle was our general services officer. He later went on to be ambassador to Russia, but John was our general services officer at the time. He looked at me and said, "Let's go talk to the Chinese ambassador." So we went over and we started talking to the Chinese ambassador. He did not speak Russian. He spoke through an interpreter, and at one point he said, "Well you know, I used to live not far from you. I was the ambassador to Cuba." So we had a laugh over that and I said, "Well, sir, you should come up and visit us, someday you should come to the United States and visit us." He said, "I'd like to do that, but in the meantime you should visit China."

I said, "I'd like to visit China, but the problem is, if I go to China, I can only go through either Pan American, through one of its package tours, or through American Express, one of its package tours. There's no other way of getting a visa to go to China." He said, "If you apply for a visa through my embassy I'll personally see to it that you get your visas." So four of us, when the exhibit closed in June 1979, went to the Chinese embassy. We got visas and then we went to the Mongolian embassy and we did not have diplomatic relations with Mongolia and so the Mongolians thought about it, and they allowed as how we could have transit visas. So we took the train from Irkutsk through Ulaanbaatar down to Beijing. When the exhibit closed we made the travel arrangements, we flew from Moscow to Irkutsk on a Tupolev turboprop, spent the day in Irkutsk, then got on the train and took the train down from Irkutsk down to Beijing across Mongolia.

That was a fascinating trip. In some parts of China we were pulled by a steam locomotive, the only time I've been on a scheduled train ride where I was drawn by steam locomotive. I learned why the romance of steam is not all it's cracked up to be, because you end up with soot everywhere, in our suitcases, and we smelled like soot. I could see why we went to diesel and electric because the steam powered trains just throw soot all over the place.

In the Soviet Union we had a Soviet dining car. I didn't realize that when you cross the border you get a new dining car, so when we crossed into Mongolia, we had a Mongolian dining car. We thought, well, this is going to be great, we'll go and we'll get Mongolian hot pot or something like that for lunch. We went to the dining car and it had this wonderful menu. I pointed at something on the menu and said I would have that. The Mongolian waitress looked at me; she said, "n-e-t" in Russian. You know, in heavily accented Russian, saying no. I pointed at something else; she said, "n-e-t." I pointed at something else; she said, "n-e-t." So I finally said in Russian, "What do you have?" She said, "Egg," and that's all she had, boiled eggs and tea.

So there was a wonderful menu but the only thing they had to offer was boiled eggs and tea, so we ate boiled eggs and tea as we crossed Mongolia. I have that menu, somewhere. I stole the menu, because if they aren't going to serve the things they have on the menu, there's no point in it being there, so I took it as a souvenir.

Then we crossed into China and of course in China they changed the gauge. It goes from the Imperial Russian gauge, which was also used in Mongolia, which is about five feet, it's 1,520 millimeters, and they go down to the British gauge in China. I think the Chinese railway was probably built by the English, so it goes to the normal standard gauge. You have to stop while they take the railcars away and change the bogies. It takes a couple of hours to change the bogies on a train, so for those two hours we went to a Chinese dining car that was off on a siding and sat down and after not having seen any fresh vegetables in months they had fresh vegetables and they had wonderful food.

We started eating. We just dived in. They had chopsticks. They didn't have knives, forks, and spoons, they had chopsticks. I know how to use chopsticks, my father made sure in childhood I would know how to use chopsticks, so I had no problem, but some of the others had a little trouble with the chopsticks. When we got done, the waiter came around. We looked around the dining car, everybody else's tablecloth was still pristine and ours looked like it had had a chicken butchered on it. We made a mess. The waiter looked at us and grunted in disgust at the mess we'd made, just took the tablecloth and hauled the mess away.

So then we crossed into China. On the train with us were some Chinese journalists and one of them was a journalist who had been taught English by missionaries back in the 1930s. He was probably in his sixties at that point so he would have been born in the nineteen-teens or 1920s, I suppose, and had stayed in China after the revolution and was now a journalist for the magazine *China's Sports*. He spoke English like an American because he had been trained in English by American missionaries back in the 1930s and so we had some great conversations with him and at one point he taught us a very important word in Chinese, *pí jiǔ*, which means beer, so that when we were in the Chinese dining car we could order beer. That was an important one.

We were all on leave without pay since we were temporary employees but we were technically on travel orders, so the liaison office was able to assist us with our travel plans, which was a huge help. Otherwise as we got to China, this is the pre-Internet age, we arrived in China and the only thing we had was a reservation at one of the hotels in Beijing. We arrived at the train station, it was around midnight, very close to midnight, we got into a taxi and gave the taxi the name of the hotel. He took us there, we walked in, they said, We're sorry, we have no rooms for you, we had to give your reservations away. We said, What do we do? Do we sleep here in the lobby? They said, No, we will find you someplace. So we were there probably another half hour or so while someone at the hotel made a bunch of phone calls. He came to us with a slip of paper, had a bunch of Chinese characters written on it, said, "There's a taxi cab waiting for you outside, go get in it, show the driver the slip of paper and he'll take you to the Bei Wei Lu Hotel. It is not

someplace we've ever put up foreigners before. Good luck, but it's the best we can come up with in the middle of the night."

So the four of us got into this taxicab and went to the Bei Wei Lu Hotel. We've been traveling for several days, we're covered in soot from the steam locomotive that pulled us part of the way, we're very tired, and I just wanted to take a shower and go to bed. One of the four of us said, "Wait a minute, we don't know how much they're going to charge us at this hotel. They could charge a hundred dollars and we wouldn't know until we got the bill. How do we know how much they're going to charge for this hotel?" I said, "What does it matter how much it's going to cost? Let's just go to bed, we'll sort it out tomorrow."

He said, "No," and turned to the fellow who appeared to be the manager of the hotel and started asking him in English, "How much does the hotel cost?" Of course he was Chinese, he didn't speak English, we didn't speak Chinese. I finally took a piece of paper and I wrote the yuan sign, the Y with two hash marks, and a question mark. Showed it to the guy and he wrote down twelve. I pointed at two of us and asked, twelve? Then pointed at one of us, and asked, twelve? He pointed at the two of us and said "twelve" in Chinese. That worked out to about four dollars per person per night which was not going to be horribly expensive. I said, "All right, are we okay with four dollars and can we afford this hotel?"

The hotel was pretty bare-bones, just had beds and sheets and blankets and the shower and toilet were down the hall, but it was clean and the bed was comfortable, so we showered and they had hot water which was wonderful, unlike so many of the Soviet hotels. I crawled in bed, it was now about two o'clock in the morning, and I said I'm going to sleep till noon and of course I didn't. I woke up around 7 AM when everybody came out on bicycles and you had all these millions of Chinese going to work in Beijing ringing their bicycle bells at each other.

So we got up and went down for breakfast. We couldn't read the menu because it was all in Chinese, so we just pointed at what some people at the next table were eating, which was chicken with noodles. After half an hour nothing had happened so waved over one of the waitresses. She ran out and came back with someone who spoke English from a store down the street. I said, "We thought we ordered breakfast, we said we wanted chicken with noodles like these people over here." She said, "Well, it takes half an hour to make noodles. Your breakfast is almost ready." They were making the noodles from scratch. We had one of the best breakfasts I've ever eaten in my life, fresh noodles with chicken.

We were there before China was a big tourist destination. We had some really eye-opening experiences. I went to the silk market and bought a bunch of white silk, intending to ask my mother to make shirts for me. She put it away and refused to give it back until Ann and I were engaged, and Ann's wedding dress was made out of that silk.

In Shanghai, we arrived and stayed at the Guo Ji Hotel, which at the time was the tallest building in Shanghai at twenty-three stories. The manager informed us that a group of Japanese businessmen had taken all but two of the rooms, so we had to choose between the second most expensive suite in the hotel and the cheapest room in the hotel. Of the four of us travelers, two were men and two were women, so we men let the women choose. They chose the cheap room, so the other fellow, Pete Davenport, and I were stuck with the second most expensive suite. I asked how much it was going to cost, and the hotel clerk said it would be forty-six dollars per night, or twenty-three dollars apiece, which even in 1979 was pretty cheap. The suite included a foyer, a bedroom, a sitting room, a balcony overlooking the river, and a working shortwave radio, which we used to tune in to Voice of America to get the first news from the outside world since we'd left Moscow. I remember hearing the news that John Wayne had died. So the ladies came up to see our room and immediately wanted to swap. They were paying eight dollars per night, four dollars apiece, for a room barely big enough to fit two beds in with a narrow space between them. We politely declined. Today, of course, Shanghai has lots of high rises and twenty-three stories is nothing.

Q: When you were working for Jewish Family Service, where were the Jews from? All over the Soviet Union or always Moscow or what?

MUSTARD: We had a scattering from across the country but the largest concentration was from Bukovina in Western Ukraine, particularly the city of Chernovtsy. There had been some people who had emigrated from Chernovtsy back in the 1930s to Seattle, and their family members came out and that sort of started a snowball effect of people from Chernovtsy wanting to come to Seattle, because they knew somebody there. That's one of the things about immigration, if you look at immigration, it is very network-centric. People emigrate to places where they know somebody if they can possibly do that.

Now there were exceptions to that, but by and large most of the people who came, came from Ukraine. We had some Muscovites. We had one elderly couple, they were in their 80s, the Melmans, who had lived for quite a while in the Jewish autonomous region out in Siberia. They were just a wonderful, sweet couple, and I'll never forget one of my home visits. I went in to visit with them. They had an enormous platter of bananas on the table. Mr. Melman was just sitting there methodically taking a banana off the pile, cutting it up with a knife into slices, peeling each individual slice and eating each slice with a fork. And after he'd eaten two or three bananas I said, "You know, Mr. Melman, there are other things to eat in America besides bananas. I'm a little concerned about whether your diet is balanced." He looked at me and said, "Young man, I waited over eighty years to eat my first banana, I'm making up for lost time." So, you know, he wasn't gonna take any guff off of me regarding bananas.

Q: One side of my family is from Bohemia, and they all landed in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The first one was there, and they all, they almost had like a little ghetto or a subdivision for them. And then, over time, they emigrated to other places. So is Washington a big émigré Russian population?

MUSTARD: Seattle had the second largest ethnic Russian émigré community after San Francisco on the West Coast. San Francisco, of course, was the big Russian émigré community that came out after the Russian Revolution, so San Francisco was the hub on the West Coast of ethnic Russian émigrés. Seattle had a few, enough to support two Russian Orthodox churches, that had been there since World War I essentially, but then the second wave of immigration occurred after World War II, again, mostly ethnic Russians who fled the Soviets when they got a chance, ended up as displaced persons in Germany, and then rather than being repatriated back to the Soviet Union managed to talk the Allies into letting them come West. I had professors from both waves when I was studying Russian. One of our professors had come out with the White Russians after the First World War, then I had house parents of the Russian House who had come out in the wake of the Second World War as DPs [displaced persons], and then there were a couple of other instructors who had come out with the third wave. That of course was the Jewish emigration that began in 1975 when Brezhnev, under pressure from the West, began allowing Soviet Jews to emigrate, and some of them came to Seattle, again, because there were already some Jewish émigrés in Seattle who had come much earlier in the 1930s and '40s. Their family members came out in the 1970s as part of family reunification and that kind of opened it up.

So you have the three different waves of Russian speakers, two of them ethnic Russian, predominantly, and then the third ethnically Jewish, because of course in the Soviet construct Jewishness is not Judaism, it's not a religion, it's an ethnic group to the Soviets and to the Russians, actually, too, so as a result you had these three different factions within the Slavic Languages and Literature Department, each saying that the other two don't speak real Russian. The first wave came out and they were the ones who spoke the language of Chekhov and Tolstoy, and they'd say, all these latest émigrés, they speak this distorted language, that's, you know, it's not literary Russian, and then of course you got the ones that came out after World War II saying, well, those guys that came out after World War I, of course, they speak the language of Chekhov and Tolstoy, but they're dead, and you know, that language isn't spoken any more, but these newcomers who have just come in the 1970s, my goodness, I mean, how they are tearing the language apart, it's horrible, and you would talk to the most recent émigrés and they'd say, all these old guys, they're all speaking this Russian that nobody speaks anymore, nobody talks like that anymore, if you go over to Moscow and try to talk like them, people will just laugh at you. So you tried to pick up something from all three of them in the course of your studies.

Q: Didn't the Jewish people have a Yiddish language that was a mix of Russian and Hebrew?

MUSTARD: The Eastern European Jews spoke Yiddish, which is an offshoot of German, and it's largely mutually intelligible with German. There's a little bit of Hebrew mixed in with it, a little bit of Hebrew vocabulary, but the grammar and syntax are Germanic and the bulk of vocabulary is Germanic. So there is an accent, and I heard it in Russian, not

among the younger generation, the younger generation had pretty much adopted the standard either Muscovite or Leningrad Russian accents, but the older generation like the Melman family, the older Melmans spoke with a very pronounced Yiddish accent when they spoke Russian that was the same accent that you hear from Jewish comedians today when they try to sound Jewish. It was quite interesting, because I had not heard that until I met these émigrés.

Q: We can go back to the chronological order now.

Graduate School 1980–1982

MUSTARD: In, I don't know, a couple months later, I guess, I got a letter in the mail from the University of Illinois, telling me not only had I been admitted but that I was getting a full ride. I was getting the Wright Fellowship and a part-time assistantship to pay all the expenses plus a tuition waiver. So towards fall, it was August, actually, I loaded up my VW Beetle and drove out to Urbana-Champaign. I went up on the TransCanada Highway. I had never been across Canada, drove up to Vancouver and from Vancouver headed east, as far east as Moose Jaw, then came down into North Dakota, eventually wound up in Illinois and did graduate school there for two years. That's where I got my ag econ degree.

Q: Were you married, are you married?

MUSTARD: Yeah, I'm married, my wife is here in the house with me and our daughter is here. I met her at the University of Illinois. She was a television news broadcaster who had decided that she wanted to be a farm reporter, so she started working on a master's degree in agricultural economics after getting her bachelor's in radio and television. She and I actually met in her last course. She was taking a course in international agricultural trade policy, so she borrowed my notes when she had to go out to Washington, DC, to cover Jack Block's confirmation hearings when he was being confirmed as secretary of agriculture back in '81, and she asked me to take notes for her while she was gone. I did and she was so impressed with my notes she let me take her out on a date. One thing led to another.

Q: And it was just actually time after time, she agreed to marry you.

MUSTARD: Yes.

FAS Washington 1982–1986

Q: Is it now time to ask how you got your first job with FAS [Foreign Agricultural Service]?

MUSTARD: Well, I got the master's degree and I was dual-tracking it because I also took the Foreign Service exam from the State Department, and had to drive up to Chicago for that. I stayed at the YMCA, went in with the one business suit that I owned. I'd already done, of course, the written exam, passed it, took the oral assessment and at the same time I was doing that I also was applying to FAS because my major professor at the University of Illinois was Steve Schmidt, and David Schoonover had studied under Stephen Schmidt. Schmidt had taught in Montana at Bozeman and Schoonover had studied under him, I believe, and so he contacted David and David said, "Yes, we have openings, and go ahead and send in the application." So I filled out the Standard Form 171, you remember those, Ted, and they wanted copies of the college transcripts and everything so I pulled all that together and sent it off.

I got a letter back from FAS initially saying I wasn't eligible to apply for a job as an economist because I didn't have any college education. Well, they had lost the transcript that I had attached and so I had to go get another copy of the transcript and pay for it, it was probably around ten bucks a pop, and had to send off another copy of the transcript. And of course I didn't have the degree yet, so everything was contingent on getting the degree. And Schoonover didn't hire me. He liked Debbie Henke instead, so he hired Debbie Henke for the slot, and turned me down, which I was a little bit steamed about. 'Cause I knew Debbie. Debbie was on the exhibit with me, and Debbie had gone to Kansas State and she had come out to the University of Washington one summer for our summer intensive course in Russian language, so I knew Debbie both from the University of Washington and from the exhibit, we've been friends, you know, for decades now, but David Schoonover picked Debbie Henke over me when he filled that position.

So again I'm at loose ends, I'm still looking for a job, waiting for something to happen. One day the phone rang, I was up in the graduate student bullpen in Mumford Hall at the University. It was Jim Parker, who was deputy director for analysis of the Grain and Feed Division, and so he said, "Well, I was looking at your paperwork here, you are writing your master's thesis on the Carter grain embargo against the Soviet Union." I said, "Yes, that's correct." And he says, "And you speak Russian." I said, "Yes, I speak Russian." He started asking me some questions about the analysis I had done with my master's thesis and he said, "And how are you doing this analysis." And I said, "Well, we have the second fastest supercomputer in the world here at the university. We have a Control Data Corporation Cyber 175 and I'm using that to crunch the numbers." And he kinda jokingly said, "If we hire you, can you bring that computer with you?" And I said, "No, I don't think the university would let me do that." He said, "Well, I'll get back to you."

He called back a few days later and asked if I could possibly come out for a face-to-face interview and I said, "No, I really can't, because I don't have enough money to pay for a trip out to Washington, DC and then come back. If I come out to Washington, DC you have to hire me because I just don't have enough money to pay for a round trip and continue to live." So he said, "All right, let me go talk to some people," and he did, and the next thing I knew I had a job offer contingent on receiving the master's degree.

You know how it is in grad school, you're stalling at that point, you haven't got the degree because as soon as you get the degree they cut you off, so I was still doing research on my master's thesis, but it was in the bag, so I hurried up and finished it off, printed it off, submitted it, defended it, that all took a couple of weeks. As soon as they did that I applied for graduation, received the diploma, called Washington, and April 19, 1982, I reported for work at the U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA]. I'll never forget showing up for work there and being told they were hiring me as a GS-9 at 19,477 dollars per year annual rate of pay and the rest as they say is history. I was hired into Grain and Feed as a grains analyst.

Q: So that was the beginning of a great career in FAS. So was your boss Jim Parker then?

MUSTARD: Well, Jim was deputy director for analysis. Don Novotny was the division director and under Jim Parker you had the Situation and Outlook unit, which was run by Allen Terhaar, initially. He was a GS-13 but the real gray eminence, the guy who actually ran analysis, even though Terhaar was nominally head of Situation and Outlook, of course, the gray eminence was Alan Riffkin. Alan Riffkin was the analyst's analyst, and he was the one who was teaching all of us how to do grain analysis.

Q: That's amazing. He was, like, a mentor for thirty years.

MUSTARD: Yeah. Riffkin was the heart and soul of commodity analysis in FAS, and he was a mentor to a lot of us.

It was interesting being in the grain division at that particular moment because Novotny had had a whole bunch of retirements that year. We hired seven junior professionals over the space of about ten months. The first one to come in was Joel Haggard, who then later left and went off to one of the cooperators, I think Meat Export Federation. Marc Lower came next, then I came in April, followed by David Salmon, Robert Curtis, then Jeff Hesse, and Roger Wenzel was the last one, so there were seven of us who came in one year. We were more or less the labor force in Grain and Feed, and you had Riffkin and of course you had Tom Slayton as the rice analyst, you had Frank Gomme as the USSR analyst. Cina Radler worked over on the marketing side but she also kept an eye, she was the China watcher in the Grain and Feed Division at the time, so we really had an all-star cast of people to mentor us, people who were very deeply knowledgeable of the grain trade and of production agriculture. So I felt like I got a really excellent grounding in commodity analysis in the Grain and Feed Division.

But of course I also was frustrated there because when I came in I was promised, yes, you know, if you're a good boy and you do a good job, we're going to give you some really interesting work to do, we're going to give you your own analysis portfolio, and we'll also let you travel at least once a year, which is, as we know, one of the big things I wanted to do. Well, Parker and Company found out that I could program computers and so all of a sudden I'm doing virtually nothing for the first several months but learning

how to program in SAS, and generating the circular tables. Henry Johns had been working on it, Cleveland Marsh had been working on it, but Cleveland rotated out overseas, he went out to London, and Henry moved on to another job. I forgot where he went, but eventually left the agency, which was too bad. Henry was just one of these really smart people that you wanted in your corner, but I ended up kind of the de facto computer programmer after Henry and Cleveland left, and was just generating all of these statistical tables. They wouldn't let me go. They wouldn't give me a commodity analysis portfolio and they wouldn't let me travel of course, and so one day I was grousing to somebody about it, and word filtered up to the Dairy, Livestock and Poultry Division. Next thing I know, I get a phone call from Bill Tinklepaugh, who said, "Let's go have lunch."

We went over to L'Enfant Plaza because he didn't want anybody to see me having lunch with him. He and Bob Riemenschneider sat down and gave me the sales pitch about how great things were in the Dairy, Livestock and Poultry Division, how they really needed somebody to come in and help them with their circular tables. I said, "I don't want to do this full time, to do nothing but circular tables, you know, there are other things I want to do." So they said, "We'll promise you two trips a year and you'll have your own commodity analysis portfolio so you can really learn commodity analysis in depth." I said, "All right, that's fine." They said, "Jim Grueff is going to Tokyo, we'll give you the poultry portfolio, so you'll be the poultry analyst and we'll give you the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union will be your analysis beat." Well, that sounded pretty good, and the Middle East. I got the Middle East, also, because the Middle East was emerging as this massive market for poultry, so I kinda had to have the Middle East as well.

I said, "I have to be the one who tells Don Novotny that I'm leaving." So I went up to his office, and his secretary was Donna Olson, who is now Donna Groves, Gary Groves' wife, and I told Donna, I said, "I need to see Mr. Novotny." You never called him by his first name. He was Mr. Novotny. Everybody else was on a first-name basis, but it was Mr. Novotny. Even when he played basketball with us, he played basketball with us a few times, and it was still Mr. Novotny on the basketball court. Anyway, she said, "Well, he's very busy and you have to wait." So I sat outside his office for two hours, waiting for him to find five minutes for me, and finally she said I could go in. So I went in and Don said, "I can give you five minutes." I said, "Well, all right, well I won't beat around the bush, then, the long and the short of it is that Dairy, Livestock and Poultry has offered me a job and I'm going to take it, and so I'll be leaving the Grain and Feed Division within a couple of weeks as soon as you and John Riesz can negotiate a release date."

Don looked at me and he said, "This is a shock. This is a shock." And he started asking me what brought this on, why am I leaving? All the questions that could've been asked a bit earlier, I suppose, and I told him, I said, "Well you know, I was promised certain things, that I'd be treated like everybody else. I would have an analysis portfolio. I would be able to travel, but no, there's no international travel, there is no analysis, it's all just writing computer programs and that sort of stuff, and that's not why I joined FAS."

So he tried to stop it and was told, no. Jimmy Minyard, you know, was head of Commodity and Marketing Programs, he wanted all of the commodity divisions to come into the twentieth century before it ended and really embraced the computer, the power of computing, the ability to do automation, particularly with respect to generating statistical tables 'cause so much of what we were doing in those days was still manual, still buckets of pencils, and hand calculators on the desk, and that sort of thing. So Minyard finally prevailed on Don and Don released me and I was able to go up.

I got up there and discovered that things were absolutely a mess up in DL&P. The circulars were coming out 180° out of phase. The winter circular was coming out in the summer, summer circulars were coming out in the winter. It was because the statistical database was completely messed up, so I went to work on that, went to work on building the computer programs and we ended up having to take away the user IDs for the Washington Computer Center from our stat pool. We still had a stat pool in DL&P and they were messing up the data, not deliberately, it wasn't sabotage, it was just they really didn't know what they were doing and we ended up having to simply give them different IDs that allowed them to extract data but they couldn't delete anything because they were deleting the database periodically and we would have to reconstruct it from scratch, which was just a nightmare.

So we did that and it was more than I could handle so I went to John Riesz, the division director, and I said, "John, I can't do all this alone. I need some help." And he says, "All right Mr. Mustard, whom do you want me to kidnap?" And I said, "Robert Curtis," so this was when they waited for Mr. Novotny to be in London at the International Wheat Council. He was there, and while he was gone, they rammed through the SF-50 and transferred Robert Curtis to the Dairy, Livestock and Poultry Division, and apparently, I was told, I don't know if this is true, I was told that when Don found out about it he confronted Minyard, said, "You're doing it to me again, you know." So we got him and the—

Q: Did he blame you?

MUSTARD: I think he blamed John Riesz more than he blamed me, but then, you know, we hired Merritt Chesley and we hired Henry Schmick and they came into the division and the four of us are really the ones who cleaned up that database and got it running so that we could get the circulars out on time and without nearly as much headache as had been the case in the past. And we were also able to put out some specialty circulars that people had been requesting and saying would be a good idea, now that we had the time to do it. We were able to do some interesting stuff.

I never had a formal course in computer science. When I got to the Grain and Feed Division, we were doing all this number crunching. I was self-taught, I just sat down and read the SAS manual, and I talked to other people who were writing programs, talked to Henry Johns, I talked to Cleveland Marsh, and there were some other folks around, two who were doing programming in the department, some folks down AMS were using it.

Guy Grenier of the Trade and Economic Information Division was a bit of a SAS guru and I went to him, and Mike Dwyer of course was doing SAS programming, so Mike and I would pitch ideas back and forth, and Mike was a tremendous help back in those days.

But we were running on an IBM mainframe. It was an IBM System 370 computer that used to be down in the subbasement of the South Building, down there where that concourse is now, where, you know, where you go get coffee and everything, and that used to be the computer center before they moved it to Kansas City. The IBM 370 was down there and we would submit the jobs as batch jobs, you would login, you would type up the program, you would save it as a file, and then you would submit it as a batch job, which meant that you had to know IBM job control language, which none of us had any training in. We didn't even have a manual, we were just doing what was called voodoo programming, where you take something that someone else has written and you try to copy it and figure out what makes it tick, and you submit it and hope it works. It is kinda cross your fingers.

And we started having this problem of something called the format library blowing up. SAS had this thing called the format library that allows you to interpret country codes, these three-digit country codes where, like 101 was Canada, but you didn't want 101 to appear on the statistical table, you want to have Canada on the statistical table, saying here's the production of dairy products being produced or traded out of Canada. To associate that three-digit number with the name of the country you use the SAS format library. And we could run the programs, I don't know, maybe a dozen and a half, two dozen times, and then the format library would blow up and the program would crash. If that happened when we were generating circular tables for publication it was catastrophic, because then we had to delete the format libraries, rebuild them from scratch, and start running them over again, and it took time which we didn't have a lot of, you know, when you're under a deadline to get stuff to the publications shop.

I went to Jim Parker and said, "You know, I really need to take a course in IBM job control language so I can understand this." There was a course in job control language from the USDA Graduate School, remember that? It cost seventy-nine dollars and oh, gosh, they didn't know if they could come up with seventy-nine dollars out of the training budget for this, that is a lot of money, and so finally though, they decided, well it's worthwhile, so they allowed as how I could take it. It was an evening course, so you know, I was on my own time, I was not compensated for it, I was not paid overtime or anything, but I took this course in IBM job control language and I came out of it and I understood after that course why the format libraries were blowing up. It was because one parameter in the job control language was set wrong.

We changed that one parameter and they quit blowing up. You know, we were rescued at that point, so you know you take one course, and it changes your life sometimes, and that was kind of a valuable lesson, I think, for some people. I don't think everybody got it, but it made a real believer out of me in training and the need for education, in the need to train people so they have the tools that they need to do the jobs that you're asking them to

do. That's the one course in computer science that I've had over the course of my career working for USDA and USIA and State Department for thirty-eight years. Aside from the usual cyber security stuff they make you take now, it is the only computer science course.

When I was in Dairy, Livestock and Poultry they sent me to the Middle East. I went to Iraq at one point because Iraq was the single largest poultry market in the world at that time, a whopping 145,000 tons of poultry we were shipping to Iraq, which of course is a drop in the bucket these days but back then it was big stuff. That was a big market for chicken and we couldn't figure out where it was all going and how it was getting there, so I visited the United Arab Emirates. They had this huge seaport in the Emirates that had massive frozen storage facilities run by a Scotsman, and he knew where everything was going because he was monitoring the shipments in and out. He said, "Yeah, about a hundred thousand tons of this is coming into the Emirates and going straight up by truck to Iraq," and so that's why the following year I went to Iraq and poked around up in Iraq, which is another story, that's a funny story about my visit to Iraq, but he said about forty thousand tons of it goes across the water to Iran, it's all smuggled, it's all off the books, and illegal, but it goes on dhows at night, gets across the water, and the Iranians don't care where it came from. They don't care that it's U.S. poultry, but about forty thousand tons goes to Iran, about a hundred thousand to Iraq, not very much stays here in the Emirates just 'cause the population isn't that large.

So one year they sent me, DL&P sent me to Iraq. We didn't have an attaché there, or an ATO at the time, in fact we didn't have an embassy, we had an interests section in those days, and the commercial officer in the interests section was a fellow by the name of Hampton Brown. He set up my program, was very good about taking me around to visit people, and one of the things he set up was spending a day with an Iraqi veterinarian taking me around to poultry farms so I could see farms and poultry operations and get a sense of what they looked like. Of course the Iraqi didn't speak any English and I don't speak Arabic so getting any information out of him was a bit of a struggle. I figured the Iraqis had done that deliberately, that they had deliberately given me somebody who spoke no English so that I couldn't get information out of him.

And we were, I don't know, about an hour or two into this trip, then walked into a barn where there was a Polish technician. The Baath Party was socialist, and so the Iraqis had tight connections with Eastern Europe in those days. He started talking to this Polish technician in Polish, kind of pidgin Polish, and when he got done we got back in the car, and I said, "Oh, you speak Polish," and he looked at me and said, "No, no Polish, Russian." He'd gotten his veterinary degree at the Timiryazev Academy in Moscow. So I immediately flipped into Russian, and he and I started conversing and I got everything I needed out of him, of course, speaking Russian.

Q: What year was that, was that trip?

MUSTARD: Golly, that would've been, I went to DL&P in '83, so that would've been probably '85 or thereabouts.

Q: Was the war between Iran and Iraq going on?

MUSTARD: I don't remember that, yeah, it may have been going on, I don't remember that it was a hot war at that point. I just don't remember

Q: But well before the invasion of Kuwait.

MUSTARD: The invasion occurred in '90.

Q: August 4, 1990. It's burned in my—well, for various reasons, I won't go into that.

MUSTARD: Well, not long after that, of course, Larry Panasuk went into Baghdad to be our agricultural trade officer, and so that was around 1985, 'cause he was, as I recall, was there for five years, Larry was in Baghdad for five years I think from '85 to '90, and then in '90 of course he was transferred to Ankara. That's when I saw Larry again. I had known Larry because Larry had been deputy director for analysis of Dairy, Livestock and Poultry Division for a while, and I had worked for him in that capacity. Larry came to Istanbul for a little while, he and Shirley lived in Istanbul for a few weeks before they moved on to Ankara.

Q: He was evacuated out of Iraq after the invasion?

MUSTARD: They were evacuated and since he'd already been assigned to come to Turkey, they brought them to Turkey. I was on my way out, but that's getting ahead of the story.

Q: Yeah. It would be interesting to hear how you jumped into the Foreign Service, around this time after DL&P.

MUSTARD: Well, you know, a lot of us joined FAS with the idea of joining the Foreign Service and I should back up and I should tell you that I joined the Grain and Feed Division in April 1982 and a month later, in May 1982, I got a phone call from the U.S. Information Agency 'cause I had applied for the Foreign Service and when you apply for the Foreign Service you're asked to check, do you want to go with State or do you want to go with USIA back in those days. And I had checked USIA because I'd already worked for USIA as an exhibit guide, thought what the heck, I know the organization, but they actually lost my paperwork three times while I was in grad school.

I got phone calls from USIA asking me if I knew where my paperwork was and they also lost my medical examination. I had had a medical examination, a physical exam, done at Chanute Air Force Base, which is about ten miles north of Champaign-Urbana, and they managed to lose that, too. So I wasn't feeling like USIA wanted me very badly because they kept losing my paperwork.

So finally in May I got this phone call, saying, we want to offer you a position in the A-100 class that opens in June, so are you in for that, and I've only been working in G&F, Grain and Feed, for a month. So I said, "Well, you know I already have a job that's gonna lead me to the Foreign Service." And the woman, the personnelist at USIA, said, "Well, you know, if you stay with FAS you'll never be an ambassador because ambassadors are not taken from the Department of Agriculture." And I said, "Well, I will never be an ambassador anyway, that's just not in the cards, and that's not why I want to join the Foreign Service, so thank you very much, but I think I'll stay with FAS," and that was that.

So I turned down the offer of the job from what would now be the Department of State, I turned down the job from USIA, stayed with FAS, and never regretted it. But yeah, in '85 I applied for the Foreign Service and in those days of course you applied from within FAS from the Civil Service, not like you're doing it today with bringing in people from outside, which is a good thing, I'm glad they're doing that. But we came in and you had to submit an application, there was no written examination in those days because they already had examples of your writing, they already knew you could write, they already had an idea, and in those days they would also send you overseas on trips and then they would call the attachés and ask them how did he perform. We had some people who were not allowed to sit for the oral assessment in FAS because they had done so poorly during an unsupervised trip overseas and the attachés reported back, no, this person didn't cut it, something went wrong, and there are some funny off-the-record stories I can tell you about that.

But I apparently had good reports from the attachés and whatnot. I had minded my manners and done a good job while I was traveling abroad, so I sat for the oral assessment. The oral assessment was conducted over in Rosslyn, they had a bunch of leased offices over there that were run by the Foreign Service Institute [FSI]. I'll never forget, the chairman of my board of examiners panel was Paul Drazek, and Shack Pitcher was the other FAS person on it, someone from State, I don't remember, and then there was this relatively junior, newly minted FO-2 by the name of Lyle Sebranek, who was the observer. He was observing them so that he could learn to become a deputy examiner.

Well, about five minutes before I went in to take the oral assessment I bent over to pick up a magazine off the coffee table in the waiting room and ripped out my trousers fore and aft, right across the crotch, tore the seam out from the bottom of the zipper all the way back up about halfway up my backside and there was absolutely nothing I could do about it. I couldn't go home and change trousers. There wasn't enough time. I was just gonna have to go in, bluff my way through it. So whoever was just ahead of me came out, and, you know, handshakes all around, congratulations you're in the Foreign Service, I don't remember who it was, one of my colleagues. And I walked in and I walked in pretty stiff legged, trying to keep my knees together and then sat down in the chair across from these three people and had my knees clamped together the whole time. And they were asking questions and I remember at one point Shack Pitcher was kind of homing in, he was homing in on a question, he didn't like the answer that I gave to one of the questions,

so he was kind of, you know, pushing me really hard, and I was just, you know, answering as best I could. I was pretty relaxed about it because I'd already been through oral assessments before.

Got done, I stood up and walked out of the room, and they decide on the spot, you pass or fail, so after a few minutes Paul came out, shook hands with me, and then he said, "Oh, you passed with flying colors, congratulations, but you know, Allan, you were just awfully nervous in there, you didn't have to be quite so nervous." And I said, "Paul, I wasn't nervous, I was well ventilated," and I spread my legs so he could see how my trousers were ripped out. They all just burst out guffawing and Paul said, "Oh, my goodness, if we had known that, we would have given you an even higher score." That was my entrance into Foreign Service.

I was the last one to come into the Foreign Service as a GS-13 [General Schedule grade 13]. They had set a big rule in place that if you wanted to come in, you had to come in as a GS-12 and then lateral as an FP-4, and I had been promoted to GS-13 in the Dairy, Livestock and Poultry Division and I was the last person who was allowed to lateral at that grade. The one ahead of me, I think, was Dan Martinez, he lateraled as a GS-13, and I think I was the next. The next person to come into the Foreign Service behind me was Robert Curtis and they forced him to come in as a GS-12 and lateral as an FP-4, and Robert has never let me forget that. He's never forgiven me for that.

Q: Did he have to drop back?

MUSTARD: No, they refused to promote him to GS-13 so that he wouldn't have to take a downgrade, 'cause in those days, if you took the 13, they wouldn't let you take the exam.

Q: So then at that point, in '86, you got your first posting overseas, at the embassy.

MUSTARD: Yeah, well, you know, when I joined FAS they knew I spoke Russian and so they said you need to go over to the Foreign Service Institute and take the Russian exam and there was a little bit of money, not a lot of money, but back in those days FAS would give you a bit of a language bonus if you knew a foreign language, so in my case it was around two hundred dollars and Ann and I needed a new mattress for our bed, so that language bonus bought a new mattress for the bed.

But I went over to FSI and there were two instructors there, Irene Thompson and Nina Delacruz, who were originally Russian, of course, they were native speakers of Russian who had married people with non-Russian last names, and when I walked in, they said, Because you're from the Department of Agriculture, we have picked out some readings from agricultural publications that we want you to read. And so I looked at them and I said fine, and they asked, can you tell us the gist of this article, and I said, "Well, rather than give you the gist of the article, why don't I just translate it for you?" And so I did an off-the-cuff translation of the article. And then they wanted to converse, we had a nice conversation, and at one point I was translating something and I couldn't remember the

word in English, and they started throwing words in English at me and I said no, no, no, that's not it, and finally I remembered what the word was in English, and I said, "Yes, kind of funny, I know the word in Russian, I couldn't remember the word in English." We had a kind of a laugh over that. They said, "Oh, yeah, that happens." So after, I don't know, the exam took about an hour, I suppose, and at the end of it I said, "So how did I do?" And they said, Well, 4+, and I didn't know what that meant. I asked, "What does that mean?" They said, Well, we use a scale of 0 to 5 where five is an educated native speaker. We're rating you 4+, just slightly below an educated native speaker, because you made a few minor stylistic errors and you do have a slight accent, you do not have a Russian accent. I have an accent. Nobody can ever tell me what accent it is. They think it's Polish or East German or something like that. They never peg me for an American, but they know I'm not Russian."

So anyway I came back and ran into Fran Bledsoe, who was one of the personnelists we worked with and was in charge of the JP program, the junior professional program. Fran asked me, "So how did you do?" And I said, "4+," and she said, "You're lying." I said, "Well, I'm not lying, you'll get the paperwork soon enough," and sure enough a couple weeks later, of course, it took a couple weeks for the paperwork to follow, and it came. I had a 4+ in Russian and Fran came down to my office to look me up, and came in to apologize. She said nobody in FAS had ever gotten a 4+ in Russian before, this is extraordinary, so they knew I was going to go to Russia.

Q: So you didn't have to take language training.

MUSTARD: No, and this is another kind of a funny story, because I didn't need language training. Larry Thomasson was head of the attaché service in those days and he sent a message up to John Riesz, and said that he needed to speak to me, and so I came down because I had applied for language training for my wife. She didn't speak Russian and so I hiked down to see Mr. Thomasson and, you know, Larry was from North Carolina, had a very pronounced southern accent and in a very gentlemanly manner he said, "Well, you know Allan, I have your application here, you want us to give some language training to your wife, and the fact of the matter is that we have a rule that the spouse gets half of the language training of the officer and you're not going to require any language training because of your fantastic ability with the Russian language, and well, half of nothing, is, well, you get the picture, and I'm afraid we're not going to be able to give your wife any language training." Well, I got mad, so I said, "Well, you know, Mr. Thomasson, I think I can solve this problem for you," and he said, "Well, how is that?" And I said, "Well, I'll just decline the assignment, refuse to go, and then you'll have to send somebody else to language training, and that person's spouse will get half of the language training."

And he gave me a very earnest look and said, "Well, that's not exactly what we had in mind." And I said, "No, I'm sure it isn't, but if you don't come up with a solution to this, I will not go to Moscow. My wife gets the same language training as Mervi Hamby and as Dodie Huete (who were the spouses of Tom Hamby and Steve Huete), or I don't go."

It really annoyed me pretty badly and so the upshot was that they went back and they looked at the rules and decided that they could interpret them that my wife could get half of the training that I would have gotten if I had needed language training, and so my wife got six months at the Foreign Service Institute, and got some Russian language training, which of course given that we did two tours in Moscow, a total of seven years in Moscow, and then the four and a half years in Ashgabat, that Russian training came in pretty handy to her.

Q: Very much, pennywise it was a good investment.

MUSTARD: I think it was a very good investment for the U.S. government to give my wife language training, and we can talk about some of the ways that she supported FAS over the course of the interview.

Q: I'd like to hear that. That's a big part of an attaché's life, having a family, being able to survive in that environment, flourish in that environment.

MUSTARD: And if you have a partner who is supportive and who participates in it you can just get an awful lot more work done.

Actually, I should back up. There was one other thing that I did that was quite interesting and proved to be rather fateful in terms of my career. In 1985 I was asked to serve on a task force for the acquisition of a new computer system for the Commodity Credit Corporation. I was one of the users who were asked to serve on it. The other one was Reneé Murphy, also known as Renée Stallings, and Renée and I served as the users on this acquisition team, evaluating proposals from vendors for a computer system. This was before personal computer networking was possible and we had personal computers but they were not networked at that point. We got two bids. One was from IBM and the other was from DEC, Digital Equipment Corporation. We evaluated those. We selected DEC and you may remember when you came into FAS we still had the DEC VAXes operating, and we ran them for about, oh, golly, over fifteen years. We still had VAXes around into the early 2000s. So I was part of that task force, spent six months on that, and there were people who told me, this is the end of your career because by doing this you will be pigeonholed as an IT guy, as somebody who is out of the mainstream of FAS commodity analysis, which, of course, commodity analysis and trade policy were where it was at.

And I said, no, I can pick up some skills, and in fact, although it did to some degree pigeonhole me as an IT guy, nonetheless it taught me about procurement and about federal procurement and that whole process, which later on in my career proved to be extraordinarily valuable insights when I became a senior executive and senior manager in FAS, and then later on in the ambassadorship. So, you know, I guess my point there and in bringing this up is that opportunities will arise for you to step out of the mainstream and go do something, go do an excursion, to learn another skill set and to learn something else that's not part of the mainstream, and you should do that, you should embrace those opportunities, because they'll teach you things you won't learn any other way.

Q: The next question, if we should go to that, is about when you were at Dairy, Livestock and Poultry in FAS in Washington in 1986. You thought it would be interesting to talk about the Meat Import Law letter.

MUSTARD: Yeah, there was an incident that I thought was illustrative of how the bureaucracy can really go off the rails sometimes, and I want to include this so that anybody who reads the oral history will realize that sometimes bureaucratic clearances can really reach the point of the ridiculous. There was a fellow by the name of Jim Fowler in the Dairy, Livestock and Poultry Division, who was responsible for the monthly report to Congress on the Meat Import Law implementation.

Before we joined the WTO [World Trade Organization], of course, we could have quotas for imports. Cheese was imported under quota, for example, and meat was imported under quota. Quotas were abolished when we joined the WTO. We went to tariff rate quotas. But back in the days of hard quotas, we had to report to Congress on the implementation and execution of these laws, so there was a monthly letter that went to Congress that required twenty-seven clearances, and each one of those clearances received a carbon copy. This was before the days of photocopies being cheap and so we were told, you have to print the copies of the letter on a printer. We had a special dot-matrix printer that we used for this, because you had to print out the tables, statistical tables, that went with the letter as attachments. So you have a letter which had the usual number of carbons and in this case you had the original plus twenty-six carbons, and since you couldn't print more than about five or six carbons at a time, that meant that you ran the letter through this printer several times to come up with a total of one original and twenty-six copies.

So it was something that took several hours to accomplish. Obviously the letter itself had to be cleared and it had to be cleared all the way up through the associate administrator. The associate administrator was Leo Mayer and he was the one who was responsible for signing the letter. For some reason he signed it, rather than the administrator, so the letter would go all the way up there and we would get it precleared and he would approve the text, and then we would print the final copy and then send it forward. Well, at one point Leo forgot that he had already cleared on the text of the letter, actually, he did it a number of times, and there were a number of times Leo would forget that he had cleared, and he would amend what he had already approved and we would have to reprint the whole thing all over again, you know, we have to make the original with twenty-six copies.

Well, one time Leo forgot twice in a row he'd already cleared off on the text. Poor Jim was pretty frazzled. We were at the deadline, we needed for this thing to go out, and he went storming into Leo's office. Remember, here's Leo Mayer, who was Dr. Mayer, and the associate administrator, and senior executive and political appointee. He'd been a staffer on Capitol Hill. They put him in FAS to be a political watchdog, to keep an eye on Dick Smith, who was a career guy as administrator, because they wanted to have

somebody from the political side keeping an eye on Smith to make sure that he'd be politically pure.

Poor Jim went storming into Leo's office waving these things, and said, "You've already cleared off on this, why are you editing it again? I have to run off twenty-six copies of this thing, I have to rerun the whole thing. It's several hours of work that we've already done twice, why are you amending it again?" Leo apologized, "Oh, I'm sorry, I forgot that I'd already cleared off on this, so let it go as is." All they had to do was run one more original for him to sign, they didn't have to run all of it.

But that was how ridiculous it was, that you would run these things and go up to the bureaucracy and you would have people in the bureaucracy who forgot that they had already cleared off on things. It just drove you crazy. One day Jim and I were talking and I said, "Why do we have to have twenty-seven copies, and why does it have to go through twenty-seven clearances?" He said, "Well, I'm not sure." So he decided to do an experiment. He started cutting back on the number of copies that went out. We still had to do the same number of clearances, still twenty-seven clearances before the letter could be signed, but he stopped sending carbon copies to everybody who had cleared off on it, and eventually got it down to, I think, four or five, which only took one run through the printer, didn't have to go with multiple runs through the printer. We only had to have four or five copies, one for the administrator's office, one for our division. I forget, there were a couple of offices that said they needed to have it.

Well, he started dropping people off, and nobody complained, and he managed to get rid of over twenty of the copies, eventually. These things just start to balloon and to get out of control sometimes. You need a little common sense. Jim was a good guy and had a lot of common sense. He just couldn't see why we were wasting all that paper and all that carbon.

Q: Also during that time, tell us about your TDY to Moscow in 1985 when you encountered Nixon.

MUSTARD: In 1985 I made a trip to Moscow, actually, I was part of a delegation in 1985, and ended up doing a TDY in Moscow at the request of Weyland Beeghly, who needed some TDY support. One of the ironies of that was that he had me write one of the DL&P reports while I was in Moscow, and then of course, we sent the report in and when I got back to Washington, John Riesz made me evaluate my own report. The commodity divisions did evaluations of every report that came in, so I wrote the report and when I got back to Washington I had to evaluate my own report. I thought that was pretty dumb but John said, "No, you do it," and that's that, he wouldn't let anybody else do it.

One of the things that happened was that former President Nixon visited Moscow while I was there on this TDY. A bunch of us were brought over to the ambassador's residence, Spaso House, to meet the former president. He gave us little talk about how things had been when he was president in dealing with Soviets, and whatnot, and dealing with

Brezhnev, then he said, “All my life I’ve always had a fantasy, a dream, that someday I would be in Moscow and would be at the ambassador’s residence and I would play “God Bless America” on the piano while the staff of the American embassy sang along, and so now if you’ll indulge me, I’d like to do that.” He sat down and honest-to-goodness, Dick Nixon played “God Bless America” on the piano and the rest of us sang along. It was not something I ever expected to happen in my career. That was in 1985.

Q: Wouldn’t it be nice to have a video of that.

MUSTARD: Oh, yeah.

Q: I think I remember sometimes seeing him play on TV.

MUSTARD: He was not a great pianist, but he could pick out tunes, and he did okay.

Moscow 1986–1988

So from there I went to Moscow and of course going to Moscow in 1986, you remember what happened in April 1986 in Ukraine. The Chernobyl atomic energy power plant blew up, and so we had a real problem with that.

Q: You were there.

MUSTARD: Yeah, I wasn’t there yet. I was still in Washington when it blew in April and FAS has, the whole Foreign Service has this program, getting a salary advance so that if you need to buy stuff before you go overseas you can get an advance of salary against future payments. I applied for that and I went in and I told the people in the budget and fiscal office when I applied, I need this money no later than, and I gave them a certain date, ’cause that’s the day we’re going to buy our consumables, because it was a consumables post, you went in with a ton of consumable supplies, everything from toilet paper to canned food, because we knew it was hard finding anything to eat there at that point, so I said I’m gonna need, I think, two thousand dollars as a salary advance to buy all of these supplies. Well, the people in budget and fiscal decided not to do that because they had a regulation that said you can’t be issued that salary advance until a couple of weeks before departure or something like that, which was too short a time for us to organize the shipment, and buy it, and assemble it and get it shipped. So I went down to go get my check the day before we were to go shopping for our supplies and I was informed, well, you can’t get it yet, you have to wait for a few more weeks because we have this rule.

By this time Chernobyl had blown up and I went storming down the hall and Lou Davis had the misfortune of walking into his office just as I came by. I got between him and the door to his office and gave him a real tongue lashing, and said, I asked for this money in advance so that I could have consumable supplies to go to Moscow and your people are

telling me I can't get the money in time for me to buy supplies so they can be shipped with my household effects, and Chernobyl just happened, there isn't going to be anything to eat there in that country that isn't radioactive, and if I don't have the money so I can buy my supplies tomorrow, you're gonna have to find somebody else to go to Moscow, I will turn down the assignment. And in those days of course we could do that because we were still civil servants up until two weeks before departure and they couldn't force me to go. I had agreed to go but I could renege on it with no penalty and I was mad enough I was prepared to do that and I said, so, if I don't have the money, you can find somebody else to go to Moscow in June.

So he nodded, said, "Okay, okay, okay, I'm on it," and a couple hours later I got a phone call from John Williams, who was the head of the budget and fiscal office. You may remember big John Williams, he called me up to his office. He was very annoyed, and he said, "Why didn't you come talk to me about this? Why did you have to go to Lou?" I said, "Well, I happened to run into Lou in the hallway and I was mad and so, you know, I dumped all over him." And he says, "Well, we're working on it. We're either going to get you a check or, if we have to, will petty cash it. You will have two thousand dollars in your hand before close of business today, so don't leave without it. Come back and see me before close of business, I will have the money for you." And he was a man of his word. I had two thousand dollars, I think in the form of a check, which I then went to the bank the next day, deposited it, and we used that money, then, to go out and buy all these groceries from HoHo's Cash and Carry, which unfortunately is no longer in business but was a great place for those of us going out to consumables posts.

And that's what we lived off of. We lived off of those consumables, 'cause when we got to Moscow, the embassy allegedly had a commissary, but the commissary consisted of a couple of bookcases on the ground floor of an embassy hallway and you could go to these bookcases and if you wanted to buy something on the bookcases—it was all stuff that people left behind when they rotated out, if they had anything left over in their consumables. And I remember that first winter, there was one number ten tin can of sauerkraut on the bookshelves. That was the only vegetable that was available in the embassy commissary, and nobody would buy it, because if anybody had bought it, then the commissary would've been out of vegetables, and that would've been a real blow to morale. So we left the sauerkraut up there as kind of a trophy to show that we still had vegetables in the commissary.

Things did get better over time, of course. The embassy compound opened up that winter, January February 1987, and the concourse opened up. We started to get some shipments. It had a warehouse, it had cold storage facilities, so we were able to start ordering supplies in. Every month we would get a fresh fruit and vegetable shipment from Florida on the Pan Am flight. They would fill one of those containers that goes in the belly of a 747, they would fill that with fruits and vegetables, it would come up from Florida to New York, be put on the New York flight that came all nonstop to Moscow. And once a month we got one of those and that went on for sale at the commissary. So at least once a month we were getting fresh fruits and vegetables. That was a huge boost to morale.

Q: What was Chernobyl like? I remember going to Turkey and the atmosphere that destroyed a lot of their crops. Did it go all over the Soviet Union?

MUSTARD: The radioactive dust went around the world, I think in about seventy-two hours for the dust to go all the way around the world, but yeah, the radioactivity was worst in Belarus right on the border with Ukraine, and in the immediate area around Pripyat and the Chernobyl power plant itself.

One interesting story, too, about Chernobyl—have I told you the story of the first kudos I ever got for a telegram, the telegram I wrote about Chernobyl? So as a former volunteer firefighter I subscribed to the firefighters magazine. I had sent a request to the embassy before going out to subscribe to a certain number of magazines that I wanted to be able to get. In the Soviet Union you couldn't subscribe to magazines midyear, you had to send in the request in December and then your subscription started in January. It was very regimented. So I sent a note out there, and I don't remember if it was Weyland or Tom or John Harrison who put in the order, but they fronted me the money in rubles and put in the order. One of the magazines was *Pozharnoye delo*, the firefighter's magazine, *Fire Affairs*, so I arrived and I had these back issues of *Fire Affairs* waiting for me when I arrived in June.

Well, the embassy was trying desperately to find out from the Foreign Ministry or anybody it could, what had happened at Chernobyl, and the Foreign Ministry was saying, it's all secret, we can't tell you. It's classified information we can't share with you. I got the June issue of the firefighters magazine, and guess what, firefighters magazines around the world all publish an article about the big one, and the lessons learned from the big one, and this firefighters magazine was no different. The big one was the April fire at Chernobyl and they had a complete chronology. It told you exactly when the alarms went in, how many units responded, who the commanders were, a complete description of the entire suppression activity.

I'd only been at post for a couple weeks. I went to our science counselor, John Zimmerman, and said, "John, I've got this article and do you want a copy of it and to write something up?" He said, "Allan, I've got this delegation in town I'm handling, I don't have time for it. Can you write something up? I'll look at it and if it's okay, I will send it in." I said, "Yeah." So one of the very first telegrams I ever wrote was about the fire at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. I typed it all up, took it to John. John looked at it, said, "Yeah, that's fine." I think Tom Hamby actually signed off on it, so we sent it in.

Next morning there was an overnight action message from the Department of State saying that we were to photocopy that article and fast pouch it urgently back to Washington. They wanted—this was before the days of fax machines or email, of course, we couldn't, you know, just scan it and send it. The technology didn't exist. So we photocopied it, fast pouched it back, and the very first kudos I ever got for a telegram was for something that had absolutely nothing to do with agriculture, which was interesting.

Tom Hamby made the first trip of anybody in the embassy down to the Chernobyl area. He went to Kiev, I think in June, about that time he made a crop trip down there and then I went down with Pat Ashburn. Pat Ashburn and I made a trip down there and at the request of the embassy we collected fruits and vegetables from roadside vendors to bring back and check to see if they were radioactive. So far as I know, nothing was found to be radioactive out of anything we brought back, but that was kind of my baptism of fire in Moscow, was getting out there in the wake of Chernobyl, and then going out doing the crop travel and whatnot. We really didn't know for sure just how hazardous it was.

Q: You said it was a telegram. Was that the name of a cable?

MUSTARD: Well, telegrams are cables. A cable is a telegram. Yeah, I mean, there was some interesting stuff. Crop travel was always interesting. Today if you go on crop travel, you take your cell phone and you can call in reports in real time. Towards the end of my career I can remember standing in the middle of a field on a cell phone to somebody back among the satellite imagery people, telling them what I was seeing and taking photographs, so that I could send them back, so that they could then geolocate them and compare them to the satellite imagery.

All very exciting stuff that we can do now, but back then you simply got in a car and you drove out, and the Soviets required that we submit an itinerary in advance. We had to make all of our hotel reservations in advance, and all you needed was for one hotel to deny you a reservation and your entire trip went by the boards at that point. So the KGB only had to make one phone call to the hotel and tell them, don't give the Americans a hotel room, and your trip was off. And 50 percent of the trips that we tried to organize my first year at post went kablooey, went by the wayside because either the KGB refused to grant permission to us to travel or the hotels refused to make room reservations for us, again, presumably on instructions of the KGB.

We complained about this to Washington, but our under secretary at the time was Dan Amstutz, and Amstutz took the position that as long as the Soviets were buying wheat from us, he didn't care if the attachés traveled or not. Amstutz didn't understand that without our eyes on the ground we couldn't really tell what was going on. You couldn't believe what was in the press. We'd learned that during the Great Grain Robbery, so we had to have eyes on the ground and if the Soviets didn't want us to see things they would simply prohibit us from traveling to those areas.

I never got to Central Asia the whole time I was in Moscow from '86 to '88 even though I had the cotton portfolio because they didn't want us down in Central Asia. We found out later it was because of the cotton scandal. They had this enormous cotton scandal that was unfolding at the time and they just didn't want us down there snooping around.

Q: What was that?

MUSTARD: Well, I'll get to that in a minute. Let's circle back to that, but in terms of the crop travel, after about a year of this, Amstutz left. He went back to the private sector, he came out of Goldman Sachs as I recall, he went back to the private sector, and his deputy under secretary, Goldberg, took over as acting under secretary. Goldberg was much more sympathetic to us, so at one point we got a cable from Washington saying that the Soviet agricultural attaché, Nikolay Pervov, wanted to go to Kutztown, Pennsylvania, to give a speech at Kutztown State University, which required permission from the Department of State to travel outside the DC metro area. We had the same restrictions on the Soviets, we imposed in 1953 the same restrictions on the Soviets that they had imposed on us in 1937, that they couldn't travel more than twenty-five miles from Washington, DC without permission, and so we requested that they deny it because of the denials of all of our travel, half of our travel, anyway.

So in the wake of that I was over at the Soviet State Agroindustrial Committee, it was called Gosagroprom, and their deputy chief of foreign relations pulled me aside and started demanding to know why we had denied Dr. Pervov his trip to Kutztown, Pennsylvania. I pulled out a sheet of paper and handed it to him, and said, "Maybe it had to do with all these denials of our travel." I was ready. He looked at that, and he said, "We have nothing to do with those decisions, they are made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. And I said, "Well, we had nothing to do with this decision, it was a decision of the U.S. Department of State." He said, "I understand."

So all of a sudden we started getting more permission to travel, as soon as we imposed reciprocity—and that was another good lesson, that, you know, when you're dealing with these dictatorships, the only thing they understand is reciprocity. It's the only thing. There's no such thing as good will. You can't say, we're going to be nice to them and then they'll be nice to us in return. Much of the world doesn't work like that. So we had to invoke reciprocity and say, If you're going to deny our attachés travel, we're going to deny your attachés travel. Suck it up.

So we did more travel. I was able to get out and travel, and it was extraordinarily useful, even though there were tremendous constraints on us, we still were able to get out and meet people, talk to people. I can remember being on a train trip once. A fellow named Howard Clark and I made that trip, and at one point we were on the train and I was looking out the window, and one of the guys who was in the compartment with us was a Soviet. He asked me why I kept looking out the window. I said, "I'm looking at that wheat out there." He said, "That's not wheat, that's barley." Well, when it's only three inches tall you can't really tell. The grain was already about three inches tall, had tillered nicely, and I said, "How can you tell?" He said, "Well I'm an agronomist, it's my job to be able to tell wheat from barley," and I of course as an agricultural economist, when the plants are that immature I couldn't tell them apart.

So I started asking him about barley yields and wheat yields and pretty much got a brain dump from the guy, and after I got all done getting his brain dump from him, he said, "You know, you seem somewhat knowledgeable about this, what do you do?" And I said,

"I'm an agricultural attaché at the U.S. embassy in Moscow," and he about had a cow on the spot. He'd been giving away all this information to someone who is obviously a foreign spy, in his view.

So just getting out and traveling and talking to people you could get a lot of useful information for our commodity reporting. And of course back then the Soviets were buying our reports. Between 1981 and 1985 the Soviet statistics agency did not publish grain production numbers, they were considered a state secret, and so our estimates, the USDA estimates, were the only estimates of the grain crop that were available. Years later I interviewed Eugene Bannikov of Exportkhleb, and asked him what numbers they used, and he laughed. He said, "We used your numbers. USDA's numbers were the only grain production numbers, we did not have access to the official numbers."

So you know, between 1981 and 1985, Exportkhleb, the official grain trading arm of the Soviet government, used USDA data on production, and we turned out to be pretty close. We were so close that one of the reasons, I was told, that the state statistics agency was given permission to start publishing the data again was because USDA's estimates were so close that there was no point in trying to hide them any more.

Q: I think it was Alan Riffkin who once told me that many years after you had started with him, USDA's numbers were the most reliable numbers across the globe. In Mexico, they don't hide them, but they distort them.

MUSTARD: Oh, they do. Many countries distort the data, and that's a game that's been played for literally many, many, many decades. I can give you examples going back to the turn of the last century, of people being frustrated because official statistics of foreign governments were so inaccurate and were inflated or were deflated for various reasons. So, yeah, that's fairly common, and that's one of the reasons we still need the boots on the ground, and we need people who are willing to get out and travel and see with their own eyes what's going on.

So that was kind of Moscow. I have written an article for *Foreign Service Journal* about what it was like to lose the Foreign Service nationals, and I'll just mention that in passing here, that in October of 1986 we got into a spat, a diplomatic spat, with the Soviets in which we began expelling people from each other's embassies and consulates, and it culminated in not merely the expulsion of diplomats but the Soviets withdrew all of our local employees and we went to a stance of an embassy that was hanging on by its fingernails. You can read a lot of the details of what that was like in that *Foreign Service Journal* article, which I believe was published in May 2007. It's online, you can go to the AFSA [American Foreign Service Association] website and find it and download it.

But a couple of anecdotes that are not in that story I'd like to relate. One was I had the happy opportunity to be duty officer for the embassy the weekend after the local employees were withdrawn, and being a duty officer in the American embassy, one of the things that you had to do in the old days was Saturday morning you went up to the

ambassador's office, you picked up the telegrams from the cable unit, then you sat down, and they were all printed out on paper, of course, they used these multi-ply forms that they printed out on line printers. You would take the ambassador's copies and you would make three stacks. The first stack was the stuff the ambassador needed to read and react to, and that was usually a pretty small stack, usually with only one or two or three cables. In the middle stack was stuff that the ambassador ought to read, and it would be incoming messages from other posts or from Washington that you figured that the ambassador probably ought to be aware of for situational awareness, maybe an instruction from Washington for some other section of the embassy, but one that the ambassador needs to be aware of, that sort of thing. And then the third pile was everything else that the ambassador could read if he was bored but probably wasn't going to, and this is like your personnel messages, budget messages, you know the routine stuff, you are authorized two thousand dollars to buy a new photocopier, that kind of stuff. So you make your three stacks of cables.

I'm sitting there and I'm doing this and I'm sorting the cables and the phone rings. It's the duty officer at the Soviet Foreign Ministry, and he says to me in absolutely impeccable English that he has 150 Soviet citizens who are booked on the Aeroflot flight the next day, Sunday, to fly to New York, but they don't have visas, so they need for us to call in our consuls, put them to work stamping visas in the passports of these 150 passengers, or they're not going to be able to fly to New York. He got done explaining all this and I said to him, "Well, as you're aware, earlier this week the Soviet government unilaterally withdrew all of our local employees from the embassy and as a result our consular section is somewhat short staffed. As a result a backlog has developed of visa issuance and I'm afraid that these 150 travelers will not receive their visas until the consular section can get to them."

And he said to me, "I'm afraid you don't understand." I replied to him, now in Russian, I said, "No, you didn't understand." I repeated what I just said to him in English back to him a second time, only this time in Russian, and at the end of that, I said in Russian, so did you understand? He answered back with one word in Russian: "*Yasno*," which literally means "clear," and meaning it's clear, which is something Russians say when they get it. Okay, he got it, he understood that I was not gonna budge on this. So I flipped back into English and I said, "Thank you very much for your call. I will inform the consul general that these people are waiting for their visas, and I assure you that we will act on them as quickly as we can." And that was that.

So Sunday went by and Monday morning I went into work. One of the things that was rapidly becoming a ritual—the snack bar in the embassy previously had been staffed by local employees, you could go and you could get a full breakfast, and they had an espresso machine, you could get a cappuccino. It was one of the few, very, very few luxuries in Moscow, was the snack bar, and having the espresso machine. And so we were going there, and people were going out to bakeries getting these god-awful rolls that were just not very good, but that was all that was available, making drip coffee so you could go in, and you could have this kind of a chewy roll and you could drink drip coffee

and commiserate with everybody else in the embassy. So I went in, sat down next to Pat Kim, who was the number two in the consular section, and said, “Oh, Pat I got a story I gotta tell you.”

And so I told her what I had done on Saturday. She looked at me, she said, “You did what?” I said, “I blew him off. Come on, the guy was being totally unreasonable. You guys have been working twelve-hour days. I know you’ve been working twelve-hour days since the FSNs left.”

She said, “Did you call the DCM and consult with him?” I said, “Of course not, why would I do that? The answer was obvious. It was clear to me what needed to be done. Why would I not do that?” She buried her face in her hands and said, “Thank God Agriculture had duty this weekend, because if it had been a State officer, the State officer would’ve called the DCM, the DCM would’ve said, yes, he would’ve called us all back in, and we would be working weekends for the rest of our tours of duty. But now we’re going to have weekends off, thanks to you. And they’ll back you up, they will not reverse your decision now that it’s been made,” which was true. They didn’t. So for the first time in my career, as a first-tour officer who had been at post, let’s see, July, August, September, at that point October, so four months, I’d been at post, I made U.S. government policy.

So that’s one anecdote. The other anecdote I want to tell you about all-purpose duty was that we literally were doing anything that needed to be done, any sort of physical labor, and you know, at one point, we had a shipment of steel I-beams that came in from Finland, because we had some Finnish contractors who were building an ice barrier. We’d get these enormous icicles on the back side of the building, and they snapped off and came down. You could have an icicle that would weigh several pounds, you know, twenty, thirty pounds, and it was pointed at the end of it, and if it went to the top of your head you’d be dead. So these Finns were building an ice barrier and we had shipped in a bunch of steel I-beams and a bunch of corrugated steel sheeting. We had to unload that, it was thirty below zero. We’re out there thirty below zero, unloading that stuff by hand, that was really something. And you know, you do a little bit of that and you start thinking, you know, I’d really like to do something that’s more indoors rather than outdoors. So again I lucked out because I grew up on a farm and I knew what a toolbox looked like, I knew what to do with the tools inside.

One of the issues the embassy had was they had this warehouse that was way across town. It was in a neighborhood called Obrucheva. The Obrucheva warehouse was a good hour’s drive away, so if you wanted some pads of paper, you needed some more ballpoint pens, somebody had to go over to the warehouse and bring them back and when we had FSNs, local employees, you have a lot of people who could drive across town, retrieve stuff, and bring it. We lost the FSNs and now it was, we need to pre-stage this stuff closer to the embassy. So we carved out some space on the new embassy compound to be what amounted to a small warehouse. They ordered in steel shelving. It all came in boxes, you know. It’s the kind of stuff that you can buy from Grainger or one of these outfits. They

took two political officers, put them in the room with these boxes and said, Please assemble the shelves. At the end of one eight-hour shift they had assembled one shelf.

Q: They could write cables but couldn't use tools.

MUSTARD: Right, they could write cables but they couldn't use tools. So the next day I was up, it was my day for all-purpose duty, and Rich Jaworski was the assistant GSO in charge of this project. He said, "I was going to try and get someone else to help you, but nobody else was available, so you have to go alone. Just see if you can build at least one more shelf, would you please?" I said, "Sure," so I went in then, and I looked at the one they'd assembled, and they hadn't assembled it right, hadn't put angle braces on it and hadn't used the washers, either. So I had to disassemble it. I reassembled it properly, racked it so it was square, and cinched everything down, and methodically started pulling the parts out of the box.

Once you've built one of them you know how they go together, you don't have to read the instructions again, so I just buzzed through them. At the end of eight hours I had the entire thing filled up, and had all the shelving built. So I walked back up to the general services office, up the hill, and reported to Jaworski. And he said, "So how many did you get built?" I said, "It's done, I'm done." He said, "Bullshit." I said, "No, it's not bullshit, come take a look." So we went down and he was standing there, staring at all of these shelves that are built, and says, "I don't get it, you came down here alone, you did all of this, and two of them working here for eight hours, two of them, and they built one." And I said, "Yeah, I had to take it apart and put it back together again. They didn't do it right." So he said, "I gotta find out what happened."

So he did. It turned out that when these two political officers had gone in there, they had opened up the toolbox and they had only recognized two of the tools, a screwdriver and a pair of pliers, and they knew the screwdriver was not the proper tool, so they had tried to assemble this thing using pliers. And they had just mashed up their knuckles, you know, the pliers slipping and banging against the steel shelving. I of course went in with a box-end wrench and a socket wrench and, you know, boom, it was pretty simple to put those things together.

And so anyway Jaworski and I were comparing notes afterwards and I said, "You know, Rich, what this proves? He says, "What's that?" "It proves that State Department officers are subhuman." And he said, "How do you figure that?" I said, "Well, Homo sapiens is known as the tool-using animal, and State Department officers don't know how to use tools."

So from then on I got to work indoors because I knew how to use tools and other people were outside chipping ice or picking up trash or shoveling snow. I was indoors using tools because I knew how to use them.

But that was Moscow. I mean, it was a lot of work. I got alternate Sundays off, because every Sunday we had somebody flying in. All these delegations suddenly wanted to come in, and some of them were State Department delegations, some of them were USDA delegations, sometimes congressional delegations. In 1988 we were having a congressional delegation every other month and we were having a secretary of state delegation every other month, because we were doing all this arms negotiation stuff.

Agriculture was not directly involved in it but when you have no local employees and a large delegation like that, they dragooned everybody in the embassy to help out. So to do all of that on top of the physical labor, on top of your own reporting, and we were a 95 percent reporting post, you had to work weekends and so every Saturday and every other Sunday. I worked, I took alternate Sundays off, and it wore you down. You got really, really tired after a while, and after two years of that, I was really, I was burning out. I was starting to show some health problems. I was having some stress-related ailments that were showing up, and it was time to leave. So FAS asked me to extend in Moscow for a third year. I said, "No, my health is going, I'm starting to show some real stress cracks from all the work I'm doing. I don't want to extend," and that turned into a real source of friction between me and FAS Washington. There was a lot of pressure on me to stay, and I was pushing back, saying, "I don't want to do that."

One day the Canadian trade commissioner called and asked for a favor. He had George Cohon, who owned the Canadian franchise for McDonald's, the fast food chain, in his office, with a vice president from the corporate headquarters in Oakbrook, in his office. He said, "Allan, this is the Canadian franchise of an American company, and I'd like to bring them over to meet you." So they came to the embassy, and from the start Cohon made it clear he was not happy about being told he needed to meet with the American embassy. He briefed me on what McDonald's of Canada was planning to do, then said, "Well, thank you, we'll be off now." I said, "Well, I have three questions I'd like to ask before you go, may I?" He reluctantly sat down and said to go ahead.

My first question was about repatriation of profits. I asked how McDonald's would repatriate its profits from operations in the USSR. Cohon snickered and said, "Mr. Mustard, you obviously don't know anything about international trade." I admitted that I had never signed or negotiated a commercial contract, so there was perhaps something I could learn from him. Cohon said that all proceeds from sales would be deposited in an account in a Moscow bank, and at the end of each week they would be transferred to the McDonald's bank account in Germany, where they would be converted into deutsche marks [DM]. I asked if he had an agreement in place with the Soviet Central Bank on currency conversion. Cohon said, "No such agreement is necessary, that's how business is done all around the world." I said, "Well, that works in countries with convertible currencies, but the Soviet ruble isn't freely convertible."

At that point the vice president from Oakbrook butted in and asked, "What does that mean, convertible currency?" I explained that to him, and he asked Cohon, "Did you

know that?" Cohon shrugged and scowled at me. Then the vice president took over the conversation and asked, "What are your other two questions?"

I asked about milk and potatoes, because McDonald's ice cream was a 100 percent dairy product, no methyl cellulose, and the standards for potatoes and for French fries were textbook standards, McDonald's rejects went to five-star restaurants. Cohon said that the Moscow city council had promised an unlimited supply of fresh milk and fresh potatoes. I asked if either had been in any stores or at the markets to see milk and potatoes, and of course, they hadn't. So I pointed out that brucellosis and bovine tuberculosis were epizootic in the Soviet Union, and that Soviet citizens boiled milk before drinking it since pasteurization didn't work too well. Potatoes, I said, "Potatoes are rotten by the time they get to the stores."

The vice president asked me what I would do, and I suggested vertical integration—run their own dairy, run their own potato farm, and impose stringent quality control. And that's what McDonald's ended up doing. Cohon invested fifty million dollars in production and processing. They produced everything themselves except the ketchup, which was imported from Turkey. When they walked out, Cohon glowered at me. He was not happy. Years later he wrote a book, *To Russia With Fries*, in which he claimed that somebody in the embassy tried to tell him that opening McDonald's in the USSR wouldn't work, which was not true. I simply told him what obstacles he would face that he needed to think about.

The profit repatriation problem, McDonald's solved it pretty cleverly. There were derelict buildings in downtown Moscow that the Soviets didn't have the money to renovate, so McDonald's signed ninety-nine-year leases with the Moscow city council, leased entire buildings, then renovated them with the rubles and rented the space out to foreigners, foreign companies, for dollars that were paid offshore. When I went back in the 2000s, Moscow had the highest rents in the world, so you can imagine how much McDonald's made off that deal.

Tom Hamby rotated out in February and I was the acting section chief from February until April when Bill Huth arrived. He and Vanja flew in, and I picked them up at the airport, took them home, got them into their townhouse on the embassy compound, and the next day, I was in the office as usual, seven am. I was the one who went up to get the telegrams in the morning, picked up the morning take of newspapers, and started the analysis, and prepared the cable folder for all three of us to read. I was in the middle of that, Bill came walking in at nine am, I'd already been at work for two hours, and Bill walked in, walked up to my desk, and he said, "There's a perception in Washington that you're not working hard enough for FAS."

And you know at this point I'm pretty stressed out after almost two years there at post and getting alternate Sundays off, putting in eleven- to twelve-hour days most days. I dropped what I was doing, went to the file cabinet, and pulled out the reports from the last twelve months. We had a chronology, each folder was one month of reports. I went

through, methodically started counting how many reports I had drafted, how many the other attaché had drafted, and how many Tom Hamby, the section chief, had drafted. We had submitted approximately four hundred reports in the previous twelve months. I had drafted 88 percent of them. Tom had drafted 2 percent of them. The other 10 percent had been done by the other attaché. I went in and I plunked the entire stack on Bill's desk with my tally on top of it, said, "There, read this and see who's doing all the work in this office."

So to his credit he did, and he went through the files to make sure I wasn't lying to him, and then came into my office and says, "Well, Mr. Mustard, it appears that I owe you an apology." "Yeah, Bill, you really do, I've been working my butt off here." One of the reasons that he said FAS was under the impression I wasn't working hard enough for FAS was because in addition to the reporting I did for FAS probably once or twice a month I would do a telegram on something I had learned that had nothing to do with agriculture. It would be something I picked up out on the street talking to people, or something picked up on a crop trip that I had learned that had nothing to do with agriculture, but had to do with how the rural areas viewed Gorbachev, or the political situation in Moscow, or the state of the economy generally, something like that. I was just contributing to the general reporting of the embassy, not strictly for FAS, and there is this faction in FAS that believes, by God, you are payrolled by FAS, you should only work for FAS, everybody else in the embassy needs to do their jobs and you need to do yours.

I worked in enough embassies to know that if you're part of the team you get more than you give. You give 5 percent to the embassy and you'll get 10 to 15 percent back because people will reciprocate, they'll look for ways that they can help you. And the other thing it gives you is that if you're a contributing member of the team, it gives you credibility. People assume that because you're contributing to the general reporting you have situational awareness, so that when you go to the ambassador with a problem, and you say, this is a problem and I need your help, ambassador, the ambassador's going to take it seriously because you're putting everything within the overall context of the embassy, not only within your own microcosm. FAS has never really recognized that the way it needs to. It's one of the reasons FAS is such a parochial agency, is that it doesn't really understand how it fits in most of the rest of the government and in particular into an embassy, which has many moving parts.

So anyway this was the attitude in Washington. I wasn't working hard enough for FAS. I needed to be punished for refusing to extend for a third year. There was a fellow from Geneva who worked for Cargill, Daniel Pletscher, he would come through a couple times a year and check with us, find out what we were doing, get numbers from us, compare notes with us, and then go back to Geneva, because the Geneva office of Cargill did all of the trading with the Soviet Union on behalf of Cargill. He came in one day and he said, "How are things?" I said, "Well, it's the usual story, overworked and underpaid." He said, "Let's talk about that. Cargill is looking for somebody with about your background. Would you consider working for Cargill?" And I said, "Sure, I would." So one thing led

to another, and they asked for references. I sent my resume and a list of references, all of whom were in FAS.

One of them was John Riesz, who had been my division director in Dairy, Livestock and Poultry Division. Cargill called up John, asked him about me, whether I'd be a good employee or not. As soon as he hung up the phone John went down the hall to go see Tom Kay, the administrator, and said, "This'll be the sixth junior officer we lose in a year." We had been bleeding junior officers who would go overseas, do a tour, feel like the agency was screwing them, and then would bail out, and just quit. John said, "You're losing all of your junior talent. It has to stop, has to stop now. You put an end to it." And I didn't find this out until much later but this is why I got the phone call a couple weeks later from Gordon Nicks. I was at the ambassador's residence at a reception, and someone came and got me, and said there's a phone call from Washington. They'd managed to get through by booking a call, which was very unusual, again, no international direct dialing. The fact that Washington could get through on a phone call to Moscow was extraordinary and they managed to track me down at this reception. It was Gordon Nicks. He said, "FAS wants to offer you Istanbul, will you accept it?" I said, "I need to talk to my wife about it." He said, "No, you either take it now or the offer is off the table." I said, "Okay, well, then, I don't accept, because I need to talk to my wife about it first." He said, "Well, all right, we'll give you two days to think about it then, so I'll call you back in two days."

So I went home and talked to Ann that night and we talked it over and she said, "Well, you know, on the one hand you got this offer from Cargill, on the other, this offer from FAS to go to Istanbul." I said, "It's your decision, honey, you get to decide. Do I stay with FAS or do I go to Cargill? I made the choice to join FAS, it's now your turn." She said, "Let's stay with FAS, let's go to Istanbul." So it was Ann's decision, and two days later Gordon called me back and I said I'm willing to go to Istanbul.

He said, "All right, well, in that case you need to sacrifice home leave, do a direct transfer, without home leave. You will not get consular training." There was a requirement that you go do a six-day crash course in Consular Affairs [CA] to be accredited as a consul of the United States, and no language training. I started to argue with him and he said, "Well the view back here in Washington is that it's time for you to demonstrate commitment to your craft," was the way he put it. And I said, "You know, Gordon, if getting alternate Sundays off and working twelve hours a day every other day of the week is not demonstration of commitment to craft, then I don't know what more I can do, so I request curtailment. I want out of here in two weeks. Please cut travel orders for me to come back to the United States immediately so that I can prepare to resign and go to Cargill." And he said, "All right, I'll call you back." So I hung up and I went home. I told Ann, well it looks like the deal is off because these are the conditions they put on and I find that unacceptable.

Overnight a telegram came in from Washington advising that my request for one week of language training had to be modified to three weeks because the instructor they were

engaging refused to give me only one week and said I would need at least a three-week crash course in Turkish. Six-day consular short course had already been booked at FSI, and I was authorized the full twenty days of home leave in Washington state. So obviously FAS had had a change of heart and it wasn't until I came back in on consultations after home leave that I found out what happened. Bill Davis, who was head of commodity programs, was very angry that Tom Kay overruled him and said, "Send Mustard to Istanbul," instead of the person Bill Davis wanted to send. 'Cause Bill as head of Commodity Programs controlled ATOs. In those days C&MP [Commodity and Marketing Programs] controlled ATOs, not the attaché service. So Tom Kay said, "Mustard goes to Istanbul, not a friend of Bill Davis's who was supposed to go," and that made Bill very angry, so he ordered Gordon to make these conditions and hoped that I would turn the job down. Gordon then went to Tom Kay, informed him that this is what Mustard said and why, and Tom Kay told him to back down and quit putting conditions on me, all of which had consequences later on. So that's how I ended up in Istanbul and we did that transfer.

You wanted to know about the KGB and what it was like dealing with the KGB. When we were on travel and well of course we were monitored constantly. They tapped our phones, they had microphones in our apartments, had microphones in our offices.

Q: In the embassy?

MUSTARD: Oh, yeah, absolutely, in the old chancery, the old chancery was thoroughly bugged, and we knew that. They knew that. There were some certain specific areas where we could have classified conversations, but there were very few and were very closely guarded, so it was hard. And of course I was there for the Lonetree-Bracy affair when we discovered that they had been taking burn bags out. So a lot of the classified material that we had typed on the single-use typewriter ribbons that you used in IBM Selectric typewriters, the burn bags were in many cases turned over to the KGB by the drivers in the embassy. And later we found out that some of the typewriters were bugged, so that some of the typewriters, they were getting in real time whatever people were typing. So it was, you know, there was this constant surveillance and then the harassment.

You come home and find it's thirty below zero inside your apartment, too, because they've opened all the windows while you were away, and the pipes burst and things like that. Or you go and they would unplug the refrigerator, you know, unplug your freezer, things like that. They sabotaged my car, they put diesel fuel in my car at one point, and at seventeen degrees below zero diesel fuel turns to gel so it plugged the fuel lines, and the car quit in the middle of traffic. I mean, it was that they would do all these kinds of things just to harass us and try to damage our morale, trying to reduce our productivity.

Traveling was always a trial because they would follow us and if we stopped to look at a field or something we would get harassed and told to keep moving. You were only allowed to stop in the Intourist cities. Now, we were allowed to stop at picnic places. You'd be driving along and you'd see a sign that had a picnic table with a tree leaning

over it, and that was a sign that there was a picnic table up ahead. We were allowed to stop and eat lunch at those, so we always carried our own food. We could buy bread at a bakery, typically in the morning, so we would have some bread to take with us, but we always carried potted meats, things like that, nothing that required refrigeration.

You always carried a case of Coke and a case of beer, used the beer for bribing gas station attendants to fill our car. You know, if you pull up and they say, We don't have any gas, you offer them a couple cans of Heineken, and then suddenly they have gasoline.

Q: This was what year?

MUSTARD: This was '86 to '88.

Q: So the Soviet Union is kind of crumbling.

MUSTARD: Yeah, the Soviet Union was crumbling and we could see that it was crumbling. So, yeah, the KGB would follow us in cars. But see, the KGB was organized bureaucratically, just like the rest of us, so within a given county, what they called the "*rayon*," the local KGB would have to follow us, and he would only follow us to the county line, okay? There'd be another car waiting just across the county line to pick us up and he'd follow us, and we get to the next county line, and he drops off and another one would pick us up. Well, once in a while you'd be driving along and the guy who was supposed to pick you up wouldn't be there. We wouldn't stop and wait for them, of course, we just kept tooling along doing crop observations, windshield surveys, and all of a sudden you'd see cresting the horizon this car coming at you at a very high rate of speed, kind of floating above the asphalt, and the guy would roar past you and dive on the brakes. You'd see his nose going into the pavement, do a U-turn, and pull in right behind us. Very obviously he had been late getting out to where he was supposed to be to stake us out.

Q: Really?

MUSTARD: Yeah, and sometimes we'd be on trips and we wouldn't necessarily have the cars following us, particularly when we were driving around someplace close to Moscow. If we were on the distant trips when we would be out really deep into the boondocks, you know, trips of a week or more, then you would have the people following you. If you were a little closer to Moscow, they had the stationary police observation points for the traffic police. They would stand—they have a stick that's painted alternate stripes of black and white, we called it the "*pozhaluysta*" stick, which means "please" in Russian—and if they pointed it at you, you had to pull over, and they checked your documents and accused you of speeding or doing something wrong and tried to get money out of you. But they would use those to control us and to report on our movements.

So when we would drive by these stations the guy would be standing out watching you as you went by and as soon as you went by, he'd go in and call headquarters and tell them yeah, license plate number thus and such just went by, so they were tracking our movements that way. But this was back in the '80s. Now of course they just put a GPS on your car and track by GPS.

Q: It's easier.

MUSTARD: It's a lot easier. We still got hassled, I'll talk about that when we get to that.

Q: Was your car an obvious American car?

MUSTARD: We had a Volvo 240 and when Weyland Beeghly was the attaché there, Volvo came out with a deal that they would sell a Volvo sedan or any Volvo actually to a diplomat in Moscow, and if you bought the Volvo and drove it for three years in Moscow, you could then sell it duty free to anybody you wanted to. You could actually sell it to a Soviet citizen after three years. It was relieved of the import duty obligation, because we were bringing them in tax free of course as diplomats. So Volvo said, we will buy the car back from you for what you paid for it, see, because the Finns had no problems with dealing on the black market in rubles. The Finns said, And this was out of a dealership up in Helsinki, that the Volvo dealer in Helsinki would buy our car back from us after three years if we wanted to sell it back, and then we could buy a new Volvo, have a new car for the same amount of money, and they would sell the used car to a Soviet for rubles that they could then convert back into Finnmarks.

Well, that didn't work out for us, 'cause the Soviet Union collapsed before we were able to sell the car, but anyway we had a Volvo 240 that was a very good car for crop travel, good acceleration, which is what you needed. You didn't need a high top speed, but you needed to be able to accelerate to get around trucks and things like that in traffic.

Q: I have a friend who was a little bit naive. Very naive, actually. He went to Moldova once for three or four years. He said his wife was pregnant over there, and they had to go to the airport in the middle of the night, two in the morning or something. The roads don't have any reflection on the sides, the signs don't have any reflection, so they had to take a flashlight. They drive trying to stay on the road, his wife is six months pregnant, and they have to stop and shine a light at the sign to make sure they were going in the right direction.

MUSTARD: Yeah, the road infrastructure was not that good, and you tried not to drive at night because it was dangerous. You would be driving down the road in the daytime, you could see things that, that, there would be like an enormous hole in the pavement, big enough to swallow a car, and there would just be a couple of sticks sticking out of it to let you know that there was a hole there you should drive around. Well, at night you couldn't see that, and you'd be on top of the hole and down in the hole before you knew it. So driving at night in the Soviet Union was something we absolutely tried to avoid doing.

I got stuck doing it a few times but I tried to avoid it. But yeah, the roads varied in quality and again, when we get to the part where I went back in the 2000s I want to talk about that separately, but you know, when you see a three-foot frost heave—you know what a frost heave is? Well, in the springtime you get the freeze-thaw cycle, okay? And ice expands because it has more volume than the water that it's made out of, when the water is liquid. So over time eventually asphalt buckles and it starts heaving up and then it rains, you get more water down there, it freezes, it buckles again, and shoves it up, and you end up with these frost heaves that are the buckling asphalt that keeps growing as more water gets down there and freezes and pushes it up. I had never seen a frost heave that was three feet tall, and I was traveling once with the Canadian agricultural counselor, and he was from Calgary, he had grown up in Alberta, he said, "I've never seen a frost heave this big."

It is because of the lack of drainage, that the roads are not properly ballasted with enough gravel that the water will drain away. That's the reason we don't have as big a problem with frost heaves in the United States, is because we ballast the roads, have gravel, so when it rains the water drains away and so when it freezes, it's freezing at a grade where it doesn't cause the asphalt to buckle. The Russians don't put in that much ballast.

Q: This is an anecdote from my childhood. My grandfather and grandmother went to the Soviet Union, I think it was before World War II. And he said, "They will never defeat us." "Why do you say that, Pawpaw?" "Well, because when we flew into the airport, they would build the runways, and within months they would all crack up." They were told to build a highway, but then were told how much cement was supposed to be in it, how much granular material, so they would go cheap on it, and the road, you know, they weren't required to build a high-quality road, they were required to build a road.

MUSTARD: This issue was you had to fulfill the plan and the plan was measured in how many kilometers of road had been built, so the longer you could stretch the materials, the more road you could build, and you could over-fulfill the plan and get rewarded for the road that then fell apart the following year. Well, that wasn't included in the plan statistics so it didn't matter.

Q: Exactly, and that's the whole irony of that. That's why a planned system is very hard to, hard to—

MUSTARD: Hard to administer, because if you do the wrong metrics—we've had similar problems in the United States on a microscale, with people not having the right metrics to measure success, but they did it on a grand scale, on a national scale, across the entirety of the economy, and it just never worked.

Q: And people realized where the payoffs were, and stopped trying to do a good job. They tried to do the job they had to do.

MUSTARD: You fulfilled the plan to stay out of trouble. That's what it was all about.

You wanted me to talk about the structure of Russian agriculture and how that affected the way we worked as agricultural officers. I'll start off with an anecdote. The deputy chief of foreign relations of the State Agroindustrial Committee was a fellow by the name of Dr. Logvin Overchuk, whose son incidentally is currently deputy prime minister of Russia for agricultural affairs, Aleksey Overchuk. Logvin had been the agricultural counselor at the Soviet embassy in Washington and you would've thought he would've known American agriculture fairly well. He went back and was made deputy head of foreign relations in the State Agroindustrial Committee, and one day he called me up on the phone and he said, "Allan, I have a question. What would be the likelihood that the secretary of agriculture would call up the secretary of agriculture of, let's say, Texas, and give him a reprimand because Texas agriculture wasn't doing as well as he thought it should be?"

I said, "Well, it wouldn't happen for a couple of reasons, Dr. Overchuk. The first being that the current secretary of agriculture"—this was 1986 of course—"the current secretary of agriculture is a Republican, and the commissioner of agriculture in Texas right now is John Hightower, who is a Democrat, and no Democrat, especially a Texas Democrat, is going to take anything off of a Republican secretary of agriculture. That's the first thing. The second thing is that the Texas Department of Agriculture has nothing to do with agricultural production in Texas. It administers programs having to do with standards, consumer protection, it has some educational programs for farmers, but it is not like the Soviet system where you set production quotas and you tell farmers how much they're supposed to produce. That's not his responsibility. So the secretary of agriculture would never waste his time talking to the Texas commissioner about agricultural production in Texas."

Dr. Overchuk had spent years in the United States but was so unfamiliar with the structure of American agriculture that he could not really comprehend what I was talking about. It was so different from the Soviet system, which was very top-down and very much a command-and-control operation, where people at the local level take orders from the next layer above, who take orders from the next layer above, and it goes all the way to the top, to the plan that is handed down by the state planners. He just could not comprehend how our farming system worked.

And if you flip that in reverse, if you take someone from the United States who has not studied that system, and ask them to analyze it, then they'll have great difficulty because it is such a different system in terms of management that it's hard to comprehend, and hard to know how to interpret the information that is flowing in your direction. So that was one of the big challenges, really, in terms of the structure of agriculture, because Russian agriculture, if you go back five hundred years, did not look all that different in reality. The bulk of the farmland was in large land holdings five hundred years ago. The single largest landowner at the time of the Russian Revolution was the Russian Orthodox

Church, that people had been donating and willing land to the church for hundreds of years in hopes that would be their ticket to heaven, right?

So you had some very large landowners and then you had the private plots and private plots have been around for hundreds of years. Private plots were given to peasants as a means of subsistence, that was what they lived off of. The landowner allowed them to use this private plot, that was not their personal property, it was not theirs, it was not something that they could claim. They had no deed, but they had the right to use it as long as they were working the land for this landlord. And historically 50 percent of the food in Russia and the Soviet Union was produced on these private plots. Because the smallholders would produce on these in one- to two-acre plots and they would produce fruits and vegetables, they would produce the bulk of the high-value products, your fruits and vegetables and potatoes. Eighty percent of the potatoes were produced on private plots and 90 percent of fruits and vegetables were produced on the private plots, and then put out in the markets for sale.

So to understand Russian agriculture you had to look at it historically and see that this pattern had not really changed. It's just, all the Soviets did, they nationalized everything, they didn't really change the structure of agriculture, and they instituted the command and control so the producers no longer had the authority to make their own production decisions, which really drove things into the ground.

Q: So these were people who lived on the land, but they weren't peons, they weren't tied to the land?

MUSTARD: Not any more, not since 1861, because Emperor Alexander II was the one who freed the serfs, so they were no longer tied to the land. But on the other hand, when the Soviets took over, they discovered that there was a great migration beginning. People were leaving the rural areas because the standard of living was so low. People were impoverished, there was a lot of starvation, so if you were a member of a collective farm, your passport was taken away from you, and this is another thing we don't understand, as Americans. When we think of a passport, we think of the passport we're issued as Americans that allows us to do international travel. Soviets and Russians have an internal passport, and maybe have a foreign passport, too, that allows them to do foreign travel, but your domestic passport is what we use our driver's licenses for, as identification for buying things on credit or buying a plane ticket or something like that. In Russia and in the Soviet Union you had to have your internal passport, your domestic passport, in order to get a plane ticket, in order to travel, and if you didn't have your passport, if your passport was in the safe in the office of the chairman of the collective farm, then you couldn't leave the collective farm. You had no identity and you couldn't go anywhere. So technically they were not tied down but de facto they were. They could only leave the farm with permission of the chairman of the collective farm.

Q: So was the chairman of the collective farm some sort of communist apparatchik?

MUSTARD: Typically was someone who came up through the ranks of the collective farm who was viewed as politically reliable. Typically but not always a member of the Communist Party and nominally elected, but of course elected in an election in which there was only one candidate. See, this was the great farce of Soviet elections, was that they held regular elections, but what kind of election is it if there's only one candidate?

Q: Saddam Hussein had a similar structure. He learned it from the Russians.

MUSTARD: Oh, yeah, he learned a lot from the Soviets.

Q: So, in effect, the people who worked on the farms, who grew the wheat, they had their houses out in the middle of nowhere.

MUSTARD: Well, they're all clustered in villages. It's not like American agriculture where you have a house here and a house there and where everyone has a house on their own farm, because they were dealing with large land holdings, the actual peasantry was clustered together in villages and has been historically. That had not changed. So, when you're out in rural Russia, you see these large expanses of fields, thousands of acres, thousands of hectares, it's not unusual, you go out east of Moscow a few hundred miles and you'll see these absolutely gorgeous wheat and barley fields and each field is a thousand hectares, 2,700 acres, so it is just boggling the mind, and then when you come to the village, all the houses are clustered together.

And again, a thing of historical interest, oftentimes you'll find these villages down in a ravine and that's for two reasons, because down in the ravine is where the creek is, that's where the water is, if you need water, because a lot of these villages of course were founded before the days of running water. But the other reason was, if you're down in a ravine you're harder to find, and five hundred years ago you didn't have law enforcement so you wanted to be able to hide the village so it was not easily detectable by potential marauders. This is something I also noticed in rural Russia, that oftentimes in the small villages, if there was a ravine they'd be down in the ravine where they were hidden.

Q: Did they take horses out, or cars, to work the farms? How did they work these farms?

MUSTARD: You got on your tractor. You had your Belarus tractor, the Belarus T-80 tractor, which was the mainstay eighty horsepower tractor. You went around with your tractor. You went around with your, what they called the tool carrier, which was kind of a Soviet version of a pickup truck, but what it was, was a tractor that instead of having a motor in front you know, like a standard tractor, the motor would be down lower to the ground and on top you would have a truck bed that was in front, and so you saw those. People got around the farm on tractors or big trucks. They had the great big trucks, you had your five-ton trucks, sometimes ten-ton trucks, depending on the model, and so people got around in trucks. If you needed to move a bunch of workers you'd move them on a bus.

Q: Did the workers have plots, like the serfs did?

MUSTARD: Yeah, absolutely, your private plots, and the private plots in the Soviet period continued to produce close to half of agricultural output by value. See, your field crops would be done in the big fields, I mean, the low-value stuff, so wheat, barley, corn, sunflower, flax, cotton, all that stuff would be field crops that would be in the large fields that were operated by the collective, whether it was a collective farm or a state farm. But on private plots, that's where you found your tomatoes, your cucumbers, your stone fruits, you found your apple trees, eggs; the bulk of the eggs were produced in private plots, not in the big large poultry operations. They had large poultry operations, but in the Soviet period the bulk of the eggs were produced in private plots.

Q: Did that change when the Soviet Union fell? Or was it weighted that way?

MUSTARD: It's still heavily weighted that way, although the proportions have changed. There are more fruits and vegetables being produced by larger operations. As agriculture became commercial and as people looked at where they could make money you started seeing people moving into greenhouses, shade houses, that sort of thing, so you see, you've seen some structural changes but still it's very much big farms versus very small private plots.

Q: During the Great Grain Robbery, when they estimated production to be here (pointing high) and it really was here (pointing low), how did that get reversed to the point that the farms really became productive again?

MUSTARD: Well, again, it was the privatization of agriculture. If you look at a farm in which the farmer has the right to make his production decisions versus one where he's taking orders from bureaucrats like you and me in the nation's capital—I mean, what Kansas farmer, what Illinois farmer, would take orders from you or me sitting in Washington, DC about when to start planting? He knows when to start planting. He knows when the soil temperature is right. He knows when the soil moisture is right, when it's time to go out and put the corn in the ground, or to put the wheat in the ground. That's not how the Soviets did it. The Soviets would tell the farmers, we have people at the Academy of Agricultural Sciences who say that the spring planting should start now, and if it was the wrong season, they went out and they planted and the seeds died in the ground, and they had to reseed weeks later with maybe seed that wasn't as good as the first seed they'd put in the ground, whatever they had left over.

So that was just an example of what you would do. The central allocation of inputs, you might or might not get fertilizer, or maybe you would be the guy spreading the fertilizer, would be told to get this fertilizer in the ground, while his interest is in getting rid of the fertilizer as fast as possible. So he sets the rate on the spreader really high so that he spreads a tremendous amount and burns the fields where he spreads it, then runs out, says, I'm out of fertilizer, I can't spread anymore. Rather than spreading what the field should get, he spreads according to what is convenient for him and his schedule for going

out and boozing it up afterwards. So again, if you put production in the hands of the people who have an incentive to produce and give them the economic freedom to buy the inputs and then to market their product afterwards, it makes all the difference in the world.

And again, there was a lot of pressure on people to do fads. Collective contracting under Gorbachev, and family contracting, that we were going to contract out to farm families and they would take a parcel and they would be able to lease it for forty-nine years, and this was going to be a great boon for Russian agriculture. And of course it failed, because people are not interested in leasing land if they can own it, and leasing land even for forty-nine years is not long enough to ensure proper stewardship of land.

So these are the sorts of things that really made the difference when agriculture was privatized in Russia. Production went up and Russia is now a consistent exporter of wheat.

Q: Some of this is maybe going to be elementary, it's really not about you, per se, but I think it is of interest for history, to have that short synopsis of the situation.

On your posting in 1986 to 1988 there're several things that you mentioned that would be interesting to talk about. The first was the cotton scandal.

MUSTARD: Right, so one of the reasons I was not allowed to travel to Central Asia when I was posted there was because, we learned later, because of the cotton scandal. They didn't want me down there snooping around. The cotton scandal occurred because in the Soviet system there was tremendous pressure on everybody to meet production quotas, which were set in the annual- and five-year plans. Since production always had to rise, production could never be allowed to fall. If your production did not meet the plan target then you would inflate the figures, and you would claim that you had produced something even though it didn't really exist.

The problem with that was that not only was production not equal to what was on paper in the official statistics, but somebody was getting the money, because the government bought everything. All this stuff was under state quotas and for state acquisition, what they called procurement, state procurement, and so this cotton was being paid for and somebody was getting the money.

So your production quotas kept going up and production on paper kept going up even though the cotton wasn't there. Eventually it got so out of whack that the statisticians at the State Statistical Committee went to their higher-ups in the government and said, "There is something wrong with the numbers, because these republics, union republics of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, are claiming that they're producing this cotton but the cotton doesn't exist. We don't see it at the cotton mills, so either the cotton is being diverted someplace or it never existed in the first place. This needs to be investigated." The KGB investigated and discovered that in fact the cotton didn't exist, it had never

been produced, and yet certain officials down at the republic level had been getting the money for it and had been squirreling the money away and spending it on themselves.

As I recall some of them went to prison, some of them were executed, got the death penalty for that level of corruption. It was the downfall, I believe, of Brezhnev's son. Brezhnev was dead at that point, he died in 1982, so was no longer available to protect his son and his son was somehow implicated in the scandal as well. The cotton scandal blew up pretty much while I was there between 1986 and '88, and again, that's why, I was told later, I was not allowed to go to Central Asia as they didn't want me down there snooping around in the wake of the cotton scandal.

Q: If you had discovered it and the KGB had not—

MUSTARD: Yeah, well, I doubt that I would've discovered it, because we just didn't have access to the numbers and—we didn't have the kind of access that they thought we did. The KGB assumed that we had better access than we really did. It was such a closed society, such a police state, that it was really hard to learn anything.

Q: The next issue is Weyland's mutant sugar beet cable.

MUSTARD: This occurred after Chernobyl. Chernobyl occurred in April 1986 and in those days the agricultural affairs office in Moscow sent in weekly cables in the spring about the planting progress, how many hectares have been planted to each crop. Those statistics were published in the national newspapers, so you simply went to the national newspapers, *Pravda*, *Izvestia* or *Sel'skaya zhizn'*, and you extracted those numbers and you compared them to the numbers during the same week for the previous four years. We just pulled up cables from last year, copied the numbers out of those cables for the prior years, and then you would add a new column that showed, this is what the equivalent numbers are now. That way folks in Washington could keep track of the planting progress. Are they ahead, are they behind, how are things going, in terms of getting the seeds in the ground.

So Weyland had John Harrison drafting these cables and the week after the Chernobyl accident, after it became public knowledge, Weyland added, as a joke, a paragraph at the end of that telegram that said, "We don't know what the impact of the nuclear power plant accident near Kiev will have, but there are unconfirmed reports of 1500-kilogram sugar beets and sunflowers growing out of control." He sent this back as a telegram.

A couple of things to bear in mind: in those days, of course, telegrams were sent to the commercial relay center in Albany, Georgia, and then from there were sent in the clear by Telex lines to the AMS leased wire unit on the third floor of the South Building, so anybody who could tap those Telex lines, which included the Soviets, the KGB, was probably listening in on any traffic that went over those lines, would have seen that. But in addition to that, of course, when that cable arrived in Washington the reports office took it, photocopied it, and put it in the pigeonholes for everybody who subscribed to our

reports. These included all the major grain companies, like Cargill, Cook Industries, Continental, ADM, Bunge, Louis Dreyfus, and whatnot. They all subscribed to our reports, as did the Soviet embassy.

Then you had the various wire services that did, too, so in addition to all the companies that got it, Commodity News Service, which you may remember, it later became Knight Ridder, Commodity News Service also subscribed. Now, Commodity News Service would take our reports and would regurgitate them as wire service copy. They hired a bunch of twenty-something college graduates who couldn't find another job, they would take the attaché report and type, according to the U.S. agricultural attaché in Moscow, and then they would reproduce paragraph one. Then they would type, the attaché continued, and then they would regurgitate paragraph two. The report is of government origin so it's not copyrighted, right? They get down to the last paragraph and they say, the attaché concluded, and this thing about the 1,500-kilogram sugar beets and sunflowers growing out of control.

That wire service report hit the sugar exchange in New York City. The traders initially looked at that, said, "Oh my goodness, 1,500-kilogram sugar beets, there'll be a glut on the market," and sugar futures did a limit move down. Some of the other traders looked at the report and they said, "All that sugar will be radioactive, will have to be taken off the market," so it did a limit move up. The sugar futures market began to gyrate between limit moves down and limit moves up for the next roughly half an hour before trading was suspended on sugar futures for the next couple of days.

Now, remember, there was no international direct dialing to Moscow. People were frantically trying to get through to Weyland, to find out what happened and couldn't get through by phone because there was no international direct dialing. It took a couple of days to finally get through to him by phone. When Washington finally did get ahold of Weyland, he just said, "Well, it was just meant as a joke." The head of Commodity News Service called on Tom Kay, who was administrator at that point, and wanted Weyland cashiered, but they'd had so much trouble finding somebody who was willing to go to Moscow and had pulled Weyland off his farm, he was out farming in Pierson, Iowa, and was brought back into the Foreign Service specifically to go to Moscow. They recruited him off the farm, which is another story, about how Weyland was recruited off the farm after he had resigned, to go to Moscow.

The head of Commodity News Service was a woman, I believe. She demanded that Weyland be fired and Tom Kay said, "No, we're not going to fire him." But before I went to Moscow the following June I had marching orders to tell Weyland that any future jokes he would send to Washington had better be sent in by limited official use telegram, not by TOFAS.

Q: I'm amazed. That's a funny and scary story. Funny in retrospect but not funny at the time.

MUSTARD: I don't know if you remember Randy Zeitner. Randy Zeitner, after he retired from FAS, went out to Montana and he teaches agricultural economics out in Montana, at Montana State in Bozeman, and he uses Weyland's sugarbeet cable as an example of how information can move markets.

Q: Well, that's for sure. That's funny. So ever since then you've wanted to send in a cable with a joke like that? Or always reticent to do that?

MUSTARD: Well, April Fools' [Day], all bets are off. I've sent in over my career a number of April Fools' cables. I sent April Fools' cables from Moscow, from Vienna, sent April Fools' cables from Ashgabat, so I've sent in April Fools' cables. That's permitted in the Foreign Service, to send April Fools' cables. Some of them were well enough done that people were actually fooled. We had some people who were fooled by my April Fools' cables.

Q: Do you have any stories that you'd like to share on that?

MUSTARD: No, no, no. I want people to figure out on their own how to write April Fools' cables.

Q: The next issue is that you were pulled over by the, you called it, the GAI.

MUSTARD: GAI is the state automobile inspectorate which is the state police, the traffic police, of the Soviet Union. Our crop travel vehicle was a Volvo 240 and out in the boondocks of the Soviet Union it was a little bit of an exotic vehicle, so sometimes the traffic police would pull us over just so they could look at it. I remember getting pulled over once, a guy came out, was frantically waving at me to pull over and got me over. I got out of the car and asked what the problem was and he says, "Oh, I need to inspect your engine." So I popped the hood, and he and his buddy came over and they were oohing and ahhing over the engine, asking, "How much horsepower, how fast will it go?" They weren't interested in me or in giving me a ticket or anything, they just wanted to see the car, see the engine, just very excited to see a Volvo up close.

Q: Then, how about the Moscow group award ordered by Dick Lyng after FAS leadership refused?

MUSTARD: Yeah, that was an interesting little incident. After we lost the Foreign Service nationals in October 1986, of course keeping the embassy open was a real struggle, particularly when the KGB and GRU officers who were expelled from Washington and New York returned to Moscow and started sabotaging us. They sabotaged our cars, they sabotaged their apartments, they were just engaging in a tremendous amount of harassment. Just keeping the embassy operating was a struggle, let alone doing our day jobs on top of that.

At the next awards ceremony that following Spring every other section of the embassy got either the highest or the second highest award that they could get from their respective Cabinet departments. So State Department, every State Department officer at post got some sort of a high award from the Department of State. Same thing for USIA, same thing for Department of Defense folks, the folks at the Department of Commerce. They all got some sort of a special award recognizing that they had managed to keep their offices operating in spite of all of the harassment and the sabotage that we had to undergo, and we were left out. FAS was left out, which we thought was odd.

As it turned out there was a Cabinet meeting about that time and Dick Lyng was secretary of agriculture. When he showed up for the Cabinet meeting he overheard Secretary of State Shultz talking to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger about these awards that they had just given to all of their staff, and Lyng thought that was odd, 'cause he hadn't heard anything about the folks from Agriculture getting anything. When he went back to USDA he called in the leadership of FAS and said, "What award did we give to our folks in Moscow?" The answer he got from FAS leadership was, We didn't give them anything because as far as we're concerned they haven't done a very good job, their productivity has gone down, and in fact we consider it nothing special. As far as we're concerned, that's their job, to keep the office open and running in spite of hardships, and that's what we pay them for.

Lyng kind of got a little hot under the collar and he said, "Well, you will give them an award and ordered them to give us a group Superior Honor Award. A year later we were included in the awards ceremony and we were given our group Superior Honor Award in spring of 1988. Then in the summer of 1988 at the end of my tour of duty before going out to Istanbul one of the folks in FAS leadership pulled me aside and made sure I understood, "You're only getting this award because Dick Lyng ordered us to give it to you. We don't think you deserve it." It really was a very strange thing, that everybody else at post got a special award, but FAS didn't consider us deserving of the same thing that everybody else at post had gotten.

Q: That's an amazing story, because frequently people just won't change, when they get a position, they just dig in. A little bit of detail, why did you lose your FSNs?

MUSTARD: That's pretty much covered if you read the article in the *Foreign Service Journal* from May 2007. I covered that in detail, how the Soviet government withdrew our local staff in October of 1986. Rather than reiterate that here, what we might want to do is to attach, I have an uncopyrighted version of that report that was the original. It was something I wrote for the embassy newsletter and is a little bit fuller than what ended up in *Foreign Service Journal*. We can attach that to the oral history.

Q: Another issue is how you met Aleksandr Nikonov and were assaulted when entering his office.

MUSTARD: Right, so I could not, we could not get in to see a lot of government officials, and one of the officials we wanted to meet with was Aleksandr Nikonov, who was the president of the Academy of Agricultural Sciences. We wanted to meet him because he was very close to Gorbachev. Prior to being general secretary of the Communist Party, Gorbachev had been the secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party for agriculture and had been very much involved in agricultural policy making, and Nikonov was one of his muses. Nikonov had been one of his professors in Stavropol and was a very influential agricultural policy person. Now as president of the Academy of Agricultural Sciences he was in a position really to have an impact on not just agricultural science but agricultural policy more generally, and they would not allow us to meet with him.

So Stan Johnson of Iowa State University came out. Stan was the successor to Earl Heady as the head of the Center for Agricultural and Rural Development [CARD] at Iowa State and Iowa State had a very close relationship with the Academy of Agricultural Sciences going back to the 1950s. There are some historic reasons for that. Part of the history was because Boris Runov had come to Iowa State to get his doctorate in agriculture after World War II and had established that relationship between Iowa State and the academy, so you had this connection between Earl Heady and CARD at Iowa State, on the one hand, and the Academy of Agricultural Sciences, which was very robust. In fact Earl Heady was elected a member of the Academy of Agricultural Sciences, which is rare to have a foreigner who was admitted to the Soviet Academy.

Anyway, Heady retired. He was in ill health. Stan Johnson succeeded him as the head of CARD and came out to Moscow to more or less meet with Nikonov and establish that relationship and continue to build on the Iowa State relationship with the academy. He came by the embassy, got a briefing from us, and then asked if we could come with him for his meeting with Nikonov. My boss was Tom Hamby, and he said, “Allan, you should go since you’re the one who speaks the best Russian,” so I went along to accompany Stan Johnson on this meeting.

We got to the Academy of Agricultural Sciences. I drove them over in the office car, and when we walked in, the chief scientific secretary was a fellow by the name of Viktor Nazarenko, and then there was the fellow in charge of foreign relations at the academy, he was named Sergey Kuzmin, they both had this look of horror, absolute shock on their faces that I was there, that someone from the U.S. embassy was there, and going to horn in on this meeting. They said, You can’t come into this meeting, and I said, “No, I’m going to sit in on this meeting,” and so when I walked into the office they physically punched me in the stomach to try to keep me from coming in, stood in the doorway, tried, so I just bulled past them. I just pushed past them. Kuzmin hissed into my ear, “We will not forget this,” and so I sat there, I sat in this meeting and took notes.

It was an important meeting, because in this meeting Nikonov revealed that three people who had been purged in the 1930s and ’40s—Nikolay Vavilov, whom Stalin had murdered in 1943, and Aleksandr Chayanov, who was an economist who was executed in

1938—that they were going to be posthumously rehabilitated; and Kondratyev, too, the economist, who was the originator of the Kondratyev wave theory, he was also going to be posthumously rehabilitated. This was a bellwether event in terms of realizing that communism really was on its last legs, that these people were going to be rehabilitated and their research was going to come back to the forefront.

So that was an important meeting and it only happened because I was willing to allow myself to be punched in the stomach and pushed past these guys who didn't want to let me into Nikonov's office. Nikonov and I later became good friends. When I went back and forth in the 1990s, I would call on him. He was half Russian and half Latvian—his mother was Latvian and his father was Russian—so he spent quite a bit of his life in Latvia, he spoke fluent Latvian. When he was in World War II, he was a major in the army during World War II, he said he learned to carry a hip flask that was half brandy and half Riga balsam, which is an infusion. That gave it a little bit more flavor and so anytime I went to his office he would pull out shot glasses and we would sit there and we would nip at this mix of brandy and Riga balsam.

I'll never forget one meeting in the 1990s with Nikonov. I went in to visit with him with Sue Heinen, who was the senior attaché in Moscow at the time. We called on Nikonov and I said, "What can we do for you? What's the most important thing that you need from us right now?" He looked me in the eye and said, "You could listen to us. AID comes in here and AID people tell us what they're going to do to us. They don't listen to us, they don't listen to what we need. They don't pay attention to what we think our needs are. They simply say, we have a program and will execute it and then they don't listen to us. So the most important thing you can do is listen to us."

I think that was a message that never sank in with AID. They didn't have very good listening skills.

Q: The next issue is Konstantin Mezentsev's trip to America on the IV program.

MUSTARD: One day I read an article in *Sel'skaya zhizn'*, an opinion piece about how American agriculture was going bankrupt and how American agriculture would collapse within the very near future. I showed it to Tom Hamby and Tom said, "Well, why don't you call them and straighten them out?" I said, "You're kidding," he said, "No, give it a try, see what happens." We wrote a letter to *Sel'skaya zhizn'* and to my surprise the editorial staff, the editorial board, invited me to come in and meet with them. So I went in and I met with the editor-in-chief, whose name I have forgotten, and his international observer, who was a gentleman named Konstantin Mezentsev. Kostya and I had a discussion. We talked and as things turned out he became one of those quasi-official Soviets who could come to my apartment. He was allowed to meet with me because he had all the right connections and he was a member of the Communist Party and then he was their international observer, and so Kostya was allowed to socialize with us a little bit.

Kostya and I got into an argument one day. He'd made a trip to North Korea. He started talking about what an advanced country North Korea was, how Pyongyang was this modern city. I said, "You need to go to America if you want to see someplace modern." He laughed and said, "How am I going to do that?"

I went to the international visitor program, which was run by our Press and Culture Office, and they were using it at that time only to send ballerinas and artists and writers and, you know, people in the arts, purely in the arts, and the idea of sending a journalist on the international visitor program was completely beyond the pale. So I went to the deputy chief of mission and I said, "I really want to send this guy because he's the international observer for *Sel'skaya zhizn'*, which is not only the largest circulation daily newspaper in the Soviet Union, but it's the first newspaper Gorbachev reads every morning." Gorbachev, going back to his early years working in agriculture on a collective farm in Stavropol, started every morning reading *Sel'skaya zhizn'* before he read anything else.

I said, "If we can get some articles in there maybe it will have an impact." So the DCM and the ambassador ordered the press and culture section to consider sending a journalist. The head of the Cultural Affairs Office was very upset by this. He really did not like the idea, but since the ambassador ordered him to do it, they accepted Kostya's application. We put it through the mill, he was accepted, and USIA sent Kostya Mezentsev to the United States for one month on a single program, not as part of a group. He had an escort officer who went with him, and they included one week of living on a soybean farm, I think in Missouri, during the harvest period.

Kostya came back after that month and sat down and wrote a series of articles, which were so positive that they initially were not published. The editorial board said, You need to put something negative in every article. You can't come out and be all positive about America. So he modified them and watered a few things down and made sure there was some kind of a zinger in every article that was negative, but they were published and they had an impact. One of the reasons that Gorbachev suddenly got interested in family contracting in a big way and in some way of trying to privatize agriculture was in part because of Kostya's articles, which I still have copies of. I have copies of those articles and I have a copy of the report that was done by his escort officer on everything that they did on that trip.

So it was an important trip, and again, I think one of the lessons here was you should never not do something because you think it will fail. You should go ahead and give it a shot. I didn't think that writing a letter protesting against a poorly researched and bogus article about American agriculture, I didn't think that writing anything about that would lead to anything. But it had some real consequences. I wrote that. We developed this relationship. Kostya and I later in the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, he got involved in the private farming movement. He became at one point vice president of the private farmers association. He was then also the editor-in-chief of a very large circulation private agricultural news service. When I went back in the 2000s he already

was a good friend. We became fast friends and unfortunately he died a few years ago and I miss him terribly. But that one letter to the editorial office of *Sel'skaya zhizn'* led to a number of different things, including the series of articles that Gorbachev read and was influenced by.

The relationship with Kostya led to just a number of wonderful things. I used to travel with him in Russia. I made a couple of trips that were absolutely fabulous. I had contacts, he had contacts, and we both learned from each other on these trips. It was just amazing and you should never not do something because you don't think it'll lead to anything. You should go ahead and give it a shot.

Q: Just as an aside, you're talking about Gorbachev. Can you talk about him, what you think about him as a Soviet politician, as a transitional figure? A lot of people think a lot of different things about him.

MUSTARD: Well, sure. Gorbachev took over too late to rescue the Soviet Union. What he really wanted to do, and I learned this both from Kostya and from some other contacts who had worked in the Central Committee apparatus under Gorbachev, back in the mid-1980s, Gorbachev intended to create a second political party to break the monopoly on power of the Communist Party. He wanted to create another left-wing party. It was going to remain a left-wing country that was partially socialist but he realized that the Communist Party's monopoly on power had corrupted it as monopolies invariably do, so he wanted to create a second political party. He was working with Kostya to create that second political party that would be a contender for political power in the Soviet Union. He wanted to preserve the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union had gone bankrupt and there was so much unrest out in the provinces that the centrifugal force was simply tearing the country apart. If Gorbachev had been able to take command say in 1982, right after Brezhnev died, he might have had a chance. He and Shevardnadze might have pulled it off. But the fact is that initially Andropov took over and then, after Andropov, Chernenko took over for a while, and it was only after Chernenko died that Gorbachev came to power. That was 1985, and by then enough time had gone by that the coffers were completely empty, the country was bankrupt, and morally it was completely bankrupt. The Communist Party had no credibility with anybody at that point, and I heard that from any number of people, including people who had worked in the government in the 1980s and in those days were spouting the party line and toeing the party line.

After the collapse they said, No, nobody believed, we didn't believe, nobody believed, so really, I think if Gorbachev had been able to take over earlier he might've had a chance, but by 1985 it was too little, too late. I cannot hold him responsible for the collapse of the Soviet Union. He wanted to hold the Soviet Union together. George H.W. Bush wanted to hold the Soviet Union together and in fact gave that famous speech in Kyiv, where he told the Ukrainians not to break off from the Soviet Union, to stay the course, what the Ukrainian nationalists referred to as the "Chicken Kiev" speech. So there was a lot of

pressure to try to hold things together, but it wasn't enough to deal with the centrifugal force, when all the union republics bailed out and said, No, we want to go our own way.

The deciding factor was of course when the three leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus congregated and decided to bring down the house of cards, to dissolve the Soviet Union, and that was the end. So I can't blame Gorbachev for the collapse of the Soviet Union. He was handed a very bad hand of cards, he had all deuces and treys, had no aces and kings or even queens and jacks. So he just couldn't do it.

Q: As you extrapolate to today and consider the Chinese Communist Party control of China, is there any analogy there, or similar situation? Or in your mind is it totally different?

MUSTARD: Culturally it's different, but I think there is a danger, in that the Chinese government does face the danger of ultimately seeing that the monopoly on power will lead to such a level of corruption that the population finds it intolerable. But I'm not enough of a sinologist that I can say much more than that, just generalities.

Q: But when you were in the USSR, '86 to '88, did you kind of see this happening? The bankruptcy of the Soviet Union?

MUSTARD: We knew the economy was in bad shape. We didn't know how bad, because the statistics were so falsified. We couldn't really measure how bad things were, so we knew things were bad. We didn't know how bad, we didn't know they were as bad as they were. We thought, and I think I mentioned this earlier, we thought that they had another generation, maybe another twenty years, maybe another thirty years, before the whole house of cards would come down. As it turned out, they had three. So we were off by a generation, but we could see that the structure was fracturing and that it was going to be very heavily stressed in the foreseeable future.

Istanbul 1988–1990

I left Moscow in August, went on home leave, came in, did the consular short course, did three weeks of Turkish, did consultations in Washington, and Ann and I went out to Istanbul. Istanbul was fascinating but because I had snatched that post away from a made member of the marketing mafia, the word out to the marketing people not to help me in any way and so I kept reaching back to the High-Value Products Division asking for advice because I'd never worked in marketing, really, and I hadn't been an ATO, so I needed some guidance from them. They wouldn't give it to me. They wouldn't answer my questions and I couldn't figure out what the problem was, why I couldn't get any guidance, I couldn't get any assistance. Nobody would help me with anything.

After I'd been at post about six months, Garth Thorburn was my boss in Ankara, and Garth called up and said, "What did you do to make Bill Davis angry?" And I said, "Well

I took this post away from one of his buddies," and I told him who'd been teed up. And he says, "Oh my goodness, it's a good thing you're here and not that fellow, and anyway, well, Bill Davis called me up last night on the phone and said, 'Garth, I told you six months ago to document Mustard so that within six months you could get rid of him, and you haven't done it yet, what's the hangup?'" And Garth said, "I told Bill that I was very happy with what you are doing and I wasn't going to get rid of you, and he began cursing at me, and I said, 'Bill, I hired you into FAS as a JP, you have no right to talk to me that way,' and I hung up on him. Now I understand why it is that, you know, you get the runaround from the marketing people, and why Bill Davis is so upset with you."

So I did two years in Istanbul, operating as a market information person, collecting market information, 'cause of course Istanbul was a major seaport. I knew all the traders. Ted Horoschak had made sure that I got introduced to all the traders before he left, we did a two-week overlap, and so I got to know everybody, I would go visit them, we'd sit, we'd drink tea, we would talk about what was going on. I would feed all this information back to Ankara for the agriculture office and it was extraordinarily valuable market information. I won't go into detail here about the nature of it but needless to say there is no way that Ankara could see as clearly what was going on in the trade simply because it was in Ankara and the trade was happening in Istanbul.

We didn't do much in the way of marketing simply because we didn't have a budget. We kept an eye on the cooperators. The cooperators come in two flavors, those who are conscientious and those that are along to try to spend money. Towards the end of the fiscal year of course some of the former type, the conscientious ones, start trying to spend money that they hadn't spent yet, and not terribly wisely. In those days attachés and ATOs had to clear off on spending by the cooperators. If they wanted to modify something they had to put in something called an MPAR, which I don't remember what it stood for, a modification of the marketing plan, and if we didn't respond within five days then by default they could do it, but if we responded within five days saying no, this shouldn't happen, then it couldn't happen.

So the rice cooperator was based out of Zürich, was a fellow named Daniel Tuscher, who the first time I met him, and he flew to Istanbul, came in on one of his trips, he came to my office and informed me, the typical old cooperator line, you think you work for FAS but you actually work for me, and you'll do as I say. And this is something that the cooperators used to say to attachés back in the '60s and '70s and up until the mid-1980s they would say this.

And there's a story behind that, too, and how it came to an end under Dick Smith. Dick Smith was the one who finally made the cooperators stop telling attachés they work for the cooperators, not for FAS. So anyway, Daniel had not exactly ingratiated himself to me by telling me that I worked for him and not for FAS. Towards the end of the fiscal year he puts in this MPAR for an activity that he wanted to do for rice in Turkey that made absolutely no sense, was going to be a waste of time, so I picked up the phone, I called his office in Zürich. His secretary, I remember her name was Claudia. Claudia said,

"Well, you know Mr. Tuscher can't take your call right now." I said, "Well, I need for Daniel to call me back, then, as soon as he can." She said, "Mr. Mustard, Mr. Tuscher is a very important man and he cannot take or return phone calls to everybody who calls him." I said, "All right, very well, please let Daniel know that I called." And so I hung up, and I went over to the typewriter, and I typed out a TOFAS.

In those days you could, when you sent a TOFAS, we had this thing called the commercial relay center in Albany, Georgia, and you could send a telegram with a copy to not only FAS but to the commercial relay center in Albany, Georgia. And actually I should say that cables to FAS came through the commercial relay center in Albany, Georgia, so if we sent a TOFAS from an overseas post it actually went Albany, Georgia, and then from there was transmitted over a Telex line to the AMS leased wire unit down on the fourth floor of the South Building. That's how we used to get them.

Since it went to the commercial relay center you could also put in a Telex address as an addressee and it would automatically go to that Telex address. So I put in the Telex addresses for Daniel Tuscher in Zürich and for the Rice Council for Market Development down in Texas, fired it off, denying his MPAR and explaining why. Well, we were like about five days from the end of the fiscal year. So it's around September 24-25. Next morning I come into work at seven am. I was at work every morning at seven, so I come strolling into work and my phone is already ringing. Daniel Tuscher was up very early in the morning in Zürich, which is two hours earlier. He's up in Zürich calling me desperately, saying, "Allan, I got this Telex message, I wish we had talked." And I said, "Well, Daniel, I wish we'd talked, too. Claudia told me that you're a very important man, can't take phone calls from everybody who calls you, so since you won't take my phone calls, you know, I had to do this."

So we talked about it. He said, "You know, I'm leaving this afternoon for Egypt. I won't have time to rewrite this proposal. I accept everything you said, yes, yes, your criticism is valid, but I literally don't have time to rewrite the proposal. Can you please approve this and I promise I'll do what we just discussed?" I said, "No, Daniel, I can't do that. I will not do that. I have to see it in writing." And I said, "Next time I call, please tell Claudia the next time I call that she should put the phone call through." The upshot of it was that before he left for Egypt he did put through a modified MPAR, I did approve that, and everything came out in the end, but you know, that was the sort of weirdness you had to deal with. We were supposed to be equal partners in market development, as Jim Howard put it when he wrote the history of the cooperator program, but a lot of the cooperators didn't view it as a partnership and very much viewed it as a relationship of, we're in charge and you government people are there to do whatever we tell you to do. I obviously didn't see it quite that way.

Do you know the story of how that started to change?

Q: No, I do not.

MUSTARD: Yeah, this isn't my story, this is Norval Francis' story. Norval was the attaché in Lima and the Rice Millers Association put in a proposal for marketing. Norval looked at it and he said, "That's not going to fly down here in Peru, there is no way that given the economic conditions in Peru that a marketing plan of this nature is going to work." And he said so. Steve Gabbert was the head of the Rice Millers and he got very angry that this whippersnapper Norval Francis was telling him that he couldn't do something. So he picked up the phone and he called Jimmy Minyard, who was head of Commodity and Marketing Programs, and dumped all over Norval, and the next thing you know Jimmy Minyard engineers Norval's recall from Peru. So he was curtailed out of Peru, yanked back to Washington, and Dick Smith in the staff meeting where that decision was made bellowed, give him the Dick Smith steam shovel treatment, which meant bury him so deep that they'll need a steam shovel to find him.

You know what that meant, Ted, that meant he became my officemate in Dairy, Livestock and Poultry Division, so I was part of the Dick Smith steam shovel treatment. Norval was my officemate for a couple years and so I got to hear the whole story from him. But the upshot of it was that a few months after that there was an attaché conference in Latin America—I've forgotten where they held it—but at the attaché conference there was almost a rebellion among the attachés in the Western Hemisphere, who told Dick Smith, you need to do something about this, whom do we work for, do we work for you or do we work for Steve Gabbert and others like him out in the cooperator community? Well, Smith was shocked. He hadn't realized it had gotten quite that bad, and he sat down with Minyard and they had a meeting of the minds. Ed Bauer, if you remember Ed Bauer, who later served in Taipei, and served in China, Ed Bauer was an area officer at the time. He was given the task of drafting a letter to the cooperators saying the attachés work for me, they don't work for you. So that letter went out sometime before Dick Smith retired and that was a sea change. That kind of laid the groundwork for the attachés to start asserting themselves.

The other thing that Dick Smith did with that was that's when he created the Compliance Review Staff, because up until then the attachés were approving vouchers and expenditures by the cooperators in their countries. So if a cooperator went out and spent money on a project they had to submit the vouchers and if the attaché disallowed it, then there was tension between the cooperator and the attaché. Smith took the attachés out of that equation, gave that to compliance review and it made it harder for some of cooperator employees to engage in funny business with their budgets.

But that was Istanbul. And I was really enjoying Istanbul. Garth would have me travel occasionally. I covered Syria and Lebanon as well. Never made it to Lebanon but I did visit Syria three times. The trips to Syria had one goal and that was to try to get the Syrians to repay us for some GSM-102 money that they borrowed and then had not repaid, so we would go and remind Syrians that they owed us money, and they'd laugh at us, that was about that.

Rewinding and going back to a previous posting, when I was in Istanbul, there were some stories about trips to Syria that I wanted to share with you, that I think are amusing but also kind of illustrative of some of the issues you face when you're overseas. One of them was in Syria. Since I only got there three times I tried to make the most of every trip and get out into the field and do some field travel and see what I could see. And one of them, as we were crossing the border the Syrian military was there, their border troops, and a fellow looked at me and he said that you have to pay me twenty Syrian pounds as a border tax. That was bogus, it was complete nonsense and plus I was a diplomat with a diplomatic passport and visa, but he insisted I had to pay him twenty Syrian pounds.

I should back up a little bit and talk about the Syrian pounds, because the Syrian pound was not a convertible currency, which meant you officially couldn't buy it offshore. But there was so much trade between Turkey and Syria that you could buy Syrian pounds at the border from all kinds of merchants. The Syrians would come across the border, they would sell their Syrian pounds at the black-market rate so they would have Turkish lira, so they could do their purchases, so we had some cotton business contacts down in Hatay province on the border, and we would go to them and buy some Syrian pounds. We could use the Syrian pounds for buying gasoline, for buying our meals, for buying food, and things like that. We had to use credit cards for the hotels so if we stayed in a hotel, which we did usually. You paid for that with a credit card and that was charged at the official exchange rate, which of course was artificial, but the black-market rate was forty Syrian pounds to the dollar. So this guy was asking me for a bribe that amounted to fifty cents.

I finally said, "Oh, all right, fine, I'll pay the 50-cent bribe," and so I paid him the twenty pounds and I said, "Now I need a receipt for that because I'm going to claim it on my travel voucher." He took a blank piece of paper and handed it to me and said, "There's your receipt." When I filed my travel voucher I filed that blank piece of paper and put a yellow sticky on it, said, "This is the receipt issued by the Syrian border guards for the twenty pounds of border crossing tax I had to pay." And I think I was denied the fifty-cent claim because there was nothing written on it.

But that's just an anecdote to let you know that in that part of the world these are the sorts of things that you run into.

Q: Syria, when you were there, is not the country Syria is today.

MUSTARD: No, Syria in 1988 to 1990, of course, was still very much, it was a peaceful country. It was completely dominated, of course, by the Ba'ath political party. Assad was very much the dictator in charge, the older Assad, not the current Assad—Hafez Assad. It was a quasi-socialist country with Islamic overtones, but traveling around the country wasn't really a problem. We were able to travel the country and not worry about our security because it was a pretty locked-down police state. Of course, that's all changed now.

We were out driving one day and I was looking at the fields as I always did. We were in a Chevy Suburban being driven by Jaber Dalati, who was our local employee, our FSN agricultural specialist in the embassy. I was traveling with the econ officer of the embassy, Barbara Schell, and her husband, John Laylin, and we were just surveying the crops and looking at what was what. And I saw these plants that looked like potato plants but they had purple flowers, not white flowers, and I had never seen a potato plant with a purple flower, so I said, "Jaber, what is that? It looks like potato but it has a purple flower instead of a white flower, what is it?" He said, "I do not know, but it is not potato." And I said, "Let's get out and take a look." So we stopped and we got out. I walked into the field, I looked at it, and I said, "Jaber, these look like potato plants to me" and I crushed the leaf and smelled it. I said, "It is definitely the nightshade family, so it's in that family." He says, "I do not know what it is, but it is not potato."

So we kept driving, and we finally came to a field with one of these crops with a woman standing in it. Jaber stopped and he got out, and started talking to her, and they had a rapidfire conversation in Arabic, much, you know, waving of hands, gesticulations, and finally Jaber got back into the Suburban and we started driving. I looked at him and said, "Well?" And he said, "Well, what?" "Well," I asked, "What is it?" "It is," Jaber said, "potato." It was potato with a purple flower, which I'd never seen before.

Now on that same trip we were a bit farther north, we were up in the wheat country and they'd had terrible drought, so the wheat crop was not doing well. We stopped, we saw a pavilion set up, a tent top with no sides and two John Deere combines parked next to it. Jaber said, "This will be the landowner supervising the combine operators as they combine the wheat." He said, "We can ask him how the wheat crop is." We could see the wheat crop was very thin and the heads were small, the kernels were shrunken, but we thought we would talk to him anyway. The landowner was under this pavilion out of the sun with his poet. He had his own poet, who was reciting poetry to him, about him, that the poet had composed about him, and over in another corner of the pavilion the two combine drivers and their assistants were brewing tea, having a little tea break.

So we sat there for about a half an hour while Jaber engaged this guy in conversation, which is what you have to do in that part of the world. You don't just jump into business and ask questions. You spend a half hour talking and chatting and socializing and after half an hour Jaber said that he's prepared to answer your questions now. So I started asking him about, you know, the wheat crop, and he told us what we could see with our own eyes, that it was a terrible crop. In fact, he said, "It's so bad we calculated what the yield is going to be and the amount we were able to harvest will not even pay for the diesel that we are running through these combines, so I told the combine drivers just to stop combining. It is not worth the expense. We're just going to turn the sheep loose out here that will let the sheep glean whatever they can out of the wheat field."

So we had a very nice conversation and then he said something in Arabic that caused Jaber's back absolutely to stiffen. Jaber turned to me and said, "Do you trust me?" And I said, "Jaber, I would trust you with my life." He said, "He is suggesting that he has never

had such high ranking visitors before, officers of the American embassy in Damascus. He is inviting us to stay for dinner and he is planning to slaughter a sheep in our honor for this dinner. I suggest that we tell him that we are in a hurry and that we must get back to Damascus before nightfall and must leave very soon." I said, "Okay, Jaber, that's fine, go ahead and tell him that." So they did and spent the next, you know, roughly fifteen minutes again, this long-winded conversation, back and forth, he's trying to convince Jaber that we need to stay for dinner, Jaber saying, "No, we must leave." We finally got up, we exchanged handshakes and pledges of eternal friendship. We got into the Suburban, started driving, and I said, "So Jaber, what was that all about? Why should we not have stayed for dinner?" He says, "Well, he said he was going to slaughter a sheep in our honor, because we're such high-ranking visitors," and I said, "Well, what's wrong with that?" Jaber said, "Well, you do not think that he would slaughter a healthy sheep, do you?"

So we headed back to Damascus. We had dinner in Damascus that night.

Q: I think I remember him. He was a long-time employee of ours.

MUSTARD: That's right. He was with us for a long time before he finally retired when the embassy closed.

Q: When the civil war was ramping up.

MUSTARD: And it took us forever to get his pension paid because all the personnel records were at the embassy. The embassy was closed and OPM [U.S. Office of Personnel Management] kept saying, we have no record that he ever worked for the U.S. government. So OPM refused to authorize his pension and not just his, all the FSNs at Embassy Damascus. I was astounded at how badly the U.S. bureaucracy treated its employees in Damascus over that. It was really a very shameful set of events. A lot of us really leaned on the State Department to go over and in turn lean on OPM, to get these people their pensions. I think they finally did get the pensions but it took some doing.

Q: You talked about a Harvard University invitation to speak at a seminar on Russian agriculture.

MUSTARD: Right, so Harvard University, with an endowment from Archer Daniels Midland, was holding seminars annually, workshops on Soviet agriculture, and because I had a bit of a reputation among some of the researchers who also followed Soviet agriculture, Harvard invited me to come and speak. I was the agricultural trade officer in Istanbul at the time and as you know FAS is very stovepiped, so it sent a shockwave through FAS that someone who was assigned to Istanbul as the ATO was invited to come to Harvard University to speak at a rather prestigious workshop on Soviet agriculture. So the initial reaction was, No, you can't do that, we have plenty of people here in Washington who can go and do that. Well, Harvard wasn't interested in them. Harvard wanted me, so Harvard said, "We will pay your travel expenses, please come." So I went

back to Washington and I said, “I’m going to take annual leave to do this and Harvard is willing to pay for my travel expenses, but I needed Washington’s permission to accept the travel expenses because of the ethics angle on this. The answer then came back, No, we’re not going to allow Harvard to pay your travel expenses. We will pay your travel expenses. We’ll put you on orders, so go ahead and go to Harvard and do your thing.

But there was still some residual unhappiness in Washington. I followed up, since I was going to be stateside, I then said, “Well, I will be stateside, I’ll be in Boston, that’s a short flight from Boston, or even a train ride, to Washington, DC. Should I come in for consultations?” And the person who called me from Washington, I won’t say who it was, but he said, “You know it’s really presumptuous of you to think that anybody down here wants to talk to you.” I remember those exact words. I said, “Okay, that’s fine, you know if nobody wants to talk to me, then that’s fine. I’ll do this thing at Harvard and meet Tikhonov.”

So I didn’t go in for consultations and then there were some people down there who found out I was in Boston. One of them called me, tracked me down at Harvard, and said, “When are you coming down for consultations?” I said, “I’m not, here’s the response I got,” and apparently there was a small eruption on Mahogany Row in FAS, that one of the deputy administrators got extremely upset that I was going to be stateside and was not going to come down for consultations because somebody else had decided that I was being presumptuous by having suggested it. So there was a little bit of a kerfuffle over that. The leadership wanted me to come down and brief them on what was going on but the working level did not, so I never quite sorted that one out.

But anyway, so the seminar was held and the main reason I really wanted to go to it was because one of the speakers was Vladimir Tikhonov. Tikhonov was the other major influence in Gorbachev and agricultural policy. Nikonov was one, and the other was Tikhonov. Tikhonov was an absolutely fascinating fellow. By the way, Don Van Atta wrote biographies about both of them that you can find in academic literature. I think it’s called “Theorists of Agrarian Perestroika” or something like that, by Don Van Atta, who got it published as a journal article someplace. I helped him with it, pointed him in the direction of some sources and also arranged for him to talk to both Nikonov and Tikhonov to interview them.

Tikhonov was an orphan. His parents were murdered during the purges of the 1930s. He was raised in an orphanage. At age sixteen he joined the army and fought in World War II. He was a combat veteran and then as a combat veteran was allowed to pursue whatever education he wanted, so he studied for a doctorate in economics and happened to be in Sverdlovsk, which is now Yekaterinburg. I hadn’t realized it but Sverdlovsk is where a lot of the very best professors from St. Petersburg and Moscow had been exiled if they were not taken out and shot, so he said, “In the 1950s a lot of these university professors taught Marxism-Leninism in the classrooms, but then if you came to their apartments afterwards you learned real economics sitting around their apartments discussing the real economics that you needed to learn, because they had all learned

economics before the revolution." These were old professors. They had been purged out of the great universities after the revolution and during the 1930s.

But, he said, "They still remembered their economics from their earlier studies, so that's where I learned my economics." So he was kind of whispering in Gorbachev's ears about the way economics really works rather than Marxism-Leninism. That was an important thing. I got to meet Tikhonov at that meeting and that turned into a relationship that lasted until he died in the 1990s. When I was going back and forth in the 1990s Tikhonov was a confidant and someone I worked with very closely, and Ann and I hosted him at our house. He came to our house here in Falls Church and spent the night with us and we had some fantastic conversations, talking about the future of Russian agriculture after the collapse.

It was that sort of a relationship that you can only build if you got, if you could have the personal contact, because again, the Soviets would not allow me to have contact with him officially when I was posted there. But I got to meet him at the Harvard conference. He gave me his home telephone number and said, "Call me any time," and that's how we established contact. That relationship came about because I made the effort to go to that conference.

Again, I think it is one of these things, that FAS doesn't like to send people to conferences. I think they're important so you can establish your network and you can establish these sorts of relationships, because they pay off into the future. If we don't send people to conferences and tell them to go out and meet these people, make yourself known, we're missing something.

I wrote a reporting cable on the Harvard seminar and on Tikhonov's presentation, in which he said, "The experiment is over and it failed." That was the most important thing he said. We've had this experiment going on for seventy years and the experiment has failed. It's time to do something else, and that was in 1990, before the collapse. So we could see that the whole communist superstructure was failing. It was coming apart at the seams and people on the inside could see it very clearly. That cable has since been declassified so I have a copy of it. We classified it at the time but since his death I had it declassified.

Q: Do you still have relationships with people in Russia?

MUSTARD: Oh, sure, no, the Internet is a great thing and still—they usually have questions for me about, I got a question from a Russian academic recently about whether there is such a thing as a holding company similar to the Russian agricultural holding companies in the structure of ownership of large corporations in the United States. So they'll still ping me about things like that, about economic questions and the structure of American agriculture, things that they really have trouble grasping to this day.

But in August I guess of 1990 I was sitting on my balcony. I had a penthouse apartment in the northern end of Istanbul with a panoramic view of the Bosporus, a beautiful apartment with a nice balcony, and I was out there drinking coffee and working on my monthly ATO activities report. The phone rang. It was Chris Goldthwait saying that he had this great offer for me, they had this job for me and wanted me to come back to Washington and be deputy director of the Eastern European and Soviet Secretariat, which had been stood up at the request of the president, and every Cabinet Department including Agriculture was standing it up. Guy Haviland was in charge of it and I was to come back and be his deputy and deal with Soviet affairs.

And I said, "Well, Chris, thanks very much for that. I appreciate that, but I already have a job and I enjoy it very much and I don't think I want to come back to Washington right now. I have another year on my hitch in Istanbul and I think I'll stay here." So Chris said, "Well, okay." He hung up, and I don't know, an alarm bell went off in the back of my head. This just didn't sound right. I didn't know Chris that well and having him call me out of the blue like that just didn't smell quite right, so I called Ed Cissel, who was an old friend from Grain and Feed Division. Ed was very well plugged in. He was a GS-15, was head of FPED, the Foreign Production Estimates Division.

So I called Ed and asked, "What's this about?" He says, "Oh, well," he says, "Allan, it's a long story, the short version is that Ann Veneman (who was our deputy under secretary at the time working for Dick Crowder) has been given the task of finding somebody who knows something about the Soviet Union to go to the interagency meetings and will be seated in this, and she immediately thought of you and ordered Chris to call you up." I said, "Oh, really, is that what happened?" He said, "Yeah, hang on just a minute, I'll connect you to Ann and you can talk to her about it."

Next thing I know he's connected me to the deputy under secretary, who knew me, because she had visited Moscow while I was in Moscow. I had been her control officer, that's how she knew me, and so anyway she comes on the line, she says, we need you to come back to Washington. I said, "Ann, I really don't want to come back to Washington. I have not enjoyed my work in Washington. I'm a much better field officer. I really, I'm getting some things underway out here in Istanbul that haven't come to fruition yet," gave her a real sob story. And she said, "Well, I want you to be happy and we want you to be happy, and if you come back a year from now this job will no longer be available. In fact, there may not be any good job available for you. If you come back now, you'll have an office and you'll have a title and some responsible work to do. I will interact with you because I'm involved in this. You know, I want you to be happy. If you come back now, you'll be happy. If you don't come back now, you won't be happy."

Q: The choice is yours, Allan!

MUSTARD: Right. And so, you know, I thought, these lawyers that we keep bringing into USDA, they really know how to argue, so I said, "All right, let me think about it. I need to talk to Ann," my Ann, my wife, so I got on the phone to Ann. Ann was back in the States. She'd gone back to the States to have the baby, and we'd had two disease outbreaks in Istanbul in the meantime. I told her to stay back in the States and not to bring the baby back in the middle of disease outbreaks, so we'd been separated since December when she flew back and it was now August. So nine months that we hadn't been together and I said, "It looks like I'm heading back to the States this fall. They are curtailing me. You and Fiona need to saddle up and come out here, help me pack out, and then we'll go back to the States."

That was August and by October I was back in USDA. They did give me home leave so I got my twenty days home leave at the end of that and that's how I ended up in the Eastern Europe and Soviet Secretariat, working with Guy Haviland.

You know, when I got there it was strictly a policy analysis shop. We were in charge of writing briefing materials and just kind of keeping an eye on what's going on in Eastern Europe, as it continued to split away from the Soviet Union. The Warsaw Pact was breaking up and then as the Soviet Union started to unravel and, oh, I think it was when the 1990 Farm Bill was passed, Doug Freeman was in our office, and Guy gave him the job of reading the Farm Bill, seeing what was in there, if anything, about us. Doug was reading the trade title and came across this thing called the Emerging Democracies Program. He brought it to Guy, and Guy at the next staff meeting with Dick Crowder—we had staff meetings with Dick Crowder every morning at eight am. So eight o'clock every morning we're in the under secretary's office, Chris Goldthwait sat at his right elbow and I sat at his left elbow, and Guy said, "You know we've got this money here, five million dollars for Emerging Democracies Program. It's mandated, we must spend this money," and Dick said, "Well, finders keepers, you know, it's your money, so you figure out how to spend it."

So all of a sudden Eastern Europe and Soviet Secretariat had five million dollars. A few weeks after that Doug got a phone call from the head of the American Society of Agricultural Consultants, whose name was Frank. I don't remember his last name, Frank something, and this fellow Frank called him up, said, "I need to come and see you." When he walked in he said, "I'm here for my check for five million dollars." He had gone up to Capitol Hill, met with Kika de la Garza, who was chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, and had said he needed five million dollars for the American Society of Agricultural Consultants. So to get him out of his office, Kika had written into the Farm Bill this paragraph authorizing and mandating expenditure of five million dollars on emerging democracies. Of course it didn't say anything about ASAC, the society. It simply said, spend five million dollars, and of course under the federal acquisition regulations we couldn't just give them the money, and Doug explained this to him. So we got into this bit of a fight with ASAC over the money.

Frank went back up to Capitol Hill to complain to de la Garza, and to get him out of the office de la Garza said, "All right, I'll put more money in it." The next thing you know there's an amendment kicking it up to ten million dollars, and the idea was five million for USDA and five million for ASAC. Well, that didn't work, either, because again the federal acquisition regulations don't allow you just to give money away, which is a good thing. So we eventually, Doug negotiated a thing with ASAC that anybody who was a member of ASAC could apply for the money as part of a project, but they had to submit a proposal and had to go through our approval process.

But now we had this money to play with. The Farm Bill was passed towards the end of fiscal year, so we had to spend the money in a bit of a hurry. The first tranche of money went out the door to the Cochran program. We gave a bunch to OICD [Office of International Cooperation and Development] and we did some other programs, and that was pretty heady stuff. We had some money to go out and do some good work at helping these countries as they were starting to unravel, and needed to be moved in the direction of a market economy.

One of the other interesting stories from there was when the Albanians contacted us. So Albania, as you know, had been probably the most closed society on earth, more so even than North Korea, and around that time, I think it was before I joined the office, it would have been probably 1990, our office in Geneva received a fax from the Albanian Mission to the UN office that's in Geneva, I believe, saying we need contact information of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, DC. So our office in Geneva gave them the fax number of the Eastern Europe and Soviet Secretariat in Washington, and the next thing you know Guy Haviland gets a fax from Albania inviting him to come to Albania to discuss food aid needs.

So he went to Chris Goldthwait and Guy, and somebody else may have gone with him, I don't remember who went with Guy. Guy is one of the first people in the U.S. government, if not the first person in the U.S. government, to get to Albania after all the reforms got underway. He went in there to negotiate food aid and it was a case of USDA being a bit of a trailblazer because people were interested in food aid.

Q: Had Albania sort of split from the Soviet Union to lean toward the U.S.?

MUSTARD: Well, Albania was more Maoist than Stalinist, although it was pretty Stalinist, and so the Albanians were very proud of their independence from the Soviet Union, and they didn't trust the Soviets any more than they trusted anybody else. So they were always kind of off marching to their own drummer. That was quite interesting.

One other thing that happened about that time, Dick Crowder, after Lithuania declared its independence in 1991, decided he as under secretary of agriculture wanted to go to Lithuania and see an American Soybean Association project in Lithuania and also to meet with the Lithuanians. This was a watershed event, because no high-level U.S. government officials had visited the Baltic states since before 1940, when they were

annexed illegally by the Soviet Union. So the question went to the National Security Council and the National Security Council came back and said, Yes, Dr. Crowder can go to Lithuania, but he cannot go through Moscow, he has to go through Poland, and cross the border from Poland, go into Lithuania that way. You cannot go by entering the Soviet Union first, since we don't recognize the annexation.

I went to Moscow before that and I met with a fellow from the State Agroindustrial Committee and I told him, I said, "We're planning on Under Secretary Crowder making this trip and plan to enter through Poland, not by going to Moscow, how are you going to feel about that?" And the fellow I talked to, he wasn't a high-level official, he just looked at me and shrugged, who cares, which was an indication to me, even though that was not an official response, that the Soviets were really starting to unravel, they were not going to kick up too much of a fuss about this.

So Dick flew to Warsaw, met with the Poles over something, and then Weyland Beeghly drove him to the border at Brest. Crowder walked across the border with his suitcase in hand, and then was met on the other side by Jim Higgiston and David Schoonover, who put him in a car and drove him on in to Vilnius, where he had his meetings and eventually he did see the hog feeding trials. But he then flew out of Lithuania and we arranged for him to fly out through Poland so he did not have to go through Moscow.

After it was all over, when the higher-ups within the State Agroindustrial Committee found out about it, they raised a little bit of a stink. They jumped up and down and wagged their fingers and, you know, this shouldn't have happened, but it did happen and when I was confronted over it on my next trip to Moscow, I said, "Hey, if you want to fly to Seattle you go to Seattle. You don't have to go to Washington, DC, to get to Seattle, or to go through New York. You go there any way you want. This is normal, so get used to it." But that was a watershed event. Again, he was the highest ranking government official to visit Lithuania, or any of the Baltic states, after World War II, and the first at the sub-cabinet level, so it was an interesting time to be working the policy level.

One other kind of funny thing was we were doing all this interagency stuff. The State Department was running an interagency meeting every week. Initially it was chaired by Ambassador Richard Armitage, and then when the administration changed, and the Clinton administration came in, it was chaired by Tom Simons, who had been a U.S. ambassador and would be again. They were in charge of coordinating all the assistance to the former Soviet Union, and of course one of the issues there was that the money was actually held by AID and AID was very much accustomed to doing things on its own without taking any advice from anybody else. So AID went out and did what AID always does, always did, which was hire consultants and tell the consultants to go out and do the work.

But the consultants of course knew nothing about the Soviet Union. I will never forget, initially AID did tap into my expertise very briefly at the outset. I was asked to come in and help assess proposals for the Farmer to Farmer Program. So I came in and they'd

hired a consultant to do an initial assessment of the proposals. This consultant was an agricultural expert who knew nothing about the Soviet Union, so he came in and started talking about how there are all these assertions in these proposals that are complete nonsense. I said, "Like what?" He said, "There's one here that says that they lose half of the potato crop every year due to spoilage, and that's just ridiculous." I said, "No, it's not ridiculous, it's a fact." So he and I had a set to over that, and I finally said, "Look, there's a fair amount of knowledge about Soviet agriculture, it is the most heavily studied agriculture in the world outside the United States, and we've been studying it in USDA for decades. Believe me, they do lose, out of the sixty million tons of potatoes they produce every year, thirty million tons rots because they don't have proper storage. They lose 20 percent of their grain crop every year that rots because they don't have proper storage. So this is all true. This is all axiomatic, so to be perfectly blunt, sir, with all due respect, you don't know what you're talking about."

So we had a real go around about that. Well, then one of the AID people spoke up and said, "Well, you know, before we do anything, we're going to have to start literacy programs." I asked, "Why would we have to do that?" She said, "Well, before people can be taught anything, they have to learn how to read and write." And I said, "Well, the Soviet Union has a higher literacy rate than the United States does, over 99 percent literacy, and half the population is literate in two languages, Russian and in their own native language, since they had so many native languages across a multiethnic country." Well they started to argue with me over that, it couldn't possibly be true, and I said, "No, it's true, and you can check the statistics. Having lived there myself I can attest that the literacy rate is pretty high."

So they were starting from a very low knowledge base and had some very wrongheaded ideas, but they really didn't want to take advice from anybody else outside AID. When AID got thrown out of the country in the 2000s, when Putin finally threw them out, it didn't really come as a surprise because the AID people went in with an attitude that they were going to save Russia, and the Russians really viewed that as an insult. They really felt very insulted. They were the first country to put a man in space, into orbit. The Soviet Union had advanced science, advanced mathematics, they had universal education, they had a higher literacy rate than the United States, and we came in as these great people from a market economy, who were going to teach them everything they needed to learn. They really took it as an insult. I frankly was surprised AID didn't get kicked out sooner, given the attitude that I saw expressed towards the Russians. So that was interesting, too, dealing with the interagency and to some degree that kept me busy.

I made several trips to the Soviet Union during that time and of course we also did some rather ill-fated technical assistance projects. I haven't talked about the trip that we made with Ed Madigan when he led the presidential mission over there at the request of the presidents and I should probably talk a bit about that. In August 1991 of course some coup plotters tried to overthrow the government of the Soviet Union. They arrested Gorbachev and tried to take over the government, and it was a complete mess. They failed. That's when Boris Yeltsin came to power, of course, and in the wake of that failed

coup attempt President George H.W. Bush got on the phone with Gorbachev and said, "What do you need?" And Gorbachev said, "I need a team to come over and look at our food situation because we're going to starve this winter, and so I really need you to come over and send some people."

So I think we did two trips prior to the presidential mission. Dick Crowder led two trips over there. We flew on an air force jet. We flew commercial to Frankfurt and we got on an air force Gulfstream, a VC-21, and on these two trips we traveled around and consulted with various people. One of the more interesting trips was out to the city of Sverdlovsk, now Yekaterinburg, where we now have a consulate, where we met with the governor, Eduard Rossel, who told us that Yeltsin had called him and told him that if Yeltsin were taken prisoner by the coup plotters, Rossel was to declare himself the president of free Russia and was to continue to go for independence. So that was a very interesting conversation.

We made those two trips and then in October I went over, did advance work in Kyiv, then rendezvoused with the team in Moscow that flew in on the old Air Force One. It was the one that brought Kennedy's body back from Dallas after he was assassinated, the Boeing 707. They were assigned that aircraft by the 89th Military Airlift Wing and we traveled with Madigan. We went to Moscow and Kyiv, and he also made a side trip up to Leningrad as well.

We came back from that trip and a couple of things came out of that. One was that Madigan decided that we should do a model farm project and so in one of the follow-up meetings he said, "The Russians have asked us to do a model farm project and we need to follow up on that." Well, we had the money from the Emerging Democracies Program and we decided to devote some money to a model farm project using that money. We started getting the ball rolling with that, we engaged Extension Service and the associate administrator of extension, Mitch Geasler, was put in charge of that, so we had the ball rolling, and all that. We went over to brief the secretary and the secretary looked at all of us and said, "Well, I'd been intending to hand this off to the Farm Bureau and ask them to take care of this for us. Now you guys are taking it on and I feel like I've lost control of the project."

So there's a lot of, you know, nervous glances around the room as we're all looking at each other, and Mitch said, "Uh, Mr. Secretary, let me assure you, you have not lost control of the project. You're in complete control of the project. Whatever you want to be done will be done." We eventually smoothed it over and of course the model farm project was a failure, because there's no way you could go over there and do a model farm that would actually set down roots in a country that didn't know how to privatize land, which they still, all these thirty years later, haven't sorted out land privatization in Russia.

Another project was the Loaned Executive Program, LEP, which was very quickly termed the leper program. We leased an aircraft to go around then and beat the drum for that, because when we calculated how much it would cost to fly internally in the former Soviet

Union on Aeroflot. It came out to sixteen thousand dollars, but the ruble exchange rate had collapsed to the point that we could lease a Tupelov-134 for seventeen thousand dollars and save ourselves a lot of time. It would be at our beck and call, would fly when we wanted to fly. We wouldn't have to worry about missing flights and we could put together our own schedule for an extra thousand dollars. So we did that and the message went out to Jim Higgiston in Moscow to lease this aircraft for us. He had to convert seventeen thousand dollars into rubles and go down to the Aeroflot office to arrange for the charter of this aircraft. And it was literally a giant paper bag full of ruble notes. He walked in, he said, with this bag of ruble notes and just set it down. They didn't bother to count it, they weren't gonna waste time counting it, they just took it as a matter of faith that the bank had converted seventeen thousand dollars into rubles.

So we went over and that delegation was headed by Dick Lyng, who of course was the former secretary of agriculture. We went to Minsk, we went to Novosibirsk, Almaty, and Minsk. And we went to all these places and tried to set up something where we could take retired executives and loan them to failing enterprises in an effort to try to salvage the enterprises and turn them around, help privatize them. And it never really worked out. That program never really got off the ground.

But one that really did take off eventually was the Commodity Exchange Program, because the Russians in particular had discovered commodity exchanges and had decided that they wanted to move away from state-controlled food supply to a more market-based system. They did it for the wrong reason. We do it in the United States because the system works and because we believe in free markets to at least a fair degree. The Russians did it, the bureaucracy went with it, because they saw an opportunity to make money.

So they were setting up all these little commodity exchanges, practically every major city had a commodity exchange, and we decided, okay, let's go in and let's do some commodity exchange training. I went to the University of Illinois and to North Dakota State University and we also engaged Southern University down in Baton Rouge, and they put together a training program where they went over to Russia and gave short courses on how to be a commodity broker. Then out of the roughly three hundred or so people that they trained with these short courses, they cherry picked the very best thirty out of them, brought them to the United States for several weeks of very intensive training in how to be a commodity broker, and how to do private trading in predominantly grains, wheat and corn. But of course commodities are commodities are commodities, so if you learn how to trade in one commodity, you can trade in any commodity.

There were a couple of really interesting outcomes from this. One was, of course, the vast bulk of the commodity exchanges folded after a couple of years. There just wasn't enough volume of trade to justify a commodity exchange in every city of the country. But the second thing was that all these people that we trained went into commodity trading either as brokers or as traders or in some capacity. Some of them were executives in their

own commodity trading companies. One of them, OGO, went from 5 percent of the domestic market of grains in Russia to over 50 percent in just a few years. So that was the first outcome, that what we did resulted in privatization of grain trade domestically in Russia. That in turn led to privatization of food trade more generally, because dollar signs lit up in these people's eyes and they realized, if we privatize food trade, we can make a lot of money legitimately. We don't have to steal the money, we can earn the money, and that set off the privatization of retail trade, too—which was a real boon for Russia and is one of the reasons Russia won't starve again, I don't think, because they have finally cracked the code on how to run private trading of staple commodities.

Q: How does it work now? Are there actual private farmers? Are there private companies that are farming?

MUSTARD: Small-scale private farming is a relatively small part of the equation. That's a niche business. The vast bulk of it is done by former state and collective farms that have been privatized. Land ownership remains a complete mess. In most cases the entrepreneur who is running the farm is leasing the land, has to negotiate leases with the owners, who are the former collective farmers and state farmers who own the land. So they're going out and they're negotiating contracts, leases, with literally a few hundred people for every one of these farms. But now they have this tract of land that they can farm and they can do large-scale farming with large-scale equipment and can do it very efficiently. When I was there in the 2000s, you could see the impact of this, that they were tremendously efficient. They were good farms, producing quality products.

So, no, it changed dramatically, and it changed because of privatization. So some of the projects that we did with the Emerging Democracies money actually bore fruit and that was one of them that I think bore fruit, the commodity exchange activity. Even though it did not result in creation of brick-and-mortar commodity exchanges, that in fact was not really the goal. The goal was to create human capital that would allow Russia to make a transition to privatizing its agricultural economy, and in that regard it was partially successful and sufficiently successful.

And again, I don't think Russia will face famine ever again. Famine has been one of the tragedies that has befallen Russia every few decades for the last few centuries, and I think we're now at a point where it is just not likely to happen and that's a good thing, because a hungry country is an unstable country, and an unstable country with nuclear weapons is a dangerous country.

And I guess that's one of the things I should mention, too. The whole time we were doing these things, you know, when we went over with the delegations headed by Dick Crowder and by Secretary Madigan, and then we came back we did the massive GSM-102 program—about a billion and a half dollars as I recall in GSM-102—and then Chris Goldthwait was the one who suggested going to Capitol Hill and getting the authorization for an absolutely massive donation program under Food for Progress.

This was another kind of a sore point. That program went through very early in the Clinton administration and there was a big signing ceremony in Vancouver, British Columbia. State was there, White House was there in force, a whole bunch of donors were there, AID was there in force. The single largest component of the assistance package the U.S. government offered to the Russians at that donors conference was the food aid package by the Commodity Credit Corporation, and not one person from USDA was invited to attend. This is one of the lessons I've been trying to teach FAS, is that we cannot always be on the sidelines, that if we want to be taken seriously as a foreign affairs agency, that we have to be front and center, and we need to stand up for being represented at the table when our programs are either being presented or offered or negotiated about. It's an issue that I think FAS at some point and USDA more broadly has to grapple with. But, yeah, we were in the midst of all of that, and at its core it was because at the back of everybody's mind was the idea that we're dealing with the Russians, and at that point, still, the Ukrainians and the Belarusian still had nukes, too. So we were dealing with nuclear powers that are highly unstable, that are going through a crisis, and during this critical phase we need to be there to reassure them that they will not starve.

After one of the trips—I don't remember which one—we flew back, we got back in Washington, I'd been on the road, it must've been the second or third trip. I was exhausted, dropped my suitcase, and the phone rang. Dick Crowder, calling from home. "Allan, how are we going to feed the Russians?" I said, "Dick, we don't need to feed the Russians. The Russians can feed themselves. They have enough food. But their distribution system has broken down, the command-and-control economy doesn't work any more, but they have a black market. We need to help them legitimize the black market so that they can start using market mechanisms and market signals to ship that food from where it's produced to where it's needed, and we just have to pretend to feed them, to reassure them that they won't starve while they make that transition."

That at its core is what we did. We pretended to feed them. We did some very small food aid programs, in the overall scheme of things, given how big the country was. But we did not have to feed the Russians. They were capable of feeding themselves, and they did. One of the issues that we ran into on one of the missions that I was on, that Dick Crowder led, we went out to Ufa. Ufa is in the Ural Mountains, is a big oil-producing region, and Ufa had the largest gasoline refinery in the Soviet Union at the time, so they had lots of gasoline and they could use that gasoline to swap for food products. We met with the governor of Bashkiria, the autonomous republic that Ufa is the capital of, and he said, "Well, I can only meet with you for about half an hour and then I have to leave," because he was flying some place. "I'm going there to negotiate to have some railcars of beef shipped in, in return for some gasoline, and I have to negotiate the modalities of that contract." So, "Ufa," he said, "We have no problem here. We have gasoline, we can trade gasoline, it's as good as money." So this black market was quite active and it was being done by political leaders at the political level, you know, all we had to do was just nudge them in that direction.

The Eastern Europe and Soviet Secretariat was created in 1990 at the request of the White House. All cabinet agencies were asked to create some sort of a nerve center to deal with change in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and we were among them. Well, I should back up, I think a grand total of three Cabinet departments actually did it the first time President Bush asked for it. Those were the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and the CIA, and everybody else kind of blew it off. At one of the Cabinet meetings, President Bush made a very forceful request and delivered an order to the other Cabinet secretaries, get on the stick and create these nerve centers.

The secretary of agriculture at the time was Clayton Yeutter. He came back and asked Under Secretary Crowder to create such a nerve center in USDA and so Crowder did. Guy Haviland had just come back from overseas, and since he had served in Poland at some point, he was made the head of what was called the Eastern Europe and Soviet Secretariat. Doug Freeman was there. We had three political appointees as well: Chip Pickering, who later was elected to Congress and was a congressman from Mississippi later on, a fellow by the name of Alex Gilchrist, and another fellow by the name of Joe Tilley, and we were it, we were the Eastern Europe and Soviet Secretariat.

Now the interesting thing was I was still in Istanbul when this was formed and I've already told the story of how Ann Veneman recruited me to come back, so when I came in, it was already standing up, but was pretty much focused on Eastern Europe and Eastern European affairs. I was the lone resident Sovietologist as I called myself, and one interesting thing, because of the nature of what I saw unfolding, that the U.S. government was starting to put together a whole-of-government approach to try to deal with the change in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. I knew that I was going to have to be the person that USDA relied on to know what the rest of the government was doing and also what the policy-level things were coming out of the White House. So when Dick Crowder—Dick Crowder had me flown back from Istanbul for a job interview, which is very unusual to be pulled, and I was a relatively junior FO-2 at the time, so to be pulled into the under secretary's office and be told that the under secretary of agriculture wants to interview you for a job was a little bit intimidating.

So he asked me a bunch of questions and at the end of the interview he said, "Well, do you want this job? Will you take this job?" And I'd already had a gun put to my head, and had been told that I would take the job, so, "Yes, of course, but there is one condition for me to do this job effectively, there's one thing I need to have." He said, "What's that?" And I said, "I need to be able to talk to anybody in the U.S. government. I need to talk with no obstruction from anyone else, because I'm going to be your policy person. I'm going to be giving you advice on policy, and to do that job conscientiously I have to know what the policies are. So I need to be able to talk to anybody, anywhere in government without blowback." Because FAS is such a parochial agency, it's constantly trying to create stovepipes and put people in boxes to keep them from talking to anybody outside the agency. It's really strange, having worked overseas and having been an ambassador, I find FAS's approach to that strange. So preemptively I said, "I need to be able to talk to anybody I need to." He said, "Of course," immediately, and he in fact

issued an oral directive, it was never put in writing, but he issued an oral directive and informed Bud Anderson, who was the FAS administrator, that I had that license, which turned out to have been farsighted.

One of the very first things I did was go talk to Condoleezza Rice, who was the senior director for Soviet Union Affairs over at the National Security Council. I knew Condi because she had visited Moscow when Ann and I were there in the 1980s, and at the time she was an associate professor at Stanford, teaching Soviet affairs and politics. She had come out for a guest lecture to the embassy and after her lecture she was at loose ends, nobody was really taking care of her, so Ann and I invited her to dinner. We went out to dinner in one of the new cooperative restaurants in Moscow and had a wonderful chat, got to know each other a little bit, and now here she shows up in Washington, DC, as senior director for Soviet Union affairs. So I sent a letter over, a formal letter over my signature requesting an audience with her just to reestablish the connection, and was invited to come over to the Old Executive Office Building.

I met her and her sidekick, who was a fellow Foreign Service officer by the name of R. Nicholas Burns, who of course later went on to be ambassador to NATO and Greece and was later under secretary for political affairs at State. I had about an hour with her and picked her brain about where policy was and where things were going, and at the end of the conversation came back and immediately there was blowback from within FAS. I won't say which Senior Foreign Service officer protested to Bud, but one of the Senior Foreign Service officers went running to Bud Anderson and said, "Who gave Mustard permission to go to the White House?" There was this tremendous level of jealousy and Bud said, "He has permission of the under secretary, so if you have a problem with it I suggest you go in and complain to Dr. Crowder," and that was the end of that.

There were other instances where people came to me at various times and informed me that they were taking over my job, that it was a) inappropriate for someone at my low grade level to be in the under secretary's office every morning, and b) that they were going to take over the Soviet Union-, or after the collapse, the Russia portfolio from me because they outranked me, they were higher, they were in the Senior Foreign Service. And one of them went so far as to say, I've already talked to Bud about this, and he agrees, and so you're going to be relegated to being my deputy and I'm going to become the resident Sovietologist. None of these people knew anything about the Soviet Union, they didn't speak the language, they hadn't lived there, they never worked there, they never studied the area, but they were very jealous that I had all this face time with the under secretary, and fortunately none of that ever came to fruition. All of them were told, no, that's not going to happen, and the under secretary put his foot down.

I will tell you a funny anecdote, though, to give you an indication of just how all this face time with the under secretary that other people were jealous of was not a lot of fun, because it involved work. You had to prepare for your meetings, you had to go in there and take notes, then you had to come out of that and follow up with all of the taskings that the under secretary handed down to you in these meetings. So the meetings were not

something that really were all that. I can't say they were fun, they were interesting, they were fascinating, and it was exhilarating to be involved in policy at that level, but it wasn't something you would do for fun. In one case I remember Dick Crowder was going to fly to Moscow. I was supposed to go with him and I've forgotten which delegation it was for, but he was going to fly out from Minnesota, he was going to visit his wife in Minnesota and then fly directly from there to Moscow. So I asked him what flight he was taking, "Go through New York and take Pan Am nonstop from New York to Moscow?" He said, "Yeah, I think I'll do that." I said, "Good, 'cause I'm gonna fly through Frankfurt then. I'll take the Pan Am flight to Frankfurt and I'll connect. They have a 727 that goes from there to Moscow."

He said, "Well, Mustard, why don't you want to be on the same plane with me?" I said, "Because if I'm on the same plane with you, Dick, you'll keep coming back from business class to tourist class giving me things to do, and I want to watch the movie on the flight over. I don't want to have you coming back giving me a bunch of work to do, right?" So he started laughing and went back into his office absolutely guffawing after I told him that. I turned to his secretary, Kathy Blythe, and asked, "Kathy, what was so funny about that?"

Apparently a few months earlier there was somebody in FAS who had found out that he and Crowder were going to be flying some place, somewhere in Europe, on the same plane. Now, Crowder always flew at least business class and oftentimes he paid out of pocket for upgrades to first class, 'cause he got quite the golden parachute when he left Pillsbury, so he could afford this. And this individual in FAS, who shall remain unnamed, paid out of pocket for an upgrade to first class and arranged to be seated next to Crowder, went to the airline and told the airline, you know, I need to be seated next to the under secretary because he wanted facetime with the under secretary that desperately. Well, Kathy knew about this because of course she'd made the flight arrangements for Dr. Crowder and this individual had gone to Kathy and informed her, I need to know what seat he's in so I can arrange to have a seat next to him, and she of course dutifully informed Dr. Crowder that this had happened.

Dr. Crowder then instructed her to change his flight, get him on a different airplane, but not to tell that individual, and so that individual boarded the flight and paid for a first-class ticket without the benefit of sitting next to Dr. Crowder. I tell the story to give you an indication of just how jealous people were, and how desirous people were of having face time with the under secretary. To me it was just part of the job. I was dealing with the under secretary because he was the point person for dealing with the Soviet Union and I was his technical expert, and it was nothing more than that.

Q: And when you are only an FO-2, it's only you, you don't have any staff. When you're a senior executive, you can delegate some of that, take the notes, do the write ups.

MUSTARD: At that point I had no staff. Now, later on as time went by I did get some staff. Around 1993 Marina Denicoff came to work for me. She had been working in

Dairy, Livestock and Poultry Division and she is an émigré who came at age thirteen from the Soviet Union, spoke native Russian, and so I needed someone else, another Russian speaker to help me. Michael Barton Smith came to work for me for a while, he's another Russian speaker, his Russian is really good, and of course Clarissa Valdivia came to work for me for a while. She didn't speak any Russian, but she was very, very solid, good analyst, and good at implementing programs. So I eventually did get a little bit of staff, but it was never as much as you needed for the volume of work that was coming at us. So we were constantly doing briefing materials, we were constantly generating paper for the upper echelons, mainly for the folks across the street, it was mainly for the under secretary, for the deputy secretary, once Ann Veneman moved across to be deputy secretary, she was still heavily involved in former Soviet affairs.

I have to tell you one funny story. I had only been back, oh, maybe about three months, I guess. I reported for duty in November 1990 after taking home leave and decompressing a bit, and in, I want to say about March 1991 or thereabouts, a delegation from Ukraine came in. The Soviet Union hadn't yet collapsed, the Soviet Union was still very much in operation. This delegation came in from Ukraine, Soviet Ukraine, hosted by the U.S. Feed Grains Council, and the fellow came in to meet Deputy Under Secretary Veneman. Of course Feed Grains Council had taken him out for a liquid lunch and he was extremely drunk. He was the minister of grain products of Ukraine and he was absolutely drunk out of his mind. I was there both as a notetaker and as the interpreter, so was interpreting for him as he was talking to Deputy Under Secretary Veneman. At one point he said something to the effect of, things are really changing rapidly in Ukraine, you know, we could be in NATO by this time next year. And that of course was a shocking thing to hear from a Soviet official even if at the republic level, that he thinks things are unraveling so fast he thought that the Soviet Union could be a member of NATO within a year, which of course was a gross exaggeration, but nonetheless the fact that he would even say that was earthshaking.

So the meeting got over, she turned to me and she said, "We need to get you over there and find out what's going on," because she was not happy with the volume of reporting that was coming out of our office in Moscow at that point. She said, "You need to get over there and start traveling over there and then come back and report back." So I said, "Okay, fine, we'll tee up some trips." I went to talk to Chris Goldthwait. And he said, "Okay, well, let's tap the travel budget, start putting you on a plane and get you over there and find out what she wants you to find out." So I started flying over there and, you know, I did probably five trips in '91, the bulk of them after the coup in August. The August coup of course was a triggering event and we did several trips, two of them were preparatory to the secretary's trip in September–October, which was done at the request of Gorbachev to look at the food situation and I've already talked about that.

But then there was another trip that I made in December that was quite unusual. The Department of Defense had come up with a bunch of surplus B rations. B rations are the battalion-level rations that come on steel pallets, that are enormous, and it's enough to feed an entire battalion one meal. So if you consider a battalion is eight hundred people

you know one dinner for eight hundred people on a steel pallet, shrink-wrapped, and they had these things left over from Operation Desert Storm. They were about to expire and so they wanted to get rid of them, and they decided, what better thing to do than to put them on some C-5As and fly them to Moscow and Leningrad and give away to orphanages as a sign of goodwill.

So I got this phone call from Gary Grappo over at the Department of State saying, "We're going to put this mission together, DOD has taken the bit in its teeth and is gonna make this happen whether we want it to happen or not, it has to happen before Christmas, can you help?" And I said, "Well, I guess so, what do you need me for?" He said, "We don't know, because this thing is being thrown together so fast that we just don't know how it's going to work, and we need a troubleshooter along, and we think someone from the Department of Agriculture who speaks Russian could come in really handy. So can you do this?" And I said, "Sure, I can do it, but I can't make the request. The request is going to have to come top down because if it comes up from me it will get slapped down. There are too many people who are unhappy with me right now and my access to the under secretary."

So the way it worked was that Gary sent up his request through his chain of command to Assistant Secretary for Economics Gene McAllister, whom we knew because he had been on some of the trips with us preparing for the secretary's trip in September–October, and Gene McAllister picked up the phone, called Dick Crowder, and asked if I could be attached to this mission. Dick of course immediately agreed with that and then issued orders that Allan Mustard was to be loaned to the Department of State and was to go on this mission and so there was no kerfuffle, nobody pushed back, nobody made a stink over it because this was the under secretary saying, make this happen.

So out we flew, Gary and I got on commercial air, we flew to Moscow and two airplanes came in. One was a C-5A that had the pallets, these enormous steel pallets, and on them were stacked wooden pallets, to be taken off when you broke up the pallets. The second airplane was a C-141 carrying two forklifts, had a big forklift for lifting up the great big pallets and then a little forklift for taking the little pallets off of that and putting them on the trucks that were going to deliver them to the orphanages. This had all been laid on in advance. The Soviet army was providing the trucks and the manpower to deliver these things to the orphanages, and the embassy and consulate in Leningrad were providing observers who would make sure that the trucks actually arrived at the orphanages, so there could be some accountability.

I should back up and say that when this all got underway and Gary was talking to me, I asked him, "What's in these B rations?" Gary Grappo had been in the air force, he left as a captain in the air force, and he knew what B rations were. He started describing them and I said, "Some of that stuff is freeze-dried, isn't it?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Well, Soviets aren't going to know what to do with freeze-dried food, so we'd better write up some instructions for them." So he contacted DOD, got the instructions, and I sat down with a very primitive word processing program on my dual floppy laptop. I had this really

clunky software that allowed me to generate text in Cyrillic and this is long before the days of Windows or anything like that, and I started to translate these recipes, how to reconstitute the freeze-dried foods in particular, into Russian. Well, I immediately ran into a problem because although my Russian is pretty good I'm not a cook, and so I didn't know a lot of the cooking terminology in Russian.

I picked up the phone and called one of my old Russian instructors, Nora Holdsworth, out in Seattle at the University of Washington, and had her on the phone for about an hour as we plowed through these recipes and she dictated to me. Well, you know, this is how you say this, and this is how you say that. I typed it up as best I could, ran these things off, and then I delivered them to Gary. Gary ran them through a photocopier so when we flew to Moscow I had in my suitcase multiple copies of the instructions that then went with every truck. Every truck that rolled out and went to an orphanage had the sheet of instructions to hand over to the cooks so that the cooks would know what to do with the food, and I hope they got them, and I hope that worked, but anyway.

So we were at the airport. It's December so it's about thirty below zero and I knew going in it was gonna be cold at the airport, so I also knew, I just had this feeling, we were going to have some problems with the Soviet army, that they were not going to be happy that they'd lost the Cold War. I just had this feeling in my gut that I had to be prepared to deal with that. So I went down to a store down in Crystal City called the Ship's Hatch and got one of these navy baseball caps, it has all of the gold braid on the bill, you know, what they call the scrambled eggs. So I got one of those, and I stitched on the front of it—you used to be able in USDA to buy the shoulder patches that they issued to APHIS [Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service] inspectors that had the USDA seal on 'em, they don't let you buy them anymore, but I've still got a couple somewhere, and I stitched one of those on the front of the cap. So I had this really official looking baseball cap, it has the USDA seal on it, has the scrambled eggs making it obvious that I'm an officer of at least the rank of a naval captain, which at that point I was not, but I was not going to take any guff from anybody.

I wore long underwear, I had a pair of German army surplus wool trousers that I wore over my blue jeans, so I had three layers of trousers, wool shirt over the top of, you know, my long underwear top, then a down vest, and over that my down parka from Eddie Bauer, and then on top of all of that, I had a set of thermal overalls from JCPenney. When I zipped up all of this, of course, I looked like the Michelin man, kind of bulging with all of that on. I didn't even have to put up the hood on the parka, just wear the baseball hat, because I was so hot in that thing I needed to be able to blow off heat. So you're out there, it's thirty below zero with a light breeze out on the ramp of this airport and I'm not wearing a fur hat. I'm just standing there completely comfortable, quite frankly, with all of that insulation, and the Russians were absolutely impressed because the other Americans were all hunched over against the cold. I'm out there, a real macho, macho man, who can withstand the cold as well as any Russian.

Well, they issued us radios, so we had these handheld radios, and I was standing out there just waiting for something to happen when the radio crackles and Gary's on the radio, says, "Allan, there's a hangup, there's a problem over there with the trucks, the trucks aren't rolling. Can you go over and find out what's the matter?" So I walked over and there was this hard-bitten Soviet army major standing with his arms folded, staring at the motor pool officer from the embassy, who in his best Russian was saying something that in English would sound approximately like this: "Oh, please, Mr. Major, please, we need a truck right now. Can you please send a truck over to be loaded? Mr. Major, would you please do this?" And the major is just staring at him.

I looked at that and composed a sentence in my mind, and then walked up to the major, put my hands on my hips, and said, "Major, if there's not a truck in front of me within five seconds, day after tomorrow you'll be commanding a f***ing shovel battalion in Siberia." He did not acknowledge me. He simply turned to his warrant officer, barked out an order, and the truck roared up. I turned to the motor pool officer and said, "Put the placard on that thing and send it." So he did. The major turned to me and said, "What next, sir?" And we were off and running.

Q: Is this the beginning of your moniker, Colonel Mustard?

MUSTARD: No, you know that went back to something, that goes back to that stupid game, Clue, which I've never played.

Q: I know, but I remember a staff meeting once, I think it was one of those nine am meetings that FAS managers attended, and some administrator was teasing you, and you had said something somewhat authoritative, and he said, "Colonel Mustard, we're not doing that!" Or something like that. And then you talked him into it.

MUSTARD: That sounds like Gus.

Q: Maybe you didn't know, that was your nickname.

MUSTARD: Oh, I knew that. So anyway, when Ann put me on the plane she had made sure I had a pound bag of M&Ms in each pocket of the coveralls, so after the trucks started rolling, I reached in, opened one of them, and started feeding M&Ms to this major. We started chatting, and by the time the mission was accomplished he was literally eating out of my hand. I mean, out of the palm of my hand, he was taking M&Ms I would offer him from the palm of my hand and was eating them. But you know, when you're dealing with people like that, you don't go up and say, please, as your opening gambit. It just doesn't work. You have to go and establish that you have authority to tell people what to do, just, that was the way the Soviets were.

Q: And you also used the carrot and the stick, first the stick, and then the carrot was used. That's interesting. You knew the dynamics of how Russians think.

MUSTARD: Yeah, absolutely. We had one of the meetings over at State Department, which was sometime later, because this particular meeting, I remember, was chaired by Tom Simons, and so it was after the Clinton administration came in. We had a major general of the United States Army in there talking about his interactions with one of the former Soviet states, and he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, the one thing I've learned is that in your very first meeting with any of these people, the very first thing you have to do is kick him in the nuts, and after you've done that, then you can start talking to them." And that was right. The first time you meet with these people, you have to establish that you're a person to be reckoned with, and not to be dismissed. It runs completely counter to the way Americans normally operate. We normally go and we want to smile, shake hands. The Soviets and the former Soviets just don't operate that way.

So that was, you know, that was one of the more interesting things and then after the Soviet Union collapsed, of course, there was just this unending desire for information, so I was traveling over to Moscow or one of the other capitals about once a month through 1992. I would fly out, I'd spend two weeks typically someplace, come back, spend two weeks back working on our programs, working on our briefing materials, writing my trip reports, trip reports went across the street, of course, so they were read by Ann Veneman, by Dick Crowder. I have no idea if they shared them any farther but we did all of these trip reports, and they of course were in the files which probably ended up in the Landover landfill, so I don't have copies of them. I would love to be able to find some of them, but those trip reports have all been lost to history, I'm afraid.

But we documented a great deal of what was going on, and 1992 was interesting because that was when we really started the serious negotiations on food aid. Initially we didn't have tools in our toolkit to do that. All we had was just GSM-102 large enough to deal with the volumes of what the former Soviets needed, so we headed up I think about a billion and a half dollars, if I'm not mistaken, of credit guarantees that we issued, mainly to the Russians and maybe all of it. And now that I think about it, all of that went to the Russians, and we knew they weren't creditworthy, we knew that there were going to be problems with repayment because they were broke, but we had no other tools to deal with. Chris Goldthwait went up on Capitol Hill and started explaining this to the members of Congress and that was when we got the authority for the eight hundred million dollar food aid package using Food for Progress. It took some tweaking of the Food for Progress authority, and so that legislation went through in 1992 and that allowed us to start looking at an alternative to GSM-102.

Dick Crowder left about that time in 1992. He decided to go back to the private sector and so he left the government. Randy Green took over as the acting under secretary. He was never given the title of under secretary, was never confirmed, I don't think he was even nominated, but I remember other delegations came in asking for GSM-102 and the best we could do was maybe a little bit of PL 480 [Public Law 480] and it really created some friction.

At one point Lynnett Wagner, who was the deputy administrator for international cooperation and development, led a delegation to Kyiv, and we went over and we were negotiating a PL 480 agreement and I will never forget, the Ukrainians were so broke that they couldn't afford to heat the restaurant that they took us to. They took us out for a banquet in honor of our arrival and I remember having to sit on one hand to keep one hand warm while eating with the other hand, and then switching when that hand got so cold it couldn't hold a fork anymore, and I would switch and I would sit on that hand and continue to eat. This dinner was hosted by the minister of agriculture and you know that's how bad things were.

Another time I was over there with another delegation in Ukraine and we had a breakfast meeting with some folks from the World Bank led by the famous Hungarian economist Csaba Csaki, and so there were probably half a dozen from the World Bank and half a dozen on the U.S. side of the delegation, we were chatting and had a nice breakfast, and everything. We got done, people broke up, started to leave, and the waiter came rushing up to me because I was one of the few, I think I was the only American who spoke Russian, almost in tears, saying, "Everybody's walked out and nobody has paid, and this will be taken out of my salary if you don't pay. This is almost a month's salary, this breakfast that you had." So I said, "That's no problem, I'll pay for it. How much was it?" He quoted me a price in the Ukrainian local currency that was equivalent to less than three dollars for breakfast for a dozen people, so I obviously paid for breakfast and gave him a substantial tip as well to calm him down.

But that's the kind of conditions that you had. At one point, every trip I made—well, I have to tell you another funny story. There is a flea market in Moscow where you can buy all kinds of stuff. It used to be secondhand materials but then artists began putting up paintings and sculpture and all kinds of different things, secondhand books and posters and whatnot, and of course the Russian nesting dolls became a hot item, particularly when the Russians found out that all these foreigners were coming and would commission specialty nesting doll sets, to get nesting doll sets not just of the traditional pretty Russian traditional girl costumes and things like that. You would get all the Russian leaders, all the Soviet leaders. I have one of the coup plotters, not all, but five of the coup plotters, for example, from August 1991. People started commissioning Chicago Bulls, they started getting the All-Star dream teams, and you could give them photographs of your family and they would do custom ones of you and your family. So people were just doing anything they could just to make a little bit of money.

The secretaries in FAS found out about this and so I started flying in, and this is in the days when you flew internationally you got two suitcases. You remember those good old days, Ted? Now I mean they limit you to practically nothing, but in those days you had two suitcases and a maximum of sixty pounds. So I would carry two suitcases, and inbound, we had some Russian friends who were having some really hard times and having difficulty getting children's medicines and things like that, so I would go in with one suitcase of baby food and children's medicines and children's vitamins and things

like that for our friends, and then on the flip flop I would come out and that suitcase would be filled with all the souvenirs that the FAS secretaries were ordering.

What I noticed was, I would go in and they'd give me a list—yeah, we want this many nesting dolls, we want this many of those wooden pens, we want this many of the little dancing bears carved out of wood, things like that—and they always knew exactly what the current price was at this flea market, and I thought, that's absolutely astounding. How do they know with such precision what the prices are? Because they were right about on the money every time and I thought, FAS is this agency that deals with commodities and yet we do not have the ability to predict what the price of wheat is going to be day after tomorrow, let alone, you know, the price of a wooden dancing bear in Moscow. How is it that the secretaries are better at forecasting prices than the Economic Research Service or the Foreign Agricultural Service economists?

So finally after one of these trips I came home and sat down with one of the women and said, "You know, here's all your stuff that you ordered." And I asked her, "How do you know what the stuff costs,'cause when I go in there and I negotiate with these guys we tend to come in right on the money you gave me." She said, "Oh, it's really simple. We call Moscow and we talk to the secretary in the agriculture office, and she asks us one question: 'Who's going to be doing the buying for you?' And if we say it's you, 'well, if Mustard is going to be doing the buying,'" she says, 'he can get really good prices, so only give him this much money.'" So I was a self-fulfilling prophecy, that they would give me that much money and I was negotiating people down to that level of money, which I found a rather interesting economic phenomenon.

Then we get into '93. By '93 we had the authority for the food aid and the Russians had been sending over delegations to negotiate with us. We had insisted that all of the food aid go through the new commodity exchanges, to be sent through private-sector structures that were being set up. We didn't want to go through Exportkhleb and through the Ministry of Grain Products, which was being reorganized but was still a state-run corporation called Roskhleboprodukt. We argued and argued and argued with them, fought over this and wrangled over it, and they just absolutely dug in their heels. No, all of this food aid has to go through the state organizations.

But we got into February 1993, the new administration was in at this point, and we were running out of time, because the new harvest was going to be coming in another few months. We had to get the stuff on the water if it was to get there in time, and there would be chokepoints, because they would be bringing in their own harvest of winter wheat while trying to handle the stuff from us. So we had to get things moving. Chris Goldthwait and I sat down, we talked and he said, "You know, we're going to have to give on this one, so let's insist on one ship load of fifty thousand tons and the rest of it can go through their state-owned corporations." That was our fallback position.

The delegation flew into Washington, we sat down with them, and the very first thing they said was, We have seen the light, we agree with you, everything should go through

the commodity exchanges, so that's how we'll do it. And you could've knocked us over with a feather. We were absolutely astounded that they had come around to our way of thinking, so we ended up signing the agreement. Stuff was going to get on the water and Chris turned to me and said, "You need to get over there and find out what the heck happened. Something happened to make them change their minds, so get over there."

One of the commodity exchanges that was most active was down in Saratov, which had been a closed city for decades. It was a military point and foreigners had not been allowed to go there, but there was an American living in Saratov at the time. Kathy Farley now lives just a few miles away from here in Northern Virginia but Kathy was representing one of the NGOs there, ACDI/VOCA as I recall, and I connected up with her. She made introductions so that in addition to the commodity exchange in Moscow I flew down to Saratov and called on the commodity exchange there.

Got a tour of it, we had quite a nice chat, and then I told him the story about how this food aid can be coming through the Saratov exchange and how we were kind of curious how that came about. The guy looked at me and he said, "Yeah, it was really interesting. Several weeks ago a couple of guys came down from Moscow, they came in, they said they work for the government, but they were interested in buying seats on the commodity exchange." So they did, they bought seats on the commodity exchange, there is no conflict-of-interest law in Russia, of course, so this was perfectly legal in Russia, for government officials to do this sort of thing.

Right after that they then announced that they were going to be putting all this food aid through the commodity exchange, so you know, it's good business for us and we're very happy with it, and that's why it happened, is because these government officials figured out how to make money off of it. So that was the first step, really, in privatization of food trade in Russia, was those food aid programs, and it happened for the wrong reasons, because you had some government officials who wanted to be able to make money. But it did work and it did eventually lead to a good result, which was privatization of the food system in Russia.

There was another aspect of that I should tell you about, and that was the infamous chicken legs. You know what Bush legs are, right, Ted? Bush legs are chicken hindquarters that were shipped from the United States to Russia in the early 1990s as food aid, which then were taken over by the private sector. The reason that happened was that we were shipping wheat, the Russians wanted wheat, and they were willing to take some of our surplus butter, so we were shipping wheat and butter and those are the only two commodities we were shipping. Well, one day legislative affairs was contacted by the office of Congressman Hammersmith of Arkansas, and Congressman Hammersmith wanted a meeting with folks in FAS, and the result of that was that we agreed to ship twenty-five thousand tons of chicken hindquarters, frozen, to the former Soviet Union, to Russia, simply to get him off our backs, quite frankly, because this wasn't something that was normally on a PL 480 docket or anything like that. Under Food for Progress we could do it, but it wasn't really something that we wanted to do. So we shipped

twenty-five thousand tons, and the Russians didn't want to take it. They absolutely dug in their heels, they didn't want to take this, it wasn't something that they viewed as a necessity, please don't do this, but we insisted, no, twenty-five thousand tons, you know, are you gonna stop the entire food aid program for twenty-five thousand tons of chicken?

The answer was, Oh, all right, we'll swallow hard, take it. Well, the stuff was wildly popular, was the cheapest animal protein you could find in Russia, a country that was in economic freefall. Sold like hot cakes. Disappeared immediately, and the Russian food aid authorities immediately came back and said, We'd like another ship load, can you send another twenty-five thousand tons? So we put another ship on the water, twenty-five thousand tons, and when it hit St. Petersburg the screaming started from the private sector people who had jumped on that, seeing that there was money to be made and were commercially importing chicken hindquarters. At that point we said, Okay, under the law we cannot ship chicken hindquarters as food aid anymore because we're getting in the way of commercial shipments, so we backed away.

It took off and as you know we were shipping a billion and a half dollars' worth of chicken hindquarters to Russia every year at the peak. It was a massive market for chicken hindquarters, and then eventually of course the Russians wanted to start producing their own. They reached an agreement with USAPEEC, the USA Poultry and Egg Export Council, to do a joint venture called Elinar Broiler, which was outside Moscow. It was a very good project, really taught them how to produce chicken using more modern nutrition and more modern genetics, more modern management. We had an American over there, who managed the project, taught a lot of the Russians how to do it properly, and we were pushed out of the market.

So the long and short of it is, there was still a market there when I was in Moscow in the 2000s but we could see it was winding down as the Russians were ramping up their own domestic production. So that was interesting and again it was one of these flukes, it was something that we didn't anticipate. Nobody foresaw this, there was no plan involved, simply Congressman Hammersmith wanted to sell some chicken, forced us to sell, give away chicken to the Russians, and matters took on a life of their own.

So then getting into 1993. The big thing there was not so much the food aid. The Russian economy started to recover in '93 and I didn't have to go over quite as often. I probably went over half a dozen times instead of a dozen times as I had in '92, and the focus was more on policy, because we'd stood up the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission chaired by Vice President Gore on our side and on the Russian side by Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. Partway through that effort there was a fellow by the name of Alexander Kalinin in the apparatus of the president's office of the Russian Federation, and Kalinin wanted to have an agriculture committee as part of the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission. So that was added.

Of course, Dan Glickman was secretary at that point. Mike Espy was long gone by the time this got stood up, but even before the agriculture committee was stood up we were

still very much involved with the policy issues of the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, because food policy, especially food aid policy, was a hot potato and in that regard this as my first ever brush with drafting a policy statement that was used at the level of the National Security Council.

Once the Clinton administration came in, somebody somewhere decided we needed to have a food aid policy, something written on paper, which we had not had, I mean it was pretty ad hoc. So yours truly was given the task of drafting it. I sat down and I drafted the food aid policy and sent it up through the chain of command. USDA blessed it, then it went to the interagency. The interagency blessed it virtually without any edits or modification, and then it went to the Deputies Committee. The Deputies Committee as you know is the deputy secretaries of the Cabinet departments, normally chaired by the national security advisor, but because he had been Bill Clinton's roommate at Oxford, Strobe Talbott, the deputy secretary of state, tended to chair the Deputies Committee in the Clinton administration. So I was told this paper went up to the Deputies Committee for blessing and Strobe, being a former editor of *Time* magazine, didn't like my cover page, so he sat down and gutted and rewrote the cover page to his liking, but left the rest of the document completely untouched. That paper then became official U.S. government policy, so I felt pretty good about that, you know, to have drafted something that went through and except for the cover page was essentially untouched by everybody who looked at it and was adopted by the Deputies Committee.

Well, in the wake of that, a request came down from the White House several months later for an explanation as to why USDA had rejected a food aid request from Feed the Children. Feed the Children wanted to have a program in the former Soviet Union. For whatever reason Export Credits had rejected the proposal and came to me to respond, so I replied to the National Security Council staff that the Feed the Children program proposal was not in conformance with the food aid policy towards the Soviet Union as articulated in document thus and such, whatever we called it, and the request then came back to explain who had approved this document, and had it been approved at the interagency level. To which I replied, it was approved by the Deputies Committee and signed off on by Nelson Strobridge Talbott, deputy secretary of state, so if you have any questions about why it was adopted, please direct them to him, and that was the last we heard.

So again, this was a lesson to me, that sometimes having these written policies can come in handy, because you always have people with their hands out wanting something. And of course, you worked in Export Credits, Ted, you know that everybody looks at USDA, just sees this giant organization with lots of money that's usually good for a few bucks here or there. Nothing against Feed the Children, Feed the Children does wonderful work, but if you're going to submit a program proposal it has to line up with the policy priorities of the government as they have been articulated, and it was a lesson to me that, yeah, putting things on paper can be useful sometimes even though it's a lot of work.

Once you've got your policies down there, it helps you make decisions and helps to defend the decisions that you've made.

Q: And it makes it transparent to everybody. You talked about the fact that you were able, because you had permission from Under Secretary Crowder to contact anybody within the government. Then, as you prepared documents, and sent them out to people, was FAS, the rest of the bureaucracy involved in clearing those documents as they moved back up?

MUSTARD: Always. Sure. No, absolutely, any document I prepared was prepared because USDA had been requested to prepare or to sign off on it, so absolutely. I think one of the more interesting aspects of the job was that Crowder made it clear that the Eastern European and Soviet Secretariat had a mandate to oversee all USDA interactions with the former Soviet Union, not just FAS, which brought us into conflict with OICD, which had not yet been merged into FAS, that didn't happen till '94. And there was an individual in OICD who went so far as to go out to the other USDA agencies and to say bluntly, the Eastern European and Soviet Secretariat coordinates FAS activities towards the former Soviet Union, but OICD coordinates activities of the rest of USDA towards the former Soviet Union, which was not true. And when Dick Crowder found out about that, at the time Duane Acker was administrator of OICD, this was while Bud was administrator of FAS, he called in Duane, and absolutely dressed him down. Poor Duane, who is one of the, you know, nicest and kindest people you've ever met, had to withstand a dressing down from Crowder. I had a few of those myself, and they were not pleasant affairs, I have to say. Duane came back with instructions from Crowder to fix the problem, and the way he fixed it was that he called in the individual in OICD who had been saying all these things, giving that individual a dressing down, saying this will stop immediately, and then taking the staff person that person had, who was a GS-13 devoted to former Soviet affairs, and saying that person will now be seconded to the Eastern Europe and Soviet Secretariat and will report to Mustard.

Which, you know, lasted for a while, lasted for a few months, just long enough to make the point that the Eastern Europe and Soviet Secretariat had a mandate to coordinate all USDA activities towards the former Soviet Union. What this gave me was an ability to really see how much the rest of USDA was doing in the former Soviet Union. It was really very broad gauge. Forest Service was heavily involved and had been since the 1960s. You had lots of people there who were just very heavily involved in all manner of activities. We had AMS [Agricultural Marketing Service] involved, we had Agricultural Research Service involved, Soil Conservation Service, NASS [National Agricultural Statistics Service], all kinds of people and it was to me, it was fascinating to have these sorts of connections and to be able to talk to all these other USDA agencies as well as the rest of the U.S. government.

One of the things I did during that period was we started putting together monthly luncheons. We would find a speaker from someplace, somebody would come in and would talk about something related to Russia or the former Soviet Union. We would try to reserve one of the rooms over in the secretary's dining room and have this person talk to us over lunch, and folks from across USDA as well as FAS would come to these lunches and sit there and, you know, these are great for networking. You're just talking to

people and informally on the margins of these sorts of things, finding out what other people are doing, making it clear that you're open to them and can talk to them.

We had Tim Penney. Bill Liefert of ERS [Economic Research Service] knew Tim Penney, so Congressman Tim Penney came to one of the luncheons and spoke to us, and again there was this hue and cry of, Oh, my God, we had a member of Congress come down and have lunch with this group of people from FAS and the rest of the department to talk about how Congress views relations with the former Soviet Union. It was as if I committed some egregious sin, but again I think we're too parochial, we have too many stovepipes, we shut off too much communication, because this sort of informal communication was extremely valuable to help us understand, where are the boundaries, what is Congress willing to do, what is Congress not willing to do. I think if we did more of this sort of thing it would lead to better government. So yeah, I mean, there was some nipping at my heels, typically by people unhappy that I had a mandate to go out and talk to anybody I needed to talk to, but I didn't really let it bother me too much. I was focused on doing my job, just trying to do my job as best I could.

Q: Is there anything you want to say, as we shift into other issues, the lessons learned that you would like to pass on to other FAS employees of how to negotiate the bureaucracy effectively, over your whole career.

MUSTARD: Hmm, well I think some of the lessons of the 1990s, I mean, one important lesson I learned was that no matter how good you are, no matter how dedicated you are to simply doing your job, you're always going to have people who are envious of whatever access you have to decision-makers and who will seek to undermine you however they can. So one of the lessons I learned was not to give people openings ever to undermine me. They still tried, people still tried to undermine me, they took potshots at me, but I was focused on the mission. I tried to focus on getting things accomplished that the higher ups wanted to accomplish.

And here's an interesting thing, too. When the Bush 41 administration was leaving and the Clinton administration was on the way in, I had one of my last meetings with Ann Veneman, who at that point was deputy secretary. Ann was leaving and she thanked me for having always done everything I had been asked to do, and I said, "Well, I don't understand. When you asked me to do something, you were the deputy under secretary, and then deputy secretary. If a deputy secretary of a Cabinet department asked you to do something and you're in the bureaucracy, you have to do it." She looked me in the eye and said, "Very few do, you are one of the few who actually did what I asked you to do." Most people did not, which really shocked me, and I've carried that with me, too. Even when I disagreed with the decision, if the decision came down from on high, sorry, they outrank you, they have the authority to make those decisions. You suck it up, cupcake, you go out and do what they asked.

I think in retrospect that was one of my strengths, was that I had credibility with the decision-makers in that they knew they were going to get from me my best advice,

unvarnished, which didn't gladden everybody. There are a lot of people who don't like me because I told them the truth and they don't always want to hear the truth, and in fact one of our former deputy administrators, I won't tell you which one, once told me that I had a very bright career ahead of me if I would just learn not to tell the truth. He said, "Your problem is, Allan, you just tell the truth too much, and sometimes people don't want to hear the truth." Well, sorry, I have always tried to tell the truth. I have been a truth teller my entire career, and then coupled with that if I received a supervisory directive from somebody I tried my best to carry it out.

That, I think again in retrospect, that has been tremendous strength because it gave me credibility with the upper echelons and they knew I was dependable. If they asked me to do something, I would do it, and so people could snipe at me and say, Mustard this, Mustard that, but it didn't generally have much impact except with the people who didn't know me. We had some political appointees who didn't really know me very well and those relationships were what they were. But I guess that's the lesson learned, Ted. I can't really think of anything else. Maybe you observed something else and can tell me what you saw.

Q: I think you had foresight, and maybe some of it was just luck, but foresight to think about what you needed to do, what blessings you needed from people, to do your job. So that you were able to go out and contact people across the government, and then also, you weren't, maybe another thing, I'm amazed you didn't get bogged down in the clearance process back up. Paper going from FAS to Crowder, that might then go on to somebody else, could go through weeks of clearance. And changes by all kinds of people who maybe shouldn't be changing anything.

MUSTARD: Yep. Please bear in mind that the clearance process for a lot of this stuff was pretty straightforward. It wasn't like the old days of trying to get our monthly reports from the Meat Import Law out, but we typically, we would draft something in the Eastern Europe and Soviet Secretariat or as it later became, the Emerging Markets Office, it would go to whoever was the head, which was either Guy Haviland or Tom Pomeroy or later Jim O'Meara, and then it went straight to Chris Goldthwait, usually bypassed Glenn Whiteman. Glenn was out running operations in Export Credits. He wasn't involved in the policy work so much.

Chris would bless it. It didn't usually go through the administrator, I mean, if there was something that needed to go to the administrator it could, but as a general rule neither Bud nor Duane Acker saw the stuff that we were sending out until afterwards, and it would just go straight up to Dick Crowder at that point. And that's the way Dick wanted it. He wanted the stuff unvarnished from us, so yeah, a lot of this stuff was very heavily streamlined, and I have to say one of the interesting lessons I learned, too, I should mention this, in the meetings with Dick Crowder, they were an hour long, you came in, you started, he had his early staff meeting at seven, which was the administrators, then at eight o'clock he would have his former Soviet Union staff meeting. That lasted an hour, from eight to nine.

I once kept count in one of the meetings of how many decisions Dick Crowder made in one hour, because that's what these meetings were about, coming in, saying we need a decision on this, a decision on that. He made twelve decisions in one hour, which meant each decision had five minutes. Each one of them had a briefing paper that was prepared, which he had not read in advance, and he would read on the spot. There was a minute and a half taken to read one and a half pages. That was the maximum, as you recall. We could put a maximum of a page and a half to each briefing paper and I remember how people used to scream about that, say, How can I condense this entire issue down to one and a half pages? I need at least twenty pages to explain it in full detail.

Well, the fact is these decision-makers don't have enough time to read twenty pages of text, so again, this was a hard lesson for me and I finally understood why it is that busy decision-makers need very short briefing papers. What's the brief in briefing? You have to be succinct, you have to be concise, you have to get right to the point and tell them, these are the issues, that here's a decision you need to make. So that was a valuable experience to me and it made me a better briefer and it made me a better writer and drafter of briefing materials, as well, seeing how that was done.

And again talking about lessons learned, just being prepared, preparing for meetings, going in anticipating what the questions are likely to be, and trying to be prepared for them, so it was a good school. I mean, the years that I was back there in Washington, sitting at the left elbow of the under secretary every morning for a few years, really taught me a lot about the policy process and how to get things done.

The other thing I should mention part way through that—I got my own secretary just because of the workload. Nancy Sowers came to work for me, and then when she retired, Lucille Abbott came and worked for me, but we had a lot of administrative work that needed to be done and needed it. But I didn't use them to screen phone calls. This is something I remember reading in one of the biographies of World War II generals, about how George Patton never used anybody to screen his phone calls. If you wanted to talk to General Patton, you simply picked up the phone, you dialed his number, and he would answer the phone himself, and the reason he didn't worry about getting stray phone calls is because very few people were going to try to call him a second time if they wasted his time with the first call. He let them know they were wasting his time. As a result he was accessible to anybody who had an emergency and thought the general should know about it. I thought that makes a lot of sense, so I did the same thing. That was another lesson learned. In all of my years as a federal bureaucrat, almost thirty-eight years, and nineteen of those years as a Senior Foreign Service officer, I only ever encountered one person in all that time who abused that access to me. That was a mid-level employee over at the Department of Commerce, who started calling me every day just to chew the fat, because he had nothing better to do, and it took one phone call to his supervisor to put a stop to it, and it ended.

So you know, again, if you're a federal employee, I don't care how high-ranking you are, I even did this when I was in Ashgabat as ambassador, if there were times I was the only person in the office suite, that the admin assistants were gone running errands, I would answer the phone. People were shocked that the ambassador was answering the phone by himself. I never had a problem, it just was never an issue, so I think there's a lesson there, too, because if you make yourself available, you make yourself accessible, you have a tendency to know what's going on and not to have too many unpleasant surprises come your way.

Going back to the 1990s and in the Eastern Europe and Soviet Secretariat, at one point I went down to see Glenn Whiteman about something, and Glenn was holding his head in his hands and moaning about something. I said, "What's the matter?" Glenn says, "We have all these food aid agreements we need to sign and we don't have any travel money left. We can't go out and some of these embassies, you know, they don't have anybody here who can negotiate with us. This year we have to go there and I have no travel money. I don't know what to do."

I said, "Well, I've done all this travel, and so I have great gobs of frequent flyer miles that I can't use," because they were all back in those days when we couldn't use them personally, remember? They belonged to the government, only the government could use the frequent flyer miles. So I said, "I can get as far as Istanbul on my frequent flyer miles and then it's five hundred dollars round-trip on Turkish Air from Istanbul to Almaty, so I could fly in there and I can go down." One of the countries was Kyrgyzstan, so I said, "I can, if you come up with five hundred dollars for the round-trip ticket from Istanbul to Almaty, the embassy will send a driver to pick me up in Almaty and drive me down to Bishkek," it was about a three-hour drive. So we did that and I went in and negotiated that PL 480 agreement, which would never have happened if I had not had the frequent flyer miles, because as you remember the PL 480 people were very jealous of their prerogative to travel. The PL 480 people didn't want anybody else to go negotiate food aid agreements because this was their one chance to get out and see the outside world.

So I kinda lucked out that I had these frequent flyer miles and was able to go to Bishkek. Of course, I was treated like visiting royalty, 'cause I was coming with this great food aid program. While I was there I also did a bunch of Cochran interviews. Cochran needed to do interviews and they were short of travel funds as well, so as long as I was out there I went ahead and did that. I remember that the first trip I made into Bishkek, they put me up at the presidential guest house free of charge, so my accommodations were free, but I had to pay out of pocket for the meals. One night I hosted the chargé d'affaires, who was an old friend from Moscow days, his wife, and the economics FSN to dinner at the presidential guest house, and that five-course dinner for four of us came to $2.58. We were able to get in there fairly cheaply and of course I didn't need an interpreter. I negotiated the food aid agreement in Russian. And that's how we did that. I did want to share that one story, that sometimes you have to be creative about how you travel.

A couple of the stories that I wanted to make sure got recorded for posterity, one of them was in preparation for our trips to the Soviet Union. Sometimes, you know, when extraordinary events occur, that requires bending of the rules, and we ran into this very quickly when Gorbachev came back from Foros. He got back to Moscow and one of the first things he did was he got on the phone with President George H.W. Bush, Bush 41, they had a telephone conversation. And one of the results of that conversation was that President Bush directed the Department of Agriculture to send a delegation to the Soviet Union to look at the food situation, because Gorbachev— This was in '91, so this was in August 1991 that the coup took place, August nineteenth through twenty-first of 1991, and the phone conversation took place fairly shortly after that within a couple of days, as I recall.

I, at the time, was out on the farm. I was out at my dad's farm because my mother had died the previous spring, and my dad needed some help on the farm, and so my wife and I drove out, six days one way from Falls Church, Virginia, out to Washington state with an eighteen-month-old baby in the backseat. We spent three weeks out on the farm and then took another week to drive back, so a total of five weeks that I was away from work. And in that time, while I was out on the farm, the coup took place in Moscow.

I got back over the Labor Day weekend, so Tuesday morning I went into work, Monday of course was a day off, it was the Labor Day holiday, so I went into work on Tuesday. Chris Goldthwait grabbed me and said, "Come to my office, we're planning this trip." So we went to his office, began planning the trip, and I then got a phone call the next morning, very early the next morning, so this was Wednesday morning already, from the Department of State, from Gary Grappo. He said, "We need everybody's passports who's coming from USDA over here at State by no later than one pm today, because we're going to take them, all of them, one bundle, over to the Soviet embassy. We're going to have visas put in them so we can fly out on Friday."

This is all happening very fast, so I said, "Okay," and I went down to the travel unit to talk to the head of the travel unit, who was Sylvia Wynn. I told her, "You know, the President has ordered this delegation to go to Moscow and we have to go to Moscow on Friday, so I need the passports for the following people." And she refused to give them to me. She said, "I can't issue the passports, release the passports, unless they all have travel orders." Well, we didn't have travel orders yet, that was going to take at least a day to gin up the travel orders and have them typed up and signed, and by that time it would be too late to get the visas.

I said, "Well, I'll get you the travel orders, but I need the passports now." She looked at me and said, "Well, you're just going to have to call the White House and tell them they're going to have to delay this trip, because USDA regulations are very clear, we're to get forty-five days notice before anybody travels, so they're just going to have to wait forty-five days before the trip can take place." So, right, I was going to tell the President that he has to wait forty-five days because of a USDA regulation.

I knew I couldn't get in to see Earl Hadlock, who was the head of management, because he had this rule that to get in to see him you had to put in a request for a meeting with him and then wait till the next day before you got your appointment, but I did know that if I picked up the phone and called Dick Crowder, the under secretary, that he would take my call. So I called up Dick and I told him what was going on, explained the situation to him, and he said, "Where are you right now?" I said, "I'm in my office." He said, "All right, stay there, don't move, someone will get you the passports." So this was about ten o'clock in the morning at this point.

At eleven o'clock Earl came storming into my office, very angry, slammed the passports down on my desk, and said, "There, are you happy?" I checked them, I made sure that they were the passports that I needed, and I said, "Yes, I'm happy, Earl, these are the passports I needed." He said, "Do you know what you just did?" I said, "Yes, I just carried out a verbal order of the President to organize a delegation from USDA to go to the Soviet Union on Friday, what do you think I did?"

He said, "About an hour ago Duane Acker, the administrator, got a phone call from the under secretary saying that if the passports of the following people were not on Allan Mustard's desk within an hour, that he was going to be out of a job. Duane came down to my office and said, 'If I'm going down, you're going down with me,' and the two of us went down to the travel unit. We requested the passports." Sylvia refused to hand over the passports even to Earl and to Duane, so they went over the countertop and went back into the file cabinets with Sylvia chattering at them the whole time about how this was completely a violation of USDA regulations. They pulled out the passports and then Earl was given the task of delivering them to me.

I said, "Thank you very much, Earl, I have to be off now, I'm leaving," and I then got in a taxicab and went over the State Department, delivered the passports, hand-carried them over and delivered them to the Soviet desk, and that's how we got visas to go to the Soviet Union on this trip. Again, there is a lesson in here, that if Earl had had an open-door policy and had been receptive to having people come in when there is an emergency, and say, I have an emergency, I need to see you right now, I wouldn't have had to go to the under secretary and get him and the administrator in hot water. It was a good lesson for me. That's one of the reasons I always had an open-door policy over my career. I think I told you it has virtually never been abused. People just don't abuse access to people, at least not for very long. If they abuse it once or twice then you just cut them off, but there was a lesson there.

Another funny story I wanted to tell you was when the Ukrainian delegation came. They were looking for GSM-102 because we had granted GSM-102 to the Russians and the Ukrainians came in saying that they wanted to have a similar allocation of GSM-102 credit guarantees. It was the deputy prime minister for the agroindustrial complex, the Ukrainian ambassador, and then a couple of assistants to the deputy prime minister. I was interpreting for them when they came in, for this whole group. They were initially meeting with Randy Green, who was the acting under secretary at the time, because

Crowder had already left. We were not going to give the Ukrainians credit guarantees because they were not creditworthy. We were offering them some PL 480, some food aid, but we really could not in good conscience offer them commercial credit guarantees.

When we started out the meeting I of course was there to interpret, and the ambassador turned to me and said, "We're going to be speaking Ukrainian, you'll have to interpret between English and Ukrainian." I said, "Well, I don't speak Ukrainian, I speak Russian. You're going to have to speak Russian, not Ukrainian, I'm sorry, because we don't have anybody in the Department of Agriculture who's qualified to interpret Ukrainian." And he said in English, "No, you must speak Ukrainian," and at that point the deputy prime minister for agroindustrial affairs turned to him and said, very rudely in Russian, "Shut up." The Russian word was "*zatknis*," which is a very rude way of telling someone to shut their mouth. So that kind of set the tone.

We had the meeting with Randy Green and he explained, "I can't give you credit guarantees, I can offer you food aid." So they signed the food aid agreement. They were not happy about it but they signed the food aid agreement. Chris Goldthwait countersigned it as the assistant general sales manager, and then the deputy prime minister said, "I really need to meet the secretary of agriculture, your minister." And Randy said, "Well, he's very busy," i.e., he's got other things he's doing right now. I could see that the deputy prime minister was getting pretty nervous, so I leaned over and whispered to Randy, "Randy, he needs five minutes with the secretary, if he doesn't meet the secretary, and goes back without credit guarantees, he'll get fired, he's gonna be losing his job, so, you know, can you get at least a five-minute courtesy call?" Randy said, "All right, I'll see what I can do." So he gets up and goes back to the secretary's office, came back after a while and we went back into the secretary's ceremonial office.

Secretary Madigan was sitting there, slouched in his chair, the look on his face made clear he was not happy. He did not want to meet with the Ukrainians. The deputy prime minister made his sales pitch, we need credit guarantees and we're credit worthy. We'll pay you back, and all of this, and when he got done, Madigan leaned forward and he said, "You know, Mr. Deputy Prime Minister, I have a question for you. I've known Mr. Goldthwait a lot longer than you have, and he's never given me a ballpoint pen quite as nice as the one that he obviously just gave you. I want to know, what did you do for Mr. Goldthwait that he gave you such a nice ballpoint pen?"

I interpreted that and this deputy prime minister turned to the ambassador and said, "Did he say that?" And the ambassador said, "Yes, he said that." The deputy prime minister threw the ballpoint pen at Ed Madigan, it skittered across the table, and he said, "There's your pen." Madigan picked up the pen and started twirling it in his hands, saying, "What you have to understand is that as the chairman of the board of the Commodity Credit Corporation I have a fiduciary responsibility to the shareholders of the corporation, who are the taxpayers of the United States, and my people tell me that I cannot permit commercial credit guarantees to be allocated for Ukraine. I'm sorry, better luck next time," words to that effect. The deputy prime minister got up from his chair. Everybody

else got up and started to walk out. Chris ran after him, took the ballpoint pen and tried to give it back to the deputy prime minister.

The post-script to this was that as we were walking out, one of the assistants to the deputy prime minister sidled up to me and said, "Thank you for insisting on speaking Russian, because I don't speak Ukrainian, either."

Q: A lot of the—we're not part of the Soviet Union, we don't have to kow-tow to the Rooskies.

MUSTARD: Absolutely, that's what it was all about. But unfortunately, the sad fact was that I got my degree in Russian, not in Ukrainian.

Then there was the time, again, it was while Dick Crowder was under secretary, his secretary, Kathy Blythe, called me up and said, "Allan, there are a couple of Russians down at the guard station here in the administration building," what we now call the Whitten Building. "Could you come down? They want to meet with the secretary. Could you come down and see what it is they want?"

So I got up from my desk and went over across the street and there were three gentlemen standing there, so I escorted them in, brought them to my office, and asked if I could help them. One of them was the deputy prime minister of finance for Tajikistan, another one was the Tajik ambassador to the United Nations, they didn't have an embassy in Washington yet, though they had their UN mission set up, and the third was a gold merchant, a Bukharan Jew who spoke fluent Tajik, which is a dialect of Persian, and he was part of the Bukharan Jewish diaspora that had left Central Asia over many decades. Some of them had settled in Israel, some of them had settled in New York. The Tajik ambassador had bumped into him somehow, met him, and learned that he spoke fluent Tajik as well as English.

So the president of the country told the deputy prime minister of finance to fly to New York City, which we all know is the capital of the United States, and go find the ministry of agriculture and ask for a food aid allocation. Right, so he got on a plane and he flew to New York and linked up with the ambassador to the United Nations, and they began to roam the streets of Manhattan looking for a building that looked like it might be the ministry of agriculture. After a day or so of fruitless searching, the ambassador said, "I know this guy who's lived in America for a while, maybe he can help us." So they went to this Bukharan Jewish jeweler and explained to him what their problem was, and he said, 'Well, the capital of the United States is in Washington, DC, it's not in New York, so we need to get on a train and head down to Washington and when we get to Washington we can find the Department of Agriculture, and it's called the Department of Agriculture, not the ministry of agriculture."

They got on Amtrak and came down, they got to Union Station, at Union Station back in those days they still had phone booths and phone books. They got to a phone booth,

opened the phone book, they found the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the blue pages, called the number, were given directions on how to get on the subway at Union Station, and get off at Smithsonian. They showed up at the Whitten Building looking for a meeting with the secretary of agriculture, and they got me.

So I said, "Okay, well, let me see what I can do." Jim Higgiston was the branch chief down in export credits in those days for dealing with the former Soviet Union, so I called Jim, and he said, "You're kidding, we've been trying to figure out how to do a food aid allocation for Tajikistan, because we have an agreement ready to sign, but we have nobody to sign it with. Bring them on down."

So I took them downstairs and Jim worked with them for a couple hours and after a couple of hours they had a PL 480 agreement for ten million dollars of commodity to sign, and took it up to Chris Goldthwait. Chris signed it, and this deputy prime minister for finance of Tajikistan signed it, and then when they got done with that, the deputy prime minister said, "Well, there's just one more thing. Under our laws, this is an international agreement. It will have to be ratified by our Parliament, and to get it ratified by the Parliament somebody's going to have to lobby for it. I can do that for you, I can lobby for passage in Parliament of this agreement, for its ratification, but my fee for that is fifteen thousand dollars."

Higgiston immediately explained that we don't do that. That it's up to him to get it passed, to get it ratified, but we don't expend funds on those sorts of things. They were then ushered out, they got back on Amtrak and went back to New York, and the Tajiks never did ratify it. They never got that food aid allocation.

Q: How would you confirm that he actually was the deputy prime minister of finance for Tajikistan? Did he have a business card?

MUSTARD: He did. He had a business card, you know, and I'm sorry I don't have all those old business cards anymore. I had, I don't know how many of those books of business cards, you know, where you can get the full-size sheets that go into a three-ring binder. I must've had a couple or three binders of business cards I collected while I was in the Eastern Europe and Soviet Secretariat. I pitched them all when I left, when I rotated to Vienna. I didn't keep any of them and I'm kicking myself now because it would be kind of fun to go back through some of them.

But yeah, he had a business card, he had the ambassador to the United Nations with him, who had his diplomatic credentials from the Department of State, so you know, we had bona fides. But it was kind of the wild west back then, you know, people would just show up on your doorstep and say, I'm here to get some food aid, can you help me?

Q: And those guys, they thought they could do it, out of ignorance, and actually, almost did.

MUSTARD: Well, yeah, it almost worked out for them, if they hadn't demanded a bribe, it would've worked out for them.

Q: You talked about the Brother's Brother debacle.

MUSTARD: An NGO called Brother's Brother. We had a lot of NGOs that we were giving commodities to. They would then ship those commodities to the former Soviet Union, monetize them, and use the monetize proceeds for projects. One of them was called Brother's Brother and it was run by some folks who had very good connections on Capitol Hill. There was a fair amount of political pressure on USDA to give them a grant under one of our food aid programs and I don't remember which one, it was Food for Progress or 416(b), not sure just which one of those programs. So Brother's Brother received the grant, they shipped the commodity, and they were under the impression that that was all they had to do, that once it arrived in Moscow, that the office of agricultural affairs at the embassy would take care of all the details.

So it turned into a complete mess because of course our ag office is not set up to do that. That's why we give these grants to NGOs, so they'll take care of them. The ag office is not there to handle monetization. So the ag office ended up having to request TDY support. We sent out a TDYer to deal with this and it was just a huge mess and headache. David Schoonover was the head of the office and he complained to me quite a bit about how Brother's Brother just came to him and dumped it in his lap, said, "Here you deal with this." And again, there was all this pressure from Capitol Hill the next year to give them another grant.

So I called Schoonover on the phone and said, "David, we need a report from you in writing that says what a bad job Brother's Brother did with this monetization program." "Well, Allan, I prefer not to do that." I said, "David, you really need to do that, otherwise it's gonna happen again two years in a row, they're going to do the same thing." So David sat down and wrote a telegram that spelled out everything that had gone wrong and that Brother's Brother should not be allowed to have another allocation.

I showed it to Chris Goldthwait. Chris's eyebrows went up, he said, "I knew it was bad, I didn't realize it was that bad, is it?" "Yeah," I said, "Chris, you know, the folks on Capitol Hill need to be made aware that this is a scandal just waiting to happen, that if information like this were to leak and to get out into the public domain, it would look very bad for the members of Congress who are pushing this on behalf of Brother's Brother." He agreed, so to his credit Chris went up and talked to a few staffers on Capitol Hill, and spelled out, this is what's going on, just how badly do you want a scandal that affects your member of Congress? Of course, nobody wanted that, and so all of a sudden Hill support for Brother's Brother dissolved, just dissipated. Nobody wanted to be in any way affiliated with something that wasn't working and all of a sudden, Brother's Brother was like, What happened? We thought we were going to be getting another allocation! No, you actually have to do what we require you to do under the contract, you actually have to handle the commodity, you have to do your own work, you can't just pawn it off.

That to me was instructive, because a lot of us had been under the impression that if there's congressional pressure, there's nothing you can do about it. Congress weighs in and Congressman so-and-so or Senator so-and-so says do this, you have to do it, because there's this tremendous pressure. But I learned from that, if you have a bad actor who is taking advantage of the federal bureaucracy, that it is possible to push back and to reason with members of Congress and with their staffs, and say, here's what's really going on, you really don't want to have a scandal come out of this, and they will see. They can be reasonable. You can reason with them, and that was important for me to understand.

Q: They need feedback as well, to be told what they weren't doing correctly so they can fix themselves.

MUSTARD: I'm not sure they ever got that.

Q: Could you talk about how Gus Schumacher changed FAS' Eurocentrism?

MUSTARD: This is one of those random things, one of my random conversations with Gus. Gus was very good about wandering the halls of FAS and if he saw you, he gave you a writing task. You had to write a briefing paper for him on something. So one day he caught me somewhere and said he wanted me to write something for him, then, I need it right away, get it to me right away. So I got it to him right away and went into his office, handed it to him, and he started grumbling about how the Selection Board just met and everybody recommended for promotion had prior service in only the Cadillac posts, you know, Western Europe, Japan, Canada, and that none of the people recommended for promotion had served in hardship posts.

I said, "Well, you know why that is, don't you?" And he says, "Well, no, the precepts say that if two people do the same amount of work, that the person who served in a hardship post gets rated higher." And I said, "Yeah, but that doesn't actually happen in fact on the boards, that kind of gets ignored." He asked, "Why is that?" I said, "It's simple, it's the constitution of the boards. If you look at who served on the board, the panel members from FAS are all people who only ever served in Western Europe. The Western European mafia has a sweet lock on the Selection Board and they only promote their own. Nobody else needs to apply."

Gus asked, "Who appoints the Selection Board?" I said, "You do, the administrator!" He said, "I do?" "Yes, you do," I said. "Here's how it works. The head of the attaché service comes to you and hands you a sheet of paper and you say, what is this? And he says, 'Oh, it's just a routine bureaucratic exercise, and you just need to sign it, don't worry about it,' and does the old Radar O'Reilly thing with Henry Blake. And you sign it and don't give it a second thought, and all of his buddies who only served in Western Europe get appointed to the Selection Board. So next year, you need to pay more attention to it."

The following year that's exactly what happened. The attaché service came to Gus and said, "Here's who's gonna be on the Selection Board this year," and Gus said, "No, they aren't." He went through, crossed off the names of people who only ever served in Cadillac posts and said, "I want people who served in hardship posts." So everybody on the Selection Board that year, that would have been probably the selection board of '96, I guess, everybody on that Selection Board had prior service in at least one hardship post, and some of them in multiple hardship posts.

That year out of all the people promoted to Class One, only one did not have prior service in a hardship post. There were nine people who'd been in hardship posts and that sent a shockwave through the system. A whole bunch of people who had just been banking on, I will only ever serve in Cadillac posts and I will get the promotions, and these poor saps and suckers who go to Moscow and Istanbul and places like that, they don't need to apply.

Well, the other thing Gus did was, there was this buzz promoted by the folks who were in the European mafia that to serve in the EU you had to have "EC experience" and there is no need to even apply for an EU posting if you didn't have "EC experience," which of course was nonsense, since all the agricultural policy literature was available in English. You didn't even have to translate it into English, it was already done for you. And understanding EU agricultural policy was no more difficult than understanding the agricultural policy of anyplace else, for example, the Soviet Union, where documents were only available in Russian. So it was just a trick to keep the uninitiated out of Europe and save those posts just for the people who were part of a special club.

Well, Gus broke that, too, and started sending people who had no "EC experience" to EU posts, and I was one of them. I got to Vienna in part because he decided to break that. By the time I was posted to Vienna, Austria was an EU member state and so it was fair game, and that's one of the reasons I got Vienna, was he was going to change that policy.

And that was when FAS started to change from being a Eurocentric organization to realizing that our growth markets were in Asia and in Latin America. Japan had begun to emerge as a major market at that point, China was out there but hadn't really taken off yet in the 1990s, that was yet to come, by the 2000s, of course, it really took off. Japan had emerged as a huge market and people started to realize, we need to start looking at Japan, we need to look beyond the EU, at the NAFTA countries, Canada, and Mexico. One of Gus's really major accomplishments was breaking the back of the Eurocentrism that had been afflicting FAS since World War II.

Q: That was a really titanic shift. I'm sure there was blowback.

MUSTARD: Oh, there was lots of blowback, and there were a lot of people who were very unhappy with that, who thought that they would have careers of just a round robin of EU posts and would never have to serve anyplace else, who were now told, if you want to have a future in the agency, you have to serve someplace else.

Q: I felt that, the effect of that. I felt that that had changed. Talk about Gus Schumacher and the monkfish liver to Japan.

MUSTARD: Do you remember that he was pushing monkfish liver to Japan? We were collecting data on monkfish liver to Japan. People thought he was absolutely crazy and years later after he left USDA I bumped into Gus somewhere and I asked him about it. I said, "What was the big deal with monkfish liver to Japan?" He looked at me several seconds. "Mustard, wasn't it obvious?" I said, "No, it's not obvious to anybody."

He said, "The watermen who catch the monkfish and harvest the monkfish liver that's sent to Japan are all from Barney Frank's congressional district, and Barney Frank was either chair or ranking member of the House Financial Services Committee and was well plugged into appropriations. If we needed money, I had to go to Bahney, not Barney, but Bahney, that I go to Bahney, and I would tell Bahney, look at all this monkfish liver that we're shipping to Japan, it's all coming out of your congressional district. So that was how Gus got us money, in FAS, in our budget, was by going to Barney Frank, the congressman from monkfish."

Which again was a lesson that sometimes, you know, all politics is local as Tip O'Neill famously said. If you have a politically astute administrator you can get a lot done.

Q: You have to balance practicality with idealism, and the future with the present.

MUSTARD: Well, that's right.

Vienna 1996–2000

Q: Is it time now to move towards your time in Austria?

MUSTARD: Yeah, well I had been promised that I would spend three years in the Eastern Europe and Soviet Secretariat, so after five years had gone by out of the three, I decided it was time to go overseas and started lobbying for an overseas post. Finally Chris Goldthwait allowed as how, yeah, maybe it was time for me to go, so I bid on Vienna and was one of, I was told, I was one of thirty-one people who bid on Vienna. The only post that was more heavily bid that year was Jakarta, because of course everybody wanted to ride the Asian tigers and get promoted on the basis of great work in these burgeoning markets.

But Vienna was an interesting post to me for a couple of reasons. One is that I had studied German in high school and I thought if I could brush up my high school German, I could function in Austria and in the German-speaking communities around there. I knew that with Russian that kind of gave me a smattering of all the other Slavic languages. I could at least speak pidgin Czech and pidgin Serbo-Croatian and whatnot. I

had visited Austria years before, back in my high school years, and really wanted to go back, so I thought this could be an interesting posting.

The second reason was that I figured at some point in the future FAS will send me back to Moscow, which was a large regional post, but one in an environment that is not benign. It is a challenging work environment, so I would really like to go someplace where it is not as challenging, where I can learn the ropes, I can learn to run a regional post without all of the headaches that come with the challenges of a hardship post. I laid all this out in my bid form, said these are the reasons I want to go, this is why I'm qualified, and I was the top pick. Which then again set off a fair amount of jealousy within the organization. I had one person storm up to me in the hallway outside the USDA cafeteria and tell me it was totally unfair of me to have bid on Austria because I was so obviously the best qualified candidate, nobody else had a chance and that made it totally unfair, and how dare I do that, which I thought was a pretty strange thing to say. I mean, if I was obviously the best qualified among the candidates, why wouldn't you want to send me?

So we were posted to Vienna. I did six months of language training at Foreign Service Institute, trying to rehabilitate my long forgotten, very rusty high school German. Ann got some German there. She went of course as well. At the time I arrived Vienna covered six countries: Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and Slovenia, and so I immediately did what I've always done, start traveling to try to see all these places and find out as much as I could about agriculture and the food economy.

Austria had just joined the European Union in 1995 so they were still in the process of dealing with accession and everything that meant. Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Slovenia were getting close, Hungary also, they were getting close, but they weren't in the EU yet, so there were some difficulties there in terms of cross-border trade. We of course were trying to influence them as much as we could so that when they joined the EU we would not be completely aced out of the market and a lot of our analysis at that point revolved around, what will the impact of EU accession of these countries be on U.S. trade with them? So we were trying to analyze that and one of the problems I ran into was that we had no FSNs anywhere in the former Yugoslav states of Croatia and Slovenia. We had one FSN in Prague, one FSN in Hungary, nobody in Slovakia, so we really were having some difficulty trying to put all this together. When I arrived Keith Schneller was my attaché, and he was very good, but again it was just more than all of us could do put together.

One of the first things I did was start talking to Washington about the need to hire some reporting contractors in the other countries, so that we could start to get some market information out of them. This had never been done before, and it was oh, well, now why do you need this, and how important is it, and whatnot. I came up with a budget of nine thousand dollars for a bunch of reports and then in January 1997 FAS decided to hand me Bosnia.

This was kind of a case of a fluke. Bill Huth in Sofia had Bosnia as part of his portfolio, trying to cover it out of Sofia, but he got crosswise with our ambassador in Vienna. Our ambassador in Vienna was Swanee Hunt. She was flying down to Sarajevo, to Bosnia, talking to the ambassador down there, and on one of her trips she got the idea that all of the trees that had been cut down in Sarajevo during the siege, when people were cutting down trees to heat their homes, needed to be replanted. We needed to do a reforestation, so she contacted Bill at my urging, because I said, "I don't cover Bosnia, Bill covers Bosnia," and she began trying to open a dialogue with him about the need to do reforestation of parts of Sarajevo, to try and get the trees to come back. And Bill wrote her a very abrupt letter back, which is never smart to do, to the ambassador telling her that Bosnia really was covered out of Sofia and the embassy in Vienna should stay out of it. So she wrote to him again and explained what it was she was trying to do, and he wrote her a second letter, saying the USDA regulations are very clear on this and Vienna has nothing to do with Bosnia.

I knew nothing about this. I didn't know that she was corresponding with Bill. She had come to me and asked me who covers Bosnia, I told her, gave her the address, said this is who does it, and forgot about it. She flew back to the United States on some kind of a normal consultation in December of '96 and she met with Richard Rominger, I believe, who was deputy secretary of agriculture at the time. And lo and behold, shortly thereafter word came down from the Foreign Agricultural Service informing me that as of January 1997 Bosnia would be added to my portfolio and I would have seven countries now, instead of six.

I of course had to inform the ambassador of this, so I did. I said, "I'm picking up a seventh country, Bosnia." She said, "Oh, good, then it worked," and she then went to the files and pulled out her letters to and from Bill Huth and showed them to me, and said, "This is why this happened." So there was a lesson learned there, too. You should never try to go out of your way to get crosswise with an ambassador, even if the ambassador is not your ambassador. Ambassadors have ways of taking things away from you if they really want to.

So I now had Bosnia and I needed to get down there, so I called Phil Letarte, my area officer, and I said, "Phil, you guys have informed me that I now have the Bosnia portfolio but I haven't seen an NSDD-38 telegram informing any the embassies of this, so I need that before I can travel." And you remember Phil, Phil of course chewed me out for bothering him with this. He said, "No, Allan, that's why you get the big money, is to solve problems like that at post." I said, "Phil, I can't solve a problem like this at post. My management officer will not allow me to spend government money on travel to a country that's not in my official area of responsibility, and Bosnia has not been transferred to my AOR yet, so I need the NSDD-38 to do that. Otherwise, I can't travel." Phil of course admonished me for having wasted his time with that phone call and did nothing about it.

So I picked up the phone and called Ted Horoschak, who was the acting head of the attaché service at the time, raised it with him, said, "Ted, you please do something about this." Ted of course did, and the result was the NSDD-38 cable came out, I think in February, it only took about a month to get it cleared interagency, for State to sign off on it. Phil was very upset that I got him in trouble with Ted Horoschak, but again it was one of these lessons learned that, you know, sometimes people don't know what they need to do, and I think maybe here Phil didn't realize that—I don't think he'd done an NSDD-38 before. He didn't realize that when we transfer responsibility for one country from one post to another that has to be documented, it has to go through the bureaucratic process, otherwise an attaché simply told by FAS, you're responsible for this country, can't even travel.

But it got sorted out by February and I contacted the embassy, got through on the phone, which took several tries. Phone service was horrible. Got through to the head of the political/economic section, told him that it had been handed off to me. They had not noticed the telegram, they completely missed it, and he said, "Yeah, come on down." He arranged for me to come down, "When you get here we will see what we can do for you."

I just got on an airplane and flew down to Sarajevo. I had no program, no plan. Sometimes you just have to go some place and see what you can see. It was like no other posting I'd ever had. I just walked in, with an embassy that was hanging on by its fingernails, just trying to stay open. You arrived in a city that didn't have a single pane of glass in any window. All the windows had been shattered and blown out during the artillery barrages. I still have photographs of the street signs with bullet holes in them. I have photographs I took in the Olympic Village of the absolutely bullet riddled lampposts. Somewhere I have a photograph of the delivery van for bread that was used during the siege. The cab was armored with armor plate, but the actual van was not, and it was riddled with bullet holes where the snipers were trying to stop the truck as it was going around delivering food to people during the siege.

This is what I arrived at and I met with the embassy, and they said, Well, let's set up some meetings with the ministers of agriculture and start with that. So of course Bosnia had two ministers of agriculture because the country was bifurcated between the Muslim-Croat Confederation on one hand and Republika Srpska, the Serbian Republic, on the other. So I met with the minister of the Federation, who was a Muslim, then we drove over to Pale, Pale was a former ski resort that was being turned into the satellite capital of the Serbian Republic just outside Sarajevo, just across the line, and went over there and met with the minister of agriculture of Republika Srpska. That was how I got started, was those two meetings.

And then after that I tried to go out and make other contacts, but still, it was a tough slog because I didn't have any contact information and nobody knew where anybody was, and of course FAS was on me, saying, we're going to do food aid there, we need to have Bellmon determinations. I wasn't allowed to drive outside the city on my own. I could only go in armored convoys and there weren't enough vehicles to service all the officers

at the embassy, let alone a TDYer coming in, wanting to go out and traipse around the countryside, so I was feeling very frustrated. And then the other thing FAS needed was PS&D, production, supply and distribution data, because if you're going to do food aid you need to know how much food aid you can deliver without disrupting either domestic production or commercial trade, and we had no data at all. Prior to the war we had data on Yugoslavia writ large, but we didn't have data for the individual republics of Yugoslavia, and so I was scratching my head, trying to figure out, how am I going to come up with this?

Serendipity saved me. I was walking around downtown Sarajevo one afternoon, wondering how I was going to deal with all of this, and saw a bookstore. Just walked into the bookstore and I knew going into the bookstore there wouldn't be anything there of value for me, simply because all the books were going to be in Serbo-Croatian, which is a language I can't really read very well. I can with a dictionary, I could plow through it, but it wasn't going to be terribly efficient. I walked out with a one-volume English-language encyclopedia of Bosnia-Herzegovina published in 1991, just before the war broke out, that included production data and area planted data for major grain products and some of the other agricultural products in Bosnia-Herzegovina. I paid fifty deutsche marks for it and it was worth every penny, because that was the baseline for my production estimates at that point, and for building PS&D's. So I carried that back from Sarajevo to Vienna.

I should say there were two ways of getting into Sarajevo in those days. One was, if there was good weather, you could fly. Austrian Air flew down there, Swissair flew in there, and probably a couple of other airlines, too, but it was a touchy landing because the airstrip is in a valley with mountains on both sides and a mountain at the end. The valley is L-shaped, so you have to come down into the valley and then you turn left as you approach the mountains and then line up with the airstrip and then land on the airstrip. Two thirds of the airstrip was usable, because the last third of course was the other side of the tunnel that had been dug under the airstrip, the landing strip, during the siege so that people could go in and out of the city. If an airplane were to roll over the top of the tunnel, it would collapse, of course, so the plane had to touch down right at the end of the runway and then dynamite the brakes and stop before running into that tunnel. So it was kind of a hairy landing.

The other way to get in was to drive to Zagreb and go to the Sheraton Hotel in Zagreb, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays there were shuttles that ran back and forth between Zagreb and Sarajevo, two-vehicle armored convoys of armored Toyota Land Cruisers. So I could go there, people were shuttled in and shuttled out. You would call the embassy, tell them you want to be on the shuttle, they would book me on the shuttle, I would drive down to Zagreb, leave my Jeep in the parking garage of the Sheraton, and then catch the shuttle. That went on until 1998. In January 1998 Embassy Sarajevo told me that I could start driving down on my own in my unarmored Jeep Cherokee as long as I drove within the Federation. If I went over to Republika Srpska I had to be in a two-vehicle convoy, which also, that leads to another story I'll tell you later.

But that was the problem. I couldn't get out of the city. I couldn't get out and travel to do the Bellmon determinations, so I went back up to Vienna and, of course, I had the other countries I was dealing with, and trying to get my feet on the ground, get some reporting going. I got a phone call one day from the ambassador's secretary in Sarajevo, saying, "Now, Allan, you know when you were down here, I don't guess that you met with the guys from SFOR, the stabilization force." I said, "No, I didn't meet with them." "Well, they have an agriculture team and there's an army lieutenant colonel named Kirk Skeeles, he's a veterinarian. He would like to talk to you. May I give him your phone number?" I said, "Yes, absolutely."

The next thing I know I got a phone call from Lieutenant Colonel Kirk Skeeles, U.S. Army Reserve, who was part of the civil affairs team, which had an agriculture group, they were all reservists. They said, The next time you come down here, let's get together, put our heads together and see what we can do, and I said, "Well, I can think of one thing you could do for me that would be really helpful, that's figure out some way of letting me travel so that I can go out to do my Bellmon determinations." I explained what that was. They said that was nice to know, that would be wonderful, because right now we don't have a mission for the agriculture team here, the command here doesn't know what to do with us and they can't find things for us to do, so they have us doing renovation of schools and, you know, just general civil affairs work. We'd love to have something that's more agriculturally oriented.

So next time I went down they put together a convoy of two Hummers. I talked to the regional security officer at the embassy and I said, "You know, these Hummers, they're not armored." He said, "I know they're not armored, but if you get killed while you're under the SFOR umbrella, that lets me off the hook. It's not my fault, so go ahead and do it."

So they began hauling me all over Bosnia. We talked to the guy who ran the big flour mill in Sarajevo, and he gave me the locations and the names of other flour mills and grain storage elevators, so we drove all over Bosnia looking at grain storage and looking at flour mills and I was able to do a pretty good report on the state of flour milling as a result. Thanks to these guys from SFOR, that's when we started doing the food aid into Bosnia. We started including vegetable oil and we did wheat. The Miller's National Federation, you know, the wheat millers' cooperator, really wanted to do flour, they didn't want us to ship wheat, and I pushed back against that. I said, "No, the mill is operating and it makes no sense to send in flour and undercut the mill, so we're not going to do that, Senator Bellmon, the ghost of Senator Bellmon, would not be pleased with that."

So we calibrated it, I think the first year we put in about eighty thousand tons of wheat. The following year I think we did a hundred thousand tons of wheat and we really brought some order to the market when they did that, because the market was being dominated by Croatian traders, who were nice enough guys, but they had dollar signs in their eyes and they saw that there were opportunities to do some price gouging. So they

were shipping third class wheat to Bosnia, most of it sourced out of Croatia and Hungary, that was being priced at a first class wheat price. The Bosnians knew that they were being shafted, we knew they were being shafted, everybody knew that, but they had no other sources to go to, nobody else would do business with the Bosnians. So when we started coming in, delivering our relatively modest amount of wheat, like I say, eighty thousand tons one year, a hundred thousand tons the other, it really forced an adjustment in the market.

So the Hungarian wheat started coming in at a price that was much closer to the market as did the Croatian wheat, and the Bosnians were grateful. The Croatian traders, we knew all of them, we used to meet with them all the time in Zagreb, and they would complain about it, but they understood what we were doing and they were still making money. They weren't going hungry by any stretch of the imagination.

Q: Did you still have to work with the bifurcated culture there—Muslim and Christian?

MUSTARD: Yeah, to some degree, you had to deal with that. At one point the minister of agriculture of the Federation decided that we should have to pay import duty on the wheat, which was effectively a donation. We were doing it under Food for Progress as a donation through a bunch of NGOs, and he decided we should have to pay import duty on it, we should also have to pay some exorbitant amount for phytosanitary inspection. It was all really ridiculous. It was corruption. He was going to line his own pockets and you have to remember, there were three U.S. ambassadors involved there. In addition to the bilateral ambassador we also had an ambassador who was attached to what they called OHR, the Office of the High Representative, which was the multinational group overseeing peace in Bosnia under UN auspices, that was Ralph Johnson, and then you also had another ambassador, who was the State Department's ambassador at large for the Balkans, and that was Robert Gelbard, who incidentally was an old college classmate and buddy of Gus Schumacher's. And that's one of the reasons we were doing food aid to Bosnia, is because Bob Gelbard wanted food aid to Bosnia and got Gus Schumacher to push it through.

So it ended up that Bob Gelbard confronted the minister of agriculture of the Muslim-Croat Federation and told him that every dollar that was charged for phytosanitary inspection and for customs duty would be taken out of the overall assistance package for Bosnia-Herzegovina, that we would use those monies to pay for it, and that he would then have to answer to President Izetbegović as to why U.S. assistance to Bosnia-Herzegovina had been reduced. That solved it. Bob Gelbard put a stop to the nonsense.

We did insist because we were doing it through to NGOs, we had tried to negotiate with the Bosnian government and in the Bosnian government my counterpart was the minister of foreign trade, who was a Muslim, and he had two deputy ministers, one each Serb and Croat, but I never met with them. They never showed up.

They came up with this scheme for doing monetization of the wheat that would make Rube Goldberg blush. They came up with this scheme for the money, well, it will come in here, and it will go through there, and then it will come out here, and that's how it goes into our bank account here at the National Bank. Treasury had advisors there. We had a treasury attaché in the embassy, Sonal Shah, and then there was a woman named Laura Trimble, who became a dear friend, who was the treasury advisor to the Bosnian Central Bank. She looked at the diagram, put her finger on it, and said this is where the money disappears. If you agree to this, the money will disappear at this point, it will not be auditable after that point, and I can guarantee you that the money will simply go off into somebody's pocket or be used to fund the militia or buy weapons or something like that. It will not end well.

We put our feet down, said, We will not do this, the monetization scheme has to be more transparent, and at that point the minister of trade looked at me and said, "Mr. Mustard, I happen to know you do not have authority to turn down this agreement, you have to sign, agree to this agreement." Well, actually, he was wrong, because I had already discussed this with Mary Chambliss, and I told Mary, "If there's one thing I've learned in negotiating in this part of the world, it is that you have to be willing to walk away from a bad deal, so please reassure me that if necessary I can walk away from this deal." She said, "Yes, you have that authority if it comes to that, you can walk away from the deal."

So I spent the bulk of 1997 trying to negotiate with the Bosnians. I was down there about once a month through most of 1997 for a week to two weeks, each time doing this, these surveys, getting the Bellmon determination ready, trying to figure out what agricultural production looked like 'cause there were no statistics, using SFOR to drive me out in the boondocks to see if anybody was planting anything, trying to figure out how much area was being planted and then negotiating this food aid agreement. And at the end of it I'm just tearing my hair out because this guy obviously wants to steal the money, doesn't want to sign the agreement unless he can have a construct that allows the monetized proceeds simply to disappear.

At that point I looked him in the eye and I said, "Mr. Minister, with all due respect, you're wrong, I do have that authority. You have until March 1 to sign this agreement and have it ratified by your Parliament, and if you do not, then we will stop working with you." So March 1, I think 1998, we said that's it, and I informed the embassy that, you know, it's over, we were to start working with the NGOs and I didn't know what that was gonna look like. Things were pretty murky and about, I don't know, a month later, the Bosnian government contacted the embassy and said, Please ask Mr. Mustard to fly back down here and resume negotiations, and the embassy said, Mr. Mustard will not fly back down here to resume negotiations. Mr. Mustard told you that you had to March 1, he set the deadline, that deadline has passed, and that's it.

And this sent a shockwave through both the Department of State and the Bosnian government, because it was the first time since the war had ended that the United States government had imposed a deadline and then stuck to it with the Bosnians. Up until then

they had always been able to kick the can down the road and play a waiting game, and try to get the U.S. government to knuckle under to some unreasonable demand, and I was the first government bureaucrat to tell the Bosnians, no, and then make it stick. I didn't realize that at the time but the folks at the embassy told me that was the case, and that they were glad of it, because dealing with these people is so difficult, because they know that if they play the waiting game they can find some soft-hearted person in Washington who will tell us, no, let's cave in on this one and give them what they want.

So that's when we started dealing with the NGOs. Grant Pettrie was the branch chief in charge of the section of Export Credits I was dealing with. Grant and I got on the phone, we started talking, kicking around ideas. He said, "Let's do a Food for Progress donation to some NGOs. Why don't you go talk to the NGO community and see how they would feel about it?" So I convened a meeting of all the NGOs. Catholic Relief Service had a big office and space where all of us could get together and meet. I don't remember all of them, there were at least ten NGOs, nine of them formed a consortium, the one that didn't join the consortium and got an allocation separately was one run by Rod Campbell, I will try to remember the name of it, but they got together and I asked the question, "What would happen if we were to put ten million dollars of monetizable commodity out for you to monetize and use for programs?"

Greg Auberry of Catholic Relief Service said it would be like throwing a bunch of raw meat in front of a pack of starving dogs, we would jump that. Everybody laughed at that. So we went back and we put out the announcement that we would approve two proposals. We were looking for as many proposals as people wanted to send in, but we would approve no more than two for Bosnia-Herzegovina, and then sat back and waited. Well, nine of them formed the consortium that they said would be led by UMCOR [United Methodist Committee on Relief], they asked for ten million dollars worth of monetizable commodity. UMCOR was to get an extra portion to cover the administrative overhead costs in addition to its one million of monetized proceeds, and Rod Campbell's NGO got another allocation, I think they got one million dollars, too, for a total of about eleven million dollars of monetized wheat. They put it all through the flour mill in Sarajevo, and then shipped the flour out and sold it at fifty pfennig, you know, half a deutsche mark, per kilogram, sold the flour and then used the monetized proceeds to fund their projects.

And it was fascinating because when they came together, of course one of the things the NGOs want to do is to make USDA happy, because if you make USDA happy you may be able to come back to the well for another bucket of water. So they wanted to sit down with me and divine from me, What does USDA want from us in the way of programs? All these NGOs have their own pet projects, there are certain things they do, they all have their specialties that they work on, things they wanted to do. So I said, "I'll tell you what, USDA wants you to do, in addition to your pet projects, you can spend half the money that you accrue on your pet projects, but half of it has to be done through coordinated projects that will move the needle in terms of economic resuscitation of Bosnia. So I want you to put your heads together and find a bunch of municipalities where you can inject money in three places. Producers get some money, processors get some money, and

consumers get some money, so that you can get the velocity of money up and get money moving through the economy. Because we're about to inject a bunch of money into the economy, but if there's no velocity, it will sit some place and economy won't get moving. Somebody will sit on the money. So the money needs to move through the economy. You know, this is basic economics."

So they came back with a list of three hundred municipalities that they wanted to work with, and I said, "That's too many, you are spreading yourselves too thin. You won't have an impact if you do that, so cut it back to fifty." And one of them, I forgot which one, the head got a little bit snarky with me, said, "Why don't you tell us which fifty to do?" And I said, "I'm not going to micromanage you guys. Decide which fifty municipalities you want to work in and you come to me and tell me, these are the fifty we're going to work in, and I'll bless your plan."

In the meantime I was talking to Ron Croushorn. Ron was the technician in Export Credits who was working on this program and Ron said, "Well, you know, Allan, the fact of the matter is we really don't care what they do as long as the money is spent wisely, so give them your best advice, and do whatever you think is best in order to make sure that the monies are used wisely." So I had a pretty free hand. They came to me with a bunch of proposals that all looked pretty good. There were a couple that I offered some suggestions on, because at that point, by 1998, I had been traveling around the country enough that I had my own sense of what would work and what wouldn't work. Again, it came down to travel. If I had not been able to travel widely, if SFOR had not been providing me with the wheels, I would've really been flying blind, and I'm eternally grateful to the United States Army for having given me the mobility to get around and do my job.

And they did! A year later we went back and some of the NGOs took me to some of the places, the municipalities, that they had revived, and they were vibrant. People had jobs, people were working, a lot of the people were war widows whose husbands had been murdered during the ethnic cleansing, so they had been on the dole, literally on the dole, living off of relief shipments from us, from the Europeans, from others, and now they were working, they had jobs, there were credit programs. They could borrow money to start their own businesses and the economy was coming back and it was very heartwarming.

Catholic Relief Service set up a meeting with a bunch of the war widows that they had been both loaning money to and giving business training to, so that not only could they start a business but that the business would succeed. They would have the technical skills they needed to make the business profitable. The women had gotten together in a school gymnasium, had some tables set up, and they were showing me what they produced or what they sold and what they did, examples of how they were supporting their families now with their businesses.

There was one woman who had bought a programmable sewing machine and she was sewing things and embroidering them, and selling the embroidered things and one of the things that she had was tea napkins, embroidered tea napkins, and then a sort of a tablecloth, small tablecloth, maybe a foot by a foot on each side that you would put on the coffee table. And you had your tea napkins to go with it. It was very pretty and she wanted twenty deutsche marks for the set, so I looked at her and I said, "So you mean, I can buy this for twenty deutsche marks?" She said, "Yes, that's what I sell them for." So I reached in my wallet and gave her twenty deutsche marks and said, "I would like to have this one right here, take this, and give this to my wife." She said, "No, no, I can't take your money. I'm only able to do this and support my family because of you and USDA. I want you to have it for free." And I said, "Well, ma'am, but I can't take it for free because that's a violation of U.S. ethics laws, and you're a beneficiary of a USDA program. If I accept a gift from you I can get ten years in prison and a ten thousand dollar fine, so it's much better for me if you accept the twenty deutsche marks. That way I don't have to worry about going to jail."

So she accepted the twenty deutsche marks. She looked at it, and she started to cry, and we all cried. They'd all lost their husbands and they all had lost their sons older than age sixteen. All males over the age of sixteen had been murdered if the Serbs could get their hands on them. And we in USDA gave these women back some hope and some ability to support their families.

That was Bosnia. By the time I was wrapped up in Bosnia we had a pretty good handle on the analysis that we were trying to do. I had hired, there was a Croatian fellow I met who had studied at Iowa State University before the war, and I put him to work with a Slovene, because of course as an ethnic Croat he couldn't go down to Serbia and he couldn't go into the Serbian part of Bosnia, so he hired an ethnic Slovene to work with him. Under contract he started collecting production, supply, and distribution data of all of the former Yugoslav republics. At that point Holly Higgins was in Sofia, Bulgaria. She was covering the other parts of Yugoslavia that I was not, and so we collaborated on this. The project wasn't completed while I was there, was still underway when I left, when I handed off Vienna to Robert Curtis. But we laid the foundations for the production, supply and distribution databases for the Yugoslav republics with the help of this contractor, 'cause he was able to travel to these places, or the Slovene could travel to places he couldn't travel to, and collect data, go to the ministries of agriculture, go to the libraries, find all the information, collate it, send it back to us, and eventually we got the rudimentary PS&D database, so that in the future we wouldn't be starting from scratch. That was one of my preoccupations the whole time I was in Vienna, was getting the food aid program going in Bosnia. We did some technical assistance as well, did the Cochran program there, things like that.

One other thing I did was I got the veterinary officers to talk to each other, because of course after the collapse of Yugoslavia the chief veterinary officer in Republika Srpska and the chief veterinary officer in Sarajevo would not talk to each other even though they knew each other. The chief veterinary officer in Republika Srpska had been a student at

the Agricultural University's Veterinary College under the chief veterinary officer in Sarajevo, so they knew each other. They wouldn't talk to each other, and one of the things you know as well as I do is that diseases do not carry passports. Viruses and bacteria do not respect international borders. So they really needed to be talking to each other.

One day in Sarajevo I was talking to the chief veterinary officer there and said, "How often do you talk to your counterpart up in Bijeljina?" And he said, "Oh, I never talk to him. I know if I ever were to call him he wouldn't take my call." I said, "Have you ever tried?" He said, "No, because I know what the result would be, I'm not going to waste my time." "Well, if he called you, would you take the call?" "Of course, I would take the call, he's my former student, of course I would take the call from him."

So I went up to Bijeljina and met with the chief veterinary officer up there and asked him the same questions, and he said, "No, of course I would talk to him if he called, but no, I know he won't call and I don't dare call him because if I were to call him he wouldn't take my call."

So the same answer on both sides, and so I said, "Well, actually, here's his phone number. He said if I see you, to please ask you to call him." He stared at me. "Seriously?" "Yes, seriously," I said. So he said, "All right," and he picked up the phone and he called, and I got the two chief veterinary officers to start talking to each other about disease issues, cross-border diseases.

Now these are the sorts of things, this is another lesson. Sometimes we in the U.S. government have a convening authority that is completely soft power. There, you know, I had nothing on these guys, I couldn't force them to do anything, but I could carry messages back and forth, and then I could coax them into resuming a dialogue that they needed to be having, because livestock diseases, plant pathogens, don't respect borders, and these people needed to be talking to each other. So again, that was just one of the things that you do when you're an agricultural officer, that you can do and you should do, even though it isn't something that FAS really necessarily encourages you to do.

I don't think I told you about starting up the food aid programs in Bosnia. I didn't finish that story. I talked about how we went to the NGOs and whatnot, but there was another aspect of the story, and that was when I went down there the ambassador who took over. When I arrived, there was a chargé d'affaires by the name of Bob Beecroft. He was chargé d'affaires and then he was succeeded by a full-fledged confirmed ambassador by the name of Rich Kauzlarich. Rich Kauzlarich was a good guy, very knowledgeable of the territory, but he had kind of fallen in with the AID mission director and the AID mission director had told him that all assistance programs should be under him and under the AID mission. Nobody else doing any sort of assistance should have any sort of independence, and of course that's one of the aspects of USDA food assistance, at least there used to be, I don't know if it still is, there used to be a statutory prohibition on USAID operating USDA food aid programs.

So when this AID mission director, Craig Buck, called me in at one point, and he went out of his way to make it clear that he was in charge, the USAID mission was in a separate building and when I went over and showed my embassy badge, I had an embassy badge, he had instructed the local guards to still put me through the metal detector, check my bag, and frisk me and everything, make sure I wasn't carrying any weapons or anything, which I thought was a little over the top. I was an embassy officer, had a top secret security clearance, I had an ID badge for the embassy, but the guards said, No, if you're not with the AID mission you have to be searched when you come in. And after that experience I refused ever to meet him again at the AID office. I said we would meet in the DCM's office over at the embassy chancery after that.

But he had me come into his office and said, "When you're in Bosnia you work for me, you report to me, because you're running this food aid program and you're running technical assistance here, so you report to me." I said, "No, with all due respect, by law I report to the ambassador since I'm the head of another foreign affairs agency. I do not report to you. USDA does not report to USAID. It's a Cabinet department with its own Cabinet secretary. USAID is not even a Cabinet department, so, no, I will not report to you. I will report to the ambassador." He got very annoyed with that, with my attitude, and the next thing I know, I went back up to Vienna and I would try to get this food aid program going and I would get a message from the econ officer at the embassy informing me that the ambassador and the AID mission director had come up with a set of questions that they needed answers to before they could agree to let the food aid program go forward.

It was always something bogus. I mean, one of them, they were afraid that a ship would come into the port of Ploce, discharge the wheat, and the Croatians would come in and would confiscate the wheat and would distribute the wheat in Croatia rather than let it go on by rail into Bosnia. Bosnia has no seaports. Ploce is the seaport for Bosnia, and that was ridiculous because the coastal road up to the rest of Croatia is a winding, twisting two-lane road that trucks loaded with thousands of tons of wheat were not going to negotiate. You know, if the Croatians wanted wheat, Croatia was exporting wheat, first of all, they weren't importing it. But I had to run that down. I had to talk to the folks in the World Food Programme and FAO, you know, everybody else down there, and build up a case and then go back to say, you know, the odds of this happening are slim to none. And so the next month I got another question posed to me, again bogus, putting sticks in the bicycle spokes to keep the food aid program from going.

On one of my trips down to Bosnia the ambassador asked me to come see him. I was in the econ office and he decided to come over to the econ office. He and the DCM came in and he started asking me a bunch of questions about the program. His last question was, do I have the ability as ambassador to stop this program if I want to? And I said, "Yes, sir, you are the ambassador to this country, are the chief of mission, you have chief of mission authority, and if you don't want this program to go forward, you can stop it." And he smiled and said, "Okay, that's all the questions I have."

I said, “Well, sir, I have a question, if I may.” He said, “Oh, what’s your question?” I said, “Well, I seem to be caught in the middle of a proxy battle between you and Ambassador Bob Gelbard. Ambassador Gelbard is the ambassador at large, is demanding that this program go forward and is putting pressure on USDA to make it happen, and every time I try to make it happen, I find that you are obstructing the program.” I said, “Furthermore, I have learned that you and the AID mission director and perhaps one or two other embassy officers are meeting privately down here to discuss my program. You’re not including me in those conversations, you are making decisions on my programs without my participation, and then informing me of the results.” I said, “In the best of circumstances this would be considered unprofessional and in the worst of circumstances it could be considered backstabbing. And, sir, with all due respect, I will not be a pawn in a proxy battle between you and Ambassador Gelbard, so if you and Ambassador Gelbard cannot come to a meeting of the minds, I will retreat to Vienna and wait for instructions from Washington to move forward with the program as soon as you and he have had a meeting of the minds, sir.”

He looked at me and said, “You have anything else to say?” Or words to that effect, and I said, “No.” He said, “Okay,” got up, and stormed out, and the DCM gave me, you know, the hairy eyeball on the way out, couldn’t believe that I’d said that. So anyway I was staying in a hotel called the Grand Hotel in those days, and after my other meetings that day I was back in the Hotel Grand, the phone rang, and it was a friend of mine, whom I’ve known for many years, who was on the staff of Ambassador Bob Gelbard back in Washington. He said, “Well, you certainly upset the apple cart,” and I said, “Really, what happened?” And he said, “Well, Ambassador Kauzlarich just got off the phone with folks back here, and they’ve had the meeting of the minds and the result is that you are shortly going to receive instructions to go forward with the food aid program and they will stop obstructing it. Clear instructions have been issued. However, you should also be aware that AID has put out the word that if there are any screw ups, they will hang you. They’re waiting for USDA to mess up this program so they can point at it and say, see, USAID should have run this program instead of USDA, so make sure it works right. Be prepared that there will be knives out for you if anything goes wrong.”

Which of course I had already pretty much figured out, and that was one of the reasons that we ended up not doing it with the Bosnian government, because after it was clear that the Bosnian government planned to abscond with the proceeds of a monetization program, that’s when we decided to do it through the NGOs. We knew we could trust the NGOs, and that’s the other side of that story.

Q: That’s an interesting anecdote about bureaucracies. In order to get anything accomplished, you have to work through the bureaucracies. And it’s amazing sometimes how, maybe it looks transparent now that you look back on it, my crew, sometimes I would sense something going on, but I didn’t know exactly what. Something was wrong. Something was happening, obstructing me. But I didn’t know exactly what it was. But it seems you had insight into what it was, and frequently, those enemies don’t tell you, Okay,

we're going to hang you if you do it, they just wait and then when you do something, then they hang you.

MUSTARD: Well, one of the keys to all of this was that throughout my career I've tried to be helpful to other people, and I've tried to, you know, if somebody had an issue, they had a problem, and I was in a position to help them with that, I tried to help them. And what you do, if you do that, if you have that philosophy, that you're going to help other people including your colleagues and your peers as well as the people up the food chain, and particularly helping people who are coming up the ladder behind you, you help them, too, as you want the good people to thrive. What I discovered over my career was that these people will reciprocate, most of them will, and what happened in this case, I knew what was going on because there were people in the embassy who were observing it. I mean, I was up in Vienna half the time, more than half the time, I couldn't see what was going on in Sarajevo, so the people who were on the inside were feeding this to me, saying you need to watch out, to be careful, here's what's going on, here's why your program isn't moving forward. They wanted it to go forward, they thought it was a good thing, and they could see that there was this cabal in the embassy, that was under the influence of the AID mission director who didn't want it to go forward. He thought it should all be under him.

It was a very tense time until that ambassador left. He was replaced by Tom Miller. Tom Miller came in as ambassador and I got along with him just fine, and Craig Buck left and was replaced by Ed Kadunc, and Ed and I got along just fine. It was a completely different atmosphere my last year or so at post, when it came to Bosnia.

Q: Sometimes perseverance, just outlasting the enemy is—

MUSTARD: Well, I think there is something to be said for that. The fact that FAS tended to go for three- and four-year tours rather than two- and three-year tours had something to do with that. It's hard to know anything about a country in the first couple of years, you spend the first two years just learning about the country and your typical State Department officer does two-year tours, just as they finally get their feet on the ground they rotate to another country, and we tend to keep people in our posts a little bit longer.

But yeah, and you try to help people. We had a case of one of the NGOs down there, one of the NGOs that we were dealing with, had some people who had run over a landmine, and they needed emergency surgery that they couldn't get in Bosnia, and of course the Austrians are warm-hearted people and good people but they have their bureaucratic requirements, too, and of course they had their own problem with illegal immigration. So they were very cautious about letting random Bosnians come into the country. This NGO called up and said, We as an NGO have no presence in Austria so we cannot sponsor these people to come up and get the medical treatment. If we promise you that we will pay for their medical treatment, that they will not be indigent, as soon as they get the medical treatment, we will bring them back to Bosnia, could you please sponsor them? And I said, "Sure, we'll do that." So for a humanitarian thing, you know, we had these

Bosnians come up, get their medical treatment in Austria, and of course as soon as they were taken care of they went back down, went back to work for the NGO.

But you know, you try to be helpful to people. It wasn't strictly speaking something that FAS would necessarily have condoned if FAS found out about it, because I'm sure the lawyers would've jumped up and down about the legal liability and this and that and the other thing, but you know, when a guy's run over a landmine and he's injured and he needs medical attention, you do the right thing or at least you try.

I want to talk a little bit about some things in Austria that occurred to me. We were talking about Austria in the last session. One was, the big trade policy issue that blew up while I was in Austria was biotechnology, and we had a disagreement with the U.S. Mission to the European Union, USEU, on the one hand, George Pope was there with Bobby Richey, and the two of them maintained that the EU Parliament was a toothless tiger and that the EU Parliament's objections to biotechnology would have no impact on the EU Commission because the EU Commission was controlling trade policy and was not going to take any adverse actions against biotechnology. We out in the member states could see that there was a storm brewing. Bob Tetro was up in Sweden, I think, or maybe Denmark, I don't member, he was somewhere up there, and Frank Lee was in Madrid, Tom Hamby was in London, and we were communicating among ourselves, and we could all see the same thing happening in all of the EU member states. The member states were spoiling for a fight. They were tired of taking orders from the commission and they wanted to pick a fight with the commission and lay down a marker as to just how far the commission could go before it would force a vote of no-confidence in the EU Parliament.

The issue they chose was biotechnology, unfortunately for us, so things came to a head in Spring 1997. Gus Schumacher was already administrator at that point so spring of '97 the EU Parliament held a vote of no confidence of the European Commission over the question of biotechnology, and almost voted no-confidence. The commission almost got thrown out en masse over biotechnology, and that scared them, so all of a sudden we saw this ban go in on one of the Monsanto biotechnology events. They said any corn containing this Monsanto event can no longer come into the European Union, which meant all U.S. corn was banned because it was all commingled, you couldn't separate the biotech corn, we didn't do identity preservation at that point.

So overnight we lost a three hundred million dollar corn market in the EU and Washington was completely taken by surprise, even though those of us in the member states had been reporting on this, I'd been sending in monthly reports, sometimes weekly reports, on what was happening on biotechnology, both telegrams and GAIN reports. At one point I got a phone call from someone in trade policy saying, "Allan, you've completely shredded your credibility back here in Washington, nobody is paying attention to all these reports you're sending in, because it's a done deal, the European Commission is gonna take care of it. Quit sending in these reports because all you're doing is damaging your own credibility, which is pretty close to zero at this point anyway."

I remember I went home after I got this phone call, I went home and told my wife about it. She pulled out a bottle of red wine and fixed a really nice dinner and we sat there and we drank red wine and ate dinner. I said, "What do I do?" And she says, "You have to follow your conscience. You have to do what you think is the right thing to do. If the right thing to do is to continue to report on biotechnology, then you do that." So I did, and again this deafening silence from Washington until the corn market got shut down.

And I don't know if you remember, but Gus Schumacher went up and testified before the House Agriculture Committee that week and he came back from his testimony absolutely hot under the collar because in all of his briefing books, and as I recall he had something like three of those three-inch binders, his briefing books, all this material on things that he needed to know about, have at his fingertips in case the House Agriculture Committee asked about it in this hearing. And in all those briefing materials there wasn't a single page about biotechnology, not one. He came back and raged and stormed and gave some dressings down to various people.

All of a sudden this telegram came out from the Oilseeds and Products Division, Finn Rudd was acting director of Oilseeds and Products, and he sent out this cable saying he needed a full report from all countries on the status of biotechnology approval in their countries and it was not to consist of regurgitation of previous reports, he wanted all fresh material. That made me mad, because I had been doing what I thought was a pretty conscientious job of sending in these reports. So I sent back a telegram that had, I think, three sentences in it, saying in effect, I don't remember the exact words, but post has reported quite conscientiously or something like that on this matter, post recommends reading reftels, and I had put up the references to the telegrams that I had been sending back and I ran out of letters of the alphabet, I remember that. I had to go to double letters at the end, so I had refs A through Z and then ref AA, AB, AC and so on, like that. So something well in excess of thirty reports that I sent in previous weeks, and then my third sentence was to the effect that if you have any specific questions, please advise. I sent that back and I never heard another word from anybody about how I should stop reporting on biotechnology.

Again, the lesson learned here was that Washington was not listening to the field offices that were closest to the action, and even Brussels, USEU Brussels, was not listening to those of us who were hearing directly from the people on the ground, who were telling us, there's a political storm brewing, the commission is about to get its comeuppance. We in the member states are tired of this nonsense, we're about to jerk their chain, and we could see it in the member states, but you could not see it in Brussels and of course Washington was across the Atlantic and could see absolutely nothing unless we told them about it, and they weren't paying attention, which is I think a sad mistake. And we're still paying for it all these years later. Here it is 2021 and biotechnology remains an issue with the European Union.

Q: It was more than just the member states trying to stick it to the commission. It was also a fundamental issue for the member states.

MUSTARD: It was pure protectionism. The European Union understood the technology. Gregor Mendel was an Austrian monk and Gregor Mendel was the guy who invented modern genetics, so you know, there were scientists there who understood this, but the scientists were shouted down by the activists from Greenpeace and a European NGO called Global 2000. So between Greenpeace and Global 2000 it became a political issue, not based on sound science, not based on science at all.

We had protests that came to the embassy. The protesters came from Greenpeace at one point and put on a demonstration in front of the embassy. They dumped a ton of soybean meal on the front steps of the embassy. A beer truck pulled up in front, they opened up the sides of the beer truck, started taking out these bags of soybean meal, dumping them on the front steps of the embassy, and then held their demonstration. They demanded a meeting with the ambassador. Ambassador Swanee Hunt was there at the time. The security officer advised against it, her public affairs staff advised against it, the political section advised against it. I was the lone voice who said, "You should meet with them," and she asked me, "Why should I meet with them?" I said, "To hear what they have to say, because you're ambassador to all Austrians, not only to the Austrians who agree with us, so you should meet with all of the Austrians, including them. So go ahead and meet with them and I'll be there as your notetaker."

She decided to go ahead and meet with them. They came in and met in the ambassador's office. She had some chocolate chip cookies baked for the occasion, her chef had prepared chocolate chip cookies, and we sat there eating chocolate chip cookies and drinking water, and they got about a half hour audience with the ambassador and stated their objections to biotechnology. Then she stood up and said, "I'm very sorry, I have another appointment I have to go to, so I have to leave now, but I would like you to stay here and talk to Mr. Mustard and continue to talk to him." So I got another hour with these folks from Greenpeace and they laid out their battle plan for how they were going to make biotechnology a global issue, they were going to have a groundswell globally and across the third world as well. They said, We're going to stop this technology. They wouldn't say why, but simply we're going to stop this technology.

I took copious notes, of course, and I wrote all of this up and sent it back to Washington. I said, "This is the battle plan that Greenpeace has just given us. This is their plan of action. What are we prepared to do about it?" The answer was, We're not going to do anything about it because the European Commission has everything in hand. And of course we have seen since then, in the years since, it's been a quarter of a century and Greenpeace carried out its action plan and did exactly what it planned to do and has been reasonably successful in stopping biotechnology in a lot of countries.

I want to talk a little bit about delivering demarches in Austria, because there were some funny things there. There was a while that the Western European Division of

International Trade Policy was sending out a demarche every week. The demarche would get started on a Monday and it would go through clearance and by the time it got transmitted, it was transmitted typically Wednesday night, close of business Wednesday night, which meant that we received it in European Union member states Thursday morning. Well, by Thursday morning everybody was already in Brussels, all the government officials they wanted us to demarche were in Brussels for the weekly EU meeting of various ministers.

They had an EU member state ministerial every week in Brussels. Everybody flew to Brussels Wednesday night, they would meet on Thursday, and then they would fly back Thursday night, back to their home countries, and so there's nobody we could deliver the demarche to. Second of all, you can't just deliver a demarche every week in person. The member state governments just wouldn't put up with that, so we would end up just faxing it over to an appropriate office in the Ministry of Agriculture and say, please pass this on to the minister, or, you know, the section chief who was in charge of this thing. And we tried to explain this to folks in Washington, if you want us to demarche them, you have to time it so that we can actually deliver the mail while people are there to receive it, and that message never quite got through. Washington could never figure out that it does no good to close the door to the barn after the horse has left, and that was a little bit frustrating.

Some of the demarches were fairly trivial. We had a demarche once that came in on canned peaches from Greece. The Greeks were subsidizing export of canned peaches, we objected to that, they wanted this one done in person, we had to deliver it in person, so when I called over to the Ministry of Agriculture, one of my counterparts was a fellow named Andrä Rupprechter, who later became minister of agriculture years later, but Andrä said, "Oh, Allan, this sounds like a very important demarche, why don't you come see me Friday afternoon at 4:30." So 4:30 Friday afternoon I went over, I delivered the canned peach demarche, and he listened very soberly, and he had a couple of his assistants in the office with him, we all sat there, and they sat there listening to me, and I delivered the canned peach demarche and handed over the non-paper, of course. They thanked me for that and then Andrä looked at his watch and says, "Oh, my goodness, it's five pm, it's quitting time on a Friday night. Let's all go out to a Heuriger and have dinner together." And so this became sort of a routine after that. If I had a demarche to deliver in person, it would be scheduled for 4:30 in the afternoon on a Friday so that afterwards we could all go out and have dinner together and talk, and that was how seriously the Austrians took our canned peach demarche. One of their parting gifts to me when I left post in 2000 was a can of canned peaches from Greece. They never forgot that one.

The dinners on Friday nights with the folks in the Ministry of Agriculture were quite interesting, a lot of fun, learned a far amount about Austrian culture and Austrian politics and at one of them, one of the people mentioned to me, said, "You know, the next time we have an election, the grand coalition will fall." Austria had been ruled since World War II by a grand coalition of two parties. The two parties in question were the so-called red party and the so-called black party, the red party being the Social Democrats and the

black party being the Austrian People's Party, which was the conservative party, kind of the Christian Democrats, if you will, equivalent to the Christian Democrats in Germany. The other three parties were the Freedom Party, known as the blue party, which was headed by the notorious Jörg Haider, a rather notorious populist, and was really the ultraconservative right wing of the political spectrum in Austria, then you had two very minor parties, one of them the Greens, of course, which were probably bigger in Austria than most other European countries but not really a political force at that point, and the Liberal Forum, which would periodically get a seat or two in Parliament but was not taken terribly seriously as a left-wing liberal party somewhere to the left of the Greens.

And anyway one of the folks at one of these dinners said, "Yeah, the next time we have an election, the Austrian People's Party (which dominated the Ministry of Agriculture, being the conservative party) will probably coalesce with the blue party, with the Freedom Party, and we will leave the Social Democrats out in the cold. They will have a plurality most likely but if we coalesce with the blues we can form a majority coalition and we can do things our way."

I of course reported this in the next country team meeting, told the ambassador and everybody else that I'd been told this, and the political officer of the embassy snorted at that, said, "Well, none of our contacts sees that as a real possibility, it is just not going to happen." So then six months later when it did happen, the ambassador pulled me aside and said, "How is it that you knew what was going to happen as the agricultural officer, and the political officer, whose job it is to know this, didn't know?" And I said, "Well your political officer is a yellow dog Democrat who only really talks to people of her political persuasion. She's not talking to the conservatives, and neither are her FSNs." The political FSNs were all Social Democrats, and they were well plugged into the Social Democrats, the red party, but they were not plugged into the other parties very well. I was hanging out with the conservatives, the people who are the base, essentially, of the black party, and I said, "That's how I knew it and they did not and they chose not to heed what I told them."

And again, I mean, there was a lesson in here, that you should talk to everybody and it goes back to, not just this episode, but the episode with Greenpeace, for example. If you only talk to people who agree with you, you're going to get a very biased view of what the world looks like, and you're going to get a very biased view of events, and so you're going to miss opportunities to be able to predict possible outcomes, and you're going to miss the ability to know where certain threats lie. So I carried that throughout my career. I'll talk to pretty much anybody and when I was a diplomat, I was willing to talk to just about anybody who was willing to talk to me. Because you're always learning something from these people.

Q: When you were in Vienna, '96 to 2000, could you repeat, what countries did you cover?

MUSTARD: Seven countries, Austria, Bosnia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Bosnia was bifurcated. It was split into the Republika Srpska, which was the Serbian Orthodox side, and the Federation, the Muslim-Croat Federation, which was a combination of Catholic and Muslim, so you had three religions to contend with, which were all pretty much at loggerheads with each other.

Q: You thought it might be interesting to talk about travel in the Republika Srpska.

MUSTARD: Republika Srpska was interesting because under embassy security policy I had to move in two-vehicle convoys, so if you had a breakdown you would have somebody who could rescue you before you were caught by Republika Srpska troops who might do something bad to you, was the idea. But they relaxed it a bit so it didn't have to be an embassy vehicle. It could be any vehicle, and so I would contact the minister of agriculture of Republika Srpska when I needed to go over there and he would provide the other vehicle and give a driver and someone from his staff to accompany me and we could move in two-vehicle convoys.

The first time it happened I had to drive up to Bijelina, which is where he had his office, it's where the agricultural institute was located. When I met with him he said, "I don't understand why you have to move in two-vehicle convoys," and so I told him it's for this reason, for security reasons. He said, "Well, nothing's going to happen to you. You're perfectly safe in Republika Srpska." I said, "Well, the embassy is very deeply concerned that there will be people who will take advantage of an opportunity to kill me or to hold me hostage, at least." He said, "That will not happen to you. You have gone out of your way to make sure that Republika Srpska is included in all of the food aid programs and all the technical assistance programs. You've been very evenhanded in all of this." He said, "We know that, we recognize that, and so we have let everybody know that if anything should happen to you, we will avenge your death, and so everybody knows to leave you alone and not to touch you." Which I thought was an interesting approach to security, that the Republika Srpska government had informed everybody that if anything happened to Allan Mustard the government would avenge his death, that I was perfectly safe.

Q: That's an interesting comment. You took it as safety. Your wife could have said, "Well, that's going to do me a heck of a lot of good."

MUSTARD: That's one of the reasons I carried one million dollars of life insurance.

Q: Talk about the hazardous driving in BiH, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

MUSTARD: Well, we would go out into the boondocks and of course I was allowed to spend the night wherever I needed to but if I was traveling with someone from SFOR they had to be back in a barracks, one of the barracks, before dark, and they could not spend the night out in civilian country. They had to be in a military compound, that was their security rule. I was out traveling once with Paul Converse, who was working at the

time for OHR, the Office of the High Representative, and with Colonel Earl Morgan of SFOR, who is a veterinarian and was on his second tour in Bosnia-Herzegovina with the civil affairs team. The three of us were out in the boondocks, way down in the south, and we needed to get back to Sarajevo before dark and we had to get back before bedtime so that Earl would not be in violation of the security policies.

We got behind schedule and we had a choice. We could either drive back to Sarajevo on paved roads only, which was the embassy policy, that you only went on paved roads, which we were reasonably assured had not been landmined. You can see if there was a hole in the pavement and if a mine had been planted, in most cases, not always, but most of the time, whereas on gravel roads or dirt roads you couldn't tell. They could be landmined and there was no way of telling. So the problem was that the paved road was a circuitous route that went around some mountains, and if we went out on the paved roads we would get back way, way after dark, and driving after dark in Bosnia was just not something you wanted to do. It is dangerous, hazardous. Or we could take a dirt road, which was a much shorter road, and be back before nightfall. And so I put it to these two guys. I said I'm just the driver, you guys actually live here, you know the hazards better than I do. Do we take the paved road or do we take the dirt road? And they said, We take the dirt road.

So we took the dirt road and what we did was we went up to where the dirt road started, we sat there, we waited until a truck came by. The truck went ahead of us and we followed in the track of that truck so if there was a landmine he would hit it first, okay? And so we followed this roughly five-ton truck across this dirt road and he was moving probably about thirty miles an hour on this dirt road. At one point, I remember, we crossed a small river. There was no bridge but people had thrown logs down, and so Paul got out and walked across, and marshaled me across showing me which way to turn the wheels to remain on the log so I wouldn't slide off the logs into the river. We got across the little river and got to the other side, continued to follow this truck, eventually came out on a paved road, and made it back to Sarajevo.

But those are the sorts of things you had to make decisions on, which was the worse hazard when you were out driving in Bosnia. Twenty percent of the farmland was landmined. That was a statistic that was given to me by SFOR, they estimated that 20 percent of the arable land had been landmined at some point, so there were landmines all over the place. I carried a case of MREs and a case of water, plus a sleeping bag, so that if I ever ran off the road, had an accident, I could hole up in the Jeep until I was rescued, since so many fields were mined, you couldn't walk in them. I also carried a thousand dollars in cash, half in dollars, half in deutsche marks, in case I got in a jam while out in the boondocks and had to bribe my way out of the country, or pay someone to drive me out to Croatia.

Q: For some reason I remember that Princess Diana was there when she was fighting against landmines. Well, also talk about the trip to Knin.

MUSTARD: Knin is an area in Croatia. It borders the northwest corner of Bosnia-Herzegovina, kind of wraps around that corner of Bosnia. The ambassador to Croatia was Bill Montgomery, and he had been told by somebody that the Bosnians were smuggling live cattle into Croatia through Knin. He wanted me to go down there and check it out.

Q: What was the problem with importing live cattle?

MUSTARD: It was smuggling. He'd heard there were smugglers, so you know smuggling is against the law, so go check this out, see if there's any evidence of cattle smuggling going on. That area is not heavily populated. There was only one road going back in there, so it was very easy to find. You drove down to this bombed out church, and then turned and went down a country road past this bombed out church and that was the road that went back into the mountain pass that these cattle were supposedly being herded across. Well, I got down this road and it kept getting narrower and narrower and narrower, farmsteads on each side but most of them were abandoned. I only saw smoke coming out of two chimneys on this road, it went on for several miles, then the road ended because there were trees growing out of the road. You could see how that road had not been used for some years because it had trees growing out of it.

I got to looking at the fields around me and I hadn't really been paying attention to the fields very much, and I realized that these fields hadn't had anybody in them for a long time, either, that they were all overgrown. They had saplings starting to grow out of them. I got the sinking feeling in my stomach, oh my goodness, all these fields have been landmined. So I climbed out of the Jeep through the window, got up on the hood and I looked around, and I couldn't see any cow pies, I couldn't see any hoofprints, no evidence at all that any cattle had been there in the last several years.

You know, if cows had been coming through there in any numbers you would have seen cow pies, you would have seen hoofprints. I got back in the Jeep, started backing up, had to back up about two miles in reverse until I got to a place where the road was wide enough I could start a multi point turn around and get back out the way I came. I got out, I got back to the embassy, and I said, "That whole area down there is landmined, isn't it?" They said, Yes, it is. And I said, "You didn't bother to tell me before I went down there, thank you. Tell the ambassador there's no sign of any cows being smuggled down there, that I didn't see cow pies or hoofprints or anything like that. Next time you guys want an answer to that question you can drive down there yourselves."

Q: I can imagine. You were by yourself on that trip?

MUSTARD: I was by myself. I was in Croatia and you were allowed to drive by yourself in Croatia.

Q: So now it is probably beautiful, like a part of Italy. Croatia is very peaceful.

MUSTARD: Yeah, I'd love to go back there and explore that area and see how it's changed.

I took Ann and Fiona to Eastern Slavonia in 1999. Things had calmed down enough that I felt okay about taking my wife and daughter to Vukovar, which had been the site of a horrendous siege during the war. Fiona was nine years old and was very quiet as we drove around the city, most of which was rubble about shoulder high. I asked her what she was doing, and she said she was counting destroyed buildings, and was up to four hundred so far. She then asked if any children had been in Vukovar during the siege. It left a real impression on her.

Q: Then talk about the first overseas website.

MUSTARD: Well, when Gus took over as administrator in '95 he started pushing for us to get on the web, and you remember John Winski was hired and he kind of spearheaded getting FAS on the web, getting our first website up as an agency. When I went out to Vienna in '96 we had a CompuServe account that Frank Tarrant had set up. One of the things you got with a CompuServe account was web space, you could put up your own website. So I sat down with some sort of a primitive web design program, some of it I wrote using Notepad. I taught myself HTML and had to do some of that but I stood up what turned out—I didn't realize it at the time—it was the first field office to put up its own website. I did that in Vienna with our CompuServe account and, you know, it was one of these things, it was very primitive, this was a very basic website. I don't think we had any graphics at all. Everything was dial-up and you couldn't put graphics on a website because there just wasn't enough bandwidth. So I was told it was FAS's first field office to put up a website.

Originally one of the attractions of going to Austria was that if I did a four-year tour of duty in Vienna, at the end of that four-year tour, Moscow was due to open up, so I was just going to go transfer from Vienna to Moscow.

Originally that was the plan and the EAG was pretty copacetic with this, because of my Russian background and Russian language expertise, that I would just go from Vienna to Moscow. About halfway through my tour of duty in Vienna, Rich McDonnell had gone to Moscow, and he had never served in a hardship post and it apparently was quite a shock to him when he arrived in Moscow, because he had served in only either western European or North American posts. So when he got to Moscow and discovered what a hardship post was like, it wasn't what he wanted to do, so as soon as he turned fifty he retired and he left post after six months.

That left the post vacant. Tim Galvin was acting administrator at the time. Tim called me. Gus Schumacher had become under secretary at that point and Tim called me and asked me, would I go to Moscow, leave Vienna, and I said no. I said I'm only a class one, haven't been promoted to Senior Foreign Service yet, you have Senior Foreign Service officers who are available and can go, and to be perfectly honest, I'm not ready for

Moscow at this point. I still have things I want to accomplish in Vienna, so the answer is no. So he decided that first Asif Chaudhry would be acting minister-counselor. Asif of course is very good but he was acting minister-counselor for a year and then Geoff Wiggin came in as the minister-counselor in Moscow, and that threw it three years out of whack, because I just decided to stay for four years and that meant that I had to find another job. So I was to come back to Washington and I was looking for another job and curiously enough nobody wanted me. My reputation being what it was, that I hold people accountable and responsible, and that I don't suffer fools gladly, worked against me, because none of the deputy administrators really wanted me.

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Of course the unwritten rule was, if you're in the attaché service and nobody wants you, you stay in the attaché service, so I was made one of Lyle Sebranek's two deputies. I was put in charge of the IT shop and the travel unit and Larry Fouts's support and overseas logistics shop and came back to Washington into that job, which was a good job. It was a fascinating time to be in Washington, it was a fascinating time to be involved in IT, so we can talk about that too.

Well, there were a couple of big issues. One of them was when I came into the IT shop I asked for an accounting of how many operating systems we were running and what was the architecture of our system. We had fifteen operating systems, nine of them were either mainframe or network operating systems, and that was for an agency with 1,350 seats, which is just way too much complexity. Most of these systems could not talk to each other. We were running legacy systems that were no longer supported by the manufacturers and in fact we were running a Wang OIS machine and Wang had gone out of business. Wang had gone bankrupt. We couldn't get spare parts for it. The floppy drive on it was broken, so when you booted it in the morning, you had to put in a floppy with a piece of scotch tape on it so you could fish it back out again at night when you took the machine down. I looked at this kind of stuff and said, "This is ridiculous, we're literally using scotch tape to keep our machines running, and that's ridiculous. We should not be in that position." We had software running on some machines that was designed for different operating systems and so the software didn't work, particularly for the remote-sensing people. They were losing capabilities and complaining to me and I said, "Well, let's rationalize all this, let's get down to two operating systems. The target is to get to two operating systems, one flavor of UNIX for the databases, and one flavor of Windows for everything else."

We were using cc:Mail, you may remember cc:Mail. cc:Mail reached the end of its life and Lotus Development stopped supporting it. We were still running it. We were still running Banyan Vines as our network operating system, and Banyan had gone out of business and was no longer supporting the software, so you couldn't get antivirus software for Banyan Vines anymore. So we were getting virus attacks that would take the

entire network down, and we had to do manual cleanup, which was an all hands and the cook affair, usually for a couple of days, to try to clean that up. It was just ridiculous.

So two other problems we had, we had upgraded to Pentium I think at that point, we started the upgrade to Pentium, but our machinery was old, was obsolete, and we didn't have the memory capacity to handle attachments. So Farm Service Agency would broadcast an email message to all users on the network including all of FAS and would attach a 1 MB PDF file, and it would cause our entire network to crash because it was eating up all of the disk space. We were just facing these incredibly stupid problems due to the lack of money.

So I went to the leadership and I said we need money, I need three million dollars, $1.5 million to start doing a hardware refresh every year. I needed a million and a half every year and I needed another million and a half for more overseas bandwidth. Our overseas bandwidth at that point was an average of 12.6K bits per second, 12.6K, okay? Dial-up was faster than that, but this is what we were getting from DTS-PO, the Diplomatic Telecommunication Service Program Office, and paying through the nose for that. I went to DTS-PO and I said, "How much would it cost to upgrade the bandwidth to 64K on each circuit?" They came back with a price tag of a hundred thousand dollars per circuit, which was going to be ten million dollars. We had roughly a hundred circuits, so we would have to spend ten million dollars to go to 64K service globally to all of our posts, and I said, "You know, for ten million dollars I can put in gold plated connections using commercial ISPs" and we costed that out at around a million and a half a year.

For a million and a half a year we could go to 256K using commercial ISPs, so the first experiment we ran was with Tokyo, because Jim Butterworth was out there and Suzanne Hale was the minister-counselor. She was willing to be a guinea pig and Jim Butterworth installed the Cisco router that we mailed to them. It was preprogrammed, they set it up, they got a local ISP to provide them with the 256K connection, and Suzanne said, "My goodness, we're getting email now the same day it's sent, it's no longer taking five days for the email to get here from the United States."

They'd had emails that'd taken five days to come from Washington to Tokyo. Air express would've been faster. So that experiment was a success and we began rolling that out, sending out Cisco routers to various posts and setting things up so that we could at least have a little faster speed on cc:Mail, sending these attachments back and forth and that sort of thing. We also started putting in fiber-optic infrastructure inside the South Building to get a better backbone for our own network. So as we retired systems, we retired the old DEC VAX system, we retired the Wangs, we retired the MicroVAXes that we were using for the cable network, we converted all of those to Windows and Intel type of platforms, and then we did the big upgrade to Lotus Notes, we retired cc:Mail. We went to Lotus Notes and the job wasn't complete by the time I left. I was in that job for two years, but we made a lot of progress.

The problem was that we didn't really realize what a vulnerability we were creating, putting these Cisco routers overseas, because they were not really well protected and as a result we were vulnerable to hacking, it turned out, and we hadn't realized that would be the kind of vulnerability that it was. It ended up, the Chinese hacked us. When I got to Moscow and we set up the router there, it didn't take very long before the Russians had hacked that and were reading our emails and things like that, so we knew this was going on. And of course I don't have to tell you about, here it is 2021, we're still having these problems with the Solar Winds case that the Russians perpetrated against us this year, and that sort of thing. So cyber security of course is now a big thing.

Back then it was something that we were concerned about but we thought we had a handle on it. It turned out we really did not and I regret that, and I regret having been a part of that, but on the other hand we were in a position, we needed to have communication with the overseas posts.

The other thing that we did—

Q: Well, it wasn't really possible to see forward in that situation. It really was the wild west.

MUSTARD: It really was the wild west. I remember getting my first email address in USDA when the Internet had come out. It was in the '90s, we had Telemail, and everybody who had a Telemail account also by default had an attmail.com email address. And so that was my first email address. But then USDA started its own domain, you may remember ag.gov, not usda.gov, but ag.gov, so I put in a request but all requests had to go through Hadlock, who was deputy administrator for management, and he rejected my application, said you have to put it in triplicate on paper, and you have to have a paragraph explaining why you need an email address. So I did, I put in this application, and it was rejected. It came back, he said your justification for needing an email address is inadequate.

Schumacher came in as administrator in '95 and at one of his first staff meetings, before he became administrator, he was still at the World Bank at that point, but he came over to meet the staff and he asked all of them for their email addresses. Earl said to him, we don't have Internet, we have Telemail, and Gus turned to Earl, Gus told me the story personally, Gus turned to Earl and said, "You will all have Internet email addresses by tomorrow, and you will send them to me, because next week I will begin communicating with you over them." It was a real shock, I think, to the members of the EAG, who were not accustomed to thinking in terms of email, so sure enough by the following week—I don't know if you remember Brian Davies, Brian Davies was the information security officer in FAS—and Brian dropped by my office and he said, "You know that application for a an email address that you submitted?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Resubmit it again. It will be approved this time," and so my second email address was mustard@ag.gov, and I had that until I went overseas to Vienna in '96.

But anyway, coming back to the year 2000, and in 2000 to 2002 I was preoccupied with the IT staff. The travel unit pretty much ran itself for the most part. Sylvia Wynn was in charge of it, she had two highly competent deputies down there who were very good and knew their way around, so I really didn't need to deal with the travel unit very much. Larry Fouts's shop, we did have some issues there, and I had to work very closely with Larry and with Hedy Armstrong, who of course succeeded him and passed away last year tragically, but, you know, we had a pretty good group.

Now the other thing that I did which was another failure on my part, this was something I guess I didn't think it through completely thoroughly. We were starting to move in the direction of knowledge management, and I looked at the reports officer position, which had been created way back when Ray Ioanes was administrator, and I said, "You know, the reports officer needs to become more of a knowledge management officer and we need to put together a staff that will deal with all of the information that we collect and make it usable, make it more retrievable, make it more accessible, because as it is now these reports come in, they go into a database, you can search them, but we're not really leveraging all the vast volume of data and analysis of the knowledge products that FAS is producing both in the field and in Washington. This needs to be categorized, it needs to be at the fingertips of decision-makers. We really need to have a dashboard, so if somebody wants to research an issue, they can go to that issue and they can pull things up," which SharePoint was starting to do, sort of, but you needed somebody who owned that, and would make it happen. I thought a knowledge management officer would be the way to do that and so I converted the reports officer position to knowledge management officer, and it never took off.

I went back overseas before that could really come to fruition and my sense is that neither Ellen Terpstra nor Mike Yost, who were the administrators at that point, really understood what the knowledge management concept was or why it was important to FAS, and so they appointed a knowledge management officer who was then given no staff and not given the resources to do what she needed to do, and as a result you had them criticizing someone, who was under resourced, for not doing the job that the knowledge management officer was expected to do. I'd always viewed the knowledge management officer as someone who would have a staff, maybe up to a dozen people, who would be information management professionals, who would be making sure that this dashboard was kept up to date and that all this information we collect and collate but never really categorize and index and make available to people, not always being properly managed, and that they still haven't done that.

For a long time the reports officer position was empty. It didn't exist for all intents and purposes after Lee Schatz retired. Now we have a reports officer who's very good, Jodi Erickson, she's very good and she's picked my brain a couple of times about how I think things could be done better, but still FAS is not where it needs to be in terms of managing the information that it deals with. Which is odd for an infocentric agency. The one thing we produce is information. We don't produce any corn or wheat or soybeans, we don't produce beef, pork, or chicken. We don't do any food processing. We deal in information

and the information comes in two flavors. It's words and it's numbers, and those words and those numbers need to be presented to users in a manner that makes the words and the numbers easy to find and easy to digest. I just don't see the agency has ever really grasped that in a meaningful way.

During that period 9/11 happened. Lyle Sebranek had us all in his office for the weekly staff meeting, and Allen Alexander came in, said, "An airplane flew into one of the towers of the World Trade Center in New York, turn on the TV." Lyle had a TV in his office, so we turned it on and were watching the first tower, smoke coming out of it, when the second plane flew into the second tower. I turned to Andy Burst and said, "That wasn't an instant replay. We're at war."

The meeting broke up and we went to our offices. Mine was up on the sixth floor, near the IT shop, the fifth wing. I was surfing the web trying to find out what was happening and Hedy Armstrong poked her head in my office. "You need to get out here, and see what's happening," she said. I asked, "What?" She said, "Come, you'll see."

My IT staff was out in the hallway, the fifth wing corridor, milling around. A couple of people were running up and down the hall screaming that we were all going to die. I walked halfway down the hall and saw Bob Alcorn. Bob was an air force veteran, and had seen combat. I walked up next to him and said, "Pretty scary, huh, Bob?" He said, "Yeah, it reminds me of my old unit." I said, "Well, we're pretty safe in this building. Nobody is going to target USDA deliberately, and if they hit us by accident, this building was designed as a prison, it's pretty solid." Laima Kuring came by, so I grabbed her. She was the supervisor of one of the people panicking. I said, "Do whatever you have to do. Stuff that person in a closet. Stuff a rag in that person's mouth. Send that person home, but stop the running up and down the hall."

One of the branch chiefs came up, all out of breath, saying, "I have to go home, I can't stay here. I need to take care of my family." I said, "Put in a leave slip and have your supervisor sign it. Calm down, and if you want to take the rest of the day off, just put in a leave slip." I was trying to get people to calm down and think.

So now people were gathering around me. I asked two of the technicians to fire up the big-screen projector in room 6518 and tune the TV receiver to Fox News. I told folks I was going to get some paperwork that was on my desk and watch the news, and invited anyone else to join me. So I sat there, watching the news and signing some routine paperwork. People came in and out, would watch TV, then go back to their desks.

Around eleven am, I guess, word came down to evacuate the building. The phones were jammed so runners had to go around the building. I spread the word to my folks, made sure everybody was informed. By that time, the metro had shut down and I was facing a long walk to the East Falls Church metro station, where my truck was parked. By chance I bumped into Alan Vandergriff, who commuted by car, and he offered me a ride. We were the first car to cross the 14th Street bridge, which had been closed after the plane hit

the Pentagon, so we had an unobstructed view of the smoke and flames coming out of the Pentagon as we crossed the bridge.

There were some things we learned from that. First, the COOP, the Continuity of Operations Plan, was dusted off and folks discovered that FAS had not been included in it. Rand Ruggieri was put in charge of working up a COOP for FAS, but then he was detailed somewhere else, so it landed in my lap. I went over to State Department to pick the brains of their COOP people, and based on their advice I worked up a COOP for FAS.

That was kind of my two years in Washington, in that job. Part of the time there Frank Lee came to me and asked me if I could also chair something, a working group to work on a global market strategy, which was mandated in the Farm Bill, and eventually I did get to do that. He asked me to do it, I agreed, then he went to Lyle Sebranek. Lyle said, "No, Allan should not be put in charge of that." He wanted Sue Heinen to be put in charge of it. So Sue was put in charge of that effort. The working group consisted of all of the assistant deputy administrators, and the idea was that we were going to put together a construct to come up with a global market strategy for allocation of resources in the agency.

After eighteen months had gone by the group hadn't produced anything. Sue was off on a trip, as I recall, she was on a trip in Central Asia, and the budget office over across the street, the Office of Budget and Program Analysis, came to Mary Chambliss, she was an acting associate administrator at the time, and said, "We need this global market strategy because if we don't have a global market strategy, we go to Capitol Hill and ask for a budget for FAS, they are going to say, where's the global market strategy? No money unless you do this." So Mary said, "I need a global market strategy in two weeks."

I said, "Two weeks, that's crazy." She said, "I need it in two weeks." So I said, "All right, then I need some help. I want Mike Dwyer, I want Rod Paschal, and I want Rand Ruggieri, and the four of us will give you a global market strategy, but I need those three guys on the team." So we pulled together everything that the working group had worked on up to that point. We had a fair amount of data, we had done some exercises where we had generated a fair amount of data, we had polled the overseas posts, we had reports from overseas posts that gave their sense of where the best prospects were.

One interesting side note on that. We took all these data and then we normalized the data against the World Board's projections. The World Board does these forecasts or projections of where agricultural trade is going to go over the next several years, so we aggregated all these numbers that came in from the attachés and then we normalized the aggregate numbers against the World Board's global projections. It was really funny, because our attachés were wildly optimistic compared to the World Board, to the tune of 50 percent, so if you aggregated the attachés' predictions, they were 50 percent higher than the World Board's projections based on macroeconomic data. Which is good news, because it meant that our attachés were optimists and were going out looking for

opportunities and were optimistic about what could be done, although they were probably not terribly realistic in terms of their projections.

But we crunched all these numbers. We came up with some data and then Mary came to us, she looked at the first draft, and she said, "You have to have food aid in here. Food aid needs to be included." So I turned to Rod Paschal and said, "Can you write something on food aid?" He sat down and went to work writing up a food aid section of the report, and I guess after about a week we were in pretty good shape. A week and a half and we spent most of the second half of the second week wordsmithing it and sent it up for blessing by the upper echelons.

Well, that was when the fat hit the fire, because the upper echelons were not happy with the idea of a global market strategy. They said, Well, what's gonna happen is if we send forward this global market strategy, the opposite party, Republicans were of course in the White House at the time, and the upper echelons said that the Democrats up on the Hill will attack us and will use this as a club to beat up on USDA and say it's a flawed report, a defective report, it's all hogwash and they'll use it as a tool against us. So the global market strategy was never blessed. It was never approved. It was never formally published, because the upper echelons at the political level refused to do that. They were afraid that the Democrats on the Hill would use it as a club to beat up on USDA, which was a little bit disappointing.

At one point I went over to brief JB Penn. JB was our under secretary at the time so Ellen Terpstra asked me to come over and brief him. I put together a slide presentation and came over and sat down and did this presentation for JB. Of course, JB has a PhD in agricultural economics, one of the more brilliant minds I've ever dealt with. He started quizzing me on where the data came from on this, where the data came from on that.

I told him, well, it's a Bayesian analysis of our attachés using Bayesian estimation. Well, he knows what Bayesian estimation is, it's your best guess of what you think a number ought to be based on all available information, but it's not a hard and fast number, and he was not happy with that. He said, "You know, this is not good enough. Where is the data?" And the fact is, you know, when you're doing that sort of estimation, so much of the work that we do in FAS is Bayesian-style estimation, you're giving it your best guess based on what you observe. It is not hard and fast measurements like what the Economic Research Service is used to, and he of course was a former head of ERS, and so he was accustomed to harder data than the loosey-goosey stuff that FAS has to deal with as a matter of course. He was not happy with the quality of analysis, so again a lesson there, that, you know, if you're going to do something like this, this global market analysis, global market strategy, that you have to take it seriously and you have to put some resources into it, have some leadership and that had been lacking for a while, so it was a rush job at the end, which is unfortunate.

But the funny thing was that over a decade later I was talking to some people, I was overseas at that point, they were still using it. FAS was still using the global market

strategy as a benchmark for where we were at our overseas posts, and where we were doing marketing activities, and where we were operating overseas. So at a practical level it proved to be quite durable. At a political level it proved to be unpalatable and that was unfortunate.

Q: Let me remember what the global market strategy was. What I remember, it was putting every country on a scale, from A to F, with UK and Canada in the As, and Afghanistan and Haiti in the Fs, and everybody else was somewhere in between. And then you put your programs based on that. And Fs, you really didn't do much. In the Cs and Ds you did food aid. As we moved up the scale we did export promotion, GSM in the Bs, maybe. Is that what you're talking about?

MUSTARD: Well, that was part of the exercise that we asked the commodity divisions to do, that they do that sort of classification, and, yeah, I mean, we reached out to the commodity divisions and we had them engage in that exercise. We had the overseas posts do a similar exercise that fed into it. But the overall report was a formal report that the four of us drafted on the basis of all of the data that we had collected, and I was reasonably proud of it. I thought it was not a bad product. It could have been better, but it wasn't a bad product and it did really force the agency to take a hard look at our deployment of resources. Because one of the things that came out in the wash was, of course, the cooperators were very curious about it, and the cooperators were very apprehensive that this global market strategy was gonna to come out and tell the cooperators that they were doing things wrong, that they were in the wrong places and whatnot, when in reality, of course, the private sector is always more responsive than government. That's just a fact of life. So the private sector, meaning the cooperators, were already where they needed to be, they were already in the growth markets, they had been pulling out of the slug markets long before we in FAS had. So the disbalance was really in FAS. It wasn't on the cooperators, and if anything, the global market strategy verified or validated the cooperators' deployment overseas of their resources. They had their offices where the offices needed to be and they were, for the most part, spending money where the money needed to be spent.

It was FAS that was out of whack and I was a little bit amused at the level of apprehension on the part of the cooperators, and some of them huffed and puffed to me, you're going to come out with this global market strategy and you're gonna try and tell us what to do, and I said, "No, we're not gonna tell you what to do. That's not what the global market strategy is for. It's more to tell FAS what FAS needs to do," and that really is how it turned out.

Q: I found that a lot of that work that you guys did, I found it to be intuitively helpful, to think through. It was absolutely essential to think through what you were going to do for your country strategy, and that actually became, I'm trying to remember, we had the global market strategy, then every country had to have a country strategy.

MUSTARD: Well, that actually goes back to when Chuck Alexander was head of OCRA, Office of Country and Regional Analysis. I was in Moscow at that point. Chuck Alexander came out with the idea of the CSS, the country strategy statement, and people asked Chuck, What should we put in the country strategy statement, what should it look like? And his response, I'll never forget, was, "Let a thousand flowers bloom." He wanted all of us to send it in free form, just send it in, and he wanted us to send them by email.

I looked at the amount of work that was going to go into it, I said, "You know, I'm not going to send this in an email so that it will get forgotten and lost, something like this needs to go through record traffic." So I contacted Cheri Caddy, who was our reports officer/knowledge management officer at that point, and I said, "Cheri, how should we categorize this report? Should we put this in as a kiwi report or something like that?" And she laughed and came back, said, "No, I'll create a CSS report category," which she did, so then the instruction went out, when you send in your CSS, send it in as a CSS report using this report category so it can be databased in GAIN, internal report, so you know, not for public disclosure, official use only, and that way people can find it using the existing reporting mechanism. We didn't have to invent anything new.

So I sat down with my staff and we brainstormed a little bit, and I said, "You know, the first thing you need to do of course is an overview. You do kind of a landscape piece. This is the country, it's a big country, it has people in it, it grows crops, it has livestock, people eat, here's what they eat, and here's how much money they have, and things like that. So that needs to go into kind of an introduction overview," I said. Then we do a SWOT analysis, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. That then informs the last section, which is your actual strategy document, how you're going to respond, what outcomes you want, and what are the tactical means that you're going to use, and the tools you're going to use to achieve those ends. So we put together that outline and wrote it up and quite frankly it didn't take very long. We had an off-site retreat and it came out of that off-site retreat. We went out to the dacha, we had a dacha attached to the embassy in those days, we went out to the dacha and brainstormed over all of this and then sat down and we wrote this report and sent it in.

It turned out we were the first post to send in the CSS and I got an email from Elizabeth Berry, who I think was in Paris at the time, Paris or Rome, and she thanked me for having sent in this CSS report. She says, I'm going to steal your format and we're just going to do the same thing. And pretty much everybody started doing that. They all started doing the CSS format that Moscow had sent in.

Q: You invented that format?

MUSTARD: Yeah, I invented that format, which was funny, because that wasn't the intent. And then of course as time went by it was eventually institutionalized and that became the institutionalized structure of the CSS, which was funny, that wasn't something I was looking for.

The next year, I think it was maybe a year or two later, David Salmon came out for our staff retreat. He was working in the High-Value Products Division and he came out and walked us through the CSS and said, "Okay, your CSS is good, but it could be made better, and here's how." He was very helpful in helping us fine-tune the CSS, and I asked him, "David, why do you want to come out to do this? Why Moscow?" He says, "Well, Allan, the fact is that everybody's looking to the Moscow CSS as a template, as an example of what a CSS ought to look like, so we need to make yours really, really good so that everybody will imitate something that's really, really good." So that was kind of funny, too. David was an old friend, we go back to the grain division days, so it was fun having him in Moscow for a while.

Q: It's interesting to see it from the other side, because I was in OCRA at the time, actually for Chuck Alexander when he was head of OCRA. And I remember the struggles, struggling three or four years with the CSS. I didn't know he was the spirit behind it.

MUSTARD: Oh, yeah, Chuck was the one that made it happen, and I think he was head of OCRA.

Q: I covered Africa and the Middle East, so I did not see the Russia CSS.

MUSTARD: So, anyway, going back to my time in Washington, I think we did some good things in terms of overhauling the IT infrastructure of FAS during that period. We brought FAS into the Internet age, we got the higher-speed connections that did allow us to communicate with the overseas posts, we shifted from cc:Mail to Lotus Notes, which had its warts, but given the low bandwidth environment we were dealing with, Microsoft Outlook was not an option at that point. Microsoft Outlook required too much bandwidth and we simply didn't have the bandwidth to support Microsoft Outlook so Lotus Notes was really the only opportunity we had to upgrade.

And towards the end of that Lyle had offered the senior seminar to Sue Heinen but then she turned it down because Ellen Terpstra asked her to be the deputy administrator for ICD or OCBD, whatever it was called at that point, so she went over to be the deputy administrator and Lyle asked me if I would go to the senior seminar. So I did, and spent ten months at the senior seminar over at the Foreign Service Institute, which was fascinating. I did learn a fair amount about leadership and management and I still have all of my notes from that. It fills an entire bookshelf of three-ring binders. I took copious notes that at some point I want to plow through.

I developed a course in leadership, a crash course in leadership, that I taught at the overseas posts. There are six modules based on what I learned in the senior seminar, but probably the single most important thing I learned was that the Senior Seminar in Foreign Affairs, which is a leadership and management course, validated my approach to leadership and management. I learned that my leadership and management practices are considered best practices and mainstream in both government and industry, which was

interesting given that so many people in FAS had been criticizing me for years for being too hard-nosed, too demanding, demanding high quality and performance from anybody who worked for me. What I learned in the senior seminar was that those are the sorts of characteristics of leaders and managers you want if you want your organization to excel, and also holding people accountable for nonperformance or for bad conduct, and I think that's one of the issues FAS continues to have.

If you look at the best places to work survey that's done every year, FAS is very close to the bottom these days, has been for quite some time, has been since 2009. One of the issues that FAS faces is the lack of accountability and the inability of managers to manage, and the unwillingness of leaders to lead in many cases. It's become ingrained, it's institutionalized. At this point I don't know how the agency gets out of that, but it is a problem, and it is reflected in the relatively low morale in the agency as reflected in the best places to work survey.

So anyway coming back to, you know, the career path, I want to talk a little bit about being back in Washington then with the senior seminar. In February 2003 we were given a month to write a research paper, so I picked up the phone and called Ellen Terpstra, who was administrator at the time. I said you're paying for this, for my sabbatical here in the senior seminar, what do you want me to write a research paper about? She said, "Well, we're studying the possibility of reorganizing FAS and it would be really useful if we could have a set of historical organizational charts, what FAS has looked like over the years, so if you could spend some time researching that and give me the organizational charts of FAS back through history, that would be really useful."

So I said, "Okay, that sounds good," and thought it would be great because I could do a research paper on the organizational structure of FAS, that will take about two weeks, and then I'll have about two weeks to goof off, and now, that will be nice. So I started out by going up to the National Agricultural Library and then I went to the Library of Congress and ended up going up to the National Archives up in College Park, trying to dig up organizational charts and old telephone books and administrative lists and just whatever I could find to try and cobble together as many organizational charts as I could.

As I started digging through materials, particularly in the Library of Congress and in the National Archives, it began to dawn on me that this was only part of the story, that organizational charts were perhaps a partial reflection of the history of FAS, but there was a lot of context there that was missing. So I began digging and digging and digging, and pulling together papers. I spent hours and hours and hours in College Park at Archives II, I spent hours in the Library of Congress looking for materials, spent a tremendous amount of time in the National Agricultural Library back in the stacks, digging through all kinds of materials that I didn't even know existed. I ordered books from Amazon on organizational theory and design.

At the end of the month I scrambled to spend a few days writing it up in a report that ran to ninety-two pages. It was not complete because I had not found everything I needed,

and that report remains incomplete to this day. One of these days I'd like to sit down and write a revision of it, but the other thing I did was I realized that just looking at FAS alone in isolation wasn't enough. I really needed to look at FAS through the prism of other organizations. So I picked six organizations, two of them private-sector for-profit organizations, two nonprofits, and two government organizations. The two for-profit organizations were Bunge Corporation and U.S. News & World Report, because they have international operations and they had some similar functions to what FAS did in terms of intelligence gathering and reporting and things like that. The two NGOs were Catholic Relief Service, which I had worked with closely when I was in Vienna and had a lot of respect for as a faith-based organization, and ACDI/VOCA, with which I'd worked in the 1990s dealing with the former Soviet Union as a secular NGO. And then the two government organizations were the Foreign Commercial Service and the CIA, and again, organizations with overseas profiles, overseas missions, but which come at their missions from different points of view, from completely different standpoints.

So I wrote that up, wrote up my analysis of FAS through those prisms, submitted it and I sent it around for comment. I had a number of people comment on it and they're all listed in it, and if you read the report you can see all the people who commented on it. Some of them of course passed it to some of their friends to comment on, and one of the more pithy comments came back from Bernard. I've forgotten Bernard's last name—he was the driver who worked for Larry Fouts in the management shop, and he was the guy who used to drive the pouch van to go over to the State Department to pick up our cables and whatnot—and Bernard's comment was, it's about time somebody told the truth about this agency, and a number of different people said the same thing. They said, "It's about time somebody wrote the truth about this agency, and about what ails it, and the issues it should be grappling with."

However, when it was circulated to the deputy administrators they all criticized it. The deputy administrators didn't like it. Two of them told me that it was overtaken by events, that the issues that I had surfaced in this report had already been taken care of and were no longer problems in the agency, even though I look at the agency today and see many of the same problems. What was interesting was that the rank and file of the agency embraced the report, those who read it, and said, Yes, it does reflect reality, and the people at the top of the agency said, No, this does not reflect reality, this is not the reality that we see.

There was a huge disconnect between the upper ranks of the agency and those of us working stiffs who work down in the trenches, down below. So again there was a lesson for me here, that it's very easy to become disconnected when you move into upper management, it's very easy to become disconnected from the reality of the trenches, and if you want to be effective as a leader, and be taken seriously as a leader, you really need to nurture that connection. You need to stay in touch with the people in the trenches, and understand what are the issues they're facing, where the problems are they're facing, if you want to be credible as a leader and manager. I think it's important. That was a big

project, and that was what really got me started in my research of the history of FAS, was Ellen's request that I look at the organizational charts. One thing led to another.

I went overseas, went to Moscow, and while in Moscow I continued to work as best I could, whenever I was back in the states I would make a visit to the archives. I would go to the Library of Congress, I'd go up to the National Agricultural Library [NAL] and dig up more stuff and eventually decided I needed to put it out on the website, and that was the genesis of the Virtual Museum. So the FAS Virtual Museum was created to house all this information that I was collecting about the history of FAS and the administrators, the leadership, who had run the agency, and what were the issues when they were in charge, so at least, you know, I've managed to collect all that, it's all in one place, it's on this website. I had to password protect it because there are certain materials there that are copyrighted. The terms of the copyright for two items in particular, two photographs that are copyrighted, and the terms of the copyright were that they could only be accessible by people who work for FAS or used to work for FAS, so I had to password protect the website to keep outsiders from seeing two photographs. But otherwise, that's kind of right now the institutional memory of FAS, is that website.

Q: Now, is this website on the FAS intranet?

MUSTARD: There used to be a copy, I don't know if it's still there, because I don't work in the agency anymore. I made a copy available to the agency and John Heal used to keep it updated, but I don't know if the agency still has it or not. I still maintain my copy of it.

Q: How could somebody access it? Can you tell the audience?

MUSTARD: They have to email me and if they work for FAS or used to work for FAS I'll send them the password.

Q: Is part of that the history of the attachés, going back to, God knows, to—

MUSTARD: Eighteen eighty-two.

Q: Yeah, that first attaché we had in the UK.

MUSTARD: Yeah, 1882.

Q: Eighteen eighty-two. And you created that website, is that right?

MUSTARD: Yeah, I did.

Q: I found that fascinating. I don't remember why I accessed it, probably for a very good reason. I don't remember going back that far, but I remember using it if I had to find out who was the attaché in 1983.

MUSTARD: It's out of date now. I need to go back and update it. I need to do some work on it and clean it up and update it. I had a couple of junior professionals, two of the FST officers who helped me with the biographies of the latest administrators, so I need to go in and do some editing on it, clean it up and update it. That'll be something I can do this spring.

Q: Okay, so that as well is outside the FAS network. I'd like access to that, as well.

MUSTARD: You can, you used to work for FAS, so I can certainly share that with you.

One curious incident occurred in the year 2000, when I came back from Vienna and I received a phone call from the consul general of the Austrian embassy, informing me that the government of Austria was going to give me the highest award that it can grant to a foreigner, the Grand Golden Medal of Merit for Services to the Republic of Austria. To receive that award I had to get permission from the administrator. Mattie Sharpless was acting administrator at the time, so under the FAM I could only accept the award if she granted permission. So I asked her, I said what do I do about this, and she said, "Send me a memo." So I did, I sent her a memo, and she signed off on it and that was all.

That would've been around sometime in late fall of 2000, and in the spring of 2001 the minister of agriculture of Austria came for a visit to Washington. The secretary was Ann Veneman but was not able to meet with him because she had to fly up to Canada, she'd had a pre-scheduled meeting to go up there, so the next highest ranking official available was Hunt Shipman, who was the acting under secretary at the time. Hunt Shipman received the minister of agriculture, Wilhelm Molterer, whom I knew. He had been the minister while I was posted to Austria. He presented me with this medal, the Grand Golden Medal of Merit for Services to the Republic of Austria.

Well, that set off alarm bells in Washington, because as you will recall, that was during the period when AFSCME was filing unfair labor practices against management because we had awards for Foreign Service officers for which civil servants could not compete, and for which they were not eligible. This was considered by AFSCME to be an unfair labor practice, and so there was a threat of litigation and the idea that a Foreign Service officer had received this medal from the Austrians was just too much.

So it was swept under the rug. If you look at the records of the department on foreign awards given to USDA employees, I am omitted. It is not on that list and I was excluded from the department award ceremony that year. The ARS people who got international awards were recognized, anybody in any other USDA agency who got an international award was recognized, and was included in the program, but I was excluded because of the fear that this would put kerosene on the fire of this unfair labor practice that AFSCME had filed.

Mary Chambliss sat down with me and explained all this to me. She was acting associate administrator at the time and she sat down with me and explained, "We just can't do it,

Allan, this has to be kept quiet, and we're very sorry, but this award cannot see the light of day in FAS." That was her message. I think that's unfortunate. Because the award was, I thought, not so much an honor for me personally, as much as it was really good recognition of the role of FAS overseas and the things, the good things that FAS does. And that recognition was completely ignored, swept away.

Q: Do you still have that medal?

MUSTARD: Of course, it sits in my sock drawer.

Q: Can you wear that, ever?

MUSTARD: Oh, sure, I used to wear it once a year at the Marine Corps Ball when I was overseas, because that's the only time I wear a tuxedo. So once a year at the Marine Corps Ball I would take it out, I would iron the ribbon so that it would take the wrinkles out of the ribbon, and then wear it around my neck.

Q: So it goes around your neck.

MUSTARD: It's a medal that goes around your neck. When the Austrians gave it to me, they told me it had never been granted to a foreign diplomat below the rank of ambassador before me, and I was the second American diplomat ever to receive it. The only other American diplomat to get it was Ron Lauder when he was the U.S. ambassador to Austria.

Q: How could you distill what you did to make them feel they wanted to give you that?

MUSTARD: Well, the evening after the presentation the minister had another dinner he had to go to, a formal dinner, but the people who accompanied him, my friends from Austria, came over to our house, and we had a backyard barbecue. So while I was grilling hamburgers I asked them, "What did I do to deserve this medal?" And they said, Well, we realized when you left, how much of an impact you had on us and our thinking and how we approached a lot of things, ranging from biotechnology to the fact that at one point they were looking for someone to staff their office in Brussels, because the Ministry of Agriculture has an agricultural attaché in Brussels to the European Union, and I had suggested somebody who turned out to be a very good choice. And they said, The fact that you had integrated yourself so deeply into our little agricultural community and you cared about us and you were interested in seeing good things happen not just for the United States but for all of us, we thought you deserved this recognition. And the other piece of it was what I was doing in Bosnia, they recognized what I was doing in Bosnia, and how important that was to stabilizing the entire region, and that was part of it, as well. So those are the two answers, I guess, to your question.

Q: Was that the honor you received that was most special to you? Could you review those special moments?

MUSTARD: I mean, obviously, it was a high honor, and I was shocked and deeply humbled by it. I was just doing my job as best I could. I never imagined it would get that sort of recognition.

Q: When you were with FAA/IS, from 2000 to 2002, you mentioned the refusal to obey an illegal order.

MUSTARD: The one time that I really came into conflict with the boss, I was given an illegal order, which was to arrange for an official vehicle for someone who wanted his own official vehicle. The U.S. government had a policy at that point that had been instituted, I think during the Clinton administration and had never been rescinded, that only the secretary and the deputy secretary have assigned vehicles. Everybody below the rank of deputy secretary had to use the motor pool. They had a little executive motor pool for folks across the street, but this person wanted his own vehicle, he didn't want to have to use the motor pool. So he said he wanted FAS to obtain for him a vehicle and have a vehicle and a driver on standby for him.

So I got orders from on high to do that and I said I can't do that, it's against the law, and they tried to get Larry Fouts to do it because he had a contracting officer's warrant. They said, Well, then lease a vehicle, do a contract for it if you can't get an official vehicle with a direct hire. Larry refused to do that, said, "You know, that's an illegal thing and I won't do it." Larry and I stuck to our guns, refused to do it because it was illegal, and there was a tremendous amount of pressure. I was really surprised at the amount of pressure that came from the higher-ups in FAS who just wanted this problem to go away and I just refused. I wasn't gonna do it. It was illegal. It was gonna be an illegal thing to do and I wasn't going to have that hanging over me. I was the guy who told the higher-ups, if you want to do this, you do it. I'm not going to do it. I refused and Fouts refused to do it.

Q: That is an interesting story that is worthy of telling to people right at the start, that frequently there is pressure, and people will say that they will be here to protect you. Then they are gone and you are stuck.

MUSTARD: That doesn't work. That's the one time I was asked to do something illegal and I refused to do it.

Q: Fighting with OBPA about money for computers.

MUSTARD: Yeah, the Office of Budget and Program Analysis over in the department. When we were trying to figure out how to go to a higher bandwidth in the 2000s so that we could have email that went overseas and didn't take five days to go. We needed three million dollars. We needed a million and a half a year for bandwidth and we needed a million and a half a year for hardware refresh so we could refresh one third of our hardware across the agency once in three years. I went to our budget office and these two guys came over. One of them of course was Fred Blott, who was the guy in charge of

looking after FAS in OBPA, and this other guy, I've forgotten his name, who didn't know what the Internet is. He said, "I don't have email at home, I hate email. I don't know what bandwidth is."

We had all this pressure from the Office of the Secretary to get into the modern age but OBPA was not on board and was saying, we don't see why we should add three million dollars to the FAS account to give you computers and bandwidth. We had this tremendous fight over it and they weren't going to do it. I really had to get Ellen Terpstra fired up on this to weigh in with the higher-ups over it. It went all the way up to the under secretary, finally. It was JB, I think, who finally weighed in on this and said, "This has to happen, they need to have the money for computers and for bandwidth, otherwise this isn't going to work." We eventually got the money but it was a fight that took about two years. The whole two years I was there we were fighting with OBPA to get this money to get the computers and the bandwidth so that we could have high-speed communications.

It was ridiculous and you know when the guy from OBPA looked me in the eye and said, "I don't know what bandwidth is" and I said, "Well, it's what gets you your email." He said, "I don't have email at home, I hate email." You know, I'm sorry. I mean, this was the year 2000. This wasn't 1985. He should have known what bandwidth was. He should've known what the Internet was. He should've known the whole department was moving to that sort of a footing.

Moscow 2003–2008

So that was one year, the senior seminar, and then in 2003 of course Moscow opened up. I bid on it, and a lot of other people bid on Moscow that year because they knew I was going to get it and of course in the Foreign Service the rule is you have to bid on at least one hardship post every time you bid, so a lot of people bid on Moscow as their hardship post, knowing that I pretty much had it in the bag and was going to go. That way they could say, Yes, I have bid on a hardship post, knowing that they were not likely to get it.

Q: That's interesting gamesmanship.

MUSTARD: There's a lot of gamesmanship in the Foreign Service on bidding, and bidding strategies and whatnot, which I always found rather amusing, because I never really did those games. I just bid and crossed my fingers and hoped for the best.

So then in 2003 I went off to Moscow. Before I went, I requested consultations with the administrator, and the associate administrator was Ken Roberts, 'cause we were working on Russia's WTO accession and it was starting to get pretty hot, and I thought, I want to talk to the administrator and the associate administrator, Ken was running trade policy de facto in those days, and I was informed that they were too busy and wouldn't have time for me. So then I wanted to meet with Pat Sheikh, who was the deputy administrator for trade policy, and her secretary informed me that she was too busy to talk to me, and I

said, “Well, wait a minute, I’m gonna be going off to Moscow dealing with the WTO accession, should we not have a sit down and talk about this?”

Q: You were going out as a minister-counselor!

MUSTARD: Right, I was going out as a minister-counselor who was going to be hip deep in the WTO negotiations. So none of them wanted to meet with me. Finally, Pat ordered Gary Meyer and Bob Macke to meet with me, and when I met with them, Bob told me, “The only reason I’m meeting with you is ’cause Pat ordered me to, otherwise I wouldn’t waste my time,” which I thought was kinda strange. I got the lowdown from them on what they would expect from me and what they would need from me as a field officer.

I was at the Metro station two days later, my cell phone rang, and it was Marlene Minix, who was Ann Veneman’s private secretary, and she said, “The secretary wants to see you during your consultations before you go to Moscow, when can you come over and see her?” And I said, “Well, Marlene, she’s the secretary, so she gets to pick when. I will rearrange my schedule around her,” and she said, “No, she was very clear on this, she knows that when attachés are going out that their schedules are very full, she doesn’t want to upset anything, so you tell me when you’re available and I’ll see if that fits her schedule.” So I said, “How about Thursday at eleven o’clock?” She said, “That works, so we’ll see you over here, Thursday at eleven o’clock.”

So Thursday of that week at eleven o’clock I went over and went in and thought, Okay, I’ll go and JB Penn will be there, the under secretary, Ellen will be there, Ken will be there, they’ll all be there. I walked in and it was just Ann Veneman, and she and I sat down, had a one-on-one for an hour and talked about Russia, and she made it clear to me what she expected from me and what she was going to need from me, and made it very clear that I had a direct pipeline to her anytime I needed it, that if I needed to get a message to her bypassing the bureaucracy in an emergency, that was available. Obviously it was very clear I was not to abuse that, which I never did, but she made it very clear, you have a direct pipeline to me.

Q: How did you develop the credibility to have such a meeting? Was it all those years when she was working on Russian affairs?

MUSTARD: Absolutely. She knew me and we had worked together so much on former Soviet affairs, going back to when she made her first trip to Moscow as associate administrator in ’88 and then coming forward when she was deputy under secretary and I was interacting with her, and then when she was deputy secretary and I was interacting with her, and briefing her on what was going on. So she trusted me and she knew that I was not caught up in the wonder of it all, of having face time, that I wasn’t going to, you know, treat it as that sort of thing, that I was very businesslike about it. It was, what do you need, and I’ll try and deliver it. She knew that we would have that sort of a professional working relationship, and I thought it very strange, though, that the secretary of agriculture had me come in for about one hour, sit down one-on-one with her, and

nobody in FAS could find the time. I just thought that was strange and rather off putting, frankly.

So I got to Moscow and the deputy chief of mission in Moscow was an old friend of mine, John Beyrle, who later came back to be ambassador, but John and I had worked on the agriculture exhibit in the Soviet Union back in the 1970s. He was our general services officer when I was a mere guide, and John was kind enough to host a reception in my honor right after Ann and I got there. He hosted this big reception and we sent out invitations to all these contacts I hadn't seen since I had last been in Moscow in 1996, so I hadn't been there in seven years and wanted to reconnect with everybody.

In the middle of it Dmitry Rylko of the Institute for Agricultural Market Research said, "At last, we have somebody in the agriculture office who will return our phone calls." I walked over and said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "Well, for the last few years we haven't had anybody in the agriculture office who would either take or return our phone calls." I said, "That's crazy, what are you talking about?" "Well, people just won't take our phone calls," he said. And apparently that was true. There were a bunch of my best contacts there at that meeting who had not been able to get any airtime with the ag office.

So we had a sit down, a staff meeting, and I said, "Anytime anybody calls, and they want to talk to me, put them through and I will sort it out. There will be some nut cases but we'll figure out who they are in the fullness of time and start blocking them, but otherwise if people call, I want to talk to them."

My wife and I would throw a major event every quarter. We would have at least one large standup reception of some sort in our residence or out at the dacha, barbecues, and my wife did Mardi Gras, we would do seasonal buffets for Christmas, and just generally showed hospitality. My local staff started reporting that they would call somebody with a question, and they said, They take our phone calls now, or at least they return them, and at the end of every conversation they always ask, when is Mr. Mustard going to have another one of those receptions? And are we on the list?

So the combination of being receptive to people calling you when they needed something and then also showing hospitality, showing it is not just a one-way street, that we only call you when we want something, we also sometimes call you when we want to invite you to something. And the other interesting thing about having these large events was we would hold these big receptions and we would get people from industry, we would have people from the legislature coming, from the Russian Parliament, occasionally would get people from the bureaucracy, not very often because they had to have permission of the former KGB to come, but sometimes we would get them, get the academics to come, and they would all talk to each other. This was the interesting thing, they didn't talk to each other very much naturally, but if they came to our place we were the convening authority where they could cross fertilize and they could talk to each other. People started saying, We want to come because we always meet such interesting people there. They weren't

interested in talking to me, they were interested in talking to each other and that was fine, because I was usually busy helping pour drinks and urging people to go eat, and things like that, but the payoff came in just the general good feeling that you got and then the goodwill that you developed so that people would be willing to take your phone calls and let you come visit them and come see their farms, things like that.

But I went to Moscow in 2003 and walked into the office and there was a pile of stuff in my inbox, it was literally two feet high, and I asked, "What's this?" They said, It's everything that's been waiting since the last minister-counselor left, waiting for you, and the last minister-counselor had been Geoff Wiggin, and I said, "Well, why wasn't it dealt with?" Well, because there was no minister-counselor to assign work. I said, "Okay, well, we're going to stop right now. Show me the organizational chart of the office." Well, there is no organizational chart, you know, we just all report to the minister-counselor. "How often do you have staff meetings?" Oh, we never have staff meetings.

Well, this was FAS's third-largest overseas office at the time. Beijing was the biggest, Mexico City was the second-biggest, Moscow was the third-largest. We had a total of sixteen people working for us, fourteen in Moscow and two of them in other cities, one in Vladivostok, and one in St. Petersburg. So I said, "This doesn't work for me. First of all, we're going to start having staff meetings every week," which got a lot of pushback. People didn't like the idea of having a staff meeting where they would be required to report out what they were working on and keep me informed. And the second thing was an organizational chart. Everybody had to come into my office, sit down and tell me what their expertise was, what their portfolio was, what they were working on. We did an organizational chart. All the attachés had FSNs assigned to them so that the junior officers could get management experience.

We covered three other countries. At that point we had Armenia, Georgia, and Belarus, as well, we had three attachés in addition to the ATO director, so each of the attachés got a country, which meant they had their own ambassador, and their own minister of agriculture they had to interact with, maintain liaison with, and this is again part of the schooling. You're teaching people how to be attachés in their own right. They have to make sure the ambassador knows who you are, knows where you are, how to find you, doesn't feel at all shy about picking up the phone and calling you, and same thing for your local minister of agriculture. You want everybody in that ministry to know who you are and how to reach out to you.

So that was the first thing I did. Then I started saying, when the mail comes in, when requests come in, I'm not here to be your traffic manager. I'm not here to assign your work to you. You have a portfolio, you have a responsibility, something comes in, you take care of it. Do not come to me and ask me permission to do your job. Just do your job. And it took two years to break people of the habit of coming to me asking for permission to do their jobs. It took two years, especially the Russians, to break them of the habit of waiting to be told to do their jobs. If something came in, you take care of it and tell me afterwards that you took care of it.

I also made it clear that Washington had permission to talk directly to my FSNs. This is another thing where I really differ with a lot of other officers, who insist that all communications with Washington go through the head of post. We had too many issues going on, we had too much work to do, I had my own work to do, I did not want to be a funnel, a chokepoint for communication with Washington. So I said, "We have email for a reason. We have telephones for a reason. If you want to talk to Washington or if Washington wants to talk to you, pick up the phone, send an email, go ahead and do your own communication."

Productivity of the office jumped over the next year. Between the time I arrived in Summer 2003 and Summer 2004, I tracked how much reporting we were doing, how much marketing we were doing, how many trade policy interventions we were doing, and our productivity was up by 50 percent, just by those changes in management. So management matters. The management really matters if you want to have productivity in an office. You have to manage the office, you can't just be an attaché who wants to do everything himself. You have to manage your employees, you have to empower your employees, so they have the confidence to go out and do their jobs. They are going to make mistakes, everybody makes mistakes, I've made mistakes, you've made mistakes, some of my mistakes have been real boners. But that's part of the cost of doing business. You swallow the mistakes and you move on, and you try to do better next time. So getting the office management under control was a big function the first year that I was at post.

I tried to travel a lot in Moscow because there was stuff going on out in the boondocks that we kinda had a sense of, but you can't see it from Moscow and the folks in the Ministry of Agriculture had no sense of what was going on out in the boondocks. When they traveled, of course, everybody put on a good show for them and told them what they wanted to hear, but wasn't necessarily telling them things that they needed to know. Just as an example of that, at one point I was out probably around 2004 on crop travel and I noticed that there was a fair amount of minimum till going on, so I kind of did a rough calculation that along the route that I was traveling, down in Rostov oblast' and Krasnodar kray, about 20 percent of the farmland that I saw under cultivation was under minimum till. The weed pressure was too high to go to zero till, they simply couldn't apply enough chemicals to kill all the weeds to make zero till work, so they were starting out with minimum till, which is much more effective at weed control than is zero till initially, and especially when you're starting with very high levels of weed pressure.

I went over to the Ministry of Agriculture and I said, "How much crop area's under minimum till?" They said, None. I said, "I know that's not true because I can see it with my own eyes. I see the cultivators out there, I see the tractors working in the fields, I see the results of the tractors working in the fields." They said, Well, none of it is happening. I said, "Well, I think it is happening." I talked to some of my contacts in the industry and they said, Oh, yeah, definitely happening. I talked to John Deere. John Deere said, Oh,

yes, we're selling minimum till equipment, a lot of people are buying it, and so, yes, it is widespread, and it's being used out in Siberia, as well.

One of the big advantages of minimum till, of course, is the reduced loss of soil moisture. When you do deep plowing and you turn those furrows you lose a lot of soil moisture, and when you're in a semiarid climatic zone, like most of Russia, that becomes a critical factor in your yields, especially if you have a drought. So I looked at this and I said, "They're going to see some tremendous benefits in yield stabilization over the next few years as they reduce loss of moisture due to the shift from plowing to minimum till."

That is exactly what happened. Around 2005, I guess, I gave an interview to *Izvestia* newspaper, a journalist by the name of Marina Smovzh, and she asked me what the prospects were for Russia becoming a major wheat exporter any time in the future. I said, "Well, Russia will be a major exporter by the end of the decade, and I predict that Russia will be exporting twenty million tons of wheat by the end of this decade," and told why, told her about what was going on with minimum till and modern cultivation techniques that preserve soil moisture better than the traditional methods.

Oh, man, at the Moscow Grain Club, at the next meeting, everyone in the room just laughed at me. They thought that was just hysterically funny. I clearly had lost my mind. This wasn't going to happen, certainly wasn't going to happen by the end of the decade. I had gone back through history and I had looked at Russian production over the decades prior, and there had been occasional times of the Russian Federation exporting wheat to the other republics of the Soviet Union that were dependent on Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan for wheat, so the capacity was there in good years. The question was, will they be able to stabilize the yields? And they were in the process of doing that with the more modern cultivation techniques.

And in fact two years later Russia exported twenty million tons of wheat for the first time in decades and that was a shock. A lot of people didn't see that coming and when it happened, all of a sudden people quit laughing at me. Russia is now, I believe, if I'm not mistaken, the world's largest exporter of wheat at this point since the United States has put much more acreage into corn and soybeans that used to be under wheat before Freedom to Farm. We've given up the crown as the world's top wheat exporter.

So these are the sorts of things you learn by crop travel and by getting out of the capital city and seeing what's going on. It wasn't magic on my part, wasn't brilliant insight on my part. I'm not a great agronomist. It wasn't like I was able to go out in the fields and predict yields to the second decimal point, but you could eyeball things, and you could see the things through your car windshield that made it clear that circumstances were changing, that people up in Moscow couldn't see.

And this was one of frustrations in Moscow, if I could just finish the thought. One of the years I was in Moscow I was given a discretionary travel budget of eleven thousand dollars for the year, for ten people to cover one seventh of the Earth's landmass, and that

included travel to the other three countries, to Belarus, Georgia, and Armenia, which meant flying. If I wanted to go out to the Russian Far East or send one of my officers to the Russian Far East it was one thousand dollars for an airline ticket round-trip on top of which you have hotels and whatnot, and my goodness, eleven thousand dollars for Russia was a ridiculous number. And I had another twenty-two thousand dollars in the travel budget but that was for mandatory R&R leave which comes out of post-held funds and I couldn't touch that money. That had to be spent on R&R only. I couldn't use it for crop travel.

I complained to the attaché service about that and was told, you don't need to do all that travel. Well, the commodity divisions had a different point of view, and so did the World Board. They thought I should be out traveling, seeing what's going on, and yet the attaché service would rather give the money to other posts. So Paris got a hundred thousand dollars for travel in France. ITP, whatever it was called at that point, I think it already been reorganized under Mike Yost and so was now called ONA, the Office of Negotiations and Agreements, I was told it got a travel budget of four hundred thousand dollars and they were sending people a dozen at a time to Geneva to observe negotiations so they can learn about negotiations. I was told people would fly to Geneva, insist they couldn't stay for the weekend, they had to go home for the weekend. So they would fly at government expense back home to the states, spend the weekend, and turn around and go back to Geneva for another week, and the end result of this was that I did all of my crop travel in Moscow out of pocket.

I had to drive everyplace and I paid for the gasoline out of pocket, I paid for my hotel rooms out of pocket, all my crop travel in Moscow for the five years I was there, if I traveled on the ground by a motor vehicle, I paid for it out of pocket because the travel budget wasn't large enough to cover my crop travel expenses. The thing that really irritated me was not the money. I mean, the money was not that important. I can pay for gasoline and I could pay for hotels and not miss a meal, but I could not take my attachés along to train them, and one of the obligations of a section chief is to train your junior officers so they learn what you know and they learn how to do the job as best they can. Not once on crop travel was I able to take one of my attachés because they weren't willing to pay out of pocket for travel and the travel budget wouldn't stretch enough to take them on crop travel, too.

So that, I think, was something that damaged the agency, and I think it was very, very poor fiscal management on the part of FAS headquarters to put all that money into posts that either didn't need it or sending junior people from Washington to Geneva to observe, while the overseas posts that needed the money for crop observation travel weren't getting the money.

I'll get off my soapbox but that I think is something that should've been rectified and to my knowledge it never has been. I was told that we at one point had a deputy administrator who asked why the attachés needed a travel budget at all, since they're already there, which I thought betrayed total ignorance of what attachés do in the field.

Q: Just look out your window, Allan, and you can see Vladivostok! Can you also take a step back and describe, because this is an important post, and you were there for five years, and describe what Russia was going through at the time with Putin and the international context, too. And if you could talk about how the agricultural industry is structured, meaning, who owns what, is it privately owned by people or by companies, or is it owned by co-ops? How is it structured, and how did it move? What were the structures that changed that allowed the productivity to increase so significantly? The shift from product rotting in the fields to becoming the largest wheat exporter in the world?

MUSTARD: Well, coming back to the Putin era, I arrived in 2003 right after Mikhail Khodorkovsky was arrested and the embassy in Moscow collectively and the Russia desk back in Washington, State Department collectively, really had their heads in the sand. They were saying, this is just a one-off, Putin taking on one of his political adversaries, and I certainly didn't see it that way but of course I was the agricultural officer, I wasn't taken seriously at that point as someone who'd been there before and knew his way around. It was clear to me that Putin was establishing primacy in a way that would brook absolutely no dissent from anybody, and of course we've seen just in the last couple of weeks what he's done with Aleksey Navalny, sending Navalny to prison for two and a half years, and then putting him in conditions that are destroying his health, so that now there's a very genuine risk that Navalny will die in prison, which Putin would not have done in 2003. In the case of Khodorkovsky, he simply sent him to prison but didn't touch him, let him come out of prison after ten years and then sent him into exile. It is fairly clear with the attempt to kill Navalny with Novichok poison, and now putting him in a prison where he's being subjected to conditions that are placing his health in jeopardy, that the game has changed in fundamental ways since 2003.

We saw this happen over time. I argued with the Department of State that what we were seeing was not one-off, and it took several more iterations of Putin's opponents either being sent into exile or being stripped of their assets or being imprisoned before people started to wake up. Then of course before I left in 2008 Litvinenko was poisoned in London with polonium. The Russians, of course, denied that, they said, No, no, no, we had nothing to do with it. We know from the forensic evidence that it very clearly was polonium from Russia and that it was the KGB that killed him, ex-KGB, now the SVR, that killed him. We've since had the Skripal poisonings, of course, which were done by the GRU, which is military intelligence and counterintelligence, so we saw this and it's been progressing since Putin took over in 2000.

Two thousand and three was a watershed because that was when Khodorkovsky was imprisoned and that was when Putin began to show his true colors as an autocrat. It has only gotten worse since, and again, it took time for the embassy to come to that realization. When I left post in 2008 Russia had just invaded Georgia, started the war in Southern Ossetia, and that was another wake-up call to the embassy that Russia no longer was going to respect any of the agreements signed after World War II on territorial

integrity. Then of course in 2014 Russia invaded Ukraine, completely ignored the Budapest Memorandum, under which Ukraine gave up its nuclear arms in return for guarantees of territorial integrity, and Russia has completely abrogated that unilaterally.

So this was the environment we were in. There was a monthly meeting of something called the Agribusiness Club in Moscow that was organized by a bunch of former ministers of agriculture. They would get together and we would have a little buffet luncheon afterwards, but they would invite a guest speaker and we would all sit around and all the foreign diplomats who were agricultural attachés were invited, too, so I would go to these and listen to the speakers and take notes and of course usually learn something of interest. Sometimes academic, but one day the minister of agriculture himself came, Aleksey Gordeyev, and during his talk he made the point, we were building our own construct, a type of a society, and that construct failed and was destroyed, and he was referring of course to the Soviet model of communism and socialism, state ownership of property, all of that, and of course also the Warsaw Pact and COMECON, which was the Soviet answer to the European Community. You had COMECON, which included Mongolia, Vietnam, and Cuba, all of Eastern Europe, he said, "It all fell apart, and now we're being told that we have to join their construct, and we have to join their construct on their terms, and it hurts." He said that it hurts that everything we worked on has completely gone away and now we're being told we have to join, in effect, their club, their construct, on their terms, using their rules. And he said, "What we have learned from this is that they do not respect us, and if they will not respect us, then we will have to make them fear us."

This came from the mouth of not just a deputy prime minister of the Russian government, he also held the title of one of the deputy prime ministers of the government as well as minister of agriculture, he was also a judo sparring partner of Putin's. He and Putin were friends going back to their relative youths, since they were young men. They both are black belts in judo and had done sparring together and known each other for years and years, so here is a man who is very close to Putin telling us if you will not respect us, we will make you fear us.

Well, here you are, they are convinced that we do not respect them, so they're going to make us fear them. How are they doing it? They're doing it through disinformation campaigns in the West, they're doing it through invasions of countries with which they are neighbors, all kinds of pressure on other countries, and this was the political environment in which we were operating when I was in Moscow. Does that answer your question?

Q: Yes, so Putin was in charge at that time. But he was not yet fully autocratically in charge.

MUSTARD: He was very much in charge but he was not, he was still, I think, testing the boundaries of how much he could get away with, and remember, they had just undergone the 1998 ruble crash, so after the 1998 ruble crash, the economy was in really rough

shape and it took a while for them to come back. In 2003, when I arrived, the economy was really starting to rebound, because oil prices were up to $140 a barrel at that point, and Russia as one of the world's largest oil exporters, if not at that point the largest, I think it was one of the largest. There was more money floating in Moscow than you could shake a stick at. So he was gaining in confidence. I think in 2000 Putin didn't have the self-confidence because of the financial difficulties. By 2003, because the economy was rebounding, oil money was flowing like water.

At one point Ann and I drove out to the country to visit some friends, and we drove back, and in a half-hour drive from these people's house to the outer ring road that goes around Moscow, in a half-hour drive we met six Bentleys coming the other way. Where in the world can you drive where you have six Bentleys coming at you when you're driving back to downtown Moscow from the outskirts? It was just crazy. The world's busiest Mercedes-Benz dealership was in Moscow, just absolutely crazy amounts of money floating around the city.

Q: Were the people doing this, were they kleptocrats?

MUSTARD: Many of them were kleptocrats. Some of them are just businessmen who were taking the oil money and were reinvesting it in other enterprises. It was an oligarchic structure. The kleptocracy tended to be government employees who were taking bribes, and bribery was rampant throughout the bureaucracy, particularly the veterinary service, because nothing, no food could move in the country without either a veterinary or a phytosanitary or a food safety certificate. Those of course required under-the-table payments.

Q: Were there also legitimate businesses going on? My image of Russia is of Putin, his cronies who own everything, and very little legitimate business.

MUSTARD: No, there is a lot of legitimate business, but legitimate business cannot grow beyond a certain size, because once you get to a certain size, and it varies from place to place, but in Moscow, if you went over, much over, like seventy or eighty employees, you suddenly got a visit from somebody in the government, who informed you, you had a new silent partner who is now co-owner of your company. If you protested and tried to resist, they would generate falsified documents, bribe a judge, and then go and get a court judgment against you to take the entire business away from you, and turn it over to somebody else.

Q: That's basically how the mafia works.

MUSTARD: Exactly, so, well, you can draw your own conclusions from that statement.

Q: So you have to stay very small to stay legitimate. Well, then, how does the agricultural industry work? Is it the same, is it owned by these cronies, or how is it structured?

MUSTARD: Well, it varies from place to place, and also to some degree from product to product, because the money-making crops in Russia are the field crops, wheat and sunflower, of course are tremendously profitable. That is a big question, I mean we should leave that for later, the structure of agriculture is a complex issue.

There is one KGB story I have to tell you about that time in Moscow in 2003. We had an occasion to go out and visit an operation in one of the provinces, and for obvious reasons I don't want to tell you which province, but this particular province had a factory that did a lot of processing of sunflower seed oil. I had a junior officer who didn't really know anything about sunflower and needed to learn, so I said, "Go out there and learn about sunflower. Learn about crushing sunflower and how oil is refined and winterized and extracted, and all this." So this officer went out there with an FSN. We had a fairly strict rule that we wouldn't accept goods and services from anybody and so we would tell people, we need transportation, so can you please set something up so we can rent a car or have a car and driver that we will reimburse you for. So this particular operation arranged for a car and a driver and at the end of it presented an invoice, and my officer paid for it then in rubles, paid for the use of the car and the driver.

A few months later I ran into an executive of the company that this officer had been visiting and he was laughing about that visit. He said, "Well, I have to tell you where the car came from." He said this particular town has a KGB officer assigned to it, who's there to guard something, and his job is to guard a particular place in this town, but since there is no real threat he spends most of his days hunting and fishing. He likes to go out and hunt and fish and relax in the woods and things like that. All of a sudden one day he got a phone call from Moscow saying, there's an American diplomat coming down for a visit and you are to surveil that diplomat and report back to us what the diplomat says and does. Well, he came to this executive and said, "I don't know what to do. I have not been trained in surveillance, I don't know what to do. I have to follow this American diplomat around and you have to help me." So the executive said, "Well, they need a car and driver, so why don't you provide the car and be the driver?" And I said, "Wait a minute, you mean we reimbursed you for a car that the KGB paid for it?" And he said, "Isn't capitalism great?"

Another time I was doing some travel and KGB came around, the FSB actually, of course, came around about two days later and was interrogating the guy I'd been visiting, saying where did you take him? This was a big farm that had Internet connectivity, so he went to his desktop PC, brought up Google Earth and he said, "Well, I took him to this field here, then I took him over to this field, here, and took him to this field here." The FSB officer said, "Where did you get the satellite imagery?" The guy said, "That's Google Earth, it's on the Internet." The FSB officer said, "That's classified. You can't have that on your computer." The FSB officer had never heard of Google Earth, and didn't know it wasn't classified imagery any more.

Q: Not trained properly! I'd be interested, what movies at all your posts you found interesting, in India, and the Soviet Union or Russia, or anywhere else that you served.

MUSTARD: That's kind of a tough question because one of the hobbies I had was subtitling Russian movies, and I did it in part because it was good language practice, but also because over time some of the Soviet movies and Russian, post-Soviet movies, Russian movies, too, I wanted people to see, because there was something instructive. It gave you an insight into culture. So that's one of the things that I did for some of the ex-pat community that I was with in some overseas posts, we would show not an American movie, but a Russian movie with English subtitles that I had prepared.

Q: I've seen some that floated to the top, like Solaris.

MUSTARD: Tarkovsky, of course, was a different kind of a producer and director. *Ninth Company*, for example, which was the Russian response to *Platoon*, and then another movie was literally in English *Independent Steaming* but was translated as *Lonely Voyage* or *Detached Mission*. That was the anti-Rambo movie done in the 1980s, really interesting from a sociological standpoint, but it's also rather amusing.

Q: Did it take place in Afghanistan?

MUSTARD: *Company Nine* takes place in Afghanistan. But no, *Detached Mission* takes place on an unknown island in the Pacific. It's, you know, it's a no man's island where the CIA has a secret base and this mission is sent in to take down the CIA before they start a thermonuclear war.

Coming back to Moscow, when you're in WTO negotiations, one of the issues I have with the way that the U.S. government approaches it, is that we don't really study the other countries to understand their points of view and to understand what's driving their positions. All foreign policy derives from domestic policy and all foreign trade policy derives from domestic trade policy, domestic commercial policy, and if you don't understand those then you have a hard time negotiating. I don't think that we have done a good job as often as we should have in understanding other countries.

If you read the oral history interview with Joe O'Mara, for example, he makes that point very strongly, and really corroborated my view when he said that one of the breakthroughs in WTO negotiations when they were negotiating the Uruguay Round was when he and Guy Legras sat down and they tried to understand each other's points of view, from the standpoint of the farmers. Joe had to go to Europe and meet with French farmers and Legras had to understand American farmers in order to say, these are what everybody's interested in, where do we find the middle ground that allows us to compromise?

I don't think we do enough of that. When I was in Moscow one of the things I was really trying to do was to get my arms around what was driving the Russians, and I did a lot of reporting on it both through GAIN reports, because I knew that the folks in FAS were more inclined to read GAIN reports than cables, but also put a fair amount out into the

cable traffic because when FAS goes into the interagency, if it presents a GAIN report the rest of the interagency says, that's just your attaché's opinion. Whereas if they come in with a telegram, the cable has the ambassador's name at the bottom, a policy cable has been signed off on not just by the ag section but by the econ section, the political section, sometimes by the deputy chief of mission as well, and at that point it's not just the agricultural attaché's or counselor's or minister-counselor's opinion, it's the opinion of the embassy. So when FAS comes to the table and says, We have this cable that came in from Moscow, everybody sits around, Yes, we read that, and yes, we concur with that, because they all got the word from their own sections in the embassy, yeah, we signed off on this, and this is correct, this is true.

So it strengthened our hand to have dual lines of communication, both GAIN and the telegrams, the telegraphic network. I tried to find sources of information on the origins of Russian trade policy and Russian agricultural trade policy, and I'm not sure that they were effective. I'm not sure that my reporting had a real impact, because I don't think there was a lot of receptiveness in Washington to reading it and internalizing it and in figuring out, Okay, how do we use this information to approach the Russians, and to deal with their fears?

Russian trade policy is driven by fear at the most fundamental level. The Russians lived through so many famines, with famines in the 1890s, in the 1930s, '20s and '30s. They lived through not completely a famine, but they lived through some very hard times in the 1980s and '90s, and of course they look to World War II and food was very short during World War II. So if you look at the history of Russia and this history of famine and hard times and going hungry a lot, of course it has an impact on their agricultural trade policy. Of course it has a tremendous impact on their point of view, that they need to have a certain amount of domestic production that they can rely on, that nobody can take away from them.

I get that. I think there were few people in the U.S. government who got that, but I got that, and I tried to convey that to Washington, that there are certain fundamental fears that we need to address. Now, that doesn't mean we give them everything they asked for, because they're very protectionist and, you know, what they were asking for was totally unreasonable in many cases, but we needed to figure out how to accommodate it. Okay, what's the compromise that we reach? Are there safeguards that we can put in place? Are there certain commodities that we'll say are off-limits, untouchable, as we have done in our own agricultural policy?

I just don't think that there was a lot of attention addressed to the peculiarities of this, the specifics of the Russian experience, and the drivers of their trade policy, so maybe that was a failure on my part, that I just kinda took it for granted, that I would put the stuff out there, would be reporting, it would be read, people would internalize it. But that really wasn't the case. We spent five years trying to get Russia into the WTO while I was there. I left and they finally came in a couple years later.

But at one point, it was when the Bush Administration, Bush 43 administration, was in, word came down from the White House that the President wanted to be able to announce at his second inaugural address that the United States had reached agreement with the Russians on WTO accession. The European Union already did in the fall, which was a mistake, and the commission realized it was a mistake after they did it, but the commission was leaving. There was a new commission coming in, they'd held elections and the new commission was coming in, so the old commission wanted the feather in its cap of having Russia's WTO accession on its scorecard collectively. So it was a rush job and they realized that they had blown it. They had not done a good job on the negotiations.

So now the Russians were trying to push us. They wanted a similar deal and actually the Russians told us the deal they wanted was what we gave the Chinese, which we told them wasn't going to happen. China was a special deal and we weren't going to make that mistake again, either. So there was all this pressure from the White House to get Russia's negotiations wrapped up in time for the President to announce it in his second inaugural address, and we said in the embassy, we can't allow that to happen.

So the econ section and our section and the political section banded together, and we wrote a series of messages back to Washington, both front channel and back channel, saying, We think this is a very bad idea, you need to stop this, and it can't go forward, otherwise we will pay for decades for the desire for a short-term, you know, feel good during a speech. We did manage to get it turned off, so the White House did back off, back down, finally, and we continued the negotiations. That was one kind of a hair-raising experience we had.

I remember another time, we got a message from the White House. There was an advisor to George Bush, Karen Hughes, communications director in the White House, and she wanted to talk directly over the phone to a bunch of people in the Russian leadership at her level. She didn't speak Russian and I guess the White House was going to tee up an interpreter. She wanted their phone numbers and didn't want the embassy to make the calls and connect her or anything, be involved in any way, so it's just going to be from the White House to these people. We never did hear how that came out, if they even took place or if anything came of them. But that was kind of an odd thing, that someone in the White House was going to cold call a bunch of high-ranking Russian officials.

Q: It should go through the bureaucracy.

MUSTARD: You need to keep records of those sorts of things, the outcome, of the promises made. You need to record all that.

So anyway, what questions did you have about Moscow, and about my time in Moscow?

Q: Were there any times when you felt you were under pressure or it was dangerous in any way?

MUSTARD: I had a death threat once. There was a private businessman who invited Ann and me to dinner one night in his eight-hundred-thousand-dollar apartment, and over dinner it became very clear that he'd invited me to dinner because he was under instructions from the Ministry of Agriculture to deliver a message to me. We'd been doing some reporting on prices as part of our livestock reporting, and meat prices had been going up, and it was cause for a certain amount of social unrest. The chief of foreign relations of the Ministry of Agriculture called me in at one point and said, "You know, this is not appreciated. You really need to stop reporting on meat prices. These are public reports. Go out on the Internet, and we don't appreciate it." I said, "Well, Mr. Vershinin, the fact is that my paycheck is signed by Ann Veneman and not by you or your minister, and she's happy with my reporting, so as long as she wants me to report on meat prices I will continue to report."

In the wake of that, I was invited to dinner by this businessman, who was in the meat business, and he said, "You know, people who go up against Andrey Vershinin are making a big mistake, because bad things can happen to people who go against him, and I mean like really bad things can happen, really dangerous things could happen." There had already been cases of employees of the Ministry of Agriculture having not been killed but they had been beaten so severely that they had to retire on disability. They were hospitalized for months to recover after these very severe beatings, because they didn't want to do things that the leadership ordered them to do that were illegal. This was in the early Putin years, you know, he was just really starting to take over the bureaucracy.

So I took it seriously because if they were gonna give beatings to their own people, there was no reason they wouldn't necessarily give a beating to a punk agricultural officer from a foreign country who was refusing to knuckle under. But I just responded to him, I said, "You know, you realize that if a U.S. diplomat is attacked it's considered an act of war, and the U.S. government will consider it an act of war, so just tell Mr. Vershinin he has to bear that in mind," which kind of surprised him. He hadn't expected that response from me. Of course we did continue to report, same as we had been, but yeah, there was a kind of pressure.

When we traveled, we would get pressured. I traveled out once, we were in Balashov, visiting a farmer who was farming four large state farms that he was renting from the government, and he was producing wheat, barley, and sunflower. So we went out, we spent the day out looking at the fields, and then spent the evening by the river side barbecuing, just a very enjoyable day. We got back, my Montana State University intern and I got back to the hotel about eleven o'clock that night and Lieutenant Smorchkov of the local constabulary was there waiting for us, wanting to interrogate us. I'm pretty sure that the reason he was waiting for us is because the GPS on our car hadn't moved all day as we were in this other guy's car, so he'd come around the hotel looking for us and we weren't there. The hotel staff said, "No, they left this morning," and he was in a panic as his job was to know where we were, so he started interrogating me. "I want to know where you were." I said, "I don't have to answer your questions, I'm a diplomat." He

asked if the intern was a diplomat. I said, “No, he’s an intern.” So he said, “I can interrogate him.” I said, “Go ahead.”

Well, the intern didn’t speak Russian and Smorchkov didn’t speak English, so the interrogation didn’t last very long, and so then he said, “I need copies of your documents.” I said, “Well, that’s fine,” and so he sent his sidekick back to the police station and came back with a flatbed scanner, and they scanned my diplomatic card and they scanned the intern’s ID and passport, and that’s all I would let him scan, I said, “You have the right to scan these documents but nothing else.” Then I said, “Okay, we’re going to bed now because we have to get up and drive in the morning.” He started to argue with me and I just said, “Lieutenant, we’re going to bed, good night,” and made the intern go into his room and lock the door, and then I went to my bedroom and locked the door.

They would do this sort of thing trying to harass you. Then there was the unofficial type of harassment, which was not official, and it wasn’t really intended as harassment, but prostitution is very widespread in a lot of these places, and most of these hotels, you would check in and at nine o’clock, you’d get a phone call asking you if you wanted a woman. I learned that if I answered back in Russian in a Georgian accent and asked if the woman could cook and if she could clean my boots, they would just hang up and I wouldn’t get any callbacks. You know, if you answered back and tried to ask them not to call you anymore, then you’d get callbacks, but if I answered in a Georgian accent and asked if she could cook, then they wouldn’t call me back.

Once I was traveling with my wife, we were down in Krasnodar. We checked into the hotel and I had not been to Krasnodar in years, a decade and a half, and was amazed, the hotel was brand-new, it was beautiful, they had bellhops, and bellhops came running out to grab our bags and helped Ann get into the hotel. By the time I parked the car and came in, we were already checked in and Ann was up in the room and the luggage had already been delivered. So I went and I got on the elevator, and two other gentlemen got on the elevator, and an attractive young woman got on. She started handing out business cards and said, “Call the phone number on this card and a pretty girl will come to your room.” So I got to the room and knocked on the door. Ann opened the door and I handed her the card and said, “Call this number and a pretty girl will come to your room.” She said, “This has to go in your trip report,” so it did.

Q: It sounds like you had a pretty G, or maybe PG experience there. I’m surprised that they didn’t, or maybe you don’t want to name names, but your staff surely lost their perspective, let’s say.

MUSTARD: Not among the staff that I had, but it was fairly rampant in the embassy. The rule was that if you were single and if you reported your contacts to the, this is in the 2000s, if you were single and if you reported your contacts to the regional security officer, then you could have as much sex as you wanted to. But if you were married it was a different story, because that then creates the potential for compromise. It creates problems, okay, in terms of being able to compromise somebody and turn them against

their own government. So if you wanted to get thrown out of the country and you were married, the easiest way to get thrown out of the country was to let the ambassador know that you were fooling around on the side. There were a number of people thrown out of the country while I was there, none from the ag section, we just didn't have that problem, and when I served on the housing board, there were some single men who absolutely were desperate to stay off the embassy compound. They wanted housing out in the city so they could entertain overnight guests, because if you were on the compound you could not have a Russian in your apartment between the hours of two and four am.

This was a problem for my daughter because you could not have Russian citizens on the embassy compound between two and four am, specifically to keep them out of people's beds, and my daughter was going to the German school. She had friends who were Germans, were Russians, were Ukrainians, were from all over Europe, and one night she wanted to have a slumber party in honor of her birthday. Well, she couldn't have the Russian friends over, so I went to the security officer and I said, "Do I tell my daughter she can't have a slumber party? She has to tell her Russian friends, 'I can't invite you because you're Russian,' and this can look really bad." And he said, "Let me take it to the committee." They had this committee of all of the security people, you know, that would get together and think deep thoughts about problems, and to their credit they sat down, they said this really is not a problem, we can give a one-time waiver for a slumber party in honor of a girl's birthday. So for my daughter's birthday she was able to hold a slumber party and have her Russian friends included in the group.

But at two am I got a phone call from one of the guards, saying, "Mr. Mustard, your Russian guests have to leave, it's two o'clock." I said, "You have a note. You have a memorandum in your notebook from the RSO telling you it's all right." So they flipped through the notebook, "Oh, yes, here it is, sorry, okay, they can stay."

Q: The difficulties of parenting overseas. You could always explain that the RSO was the bad guy. And she had to be careful about good-looking seventeen-year-old Russian boys, I imagine.

MUSTARD: Not that much, not that much.

Q: What would you say is some of your most productive work that you did while you were in Russia? Or any of your posts? Or some of your most wasteful projects that you worked on, that you had to, that didn't turn out the way you'd hoped?

MUSTARD: Well I think one of the most productive things I probably did was I really rebuilt the reporting program. We had a reporting program when I arrived, but it was not necessarily responsive to what folks in FAS needed, as they expressed it to me, so I think getting the reporting program back up and running was pretty good. When Eric Wenberg arrived as the ATO, Eric of course is just a human dynamo, and he and I sat down and talked about what he wanted to do. He wanted to get a little bit into food safety, too, because he said, "Even though as an ATO I'm here to promote American products. there

are things here that we need to promote in the realm of both human nutrition and in terms of food safety that Russians don't really understand well. If we can make some progress on that note, the nuts and bolts of food safety, the nuts and bolts of human nutrition, then that'll be good for us, too, because the food that we are selling over here is healthful food and it's good things to eat. It's nutritious." So I unleashed him on that and tried to help him with that. I thought that was really a good initiative. I can't take a lot of credit for that, it was much more Eric's idea, his concept, but he ran with it.

One of the funny accomplishments we did was the first wine tastings in the ambassador's residence in Moscow. State Department has a very strange attitude that ambassadors' residences are not to be used for commercial promotion, when in fact under U.S. law one of the primary functions of an ambassador is commercial promotion, and that's in the Foreign Service Act. So I went to the ambassador and the DCM. I said that we wanted to organize wine promotions like what we did in Vienna, and they agreed. It took a bit of a push, because they were reluctant initially. Ambassador Vershbow is an old arms negotiator, you know, and so he thought of the bilateral relationship in terms of arms negotiations and took a little convincing, but we did it, we had very successful wine promotions.

We had a very successful whiskey promotion. DISCUS, the Distillers' Council, came out and did a spirits promotion, and I learned a very important lesson there when we did the spirits promotion. Any time that you have a promotion of alcohol, if you have law-enforcement people in the embassy, invite them to the event, because they will help control the crowd. You always have at least one drunk who needs to be handled and the law-enforcement people know how to handle drunks. So I learned that lesson and that was one of the good things.

In terms of trade policy, of course, one of the big functions there was keeping the Russians honest, and we found that record-keeping was very important, because the Russians would try to change the past. They would try to amend history, and they were very adept at that if you did not have your own records. So we found that keeping good records and having electronic copies of them that could be searched quickly were a big boon. Actually when I would go to Geneva or to London for the so-called secret meeting in London, which was a hoot, it wasn't much of a secret, we had copies of the documents in electronic form. So when the Russians would say, Well, we never said that, we could pull up a copy of their letter in which they said that, or if they said, Well, you never sent us a letter about that, we could say, No, we sent you the letter on thus and such a date, here's a copy of it, and your response acknowledging receipt of it was dated thus and such. So we could call them out on this kind of stuff and try to keep them honest.

That record-keeping might seem like a rather mundane sort of bureaucratic thing but it was an enormously valuable tool in the negotiations with the Russians and one that turned out to be pretty necessary. I found that carrying my laptop and having an external hard drive with all the documents on it was an absolute necessity for these negotiations. Susan Schwab was U.S. trade representative, Mike Johanns was the secretary of

agriculture, and they came to London to meet with Aleksey Gordeyev, who was the Russian minister of agriculture, German Gref, who was the, he's now the chairman of Sberbank, the largest bank in Russia, but at the time he was the minister of economic development and trade. They had a whole bunch of aides, the chief veterinary officer of Russia was there, Nepoklonov, and various others, and the idea was that we were to try and have this big breakthrough on the veterinary and phytosanitary issues, which was the hold up.

There were two hold ups in the WTO negotiations. One was agriculture and as I recall the other was automobiles or something like that. We were trying to get a breakthrough in agriculture and the Russians just weren't having it. The Russians in the Ministry of Agriculture didn't want to be in the WTO in the first place, so anything they could do to gum up the works was good as far as they were concerned. So we went in and we negotiated. We negotiated the first night till two o'clock in the morning, got up the next morning, got breakfast, came back to the negotiations, and your typical old Russian tactic was that you negotiate into the night and then the next morning you go back to square one and you say, No, we reject all of that, we want to start over again, and we went back and forth.

We made absolutely no progress, as I recall, in this secret meeting, and at the end of it Susan Schwab walked out of it, looked me in the eye and said, "If I had to spend one more day with these people I'd slit my wrists." She pitied me having to go back to Moscow. But that was just dealing with the Russians, they're hard bargainers, hard negotiators, and that was the, I guess, in terms of failures, that was probably my biggest disappointment, was the fact that after five years, we still were not really substantially closer, any closer to an agreement with the Russians than we were when I arrived. I really thought we might be able to make some more progress, but the Russians in the Ministry of Agriculture were not interested in progress. They really were not, and they were happy to gum up the works. A lot of other people wanted to be, and they knew the rest of the bureaucracy was behind it, but the agriculture sector didn't want to be in.

There was a lot of disinformation, too. One of the aspects of WTO negotiations is that if you negotiate a concession from the other side then it's reciprocal. They get the same concession from you, so one of the big sticking points was on the question of delisting plants. If the Russians were to delist the plant, we wanted it so that FSIS has to go and inspect the plant, certifies any corrective actions that were necessary to bring it into compliance, and send certification to Moscow, and the Russians would relist the plant, and of course the Russians blew up over this. One of the journalists who was following this quoted a member of the veterinary services saying that they're trying to get us to go into these negotiations with no trousers on, naked from the waist down.

And of course that was not what we were trying to do, we were negotiating the same terms and conditions we have with a lot of other countries. It facilitates commerce. If there's a trust relationship, then you trust each other to do it, and we said, We offer you the same thing, that, you know, when you get to the point that you can export meat

products or any sort of products to the United States, if we delist your plants, that you'll be able to relist based on your authority. That wasn't good enough for the Russians and that was a sticking point and again, there was a lot of propaganda about how the Americans are offering us this and not offering anything in return. That was just complete nonsense. It simply was not true.

Q: When you negotiate like that, you have to have a willing partner on the other side. And it's got to be in your interests. And if they don't see it that way, you have to be willing to walk away.

MUSTARD: We could tell if they were serious in a negotiation as soon as they walked in the door, because it depended on who was coming in. If the team consisted of one particular veterinarian and only that one particular veterinarian, who had no authority to negotiate anything, we knew it was going to be a waste of time. If they came in with three veterinarians, two of them backing up the chief veterinary officer, well, then we knew we might make some progress.

We would sit down, we would try to negotiate veterinary certificates, and we would just pound away for weeks and weeks and weeks, trying to negotiate veterinary certificates. And we would have the veterinary attaché fly in from Vienna, and we would have people come out from APHIS in Washington, and they would come out and they'd negotiate and leave empty-handed and have no cert. One day the chief veterinary officer—it was when Nikolay Vlasov was the chief veterinary officer—called up and said, "Allan, I need you to come over. We need to negotiate some live animal certificates." I thought, Oh, boy, here we go again. So I went over to the Ministry of Agriculture and sat down with Dr. Vlasov, and he said, "We need live animal certificates for race horses, live cattle, live sheep, live goats," a couple more, I don't know what all, and he said, "Where are your standard certificates?" So I had them, I had the standard APHIS live animal certificates for whatever species they wanted, I handed them over, and he said, "Let's sit down, let's work through these right now." We worked through them and looked at them and he said, "Okay we can live with these. We need to have these translated into Russian."

He went ahead and worked on translating them into Russian and a couple days later I went back over there and with APHIS's blessing in two days we negotiated live animal certificates. Now, the reason was that there were some very high-powered people in Russia who wanted to be able to import live animals directly. They didn't want to have to go through a third country. What you have to do if you don't have a live animal cert with the country of origin, you ship that animal for ninety days to another country, it's issued a live animal veterinary certificate for that country, which is how we had been exporting race horses to Russia for years. They would go through Belgium, typically, the horse lands in Belgium, some, you know, thirty thousand dollar race horses, but he would buy a bunch of them, maybe flown into Belgium, they stay in Belgium for ninety days, get a Belgian vet certificate, then they can come into Russia.

People from now on will bring them over directly without having to go through a third party. It was a high-powered somebody who was willing to crack heads and pay some bribes, and so, boom, all of a sudden, in two days we had veterinary certificates. So where there was a will, there was a way.

The French agricultural counselor told me about some live animals, some live dairy cows were being brought in from France, only got to the border, were being shipped in by truck. The trucks got to the border of Russia and the veterinary service would not let them in. Something was wrong with the documentation. These were live cows, you had to do something with them, because they need to be fed and watered, otherwise they'll die pretty quick. So the owner, the guy who was selling the cows, called the French agricultural counselor and said, "Can you do something about this?"

The French agricultural counselor called the chief of foreign relations, who said, "Let me check with the minister and see what we can do." So he checked with the minister, he called back the French counselor and said, "The minister says he'll be happy to issue orders to the veterinary service to let these cows in, but in return he wants to receive a decoration from the French government, so when we have a ceremony on receipt of the cows you need to present him with some sort of a medal." So they ginned up some sort of a French medal for him and when they had the ceremony of receiving all these exotic cows which were being imported, the cows were being imported by the brother-in-law of the mayor of Moscow, so I know the guy had connections, and so the French ambassador came to the ceremony and he presented the minister of agriculture of Russia with this medal, put it over his head, you know, French style, made Gordeyev a cavalier of agriculture or something like that. Afterwards the head of foreign relations went up to the French agricultural counselor and said, "Where's my medal?"

Q: When you were in Moscow, in 2008, talk about how the DPS harassed you while traveling.

MUSTARD: The GAI, the state auto inspection, changed its name because they had such a bad reputation that they changed it to the Road Patrol Service. It was the same people in the same uniforms and collecting the same bribes. Ann and I would go out on crop travel and every few miles down the road we'd get pulled over so they could inspect our documents, just harassing us, and one guy was actually rather sheepish about it. He pulled me over and I said, "What did I do this time?" He said, "You did nothing. You've done nothing wrong." I said, "What are you pulling me over for?" And he said, "Orders from up above. They told us to pull you over constantly." So we were being pulled over, being harassed, just for the sake of harassment.

I got back from that trip and this was 2008, by this time. Ambassador Burns was our ambassador and Dan Russell was his deputy chief of mission. So I went to them and complained and said, "You know this is getting ridiculous. I can't go ten miles without being pulled over. These trips just take forever. I'm constantly being pulled over and harassed, it has to stop." Dan went in and spoke to the head of the North America desk at

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ambassador spoke to one of the deputy foreign ministers and said, "What's going on here? This has to stop. We don't harass your people in the States this way," and what they said back was, Well, he travels an awful lot.

Well, of course I do. Agriculture is out in the boondocks. If you want to know what's going on in agriculture, you have to travel to rural areas. They said, Well, quit harassing him, or we will start to reciprocate, there will be repercussions to the bilateral relationship if you don't stop harassing him. Well, Ann and I made one more trip together, a long trip. We got out into the boondocks and we're heading down the road, and the head of the state police in that sector would be out on the street waiting for me. Of course they had a GPS in our car that could track us. He would be out waiting for me and as I drove by he would demonstratively turn his back to me to show that he wasn't watching me go by. We would get to the next post and the guy would be standing out there waiting for me, and as I drove by he would turn his back to me to show that he was not monitoring us. It was really bizarre. They were doing this kind of stuff, it was ridiculous. It really was such a waste of manpower, but that's the kind of stuff that you'd put up with.

We made a trip at one point, we got to the last stop and we were informed that we had no hotel reservations, they never received a hotel reservation. We had the confirmation. We said, Well, do you have rooms? He said, "No, we don't have any rooms. You're not going to be able to spend the night here." So we had to drive back to Moscow in a hurry that night because he refused to let us stay there. It was that sort of petty harassment that they would do just to make our lives more difficult. No other G-8 country treated us that way, only the Russians.

Q: That was only for a period of time, wasn't it? It goes up and down, doesn't it?

MUSTARD: It goes up and down. It was bad during the '80s, it was bad during the 2000s, was bad under Putin, and it was bad under the Soviets. In the Yeltsin era it wasn't nearly as bad, but under Putin it's gotten very bad.

Mexico City 2008–2011

Q: You got like what, six weeks of Spanish-language training?

MUSTARD: No, I got five weeks. I got five weeks of Spanish-language training but that was in Guatemala and Linda Eilks was the one who clued me in on that. She had served in Guatemala City and was one of the officers there when Bob Hoff was the counselor. Linda told me about this great program that for the same amount of money that we would've spent going to the Foreign Service Institute for five weeks we could go to the Christian Spanish Academy in Antigua Guatemala, which is the ancient capital, and live with a host family, which would force us to practice our Spanish. We would live with them and we would get two meals a day six days a week from them as part of the deal.

So Ann and I requested that. She brushed up her Spanish. She spoke Spanish, she'd studied Spanish in both high school and college, and had studied in Monterrey at one point as well. So she came with much better command of Spanish than I did, and of course after five weeks, you know, I could do the basics, say hello, goodbye, could more or less order food, but that was about it.

We had a marvelous time those five weeks in Guatemala and that was quite fascinating, seeing a part of the world I really had never been to before, never been in. I had never spent any time in Central America before that, so that was nice.

We then moved up to Mexico City and Mexico at that time was our second largest post overseas, FAS Beijing of course being the largest by far with over fifty employees and in Mexico we had twenty-three employees in FAS, and then we had the APHIS operation as well, and something that people tend to forget, the Agricultural Research Service had an operation there as well. I'd like to talk about them a little bit. The APHIS shop was eighteen different installations scattered around the country, because APHIS had this tremendous collaborative relationship with SENASICA, the Mexican counterpart to both APHIS and FSIS doing a lot of work on pest management, particularly dealing with plant diseases, animal diseases, animal pests. They had the screwworm breeding facility down in Tapachula that was used to produce sterile males that they would then release to keep the screwworm under control, and the screwworm had already been pushed all the way down to the Isthmus of Panama by the time I arrived.

So screwworm had been pretty well eradicated in Mexico and most of Central America down to the Isthmus of Panama, but to keep it under control they continued to produce the sterile males and send them down and release them, so that they could keep the screwworm population south of the Isthmus.

So a tremendous collaborative relationship between APHIS and SENASICA, but that was not reproduced in the relationship between SENASICA and FSIS [Food Safety and Inspection Service]. Shortly after I arrived, the secretary of agriculture at the time was Ed Schaefer, you remember he was secretary for the last year of the Bush 43 administration, and one of the very first things we had to do was set up a telephone call between Ed Schaefer on the one hand and his Mexican counterpart, whose name was Cardenas, on the other, and one of the local employees, Dulce Flores, interpreted for that phone call.

I was frankly shocked because the phone call was something that should've taken place between a couple of GS-13s, maybe at most a couple of GS-14s. It had to do with a rather routine plant delisting and we had an agreement with the Mexicans on plant inspection, that if there was something found wrong with a shipment of either a U.S. product or Mexican product, the plant would be more or less automatically delisted until the issue could be run down. We had an agreement with the Mexicans that if FSIS went in and did an inspection of the plant and ordered corrective actions, and if the corrective actions were put in place, the plant would be relisted, and obviously reciprocally we did the same thing for the Mexicans. If FSIS delisted a Mexican plant then SENASICA could go and

do the inspection, bring things into order, correct any deficiencies, and inform us, but the hangup here was this took several weeks. It would typically take about five weeks to do that, and that's five weeks that this plant has lost its export market, either U.S. plant shipping to Mexico or Mexican plant shipping to the United States.

So there was more or less a gentlemen's agreement that if a country voluntarily delisted, saying we found a deficiency, we're delisting voluntarily ourselves and will let you know when it's ready, it could be done much faster. Well, these are the sorts of technical conversations that should take place between technicians, GS-13s and -14s, and here we had the two secretaries of agriculture discussing this issue. When the call got over I pulled my staff together and said, "What's going on here? Why did we have to have the secretary of agriculture dealing with a GS-13 or GS-14 issue?" The answer was that the relationship between SENASICA and FSIS was so bad that they weren't communicating at that level any more. All communication took place only at the very top ranks of either the department or the agencies. This was so crazy, because we have such a volume of trade going back and forth, just billions of dollars of trade going back and forth between the United States and Mexico in agricultural products, we can't have a requirement that the secretary of agriculture has to get involved every time there's a hiccup.

So my first job really was to get to know the people at SENASICA, starting with the very top fellow, Enrique Sanchez Cruz, who was a marvelous counterpart, not only a very deep intellectual, but a very fine gentleman, as well. So I tried to establish a relationship with him so that he would open up to me and explain to me, you know, what's going on here, what's wrong with the relationship. We started working on it and I finally at one point got a hold of Al Almanza, who was the head of FSIS at the time. I said, "Al, you need to make a trip down here. You need to come down here and bury the hatchet with SENASICA and just go over the issues. Let's put them to bed and go back to a more businesslike relationship rather than this contention, because the Mexicans say they felt like they weren't being respected and they therefore didn't feel like they were trusted and that they could trust FSIS. We have to restore this trust. You are both science-based organizations and both have competent veterinarians, and there's no reason we couldn't have a much better working relationship than we do."

What the Mexicans said was, Almanza needs to come down with some of his people, we need to have a good technical conversation, but to have a trust relationship he needs to break bread with us. We need to have dinner together and we want you guys to host the dinner. So it turned out I had to go back up to the United States because I had a surgical procedure that was time sensitive. I had to go to the states. I had to have the surgery, and so I couldn't be there on the dates that SENASICA and FSIS had agreed to.

I sat down with my staff and I said, "What do the Mexicans want in the way of a dinner that we would host?" And they said, "They want a barbecue," and I said, "Well, how do you propose to do that?" The two assistant attachés lived in an apartment building that had a rooftop patio with a built-in barbecue set up. They said, We can host it on the roof

of our building. Almanza is technically hosting the Mexicans and we will just make it all happen.

Next as they were talking to the Mexicans, the Mexicans said, You know, for this to be done properly and for you to show proper respect to us, we need to be served the barbecue on china. Paper plates and plastic plates will not do. Well, my wife and I had accumulated sixty-three place settings of Noritake china over the years for our representational entertaining, so I went to my wife and I said, "What do you think?" And she said, "Well, if it's for a good cause they can borrow it, but tell them that if they break anything going up and down the stairs to this rooftop patio, they drop something and break it, they have to pay for it." So I impressed on my attachés that they were on the hook for any breakage and we then delivered to them as many place settings as they needed.

And by golly, Almanza and FSIS and my attachés hosted the SENASICA veterinarians to a real top-notch barbecue. I was sorry I wasn't there because apparently it was a real success. They hit it off, they kind of buried the hatchet and established a relationship, such that from that point forward, mid-level officials of FSIS and SENASICA could solve these problems talking among themselves. So that was the first big thing that I did when I got there, was try to get back to a working relationship.

One of the other big counterparts, of course, was Economia, the Secretariat of the Economy, and the under secretary for foreign trade of Economia was Beatriz Leycegui. She was a trained attorney, she had gone to law school at Columbia University in New York, she knew the United States extremely well, and of course had been very heavily involved in WTO negotiations during the Uruguay Round. So a very, very sharp person and at our very first meeting she gave me her cell phone number and said, "Call me anytime, because this relationship has to work." I gave her my cell phone and met Beatriz about once a month. I met her director general for foreign trade, Juan Carlos Baker, for breakfast about once a month, and he and I lived in the same neighborhood in Polanco, so we would get together for breakfast and if something blew up we'd get together for breakfast impromptu and try to figure out how do we solve this problem before it gets escalated to some level where, you know, it becomes a political issue. We just resolved an awful lot of issues at that level between the embassy and Economia. Getting FSIS to talk to SENASICA, I saw that really as our highest and best use, was to ensure that the communications were flowing back and forth, and that if there was something that we could solve at our level, that we could do it.

During that time, the trucking issue blew up. The Obama administration reneged on an agreement to allow Mexican truckers to drive their trucks into the United States. There were a total of thirteen Mexican teamsters authorized for the program, so it seemed a bit odd that the administration did this, especially because the U.S. had already lost a NAFTA dispute over it. The Mexicans retaliated by imposing punitive tariffs on several commodities, including agricultural commodities like California wine, since the NAFTA case had already been decided. I went to breakfast with Juan Carlos to get the lowdown

on the punitive tariffs, and he spelled out to me that each item was associated with a congressional district whose member of Congress had voiced support for the administration's position.

I reported this back by unclassified cable so that USDA could share it with anybody who wanted to know. The cable had no impact, because the real motivation for this, I was later told, was to get political support of the Teamsters Union for Rahm Emmanuel's campaign to be mayor of Chicago. He had been a high White House appointee and so had President Obama's support. After he was elected, the Obama administration caved in to the Mexicans and allowed Mexican teamsters to drive in the United States. It was all a big charade.

One thing I learned about Mexico during this time is that business lunches are not a good idea. Mexicans don't like business lunches because if you go to lunch and it's a business lunch, it takes three hours and it takes too big a chunk out of the day. So they liked breakfast, and we would go to a business breakfast someplace, and that worked out very nicely. We could meet in one of the hotel restaurants, or rather there was a wonderful bookstore in Polanco called *El Pendulo* (the pendulum) that served breakfast. We would go there and have very congenial meetings. The Mexicans were very open to talking business and what I discovered was, it was very different from Russia in that the Russians, of course, a meeting with Russian officials above a certain level was very difficult. Meeting with Mexican officials was simple. You gave them a phone call and said, "I need to come see you," and they would set aside time.

When the Mexican government changed in 2009, the new secretary of agriculture was Francisco Mayorga, a graduate of Cal Davis and a fluent English speaker. His under secretary was a dual national American Mexican, Jeffrey Max Jones, a graduate of BYU and native speaker of both Spanish and English. Working with them was a pleasure—they were thoroughly professional, they were accessible, and they were interested in solving problems. The top Mexican politicians had cast their lot with NAFTA and saw their future in good relations with the United States and Canada.

We had a dustup over rice that was rather instructive. At one point the rice millers in Mexico decided that they wanted to put a stop to imports of U.S. rice during their peak harvest and milling season because, of course, right after harvest prices drop and they thought, if we can keep U.S. rice out of the market for a few months, then we can keep the market for ourselves. That will support prices, we'll make better profits, and we'll do it at the expense of the gringos.

So what they did was they sent a letter to SENASICA, which was the veterinary and phytosanitary service of the Secretariat of Agriculture, alleging that the U.S. rice was contaminated. SENASICA said, This is not our issue, we don't deal with contamination of food products, that is the job of COFEPRIS, which is the Mexican counterpart of FDA. So SENASICA sent the letter over to COFEPRIS for action. Now, under Mexican regulations, if a government agency of Mexico receives a communication from another

government agency of Mexico, it has to be taken at face value. So even though SENASICA was not the source of this allegation, the fact that it was transmitted from SENASICA to COFEPRIS meant COFEPRIS looked at this letter, saw it came from SENASICA, and said, We have to take the allegations seriously. COFEPRIS banned imports of U.S. rice.

Well, this set off a firestorm. You can imagine how the Rice Millers up in the United States reacted to this, and the Rice Council, and various others. It's the only time that in my time overseas, all my years overseas, that I ever received a telephone call on my cell phone from a sitting U.S. congressman. There was a congressman in Arkansas by the name of Marion Berry, not the mayor of DC, but Marion Berry, B-E-R-R-Y, and Marion Berry, member of Congress, called me on the phone to make sure that I was on the case. He and I knew each other. We had met when he was in the Clinton administration and he had gone to Moscow as part of a delegation led by the secretary of agriculture on the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, so I had met Marion Berry before he was elected to Congress.

When we chatted it was a very congenial, cordial call, and I assured him, "Yes, we're on top of this," over an open phone line, "Obviously I can't tell you what we're going to do, but we do have a plan, it is ripening, and when the plan is ready we will execute it, and I expect that we will have U.S. rice coming back into Mexico in a matter of weeks, not months, which is our goal." So he was satisfied with that and that in fact is what we did. We sat down with COFEPRIS and refuted the arguments. We presented evidence showing that the allegations were spurious and the icing on the cake after our conversation with COFEPRIS, where they said, This decision has to be made by the secretary of health, so we need a telephone call from the ambassador to the secretary of health to seal this. I went to the ambassador, who at that point was Carlos Pascual. I gave him the briefing paper and said, "We pushed the rock most of the way up the hill, but the Mexicans tell us that to get the rock over the top of the hill, the summit, you have to do the last final push with a phone call to the secretary of health. Here are your talking points."

He was okay with that. He picked up the phone, of course, and made the call. Carlos Pascual speaks native Spanish, his parents are immigrants from Cuba, so his Spanish is extremely good. He spoke to the secretary in Spanish, delivered the talking points, and the ban was lifted, I think in about five weeks. It took us five weeks to lift the ban, it didn't take several months, and the Mexican rice producers and millers of course were not happy with that. But it was an argument in favor of sound science and that was one of the other points I made to COFEPRIS and to SENASICA, that you don't want to go down the road of not following sound science. Start to do that, obviously you're leaving yourself open for retribution that at some point somebody, somewhere, not the United States, most likely, but somebody else will turn the tables on you and say, what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, as well.

They understood that. The Mexicans understood the science and it worked and they knew that the scientific arguments worked. One of the other things was that I had my attachés engaged in this. I had my local staff engaged in this. There were some people who were throwing dust in our eyes, trying to fog the issue, and you hear about the fog of war, the first couple of weeks things were very murky. We couldn't really figure out exactly what was going on, who instigated this, why it was going on, so it took us about two weeks to get everything run down to where we thought we had a good handle on what was going on, and then came up with a plan and executed it. It was interesting to see that there were some people on the U.S. side who were not our friends, there were people on the U.S. side of the border who were trying very much to obfuscate the matter, and to keep things alive for a while, which I found rather strange.

But anyway in the wake of that, one of the things that came out of that was of course I'd done a lot of work in Moscow for USAPEEC, getting U.S. poultry into Moscow and then after this case of helping the rice people in the United States get the market back in a short period of time rather than a long period of time, they both invited me to speak at their annual meetings. That set off a little bit of a kerfuffle in Washington because folks in the commodity realm back in Washington demanded to know why Mustard was being invited, and not someone from Washington, to come to these annual meetings. Jim Sumner said that they had deliberately decided to have their annual meeting in Texas because it was close to Mexico and it would be convenient for me to fly out, because they wanted me that badly as the keynote speaker at their conference. Then the rice people, when they found out that I was going to be speaking there, said they wanted to have me come and receive an award at the Rice Council meeting in San Diego. So I got that trip, it was all one trip. I went to Austin for the USAPEEC meeting and then flew to San Diego for the Rice Council meeting.

I was surprised at the pushback from Washington. There were people back there who really tried to talk me out of it, who said, You need to turn these down because it's more appropriate for someone from Washington to go and talk to them. But the cooperators were adamant. They said, No, we want you as recognition for what you did. Again I thought it was a little bit strange, but it worked out.

The U.S.-Mexican bilateral relationship is probably the most broad-gauge bilateral relationship I've ever seen. It really covers every possible human endeavor. Our country team had forty-eight people, you know with forty-eight people sitting around a massive table, in a massive conference room, and forty-four different federal agencies. We had a half a dozen just from Homeland Security including the Secret Service, we had three agencies from the Department of Justice, FBI, DEA, and the U.S. Marshals Service, plus we also had a fellow from an assistant U.S. attorney's office from DOJ to help with extraditions. We had a huge military presence there for interaction with the Mexicans, collaboration, cooperation with them.

One of the interesting things was, though, that the Mexicans will not allow any sort of U.S. military presence outside of the capital because we invaded them in the 1840s and

took half their country away from them, so they haven't forgotten that. I got that lecture multiple times from Mexican government officials and of course if you visit Mexico City you have to go to the Museum of Foreign Interventions, which is located in the Citadel that we captured back in the 1840s. So you walk through that and you look at how the Spaniards came in and colonized, how the United States came in and took half the country away in the 1840s, and then you read about how the French came in and tried to install a new emperor, Emperor Maximilian, in the 1860s, and so three foreign interventions in recent history. They haven't forgotten them and they have a museum that all Mexican schoolchildren are required to go through.

That was the backdrop for the entire bilateral relationship. That really colored it, colored the relationship. The time I went to meet with COFEPRIS about rice, the first half hour of that meeting was devoted to a lecture on the war with Mexico, and from the Mexican perspective, before we could get to talking about rice, so it's just something that you always have in the back of your mind. I at one point did point out when I was getting a lecture, I said, "Yes, I have heard of that war. I am somewhat familiar with it. My great great grandfather died in Camargo while under the command of General Zachary Taylor, so I do know about that war." That ended that conversation.

One of the problems that we had in Mexico while I was there was the rise of the narco violence, because when I arrived in 2008 all of Mexico was still open to travel. We could go anyplace, and I drove to Monterrey at one point, my wife and I drove up there and visited the agricultural trade office in Monterrey and the USAPEEC office up there, and a couple of the other cooperators, and so it was just a matter of driving, it was an eleven-hour drive. You just got in the car and you drove from Mexico City up to Monterrey and when you were done with your visit, you drove back. It was no big deal. The highway was excellent and fast.

By the time I left Mexico City you couldn't do that and before I left Mexico City, we had to buy an armored vehicle for our people in Monterrey, and that was something that also caused a bit of a kerfuffle, because the idea of getting an armored vehicle for our people in Mexico kind of raised eyebrows in Washington until I really started spelling out, this is the kind of violence we're looking at, these are the issues that we're facing. We have to get an armored vehicle for our people.

We had the case of an APHIS local employee, an APHIS FSN, who was abducted by the narcos and held for a while. They threatened to shoot him, finally released him when they said, No, he doesn't work for the Mexican government. He works with the U.S. government, so we'll let him go. But things were starting to get pretty hairy. And then of course we had an embassy officer who was shot and killed by the narcos at one point, in San Luis Potosi, so we really started to have to take some precautions.

The problem with armored vehicles is that you're not allowed to drive them without proper training. They don't handle like a normal vehicle. The braking time is longer, they have higher centers of gravity so you have to learn how to corner in them, and the other

issue is that the way they're programmed, everything of course is in a computer on board, now you have to learn what to do if you want to stop. If you put it in park the doors automatically unlock, and that means someone on the outside can simply open the doors and kill you, which is how they killed the embassy officer. When he was run off the road by members of one of the cartels, he came off the side of the road, and was forced off, and so he put it in park, that unlocked the doors, they opened the doors, opened fire on him with an AK-47, killed him.

So we had the armored vehicle finally delivered to Monterrey but our staff there had not been trained in how to drive it, and to do that they had to come up to the United States. Well, one of the things that Tom Vilsack as secretary of agriculture did is declare that any international travel had to have the permission of the appropriate under secretary or deputy under secretary, and that meant for them to come up for training, they had to have permission of Darcy Vetter, who was our deputy under secretary at the time. Well, time was getting short, they needed to get permission to travel so we could cut the travel orders or we were going to not be able to get them into the class, and I kept pushing FAS Washington to do something about it and it wasn't happening.

So I finally sent an email to Darcy and asked, "What's the hangup here? We have these people who need to get the training so they can drive an armored vehicle, so they can keep from getting killed, this is going to look really bad in the *New York Times* if it turns out that something happens to them and it was because nobody in USDA took seriously the need for them to get the armored vehicle training." Darcy replied by email, saying, "I had no idea that this issue was even out there, of course I will sign the documents immediately," and they got signed and my folks got the training. But then folks in FAS who had been in charge of the issue were upset that I went straight to Darcy and raised it with her, but sometimes you have to short-circuit the bureaucracy. Sometimes you need to make things happen, and the next time they would have been eligible to get the training was somewhere between six months and a year away, and do we really want to waste that amount of time or do we want to be businesslike and get down to just doing the job? So again, I had to break a little bit of crockery to get it done, but my guys got taken care of. They got the training that they needed, they were able to drive armored vehicles, and do their jobs while being protected.

By the time I left Mexico in 2011 roughly a third of the country was off-limits and we at one point were under pressure to do something on the tomato report. Mexico exports about a billion dollars' worth of tomatoes to the U.S. every year. The bulk of the tomatoes are produced in Sinaloa, which was completely under the control of the Sinaloa cartel, so I started talking to people about it. See, how do we do this? One person gave me the advice, "Well, just let us talk to the Sinaloa cartel, we'll tell them what you're doing, and they won't bother you." I didn't think that was such a great idea so what we did instead was we talked to the secretary of internal affairs, the chief of police of Sinaloa, who was retired from the U.S. military, he was a former sergeant in the U.S. military, and came back to Mexico, a very good guy. He said, "Well, I will give you a security detail," and he did.

So we sent Mark Ford with two of the FSNs out to inspect the shade houses where the bulk of the tomatoes are produced in Sinaloa. They were escorted by a convoy of two vehicles. They traveled in an armored vehicle and in the convoy were six police officers, two carrying submachine guns and the other four carrying sidearms. When they would go into a shade house each of them would have two bodyguards with the sidearms, and then the two with the submachine guns would circle the shade house on the outside to make sure nobody was trying to sneak up to take them out. When they came back and reported back to me on that, I questioned whether any tomato report was so necessary that we had to take those sorts of security precautions and I don't know if any of my successors has done that since, but that was the sort of thing that we were having to do in Mexico because of the narco violence.

Q: Can you describe what caused, in a short period of time, the changes in the level of violence, and so the cartels became so powerful and active?

MUSTARD: Well, it was money, I think, mainly, because of the drug habit in the United States. The bulk of the traffic was either marijuana or heroin being produced in Mexico and shipped up to the United States or it was cocaine that had been produced down in South America, Peru and Colombia, primarily, that was being smuggled up across the border, and so it was it was America's drug habit that was fueling this. And that was extraordinary, just the sheer volume of money. It was estimated at about a sixty billion dollar business, as I recall. I could be wrong about that, and I have to go back and look, sixty billion may be a different number, but we should look that up and see what the number was. There was just a tremendous amount of drugs moving north and a tremendous amount of money and firearms moving south. We were the source of the firearms coming into Mexico.

Q: America's drug habit has been around for a long time. What was it in 2008 that became so different?

MUSTARD: Yeah, 2008, 2009, I think what was different was that one of the cartels had started out as the private army of one of the other cartels, the, and I can't remember which one. The Gulf cartel was the big cartel, and Gulf cartel had a bunch of soldiers who decided they wanted to become a cartel of their own. And it was about that time also you saw the rise of *la Familia Michoacana*, the Michoacan family, which was a third cartel and they were fighting for turf. So I think what really caused the uptick in violence was the fact that where previously things have been pretty sedate, the lines of territory had been drawn, and people were more or less observing those lines, now there were certain areas that were up for grabs, and it was the battle between the Sinaloa cartel and the Gulf cartel and then throwing in *la Familia Michoacana*, I think really was what set things off.

Because the cartels are everywhere. One Christmas we went down to Oaxaca and we spent a wonderful Christmas down in Oaxaca. We rented a house and stayed in it, went

out carpet shopping, and we visited the famous radish festival in Oaxaca, which has to be seen to be believed, it's just wonderful. I went down to Santo Tomas to see the largest livestock auction. It's a place for the sale of livestock. It is the biggest livestock, live animal market in Mexico. Things like that, poking around, seeing what there was to see. And of course the cartel is there, the cartel is in Oaxaca, there's no question, but that area was not in question, who was in charge. So it was the battle among the cartels for who was in charge of what territory more than anything else.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the cotton winter nursery. The Agricultural Research Service started a cotton winter nursery and started out somewhere, I've forgotten where, in central Mexico, and then moved to Tecoman. When I arrived it was run by a guy named Wesley Malloy. Wesley Malloy was the representative of the Agricultural Research Service. He'd been there since 1975. He was attached to the embassy as an attaché but because he spent all of his time out in Tecoman and only came to the embassy about once a year to get his badge renewed, he was forgotten, and they kept dropping him out of the telephone book in the embassy because the management section kept forgetting that Wes was there. I had to remind them to put Wes in the phone book. So we had in addition to the FAS attachés and all of the APHIS attachés, we also had the one Agricultural Research Service attaché, who was out in Tecoman running the cotton winter nursery.

I have a photograph someplace of the USDA mule. The cotton winter nursery had a mule that was used for working up the ground when the cotton needed to be replanted, and to my knowledge that is the only mule that USDA owns anywhere in the world. So we had the ARS operation down there. I think it has since moved somewhere else. I think it's in Costa Rica now, the cotton winter nursery, again, because of the violence, because when we were there the violence was starting to encroach on that area in Colima, and we had shut that down.

Agricultural Research Service had someone send me a country clearance message at one point. He wanted to come and do insect trapping in Sinaloa and I picked up the phone and called the researcher, and I said, "What are the security arrangements that you're making?" He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, you're only allowed to travel in Sinaloa if you're in a two-vehicle convoy, both vehicles have to be armored, and you have to have some sort of protection. You can't drive around Sinaloa without some sort of armed guards." He said, "Oh, I had no idea it was that bad, so I think I will cancel my trip to Sinaloa this year."

We also had some folks in the Forest Service who wanted to take the bus from Mexico City down to Guatemala City, which they had done many times before, and we were having problems with busloads of passengers being intercepted by narcotraffickers, who would take everybody off the bus and shoot them. So I put a stop to that, too. I said, "No, you can't do that. You have to fly from Mexico City to Guatemala City. You can't drive down there anymore." It was just too hazardous.

Q: So ARS allows their attachés to be there for twenty-five years? In one country?

MUSTARD: Yeah, well, you know, how ARS has people in Montpellier in France in their entomology laboratory. That laboratory's been there since at least the 1930s and typically those researchers go out there and they're researchers and managers, they're not traditional attachés, and so, yeah, they'll spend years and years there doing that work.

Q: I'm sure many of them go native. It's just inherent.

MUSTARD: Oh, I'm sure some of them do, but that wasn't anything that I worried about.

Embassy Mexico City was half native. I went from being one of the few officers in Moscow who spoke fluent Russian to being one of the few people in Embassy Mexico City who did not speak fluent Spanish. To put it in perspective, the embassies typically have a branch of one of the local banks where you go to buy your local currency, so we had a branch of a Russian bank in the embassy in Moscow where we could go to change money and buy rubles and do whatever financial transactions you needed. That worked very well and the teller who worked there, the same woman every day, spoke fluent English as well as Russian, so if you came up you didn't have to know Russian to interact with her. I got to Mexico City, went down to the Bank of America branch in the basement of the embassy, and nobody down there spoke English. They all spoke only Spanish, and that was the difference between Mexico City and Moscow.

The presumption was in Mexico City that if you were posted to Mexico City you would speak fluent Spanish, and of course in my case that was not true. After only five weeks of Spanish it was very, very far from fluent.

So, Mexico City, we got the reporting program. When I got there, every Christmas and New Year's break, you know there's that period in there that's kind of a dead period around the world, not much happening. I would go into the GAIN database and I would count reports. I would check what posts sent in how many reports, I would data mine the reports, and how many had reported on trade promotion activities, because any time you spend government money on trade promotion, you sent in a GAIN report on that, so I would count how many trade promotion activities post had done, and I go to the trade policy reporting and look at how many trade policy interventions they had done. Tally all those up in a spreadsheet by post, I would count the number of telegrams, that had the EAGR tag in them and I would give credit for any telegram with the EAGR tag to the attaché whether the attaché wrote it or not, if it may have been written by the econ section, but I assumed that the attaché was somehow involved in that, in providing information, so was getting credit for it.

And then I would rank order by the number of points. You got a point for every report, you got a point for every trade policy intervention, you got a point for every market promotion activity engaged in, and every cable, and then I would divide by the number of bellybuttons, including both officers and FSNs, and back then you could pull those

numbers off the FAS website before they stopped publishing the FSNs. You came up with an index number of how productive per person that post was, and Mexico was close to the bottom. The only posts that were below Mexico City and its office in Monterrey were Geneva, Baghdad, and Kabul. Now, of course, Baghdad and Kabul were different, because they were there to run the provincial reconstruction teams, the PRTs, they weren't there to do much in the way of reporting, they certainly weren't there to do market development or trade policy interventions, since it was a completely different function. So that was understandable. Geneva much the same thing, Geneva is a one-trick pony, it does all trade policy, all the time, not a lot of reporting, not a lot of market development, if any. So that was understandable, too.

But then you have Mexico City. The team in Mexico was at the bottom of a normal post listing when they had the second largest staff. To me that was absolutely mind-boggling. So I called a staff meeting and laid out the statistics and said, "I want an explanation as to why the productivity of this office is so low. For example, last year the agricultural trade office did three market promotion activities with a staff of seven, five local staff and two officers. You did a grand total of three activities. We had that many activities out of a single FSN in St. Petersburg, Russia. How do you explain that?"

One of the FSNs, with an absolutely straight face, said, "It's because it is seven times harder to do anything in Mexico than it is in Russia." I laughed, and said, "I know that's not true, having lived in both countries now, and things are going to change." I laid down the markers, set some goals, and said, "This is how much reporting we're going to get out of this office. This is what we're going to get in terms of market activities and whatnot," and the pushback was enormous. Some of the FSNs really dug in their heels and so I said, "Okay, I'm going to keep track of this, and a year from now if the ATO has not turned around, if the ATO is not more productive, I'll inform Washington that we need to stop spending two million dollars a year on an ATO that is no more productive than a single FSN in St. Petersburg, Russia. And if you don't want to live with that, then I suggest you start looking for another job." One of the FSNs retired, a couple of them were dismissed for nonperformance, two of them found jobs elsewhere in the ag section, so we did a 100 percent overhaul of the agricultural trade office and got it back up to productivity.

I also laid down a marker in terms of what I expected for volume of reporting. Before I went out, it was funny—I sat down with Alan Riffkin and Tim Rocke, who of course were running the analysis shop for commodities, and they said, Mexico City is a black hole. It's our largest market for corn, ten million tons of corn going down to Mexico, and we get two grain reports a year, the annual and the semiannual. We're getting no alert reporting, we're getting no voluntary reporting, we have no idea what's going on down there. So I sat down with the FSNs and I said, "We're going to start doing monthly alert reports." Oh, that's too much, that's too much, you're being too demanding. And I said, "All right then, every two months we do alert reports, plus the annual and the semiannual." Oh, that's too much reporting, is too much.

So I pulled out the statistics and showed them the kind of reporting we got out of the senior FSN in Moscow, Yelena Vassilieva, she does forty reports a year and she's a woman. You men, you men, are telling me that this is too much work for you. So I kinda had to shame them into becoming more productive, which they did, and once they buckled down and did, the reporting was excellent. The quality of the reporting was above reproach, it was just that they didn't feel like doing it. So really, the big thing in Mexico was just applying some management, telling people they had to do their jobs and then holding their feet to the fire.

We couldn't get our photocopier repaired. The photocopier company we had a contract with refused to come into service our photocopier, and it broke, wouldn't work because our administrative assistant was so nasty to them. She was nasty to visitors and so I laid down the law and said you have to stop being nasty to people. She wouldn't answer the phone, so people would call on the phone, she wouldn't answer and she wouldn't check voicemail. I laid down the law on that. I would go out into the city, while I was out there I would call the office and if nobody answered I would come back and say, "Nobody answered the phone, what's the problem here?" I instituted a rule that there had to be phone coverage at all times during business hours, and I said, "I will be calling when I'm out in the city, and if there's no answer, I'll want to know who's responsible." Things like that, that you had to do. You had to put rules in place and then enforce them in order to get people to take the responsibility seriously.

That was unfortunate, that that attitude had permeated the office, but it was a fact of life. Hedy Armstrong briefed me before I went down to Mexico. She said, "Nobody answers the phone and nobody replies to emails. We send out emails, we don't hear back. We call, it takes a week to get through by phone sometimes," and so again, I had to crack the whip on that, that there would be phone coverage, and people would take messages, and people would reply to emails. I would email people and if they didn't respond within a day then I would walk down to their office saying, "I sent you an email, I've got no response back." "Oh, yeah, yeah, I had better check my email." Just basic stuff like that. So very competent staff but not willing to necessarily always stay tuned into what their clientele was asking of them.

Q: Things are different in different embassies.

MUSTARD: Yeah, they surely are. You know, Moscow was different, because I arrived in Moscow and after I'd been there just for a few weeks, I was just in idle conversation with one of the FSNs, Marina Muran, who passed away. She died of cancer last year, a real tragedy. We were very saddened to see her pass away. But Marina and I were chatting about something and I just expressed curiosity about something, and forty-eight hours later she came and dropped a GAIN report on my desk and said, "Here's the report you asked for." I hadn't asked her for a report, and I realized then in Moscow I had to be very careful about even speculating out loud about something, or expressing curiosity about something, because if I did, odds were that within a day or two I would have a report on my desk reporting on that. I didn't want them spending time on something I

was just idly curious about. I wanted them spending time on things that were substantive and useful to our clientele.

In Mexico, if you wanted a special report you had to sit down with the local staff, explain to them exactly what you wanted, give them a deadline, and say this is what I want you to do. In one case I went over to SAGARPA, the Secretariat of Agriculture, and noticed a bunch of demonstrators outside. So I came back and said, "What was this farmer's organization?" The local staff explained to me what it was. "Is it an important one?" They said, No, it's not one of the important ones. I said, "What are the important ones?" They listed them. It turned out there were somewhere between two hundred and three hundred farmer organizations in Mexico, and about a dozen or so of them are considered fairly important. I said, "You know, we need a roadmap and with the presidential election coming up, since they're involved in politics, it would probably be useful for everybody, given the number of rural voters in Mexico, to know the political spectrum."

So I asked our senior FSN to sit down and research this and start working on a report. He came to me after about a week and he said, "Allan, it's impossible to do this report, it can't be done." I said, "Why not?" "Well, there's nothing written about them. No books about them. No magazine articles, no journal articles." I said, "Well, this is an opportunity for you to spend some representational funds to take people to breakfast. So call up these people who are the heads of all these organizations and start taking them to breakfast." So he and Carlos Gonzalez, who was my senior attaché, began taking a whole bunch of these political leaders in the rural sector out to breakfast, and they would sit and ask them questions: When was the organization formed? How or where does it fit in the political spectrum? How many members do you have?

They collected all this information and they put together an absolutely incredible report, comprehensive, about the major farmer organizations in Mexico. There is nothing else like it, and of course we didn't want to go public with it because we wanted to be somewhat honest in our appraisals of the organizations, but didn't want to offend anybody publicly, so it was kept as an internal FAS report only, but we also sent in a copy by telegram so that folks in the intel community, the foreign affairs community, the Latin America experts who follow Latin American politics both in State Department elsewhere, could have the benefit of this analysis.

The ambassador read this report and he sent it back down to me with a handwritten note, saying, I have a sense that we're not making full use of all of the talents in your section. It really was a feather in Carlos' and Ben Juarez's caps that they wrote this tremendous report. And it was funny, when I left post I had exit meetings with everybody at post, of course. Some of the FSNs were very glad to see me leave, because, I know, I had made them work more than they had really wanted to work, and Ben Juarez in his meeting with me said, "Well, you know, I can't say that I'm sorry to see you go because you and I had so many disagreements and I really feel like you made me work too hard, but I will say that of all the reporting I've ever done over my career, the report I'm the proudest of is

that one I did on the farmer organizations. That's probably the best piece of work I've ever done." So you know, he at least took pride in his work.

Before we leave Mexico I need to talk about the visit of Mike Michener. Mike Michener was administrator for nine months at the very start of the Barack Obama administration. Well, a couple things I should talk about in Mexico, one also that I should talk about, when we went to the State Department email system, because I was involved in that, but Mike came in having a background in USAID and very much a development focus and very focused on what we were doing in Afghanistan and in Iraq. Secretary Vilsack was under the impression that FAS was a development agency, not a trade agency. Our second deputy under secretary was Bud Philbrook, who also came from the development world. At one point Mike asked me to curtail out of Mexico City and come back to be associate administrator, and so I said, "Well, you know, my heart is really in being overseas, but if you want me to come back and do that, I've always been a good soldier, and if somebody wanted me to do a job, I did it." Then Mike got fired and that was off the table and I kind of heaved a sigh of relief. I got to stay in Mexico.

But then John Brewer called up at one point said he wanted me to come back, after he was named administrator, to be the general sales manager, and I said the same thing, "You know, I joined the Foreign Service to stay overseas and I'd rather do that, but if you want me to be general sales manager, I'll come back and be your general sales manager." So a few weeks after that he called up and said, "I need you in New Delhi. I decided I want someone else to be general sales manager and I've heard a couple things about your management style that concern me, and so I'd rather have you go to New Delhi." I said, "That's fine," and of course the things he'd heard about my management style were that I hold people accountable and I have fired people and I have documented people, and so some of the folks in FAS were afraid of that. They had gotten to him and scared him off, and that's when he picked Sue Heinen to be his general sales manager, and she later went on to be administrator. So that was that.

So the prelude to Mike's visit. Mike came down to Mexico, because folks back in FAS Washington were tearing their hair out trying to convince Mike that FAS is a trade agency, not a development agency. Suzanne Hale called me up on the phone, she said, "We're trying to talk Mike into coming down for a visit. We think we've got him convinced that he needs to see an overseas post. We figure if he comes down to Mexico City, you can show him everything that FAS does and the full panoply of analysis, market development, and trade policy work, and make it clear that trade is what the agency was created for, not development."

So we put together a bang up trip for Mike. Brought him down to Mexico City. He met the various government officials. We threw a reception for him at the ambassador's residence, which blew through my entire rep budget for the year. Just that one reception, we were out of pocket the rest of the year for all representational expenses. We had forty cooperators with offices in Mexico and they all said they wanted a meeting with the administrator in Mexico City. Christian Foster was the head of trade programs at the time.

I called him up. I said, “You tell the cooperators it is not going to happen, because forty cooperators, one hour apiece, that’s forty hours, is a whole week that Mike simply spends meeting the cooperators. He is not coming to Mexico City to meet cooperators, that’s not the goal of this meeting.” And Christian said, “What do I tell the cooperators?” And I said, “That’s easy, tell them to call Allan Mustard and talk to him,” and of course nobody did. Nobody bothered to call because they knew what the answer would be.

So I did tee up meetings with two of the cooperators, because we had Chad Russell there heading one of the cooperators, Meat Export Federation, and we had Bill Brant, who was the rep for soybeans at the time. They were two former attachés, both of whom had served in Mexico, and both of whom with very good reputations in FAS, outstanding officers, who were now retired, and were working for cooperators. I thought they could spell out to Mike things that he might not want to hear from me, so I set them up to have a private meeting with Mike.

That was what we did in Mexico City. Then we went up to Monterrey and met with the cooperators up in Monterrey, so that placated some of the cooperators to some degree. Then we went up to the border and he got to see, this is before things got violent, when you could still go up to the border, and I have photographs of Mike Michener on top of a hopper car loaded with corn, bringing U.S. corn into Mexico. I took him to the World Trade Bridge at Laredo, and we stood on the U.S. side of the border watching a fifty-two-foot tractor-trailer rig roll by every fifteen seconds heading onto the interstate to head north out of Laredo. Mike looked at me finally and said, “Okay, I get it. Trade is the lifeblood of the country, and FAS is a trade agency. I get it.” So we finally turned the corner with Mike and then of course Jim Miller, the under secretary, didn’t like him and arranged for him to be fired, which was unfortunate. I thought Mike would’ve been a good administrator. He never got a chance. I thought that we finally turned him around.

It took a little longer to turn around the secretary because two years into the secretary’s term of office, this would’ve been, I guess 2011, so about the time that I left Mexico, OMB, Office of Management and Budget, went over to see Secretary Vilsack and informed him that they were going to take FAS away from USDA. OMB had a plan to create a super trade agency that was going to be headed by the U.S. trade representative, who was already a member of Cabinet, of course, but all the trade-related agencies in the U.S. government were going to be brought under one umbrella to have one big happy family.

So FAS, Foreign Commercial Service, OPIC [Overseas Private Investment Corporation], ExIm Bank, TDA [Trade and Development Agency], and USTR [United States Trade Representative] were all going to be conglomerated together, and that was when Secretary Vilsack learned that FAS is a trade agency, not a development agency. He dug in his heels and of course the other Cabinet departments all dug in their heels and it ended up that OMB’s plans for a super trade agency ran aground. It didn’t happen, but that was a significant event, because we finally got the upper ranks of USDA to realize what it is that FAS does for a living.

About that time was when we discovered that we had hostile foreign intelligence services in the FAS network, and that was one of the consequences of our having gone to broadband overseas without proper security precautions in place, which was a very hard lesson for the agency, and was a bit of a source of embarrassment to me, since I was the one, when I was in Washington, who pushed FAS into a wide area network overseas. Secretary Vilsack had a conversation with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and she allowed as how USDA could get its overseas IT services from the Department of State again, which we had done back in the old days, but State had wanted to charge us platinum fees for kind of rusty iron service, and we had decided to go off and do our own. So now we began this effort led by folks in Washington, but including Robin Tilsworth up in Ottawa and me down in Mexico to negotiate with State under what terms we would come into the State Department network with our overseas offices. The opening gambit of the Department of State and of the Diplomatic Telecommunications Service was that we would have to conform 100 percent to them and they would make no exceptions to their policies for us and that meant that we would not be able to upload GAIN reports, because that would violate some of the security protocols. We would not be able to upload anything to USDA servers in Kansas City, which is where the bulk of our computing power was, using State Department telecommunications lines, as that would violate their policies. And perhaps one of the most insulting things was they said everybody overseas for FAS will have to have a state.gov email address in lieu of the fas.usda.gov email address.

So we started going back and forth and the game that State played was that on every one of our weekly phone calls, we had these weekly conference calls by telephone, Diplomatic Security would put a different person on, who is a brand-new person to this issue, and everything would go back to scratch. We would have to start from square one every week arguing with Diplomatic Security about the cyber security angles on this, and finally about a month into this I blew up and said, “This is ridiculous. This business of Diplomatic Security [DS] constantly giving us new people who don’t have any background, don’t know what’s going on, don’t know what they’re talking about. It’s going to happen exactly one more time. DS is either going to go back and research this issue and come back with a solution that works for all of us, or I’m going to pick up the phone, I’m going to call Secretary Vilsack and inform him that this isn’t working, that he needs to have another conversation with Secretary Clinton, and the two of them can work this out. And Secretary Clinton will issue orders to you to make something work. Now, if you want to go that route, we can go that route. Otherwise, we can work it out among ourselves.”

The cyber security people allowed as how, yes, there were ways that we could maintain security protocols while also allowing the upload of GAIN reports using their telecommunication lines to our servers in Kansas City, and there were also mechanisms for doing the other things that we wanted to be able to do, such as our people overseas wanted to have CD burners so that we could burn CDs and DVDs to give away data to people that came to us and wanted data, okay. State Department clients typically don’t

have that capability, they're restricted, you can't burn CDs and DVDs, so we had to negotiate these sorts of things.

And the last sticking point was the email thing, and here's where Robin Tilsworth really shone, because she blew up. It was her turn to blow a gasket. I blew a gasket over the cyber security things, she blew a gasket over the email, said, "FAS has a brand, our overseas offices are part of that brand, and you will figure out some way of allowing us to keep the fas.usda.gov email addresses." At that point much to the chagrin of the State Department people, one of the contractors on the call chimed in and said, "Of course we can do that. Microsoft has this software package that it sells. It plugs into Microsoft Exchange and allows you to have multiple domain names on any email server. So that's an easy fix. We can do that."

At that point we were down to talking money and so once we worked out the other modalities of how this was going to work we asked the Department of State to quote us, how much is this going to cost? And whereas in the past they had been telling us it was going to cost us ten million dollars a year just for the bandwidth, they now quoted us a price of three million dollars a year, which included a hardware refresh every three years, so we were going to pay three million dollars to State, a million and a half dollars of that for the bandwidth and a million and a half dollars for hardware refreshes for all of our overseas posts every three years, to rotate, one third every year. So that was a great deal, that was roughly how much we were spending out of our own pockets on bandwidth. So we weren't going to have to go to Congress and ask for additional money. We would just use the existing appropriation, switch over to State Department, keep our email addresses, and go on with our lives.

And that has actually worked out pretty well. Of course we know that the State Department network has been intruded, and so that was not a 100 percent fix, obviously. Cyber security remains a major issue, but at least it's not FAS's headache any more. It's now somebody else's headache.

New Delhi 2011–2014

You asked me about an award that meant the most to me. In terms of an award that touched me the most, that takes us to India.

You may remember, there was a chairman of the House Agriculture Committee by the name of Jack Kingston for a while. He led a congressional delegation to India and since I was the agricultural officer I was control officer for Codel Kingston. They wanted to go out and see a village someplace out in India. Well, we looked at the various places they wanted to go and they had wanted to see a wildlife preserve and so we arranged to take him to the Keoladeo wildlife preserve, nature reserve, and then I went to our friends in the Indian agricultural research community and said, "Is there a village somewhere near the Keoladeo Park that we could take this congressional delegation to?"

They said, There is, there is a village that we are working with, we're trying to teach them how to farm better and how to grow their rice better, and how to do things better, to improve their standard of living, and so we have a very close working relationship with both the men and women in this village. We have a woman researcher who works closely with the women and we would like very much for this codel [congressional delegation] maybe to meet this village. They said, But to do that, you have to go out and visit the village, so please come out and visit the village first, make your manners, introduce yourself, explain to them. They'll have a village council meeting where they'll decide, yes or no, if they want to allow this delegation to come. If they decide yes, then it's okay.

So that's what we did. I drove out there with some folks from the agricultural research institute. We met with the villagers, we explained to them who these people were, members of the United States Congress and their wives, us, and staffers who work for them. They wanted to come see a typical Indian village. Would it be all right for them to come? This was a relatively poor village. They had some livestock but it was a typical rural village in India, where people just didn't have very much, you know, they were living a subsistence lifestyle.

And they allowed me to bring this delegation. On the appointed day we drove there, everybody on a couple of buses. We pulled up. They had a little boy sitting up on top of the wall throwing petals on top of us as we came in to greet us. We went and we were greeted by the village elder, and then the men went one direction, the women went another, because in these households the women live on one side, the men live on the other, and the men will come over and visit the women, when the women invite them to. So the women got to go in and see the women's side of the housing compound and the men got to see the other side. We all looked at the tools and the implements.

I should back up. During my first visit, when I went in, I had my camera with me and Indians love to be photographed, and so I asked them, would you mind sitting for portraits for me, and I took a series of portraits of the men, and a few group photos, but some really striking portraits of these Indian farmers, and of course printed them. So when I came back for the second visit, I gave away the prints to them, the prints of the photographs, and they were very pleased with that.

And the end of it was that when the codel left, two things happened. One was that the women said, You took all these photographs of the men. We want a group photograph of all of us together, too. So they lined up and I snapped a few shots of them, then I looked out from behind the camera, stuck my tongue out at them, they all burst out laughing, and I got a photograph of all the women laughing with their kids, which was great, that was the one I printed and sent back. I counted noses and everybody got a print.

So then the second thing that happened was that as the codel was leaving, my senior FSN, Santosh Singh, took me aside and said, "Allan, the village elders want to sit down with you. They want to have a wash up with you and just get your sense of how things went,

too, were you pleased with the visit?" So we sat down. I thanked them profusely for everything that they had done.

It was a marvelous visit. They tried things out, to demonstrate to them, they were grinding wheat in a mortar and pestle, showing this is how you do it using a grinding wheel, things like that you know milling wheat with a grinding wheel and the mortar and pestle. Well, see, this is our day-to-day life, this is how we live, this is how we prepare food. So I think for the codel it was really an educational experience, really good for them to see how people in an Indian village live.

Q: It's the way they did it five thousand years ago.

MUSTARD: Oh, absolutely the same technology. And then they would invite female staff persons or the congressional wives, here, you try this, and put them to work grinding wheat with a millstone, and they realize that this is not easy. A food processor is much faster and easier. So at the tail end, as we were finishing the wrap up, they said we want to give you something, and they gave me, they had taken some pieces of wood and carved it into a little frame, and inside the frame they had put a piece of paper on which they had very carefully hand written a certificate of thanks to Allan Mustard and the date. That was a trophy that they gave me to commemorate the visit to Unchagaon village, and that is the most touching gift I think I've ever received, because this village had so little, really, it was a very, very subsistence village, and yet they felt compelled to give me this, because they were so pleased with the way the visit had gone, and the fact that we brought this congressional delegation to visit them. So of any award I've ever gotten, I think that was the one that touched me the most.

Q: Anyone can make a magnanimous gift, and sometimes the most magnanimous gift comes from the poorest person. This village is how far from New Delhi?

MUSTARD: It was several hours. We were making a rather large trip. This was part of the, as I recall, this was part of the drive either to or from Agra, because of course the codel wanted to see the Taj Mahal, and that involved driving, which now if you take the freeways only about three hours, used to be about a five-hour drive from New Delhi, so this was somewhere in between as I recall, but I don't remember. I'd have to look at a map to try and remember where Unchagaon is exactly.

So, when John Brewer told me he needed me to go to India, I said fine, I'm happy to do that. I had not expected it but of course Holly Higgins was in India at the time and so I immediately reached out to Holly and she began a tremendous brain dump to me. Holly is one of the most professional people we have, and she went out of her way to make sure that I was well prepared. She gave me a reading list, sent me handover notes, so when I arrived in India I was reasonably well prepared. I'd been able to do a fair amount of reading before I arrived and I should stop and back up.

All these years, when you're overseas there is enormous pressure on you to either sacrifice home leave, which they're not supposed to do, but people try to get you at least to make it as short as possible, and so every home leave I had ever taken in the past had been twenty working days. That's the minimum, you have to take at least twenty workdays of home leave by law, and so I would take the twenty workdays and then immediately report for duty. I had so much home leave built up, and you can carry it with you, but when you retire you're not compensated for it in any way. I said, "I may take two months off and take the maximum this time instead of twenty days." So I did, and we couldn't drive out of the country any more, so I had my car shipped up to Brownsville and I flew up to Brownsville and got the car and we started driving around the American Southwest. I had relatives in Texas, friends in New Mexico, cousins in Boulder, and so we visited relatives and we drove around for about a month, and then spent about a month in Illinois camping out.

And this is one thing I thought was strange. I was not brought in for consultations in Washington between the postings to Mexico and India. That, I thought, was strange, because when we were in Illinois for that month, I was only nine hundred miles away from Washington, DC. I could've jumped on a plane and flown out very easily for a few days, or I could have had at least telephone consultations with people, but I asked the area director for India, Kathleen Wainio, should I come in for consultations while I'm back on home leave, and she said no, nobody here thinks that it's worth the expense. That was strange. So I didn't get consultations before going to India.

Q: How did you actually get India? You said John Brewer, the administrator, asked you to go there. So you didn't have to bid that year?

MUSTARD: Well, I did bid. So my bid was in and I bid on all the Senior Foreign Service slots, and when Secretary Vilsack came down to Mexico to meet with the Mexicans, it was a courtesy visit to talk to the Mexicans about meat inspection, but on the margins of that visit he was accompanied by Jim Miller, the under secretary, and Jim Miller asked me, "What's next for you?" And I said, "I don't know," this is before John Brewer had offered me the job, and he said, "Well you have a choice between Canberra and India, I think." And you know, Canberra is a nice post, a very enjoyable place to live, and everybody who's ever served there has enjoyed it tremendously, but I didn't see it as a challenge. India was going to be more of a challenge. It's a more dynamic environment, I thought, and just a little bit more exciting from an agricultural point of view than Canberra. So I thought I'd rather go to India, and so Jim asked me, "Which would you rather prefer, do you prefer India or Canberra?" I said, "If given a choice I'd take India." So not that the fix was in or anything, I think the EAG probably would've been happy to pick me, but Brewer didn't want me back in Washington. Someone in FAS I will not name told me years later that every time one of my tours of duty was up, the EAG would get nervous and say, What are we going to do about Mustard? Because they didn't want to bring me back. They knew if they brought me back and put me in a position of responsibility that I would do what I always do, which is hold people accountable, hold people responsible, get rid of the non-performers and the counterproductive people, and

reward the super productive people. That's what I do and they didn't want me back in Washington, so to that degree, I think a fix was in, that the EAG didn't want me back. John Brewer didn't want me back and Jim Miller didn't want me back, so I went on to India.

India by the time I left was about a billion-dollar market. It was close to that before I got there even though it is a tremendously protectionist market, and one that does not adhere to sound science in its arguments, but it was a fascinating place, of course. Overhanging everything is the fact that it had been a colony. The Moghuls came in and conquered them over five hundred years ago, and then the Moghuls were displaced by the British East India Company, and then eventually by the British government, so this attitude that they were a colony for hundreds of years permeates everybody's mentality.

It was really difficult to meet with Indian officials because they were very hierarchical. The rubber hits the road in India at the level of permanent secretary. You have a hierarchy of political appointees, of the minister and then the minister of state below him, sometimes a couple of ministers of state in a cabinet ministry, and below them are the secretaries, and the secretaries are the top level of the Indian Administrative Service, the IAS, and there are seventy-one of them. Their protocol requirements are that they only meet with ambassadors, they would not meet with a minister-counselor of embassy, so I could not get meetings with the secretaries. I could get meetings with the lower-level people beneath them, but nobody at the lower ranks is allowed to make decisions, so there was a disconnect between decision-makers I needed to have access to. And quite frankly ambassadors don't meet the secretaries, ambassadors meet with ministers and maybe with ministers of state, but it's a very rare ambassador who will meet with someone below the rank of minister.

That meant that diplomats, and not just the United States, but all foreign diplomats, were not able to meet with their genuine counterparts in India, and the Indians did that on purpose, I think, because they didn't want us meeting with them. They wanted to be able to do whatever they wanted to do with no pushback from these foreigners, some of whom in the past had colonized them, and that was a problem. Because of that, the communication was nonexistent. It was very difficult to communicate, everything had to go in writing, everything had to be diplomatic notes, a couple of thousand diplomatic notes a year on some matters that were quite frankly trivial, so that was one of the issues we dealt with.

Q: India has a reputation, I don't remember what the quote is, but the complexity of the culture on top of the British bureaucracy creates a bastard of infrastructure.

MUSTARD: Absolutely. One of the things about Indian culture, of course, is that if you read Huntington's book, *Clash of Civilizations*, in his list of seven great civilizations he leaves out the Hindus, he leaves out Indian civilization, and he explained why he left it out. It's so complex he could not get his arms around it and didn't include it in that book, couldn't do justice to it. And if you read Wendy Doniger's books, in one of her books, I

forgot which one, she is one of the great experts on study of India and of Hinduism, in one of her books she admits that she started writing the book thinking she was simply going to update some of the papers that she had written years before and put them into a compilation, and she went back and realized she had to rewrite all of them, because essentially everything she'd written before was wrong and she had changed her attitude and had gotten better information. She needed to gut and rewrite the entire series of papers. It is a very complex society.

It is one of the most diverse populations I've ever seen, and this was one of the things that was amazing to me, coming out of Mexico, which has a fairly diverse population, going to India and finding that Mexico paled by comparison with the level of diversity of ethno types and languages, hundreds of languages. If you traveled within India you had to find local interpreters because there is nobody in India who speaks all of the languages, and so we would travel, we would go places, and we would try to communicate as best we could in English, and then if you couldn't do that, you would try and get someone who could interpret locally.

Q: So the main lingua franca is English, but there's also Hindi, and a couple of others.

MUSTARD: Well, you have two major language groups and some smaller language groups, those of the largest language group, these are the languages related to Sanskrit, which include Hindi and Gujarati, Marathi, those languages, and then you have the languages like Telugu and Tamil which are a completely different language family. Then of course if you get up into the Northeast you have the Asian languages that are spoken up there, which are related closer to the languages of Southeast Asia. So you really have a large number of languages and dialects and you think about some of them like Kannada, which is considered a relatively minor language but is spoken by fifty million people, and yet it's considered one of the relatively minor languages because it's not as widespread as Hindi or Tamil.

So that was one of the issues but of course our big challenges in India were on trade policy trying to get more market access. They were upset about exports of basmati rice and mangoes. Because India has a climate that is conducive to insect growth and insect propagation, we have very strict controls in place for export of both basmati rice and mangoes to the United States. So basmati rice comes from a limited number of facilities that have put in place protocols that keep the khapra beetle from infesting. Khapra beetle is the quarantine pest that we are most afraid of, so the khapra beetle is the only quarantine pest that causes a shipment to be blocked if you find a dead one. If you find a dead khapra beetle, you know that she's laid eggs, and you probably have an egg mass some place in the shipment, so the shipment then has to be quarantined. Fumigation doesn't help you, because even if you fumigate the eggs, they survive.

So we had very strict protocols in place for basmati rice. Mangoes, annually APHIS sent somebody to India to observe the irradiation of the mangoes. The mangoes are picked, they are packed in boxes that have mesh webbing covering the holes, they have to have

air holes so that the mangoes can breathe, and then these boxes after they have been sealed up and no insects can get into them, so any insects that are inside are put through an irradiation machine that irradiates them with gamma rays and sterilizes any insects. So if there are any insects inside, even if they survive the trip to the United States they are then sterilized and they can't propagate, so you don't have to worry about them infesting the United States.

Indians constantly complained about this because it meant that all the mangoes that were shipped to the United States had come to one facility, go through the irradiation, that could only be done while the APHIS inspector was present to make sure there was no monkey business. They had to pay for it, they had to pay for his room and board, they had to pay for all of his expenses, they of course had to pay for the transportation to the facility, the operation of the facility, and then they would ship these mangoes by air because mangoes have a very short shelf life. You have a shelf life of five days so then you would put them on a plane, you ship to the United States, by the time you get there the shelf life is about three days, you put them out of the street, and you try to sell them as quickly as you can before they spoil.

So they were complaining to me that these mangoes, when they arrive in the United States, they cost ten dollars apiece and they're being undercut by the Mexican and Puerto Rican and Haitian mangoes, and it's so hard for us to compete with our Indian mangoes when they're ten dollars apiece. We sat down and did the cost calculation and what we discovered was that if you took the cost of production, irradiation, including all the expenses related to irradiation, and transportation, including flying them from India all the way to New York City, it came out to four dollars and importers were taking six dollars of profit for every ten dollars that they sold a mango for.

The Indian diaspora wanted their Indian mangoes, they wanted this particular variety, the Alfonso mango, some of the others, that are very good, very tasty, so we went back and we pointed out, Well, this high cost is not all because of the expensive irradiation. Sixty percent of the cost is due to price gouging on the part of your importers on the other side, and one of the nasty little secrets about trade between the United States and India is that most of it is a family affair. You have a member of the family in the United States who is the receiver of the goods, collects the money, pays the shipper of the goods, who is a brother or cousin or some other relative, and that's how the business is done. And if you were to reduce the price gouging you would be able to sell at a lower price. Of course they didn't want to hear that, didn't want to get into that argument.

Our biggest agricultural export to India was almonds, it may still be for all I know. The Indians insisted that we ship in almonds in the shell, and they did this through a tariff mechanism, that if you shipped shelled almonds they were subject to a much higher tariff than almonds in the shell, and this was so they could create employment. We would have the almonds arrive in shell, and you had armies of women, usually mothers, sitting around, using wooden mallets to crack the shells and shelling these almonds by hand. It was absolutely amazing. It was strictly a jobs program. The Almond Board of California

was happy to ship in the almonds and have them shelled by hand by all these Indian women.

Seeing that was quite interesting. And of course meeting with the almond merchants was always amusing. We would go visit them down in the spice market, and they would sit there, and here's this guy who's wearing sandals and a two-dollar pair of trousers and a one-dollar white shirt, sitting in an office that is not air-conditioned because he can't afford air-conditioning, and he's sitting there saying, "Oh, Allan, you have to do something about the high price of almonds in California. I'm not making any money. I've been importing these almonds for ten years and I'm selling them here on the market but you know after I pay all the expenses there is no money left over, I'm breaking even, sometimes I even lose money. I'm only doing it because I love America so much. I'm pro-American, I want to, but you have to talk to the almond producers to get them to lower the price." Well, the people shipping the almonds to him are his relatives, okay, first of all, and second of all, the guy had two Mercedes-Benzes in his garage, and his house had cost a couple million dollars to build, so he wasn't exactly losing money on these deals.

The other thing I noticed about the almond merchants was that all of them, I think without exception, well, first of all, every Hindu merchant had an iconostasis of icons of various Hindu gods in their office, so you always had that, but then there would be an altar right over his desk hanging on the wall of one particular god, usually with a candle or some incense burning in front of it, propitiating that god. And it was the same god. So I asked one of my local staff, "Who is that god?" "So that is the goddess Durga, who is the goddess of victory." I said, "Why would a merchant have the goddess of victory as the one he propitiates, more than the others?" He said, "You have to understand the Hindu mentality. When a Hindu is doing business with someone else, it's not a win-win situation, where you're both going to make money. It's combat and one of you will win and the other one will lose, so you propitiate the goddess of victory in hopes that she will allow you to be victorious over your opponent in this commercial deal." It's a completely different attitude towards how business is conducted. That was the almond trade.

Q: I'm looking at a picture of the goddess Durga.

MUSTARD: Riding her Bengal tiger.

Q: Yes, she is. She has many arms.

MUSTARD: Yes, she's one of the many-armed gods and goddesses.

I was in India when we had the case of the deputy consul general in New York who was arrested for abuse of her domestic staff and since she was a consul and not a diplomat she did not have full diplomatic immunity. She could be prosecuted and jailed, and she was strip-searched, which of course to the Indians was an outrage even though it was by a matron at the prison not by not by a male, but even so they were outraged by that, and

then she was prosecuted and things eventually got worked out. But that was not handled with a lot of finesse on the U.S. side and the result was that the Indians retaliated against us. Suddenly all of our vehicles were being ticketed for various imagined offenses and the Indians carried out some sanctions against the U.S. embassy, including telling us that we could no longer operate our commissary for the benefit of other diplomats. We'd been operating the commissary, we allowed other diplomats to shop in it if they wanted to, and that was a convenience for them. They said, No, it can only be for American diplomats now, so now they also told us, there was a restaurant on the embassy compound, they said it could no longer be patronized by anyone who is not a diplomat. They couldn't keep foreign diplomats out of it but we had been allowing some wealthy Indians to buy associate memberships in the American club so they could eat at the restaurant. That was stopped.

So they carried out a bunch of these sorts of things, just some generalized harassment, but compared to what the Russians had done to us in 1986 it was pretty mild. I mentioned to Ambassador Powell, I said, "You know, this is history repeating itself as farce, what they're doing to us is pretty minor compared to what the Russians have done to us at Embassy Moscow." She agreed with that. We had some people who were kind of blowing their corks and going off the deep end, that this was the end of the world, and we had to constrain them a little bit.

At one point during that period I was acting deputy chief of mission and we had to sit on a couple of people who were running around, jumping up and down, and stirring up the community, and say, If you don't stop stirring up the community, we're going to send your spouse home. You can't send family members home, you can only send officers home and they take the family with them, so we had a couple of officers who were about to get shipped home because their spouses were running around stirring up trouble, upset at some of the sanctions that the Indian government was imposing on the embassy, which as I say, were relatively trivial. It made the *New York Times* but quite frankly compared to what the Russians have done to us in the past and are doing to us right now it was nothing.

Q: What was the air quality, what was the water quality while you were there?

MUSTARD: Air quality, of course, is horrible. While I was there air quality went from number two to number one in terms of the worst quality in the world compared to Beijing. We had six air purifiers in the living room of our house and ran them constantly. They were cleaned every month and the water ran black when the filters were rinsed. We had filters in our bedrooms. No, air quality was horrible, and then of course water quality.

Water is going to be the issue facing both the embassy and New Delhi because as the city continues to grow, water availability continues to drop, so the water quality was not good, it was not drinkable water, we drank bottled water or we boiled it. We didn't even boil the tap water, we didn't trust it enough to boil it for drinking, so we only drank bottled water and all the food got cleaned in a chlorine bleach solution. Any green vegetables or

anything like that, or salad greens, or anything like that you took home and you—it's like Mexico, Mexico is the same way—you cleaned it in chlorine bleach solution, you would wash it in the chlorine bleach, you would let it soak in the chlorine bleach for a couple of minutes to kill the bacteria, and then rinse it in potable water. The potable water came in five-gallon jugs. We had water dispensers.

Q: Did you get sick there a lot?

MUSTARD: I got sick a lot in Mexico. The first year I was in Mexico I was sick about half of my first year, about six months out of the year, before the immune system started to finally build up to the point that it was able to get infections under control. I was expecting the same thing when I got to India. I thought when I get to India it will be the same thing. I'm gonna get here and boom, it's gonna be horrible, but I was only sick twice in India. Once after eating some ice cream, I think it was because the ice cream scoop that was used to scoop the ice cream was put in tap water, and the other time I was eating a salad in a restaurant that clearly had bacteria in it, so I got sick twice in India. But the rest of the time I was fine. I think in part because all the time in Mexico probably inoculated me against a lot of disease organisms.

Q: The benefit of Mexico.

MUSTARD: Exactly.

Q: Somebody who followed you, I don't remember who now—

MUSTARD: Scott Sindelar?

Q: It might have been Scott, but who was after Scott?

MUSTARD: Jeannie Bailey.

Q: It wasn't Jeannie. It must have been Scott. He said that he was sick the whole time he was there. He speculated that it was the manure that was being burned for fuel, that was just filling the air with bacteria. Even though he lived in a cocoon in the embassy and a cocoon in your home, there were times when you had to breathe the ambient air.

MUSTARD: Well, there wasn't that much manure being burned in New Delhi. The bulk of the pollution came from a couple of different sources. One of them was burning straw after the harvests, after the rice and wheat harvest, farmers burned the straw in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, and then you would get the smoke from the straw coming in blanketing the city. So you have that smoke, and then when winter set in, people in the slums would burn anything they could find to keep warm, including timbers that were soaked in creosote, plastic, anything they could find that would just produce a flame and produce a little bit of heat, that they could cook over.

You would get these blankets of really nasty smoke. You could smell it had a lot of toxins in it. The other major source of pollution is diesel fuel. A lot of the really fine particulate matter, the stuff under .25, came from diesel because the diesel fuel is cheaper than gasoline, and so it was the preferred motor fuel, and the trucks and even a lot of cars, and I bought a used vehicle, a used car before arrival from another departing diplomat, and it was diesel powered. It was very common that you had a lot of diesel vehicles.

Q: That was the only country you were posted in that had driving on the left side of the road.

MUSTARD: That's correct, yeah, they were taught by the Brits, and so they drive British style, the wrong side of the road. We could not take our reliable Honda CR-V that had seen us through Moscow and Mexico City and had done thousands of miles in Russia and Mexico. We put it in a garage in Illinois for the duration, and I went to India and bought sight unseen a Mahindra Scorpio, which is an SUV. It's a two-wheel drive SUV. But it has high ground clearance, which is good for when the streets flood during the monsoon, and being a diesel, you didn't have to worry about the spark plugs getting wet and the engine stalling during the monsoon, either, so that was an attractive thing.

One of the funny things about that vehicle is it was a relatively inexpensive vehicle, and Mahindra cuts a lot of corners making what amounts to a third-world SUV, so just as an example, there were two things that went wrong with it while I had it that required either the engine to be pulled or for the entire dashboard to be removed. One was, the ventilation fan in the dashboard began rattling, and we took it to a mechanic, and he said, "Oh, yeah, I can repair that. I know what that is," and I think twenty-five dollars is what he charged to replace it. He had to remove the entire dashboard to get at it, and once he had the dashboard removed with everything, I mean removing a dashboard is not a trivial task in an automobile, he pulls the whole thing out, and the fan was mounted in a brass bushing, not in a bearing, but in a bushing, and it had worn out, so he replaced it with a bushing of the proper size, reinstalled, and I think the labor charge was about $24.75, and the bushing was $.25.

Now if you were to do that in the United States, replace that dashboard, it would have been hundreds of dollars for the labor, because it took them hours to do it. Then we started leaking coolant at one point from the engine, and it turned out that one of the pipes that connected the engine block to the radiator had rusted through. Now, a U.S. manufacturer, or a Japanese manufacturer, or a German manufacturer would use quality steel for that, which would not rust out in only three years, and this car was three years old and it had already rusted out. So to get at it the guy had to pull the engine completely out 'cause it was up behind sort of a brace that he couldn't get at it, pull the engine out, have it up on a stand, pull that thing out of it, find a replacement, 'cause a replacement was not sold by the manufacturer. He had to go on the secondary market, find one, pound it back into place, seal it in place, and then drop the engine back in and reassemble everything, and he charged fifty dollars for that. Now if you pull an engine in a U.S. car it will be a minimum of five hundred dollars and he charged me fifty bucks to do all of that.

And that was the thing about India, was that the labor was very cheap, but you know everything was predicated on requiring labor.

Q: I'm supposed to ask you about Indian weddings and the funeral.

MUSTARD: Right, so we were invited to several weddings. Any time one of our local employees got married we were of course invited and then we also had invitations from people we had met who wanted us to come. It's very interesting, that because Indian society is so hierarchical, having somebody from the embassy come was considered very prestigious, and so because I was a high-ranking officer of the embassy at that point, as a minister-counselor of embassy, having Ann and me attend the wedding was considered a source of prestige for whichever side of the family we were the guest of. That was a little bit odd to us. I mean, to us, you know, you go to a wedding to celebrate the people being married, and in their creation of a new family. It was a little bit odd to sometimes be put in that position, but we humored them, and then just went along for the ride.

A proper Indian wedding lasts for three days and, yeah, it includes copious amounts of food, they're constantly cooking food, and it's not like where you walk into the church and, you know, you have a ceremony that lasts for about an hour and a half, and then everybody leaves, and then you go to the reception. Here there are a number of different things that go on, including having a holy man, who sits down with the couple and counsels them, and typically counsels them in all manner of things related to how one behaves when one is married, and how they should relate to each other. It's all very formulaic—

Q: Is that in front of everybody?

MUSTARD: Yeah, in front of everybody, but the other thing is that the whole time, in the meantime, everybody else attending the wedding is just kind of hanging out, walking around, and talking to each other, and having side conversations. Then the actual ceremony of getting them married to each other involves walking around the fire three times and the timing of this has to be set through astrology, so they sit down and do astrological charts of the bride and the groom and then the holy man decides what is the most auspicious time for them to be married, and in the case of one of the weddings we attended, it was about 2:30 in the morning. So most of the wedding guests didn't show up for that. They went back to their hotels and went to sleep, but we stayed up for it. I took photographs of the whole ceremony and when the time comes they stand up, they walk around the fire three times, and then they're married.

So that was quite interesting. That was a cultural experience for us. One of our local employees had three different ceremonies, because her mother is a Catholic, her father was a Sikh, and she was marrying a Hindu, and so we had to have a Hindu ceremony, a Sikh ceremony, and a Catholic ceremony, one after the other, and in three different venues. So that was quite interesting, and of course, because the Catholics would not recognize a wedding between someone, who has at least some Catholicism in her

background, and a Hindu, as a result of that, part of the ceremony was held in a hotel because they couldn't go to a church. So it was very interesting to see that and see the desire to cover all the bases. And in the end, of course, a huge reception afterwards.

Q: When you say that at a wedding you were sort of an object of admiration for the crowd. Did they like put you in front or something?

MUSTARD: Yeah, I mean, in one of the weddings, not in all of them, but in one of the weddings, they had a VIP seating section, and this was not one of my local employees. This was a friend we had made outside and so were friends with the parents of the groom, and they invited us to come out to this wedding, which was not held in New Delhi, we had to fly out to another city for this one. We got there for the wedding and they had two couches set up in the front row, and we were told, you know, you have to sit in the front row, not on one of the folding chairs, you have to be up there in the front row on the couch because you're a VIP. And we were there strictly to lend my prestige as a senior officer of the American embassy to the proceedings, so that was again, it was a little bit strange to us, but that's part and parcel of Indian society and something you take in stride.

Our gardener passed away while we were there. We had a groundskeeper for our residence and he was well into his seventies, and he passed away, tragically, while he was working for us. I had never attended a Hindu funeral before, so to me this was all new, and the first thing was that he had to lie in state overnight before they could cremate him the next day, because you don't wait, you cremate the next day. There's no waiting on funeral ceremony or anything like that.

We of course had to grant permission because he lived in an apartment that was behind our house, actually on the grounds of our residence, so we had to grant permission to all the mourners to come and pay their respects to him, which of course we did, and we tried to be as solicitous as possible. Obviously it was a great tragedy for the family for them to lose their father. The next day we were more or less informed by our housekeeper that we had to attend the funeral, we would attend the funeral, we were expected to, because we weren't sure if it would be appropriate for us to attend or not. She advised, they should know you were his employer, you have to go, and you have to pay your final respects to him.

So we cleared the air on that point. We asked her, you know, what is appropriate, for us to go or, you know, or would we be considered intruders, and the answer was no, no, no, you have to go. So we went, and pallbearers carried him on foot on a litter over their heads all the way down to the crematorium, which was a few miles away. So he was delivered in by pallbearers. They got to the crematorium and then his son selected a large beam, a big chunk of wood that was about the size of a 12 x 12, and the length of a human body, put that down, they placed the body on top of that, and then the men in the funeral party began to go in and get wood from the wood pile to start stacking around him.

And they start motioning to me to come and participate in this. It was not a spectator thing. All the men in the funeral party were expected to pitch in and help, which I hadn't realized, so we stacked wood around the body, so you have the chunks of wood leaning against the body, and then we stacked some more on top, than the son went around with sandalwood, which of course gives off a nice aroma when it burns, he placed sandalwood in various places around the body, and then took ghee, which of course is butter oil that's been rendered down so there's no water in it, and he poured it around as an accelerant, so when he lit it off it would get wood to start burning quickly.

He walked around three times, walked around the body pouring the ghee, and then took a torch and lit it off and began burning. We stood there and prayed with everybody else for his soul, and then after, I don't know, probably half an hour or so, they said, Well, we can't do anything now, until it burns down, it's going to burn down overnight, there's a lot of wood there. It'll take out several hours for it to burn down and reduce the body to ashes. They said the family will come back the next day, collect the ashes, and then will throw them into the Ganges River, which is what you do with the ashes. And the thing is, I didn't know what to expect emotionally from this, but it was very calm, and we were saying goodbye to him, and he was a dear man. We cared very much for him, but—and I was prepared to be really upset by the ceremony, but somehow participating in the cremation was very calming, and it was, you know, we did what we could to send him on his way to the next world. So those were experiences with weddings and funerals in India.

Q: Did the females in the family cry? Did they emote?

MUSTARD: Well, they did, but it wasn't orchestrated. It wasn't like a Muslim funeral where you have a designated crier, who was paid to weep. There was none of that. It was just, the women were weeping, but they were weeping, I think sincerely, because they'd lost their husband and their father.

Q: So the men try not to cry.

MUSTARD: That's right. The men try to be rather stoic about it.

Q: I've visited India a couple times, and it seemed that people were like from a different planet. Everything is so different. The rules of society and how people think and how people act are so different.

MUSTARD: How they relate to each other is very strange, too. We used to visit some of the churches there, there are some Catholic churches in New Delhi. We would visit them even though we're not Catholic, but we would visit them, and you would have beggars outside, who were widows, and I asked about this. I said, "Why do we have Hindu widows begging for alms outside the Catholic churches?" And he said, "Well, it's because they have been turned out of their homes by their children. The father died and

the children inherited the house, and they don't want to take care of the mother, so they just kicked the mother out, and there's a fair amount of that."

Family relations can be very different in India. I found that very strange, you know. I could never imagine running my own mother out if she were destitute and reliant on me, but that apparently was acceptable to society and at least in certain parts of society.

Q: That was common in the time of the apostles, too, that widows were fragile, widows and orphans had no place to turn. I'm fascinated by India, it seems like kind of a time capsule that goes back to pre-Christianity.

MUSTARD: Absolutely. Hinduism is probably the direct lineal descendent of the original animist religion that goes back to the days of the proto-Indo-European language. Any religion that has thirty million gods, where gods inhabit everything and are responsible for everything—we had Hindus tell us that Christianity is a sect of Hinduism and that Jesus Christ is actually an avatar of the god Krishna. So, you know, it's a big umbrella that encompasses everything. So, yeah, I found that absolutely fascinating. It's an interesting, fascinating society, but one that's very difficult to comprehend.

Q: It's a little bit like the ancient Greek and Roman pre-Christian societies, if you think about it, a pantheon of gods, rituals, it seems like that, then came Christianity, which is an outgrowth of Judaism, and then Islam after that. Those two religions are now kind of dominant on the planet. But at the time, it was more like India.

Getting back to work, how much did you travel in India?

MUSTARD: Well, not nearly enough, obviously. I tried to travel as much as I could and I tried to get out and visit places both for work and for pleasure. It's a big country, it's just such a big country, there were a lot of places that I wanted to go to and could not because of violence. We never got up to Kashmir, for example. I wanted to get up to Kashmir, to Srinagar, and explore those areas. We never got there.

I did get down to the South to visit Kerala. We never managed to get over to what used to be called Madras, Chennai, and I never made it to Calcutta. I did make it to West Bengal. We went up to Darjeeling and we spent a couple days on a tea plantation in Darjeeling, because I wanted to see how tea was produced, harvested, sorted. I wanted to see all of that and so we actually spent two days at a tea plantation so I could get a sense of the cycle, you know, what goes on over the course of the day, picking the tea leaves, sorting them, and in deciding whether they're going to be fermented to make black tea or processed green to make green tea. That was fascinating to see.

We visited what they call godowns, a godown is a warehouse, because a lot of the staple foodstuffs are still distributed through state-owned enterprises. There is still a lot of state control of the economy. So we would go visit them to try to get a sense of how the harvest had been, good, bad, indifferent, things like that.

Bob Thompson came out once. You know, he was a professor at Purdue for many years, and had worked in various capacities in various think tanks and whatnot. He came out for a visit. I had never met him but I certainly knew him by reputation as one of the more eminent agricultural economists, and so he wanted to come see me in my office to get a brain dump from me. I said, "Well, you know, Bob, I have a much better idea. Why don't we drive out and visit some of these godowns, the warehouses, and get out of New Delhi? Let's go out someplace into a rural area, and you and I can talk in the Jeep on the way out there, we can have a nice discussion, and then when we get out there, you and my senior local employee, Santosh Singh, he can explain to you everything that you're seeing and can interpret for you if we meet someone we want to talk to."

So we did that. I mean, rather than sitting up in an embassy office, which is pretty boring, we went out and we showed him around, and we had plenty of time in the Prado, the small Toyota Land Cruiser, which was perfect for India, for driving on back roads. And that was great just being able to get out of the city and go places and see things.

Q: Did you have a driver on that trip?

MUSTARD: Well, yes, the agriculture office has a driver, and then of course I also had a personal driver. My personal driver cost no more than my monthly commute to get from Falls Church down to the South Building. I had to go someplace to park and take the subway downtown, take the subway back, and what with the parking fees and Metro fare, the gasoline, when you added all that up on a monthly basis I was paying approximately that for a personal chauffeur six days a week in India. So given that they drive on the other side of the road and given that the roads are filled with everything from elephants to water buffalo to what they call auto-rickshaws, or tuk-tuks, which are the little three-wheelers, run by little gas engines, driving in India was very hazardous to start with, and I just decided it wasn't worth the risk of me hitting and killing somebody accidentally. So I had a personal chauffeur for my personal stuff and then we had the official driver for official travel.

Q: That sounds prudent to me. When I was in Kenya, we had a driver, because they drive on the left there, too. They found that when Americans come over there, they get in wrecks within weeks or days.

MUSTARD: Yeah, well I've driven in England and Scotland, and it's possible to do it, and there are some tricks to remembering it, which are that whether you're driving on the left side or the right side of the road, the centerline needs to be on the driver's side. If you can remember that, always keep the centerline on the driver's side of the car, then you know you're on the right side of the road. So that's how I handled that, was always remembering to keep the centerline on the driver's side of the road.

But in India the lines on the roads are suggestions, they're not really enforced, and you would see people driving on the wrong side of the road. You would have traffic coming at

you, like I say, you have everything from elephants to donkeys and water buffalo to steer around. I just didn't want to deal with it.

Q: I totally understand that. That was very prudent.

Can you talk a little bit about the spirituality of India? You talked about the funeral and the weddings. What kind of holy man would come to the wedding? Do they have like a church?

MUSTARD: Well, you have Hindu temples, of course, the Sikhs have temples, as well, but the holy men aren't necessarily affiliated with a temple. So you go out, you try to find a holy man, and oftentimes what you're looking for, you're looking for a holy man who will tell you what you want to hear. You know, about half of the marriages are still arranged, about half are what they call love marriages, but about half are still arranged by the parents, although sometimes you run into a thing where the children go to the parents and say, we love each other, so arrange our marriage.

But for example individuals who were born on certain days of the week are not supposed to marry other people who were not born on the same day of the week, because they bring bad luck to the marriage. So we encountered that, one of the people to be married was what is called Mangala, that is someone who was born on a Tuesday, you're Mangala, and if you marry somebody else who is not born on a Tuesday, then the other person will die prematurely and that's bad luck.

Well, one of the couples consisted of, one of them was born on a Tuesday, and so what they had to do is they had to find a holy man who could interpret the astrological chart to say that the danger had passed, and that there would be no danger of early death if they got married, and here's why, and explain that this is how the stars and planets had lined up to make sure that this bad luck would not occur. So there's a fair amount of, I can't call it spirituality, I don't know what you would call it, there's a lot of work that goes into deciding whether a couple should get married, whether that would be a good match.

But if you pay enough money, you can get the answer that you really want at the end of the day, and of course, the caste system is still very much alive. It's not as alive as it was fifty years ago, it's starting to break down, but it's still out there. So people who were going to get married would be very much aware of each other's castes and even within the castes there are strata, and so there has to be some sort of balancing of this, are you marrying up, are you marrying down, and if so, how do you compensate for that? It is all very complicated compared to anything that I ever encountered when my wife and I were thinking about getting married.

Q: Did all the castes work for the embassy?

MUSTARD: We didn't care. We would hire anybody.

Q: And they felt comfortable working there.

MUSTARD: Absolutely. We had people of various castes, and, yeah, that really wasn't an issue.

Q: They didn't have kind of fights between certain people because of the castes?

MUSTARD: Not really, not that I was aware of. And if there had been problems we would have put a stop to them. Again, Americans, in particular Foreign Service officers, I think have been pretty well trained that we don't pay attention to those sorts of things. So yeah, that was not really an issue within the embassy.

Q: I'm also interested in the issues that you covered, what were the trade issues? Technical assistance issues? Food aid assistance? Research?

MUSTARD: One of the big issues was that the Indians of course were heavily subsidizing agriculture, and we were going after them in the WTO over that. So they were coming back accusing us of doing heavy subsidization of agriculture because of the size of the USDA budget, which is of course quite large. But I would point out 80 percent of that is food stamps or was at the time, as our domestic food aid programs, and I would also point out that with our domestic food aid money you can buy imported food, so if somebody wanted to buy imported Indian basmati rice with their food stamps or WIC allocations, they could do that. It is perfectly legal. But the Indians didn't want to hear that, so what we found was that the Indians are very accustomed to prevaricating, trying to win arguments by telling lies, winning in the court of public opinion. We were warned never to go on Indian television on the talk shows, because what they'll do is to put up to a dozen talking heads in windows on some sort of a panel discussion and they'll start yelling at each other and making counter accusations. It just degenerates into a shouting match and so we were told that as embassy officers, don't ever fall into that trap and go into one of those things, because it does you no good.

So we avoided those sorts of things. We simply worked within the framework of the WTO, which made the Indians very upset, because you know, you can lie and you can prevaricate in the court of public opinion, but if you go to the Dispute Resolution Panel and try to lie, it doesn't work very well. You end up coming out with facts, you come out with data, come out with the sound science, and an astute Dispute Resolution Panel looks at it and goes with what's in the data and in the facts and rejects the emotional arguments that are based on falsehood.

The Indians never really got that. Indian farming associations and a lot of the Indian bureaucracy didn't really understand why it was that they couldn't win in the WTO, so there were the constant accusations, oh, there's ethnic bias, it's racism, it's the white man against the Indian, and whatnot, which was complete nonsense. It was just science based, so the big complaints that they had about us, aside from accusations of over subsidization of U.S. agriculture, which at the time I think were not valid, I think now, I think in the

wake of the Trump Administration where 40 percent of U.S. farm income is now derived from federal payments, I think there might be a case for that, but back then it certainly wasn't the case.

The big issues were basmati exports to the United States and exports of mangoes because India is the home of the khapra beetle, which is the absolute worst quarantine pest you can imagine. We required that all basmati rice shipped to the United States come from a limited number of facilities that met APHIS's standards for insect control and this included use of stainless steel silos for storing the rice in bulk. They would not use burlap bags, they would only use polypropylene bags for shipping the rice because burlap is a natural habitat for the khapra beetle, they eat it, then they breed, so you know, you had to take all these measures to make sure that there would be no khapra beetles. Then of course there were very stringent inspection requirements.

So any basmati rice shipped to the United States from India could only come under these rather stringent conditions, which cost money, and that was the complaint. Burlap is cheaper in India than is polypropylene, why do we have to do this? This is unfair. It's a trade barrier, yada, yada, yada, and no trade barrier, we're not barring your trade. We want your rice. We just don't want the khapra beetles to come with it.

Similar thing with the mangoes, everything had to go through a radiation facility to sterilize any insect pests that were in the mangoes, and that way when the mangoes arrived in the United States, if live insects came out, they would be sterilized, they wouldn't be able to reproduce. Again, it was expensive to ship all your mangoes to this one place, have them irradiated, pay for the irradiation, and then take them to the airport, put them on a plane, and fly them to the United States. We required special boxes that had to be sealed so that insects couldn't get in after they were irradiated. That was an additional expense. So for every box of mangoes that went, there was a certain cost associated with meeting our standards, and they resented that. I just had to tell them, look, it's this or nothing, either do this or your mangoes don't go to the United States.

Q: The WTO was the major issue you dealt with there?

MUSTARD: We dealt with some WTO issues there, I wouldn't say they were the major issues, because USTR took care of most of that in Geneva. We would try to talk to the Indians in India about some of these issues, and as I mentioned to you earlier, the hierarchy just didn't want to talk to us, so oftentimes the only way we could communicate with the Indian government was by sending a message to USTR and having USTR convey that to the Indians in Geneva, and then they would send it from their delegation back to New Delhi. It was rather convoluted. I think a lot of problems could've been solved a lot faster and more easily if the Indians had been more open to direct communication with the embassy, but they were not.

I contrast that with Mexico where I had such a very close relationship with both SENASICA and SAGARPA, but in Mexico we had each other's cell phones and we

talked with each other constantly. We solved all kinds of issues before they blew up into big issues, we solved them while they were still small enough that we could deal with them. The Indians weren't interested in that. The Indians seemed to want things to blow up to a big issue and take it to Geneva, where they would lose, which I never understood. I never quite got that.

One other funny thing happened in India. One day I got an email from Ann Veneman, who was a private citizen at that point. She said that Randy Russell, who had been a Republican political appointee, but whom I had never met, wanted to talk to me, and asked if he could call, because he had a question about the history of FAS. We arranged a phone call and Randy asked me if FAS had ever had its own under secretary. I replied that it sort of had, that in 1953 for six months the head of FAS had held the title of assistant secretary of agriculture for the Foreign Agricultural Service, from March to September. I said, "Since then FAS has shared an assistant or under secretary with one or more other agencies." He thanked me. A few months later the Republicans in Congress pushed through legislation creating the position of under secretary of agriculture for trade and foreign agriculture, underscoring that FAS is a trade agency and not a development agency. Nobody has ever told me if there was a connection between that legislation and my phone conversation with Randy Russell, but I have to wonder.

Ashgabat 2014–2019

Q: We're going to shift now to your time as the ambassador in Turkmenistan. Can you describe how all of that happened? Just getting that position?

MUSTARD: It goes back to 2007, which was the first time I bid on an ambassadorship, and it was because some folks in State with whom I had worked over the years began kind of winking and nodding at me, and nudging me, saying I should apply for an ambassadorship. I just laughed at them, I said folks from FAS don't get ambassadorships very often, and when they do, it's because somebody in the political hierarchy has pushed very hard for them, so it just isn't likely to happen.

But it only takes a few minutes to fill out the initial paperwork, so I thought, all right, finally after the third person at State leaned on me and said, "You need to do this," and I put it in and to my surprise I made the short list. Now when I informed Frank Lee, Frank Lee was head of the attaché service at that point, and Frank called me up laughing. He said, "My name is in for an ambassadorship, and Bill Brant, too, and Mike Yost has already said he'll support us, so you know, you're too late. We're not going to support you. We will put the paperwork forward but we're not going to support you."

Much to my surprise I made the short list for one of the posts and then was informed that I was the bureau's selection, but of course the bureau may select you and that selection then goes up to the seventh floor of the Department of State to the secretary of state and the deputy secretary, and they decide ultimately who will get it. Well, before that it also goes to something called the D Committee, which is chaired by the deputy secretary of state, consists of the deputy secretary, all the under secretaries and then the assistant secretary for the particular bureau where ambassadors are being considered. So I was the top of the list for the bureau and when it went up to the D Committee, the deputy secretary of state said, "No, we're not gonna take in someone from the Department of Agriculture for an ambassadorship," and someone else got that one.

So I said, "Okay, fine." The same people came back three years later, so it's now 2010, the 2011 cycle. Did the same thing, they said, "No, you need to go for this ambassadorship," and once again I made the short list, I floated to the top of the shortlist, was the bureau's pick, it got to the seventh floor of the Department of State, and again people at the political level of the Department of State said, No, we don't bring in people from the Department of Agriculture, especially white males from the Department of Agriculture to be ambassadors. We use other Cabinet departments for diversity reasons to get more female ambassadors, to get more people of color, and that sort of thing, so I was passed over for that ambassadorship. At that point I figured, Okay, this isn't going to work, that is that, no chance I'm gonna get an ambassadorship even though I've got all these friends nudging me and telling me I should go for it.

So 2013 rolled around and I was not planning to apply. A fairly high-ranking officer of the Department of State happened to come through New Delhi, with whom I had worked in one of my previous embassies, and he asked how things were going, and I said, "Oh, they're going fine, but you know, this is my third posting as a minister-counselor of embassy and I've pretty well knocked it in the head. I know what I'm doing, I'm not learning anything new in terms of professional growth. I'm learning about India and about Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and that's interesting, and I'm learning a lot about a part of the world I'd never worked in before, but in terms of professional growth this posting is not teaching me anything. So I'm about ready to pull the plug. I think this'll be my last overseas post and I'll retire, go do something else with my life." And then half joking I said, "You know, if you've got something for me, I'm all ears, because otherwise I'll just hang it up."

He said, "Why don't you come see me when you come back on R&R? When will you be back?" I said, "February." He said, "Well, send me an email, come in and see me." So I did, just figured, you know, an old friend from an overseas post, will go and see him, and will have a nice chat. So I did. About five minutes into that conversation I realized it was a job interview. He was more or less interrogating me. So after half an hour he says, "I have another appointment. I have to go," shook hands, and I walked out. Well, that was very strange, I said, that was a job interview and I don't even know what the job is.

I finished up my R&R and went back to New Delhi, and then got a phone call from someone in one of the bureaus saying I need to apply for a specific ambassadorship, and I said, "Well, can I apply for more than one?" He said, "You can apply for as many as you want, but this is the one that we think you would be good for, that's what we want you for." So I applied for, I think, three ambassadorships, maybe only two, I don't remember, you don't want to apply for a whole bunch and focus on like two or three. I recycled all the paperwork I'd already done twice and sent in the paperwork and just forgot about it.

I also knew at that point, having had a run in with Tom Vilsack in Mexico, that Tom Vilsack did not like me, and I had a very strong suspicion that if Vilsack found out that I was up for an ambassadorship again, that he would deep six it, find some way of stopping it. So I chose not to inform FAS and of course if FAS didn't know, it meant the department didn't know, so it was all done internally within the Department of State and I really didn't expect anything to come of it. I figured, you know, it's gonna get up to a certain level, and then it will get torpedoed.

To my surprise in October 2013 I received a phone call from the director general of the Foreign Service saying, "If the president were to offer you this job, would you accept it?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Okay, we're now going to start the background investigation, which is quite extensive." It went from the first week of October until about the last week of May, so you're talking about eight months of having one full-time investigator, a retired Diplomatic Security Special Agent turning over every possible rock or stone or pebble about my background. The written report is pretty extensive, so anyway, as much as you would think that they would go back to my TS clearance paperwork, but, no, they

started fresh, they started right from the very beginning, and went back and checked everything. They interviewed all kinds of people. So anyway, after this field investigation, on June 4, 2014, I got a phone call from State saying that the White House is going to send your nomination to the Senate tomorrow on June 5, we just wanted you to be aware of that.

I said to Ann, so it looks like it's going to go forward, and she said, "Well, tomorrow is the day we find out who our friends are." I didn't really know what she was talking about exactly, but we certainly did, because the next day the announcement came out of the White House. It hit social media. My friend, Judy Kuo, was the first person to see it, I think, and she put it out on Facebook before anybody else did. Congratulations gradually started to come in. Some of the folks in Embassy New Delhi were actually stunned. They had no idea that this was in the works, I mean Ambassador Powell knew and the DCM knew, but nobody else knew that this was in the works. There was one person who was a friend of mine on Facebook, another fellow FASer, who unfriended me on Facebook as soon as the announcement came out, and that's when I realized Ann knew what she was talking about.

So there were people who congratulated us, and there were people who were deeply upset by it for whatever reason. I had to wait for confirmation. I came back in July for the attaché conference but State hijacked me and ran me up on Capitol Hill. That's when I had my initial meetings with the folks up on the Hill and then we had our hearings. Senator Kaine chaired the hearings, there were five of us who were up for confirmation hearings all at the same time, so it was pretty pro forma. Then following the hearings we just had to wait for the Senate to act and of course that was the Obama Administration and Mitch McConnell sitting on all kinds of nominations, refusing to confirm, so I wasn't confirmed until November 19.

Word came down from State, you need to get sworn in immediately so that we can put you on the payroll and start the paperwork, and I said, "Okay, so who can swear me in?" They said, "Any consul of the United States." So I went to the head of our consular section, Julia Stanley, who is also a graduate of the University of Illinois, and I said, "Do you want to swear me in for the administrative swearing-in?" So we had a small swearing in ceremony and that got me on the State payroll, but of course I was still going to be in New Delhi for at least the next month.

I couldn't get out of there until just before Christmas because you have to pack out, and there's all kinds of paperwork that needs to be done. State was typical, screwing up my travel orders because they wanted to initiate travel orders in Washington, DC. I was in New Delhi and I tried to explain to them, I'm in New Delhi, and they said, Well we didn't pay for you to go to New Delhi, so Agriculture will have to pay for you to come back to Washington. Agriculture of course refused since I was no longer an FAS employee. I said, "Well, first of all, my household effects are all here, you will not ship them to Washington and then to Ashgabat, you will ship them straight from here to Ashgabat, so I need orders from here," and they said, No, nothing doing, we're not going to pay for this.

It ended up going to the under secretary for management, Pat Kennedy. He said, "This is ridiculous," and ordered them to cut travel orders for me to be transferred from New Delhi to Ashgabat with a trip back to Washington for consultations and the formal swearing in ceremony, so you know the petty bureaucracy just never ends. It never ceases to amaze me that a decision of that nature had to go all the way to the under secretary for management.

Q: When was FAS brought into it?

MUSTARD: FAS found out when the nomination went from the White House to the Senate, so FAS was aware of the nomination as of June 5. It was probably a bit of a shock to some people to find out that had happened, but again, I was just afraid that somebody in FAS would do something to try to keep it from happening. So anyway the upshot of it was that we flew back to Washington in December, got back there and spent not quite a month, I think, in Washington. We did consultations and did some medical checkups and things like that and then I had my swearing-in just after the middle of January, I think it was on January 17, 2015, and then we flew out. On January 21, I presented credentials to President Berdimuhamedov and then became officially the ambassador.

Q: Talk to me a bit about FAS, forgive me, but when someone from FAS gets an ambassadorship, that's gigantic prestige that the agency gets. Everybody in the agency and USDA should be on board with that, and they should be happy, because it's benefiting everybody.

MUSTARD: Most of the career staff were. Most of the career staff felt very positively about it and did see it as a source of pride. At my swearing-in ceremony, I mean, I threw it open to anybody in FAS who wanted to come, could come, all they had to do was register for it, and the place that I paid for was the big reception room on the eighth floor, which can accommodate literally hundreds of people, 'cause I knew a lot of people from FAS would want to come. So I threw it open. I mean, I sent some formal invitations to some people, but made it clear, anybody from FAS who wanted to come could come. All they had to do was sign up on the little online form, to give your driver's license number, and all the stuff you do to get past security. So anybody who wanted to come, could come, and a lot of people did, and not just because it was free champagne, which I had to pay for, I paid for champagne for people—

Q: I didn't know the ambassador-designate had to pay for the champagne.

MUSTARD: You have to pay for your own champagne. So anyway, yeah, you pay for that, you pay for everything, but anyway that was what we did. And I received a grand total of two congratulations from political appointees when I was nominated, when the nomination came: one from Sonny Ramaswamy of NIFA, who was a dear friend and who sent me very nice congratulations, and the other was Phil Karsting, who congratulated me, he was still administrator at the time. So Phil congratulated me and Sonny did, but nobody else of the political appointees either in FAS or at the departmental level

congratulated me. One of the politicals, it was interesting, when I bumped into one of the politicals in the hall, I was back on consultations in January before going out, and did consultations in FAS, of course, having come out of New Delhi, and kind of looked me up and down, and said, "Well, I suppose I should congratulate you," which I thought was kind of a backhanded way of putting it. It was pretty bizarre, so obviously no love lost there, on their part at least.

So I arrived in Ashgabat.

Q: I've always just thought of your career as just, a meteoric rise, with no bumps in the road, anything like that.

MUSTARD: There were plenty of bumps in the road.

Q: It sounds like it, but you maneuvered through them. And somehow if you could give us some of that wisdom, how to negotiate through the bumps.

MUSTARD: Well, I was just focused on the job, focused on the work. I didn't focus on personalities unless a personality was so toxic that the personality needed to be dealt with, and there were some very toxic personalities who had to be dealt with at times. You know, the bureaucracy being the bureaucracy, it is hard to fire people and when you run into toxic personalities who are ruining the organization from the inside, you have to get rid of them. I'm convinced of that. Not everybody agrees with that but I always tried to focus on the work and when people would attack me, what do they attack me for? For doing a good job, for looking out for the best interests of our clientele, and for the agency writ large? What are they going to attack me about, for telling the truth about something? So I think the keys to me were always just to tell the truth and to focus on the work and it wasn't really maneuvering.

And you know, in that regard I did get outmaneuvered a few times. I did get pushed aside at times when I was working on something, and somebody else decided, that's really sexy, I want to work on that. I'm taking it away from you, but not always, and some people tried and failed, some people tried and succeeded, that's the way the ball bounces sometimes. But I don't think when somebody comes in and takes something away from you and then flubs it that it necessarily reflects well on them and poorly on you. People look at it and say, well, that shouldn't have happened in the first place.

So I don't know if the rise was meteoric, it seemed to me to be pretty steady over the years, just as I learned things and got better at doing things, that people just kept dumping more work and more responsibility on me.

But getting to Ashgabat, it was very interesting to arrive and to be the ambassador, to be a chief of mission, and what I quickly discovered was that, if you've been a section chief in a large embassy and if you have served as acting deputy chief of mission at least a few times, you can get a pretty good grasp on how to run an embassy. Because if you've been

conscientious about working with other embassy sections, and this is where I think a lot of folks in FAS, a lot of our attachés blow it, is because they view FAS as this discrete entity that is in the embassy but not of the embassy, and is separate somehow from the embassy and isn't going to work with the embassy. Whereas I always viewed us both as a USDA entity overseas and as an integral part of the embassy and had no problem with wearing two hats, both as the principal counselor to the chief of mission on agriculture and rural and food issues, and also as the eyes and ears of USDA, and feet and hands, frankly, of USDA on the ground. I think you have to wear both hats and if you do that, you come to understand what the rest of the embassy does, you understand where you fit into that embassy, you develop rapport with other parts of the embassy, with the employees in other parts of the embassy, and it makes you better at your job.

So then if you have the great fortune to be named chief of a diplomatic mission you already know how the rest of the embassy operates, you know how it functions, and you know how to build good relations with them, you know what irritates them, and you know what pleases them. So I was able to come to the embassy and immediately establish rapport with all the section chiefs, sit down and talk to all of them. Ask them what the issues were.

One of the former ambassadors to the region gave me a heads up, said the very first thing you need to do is go to the State Office of Inspector General website and download the questionnaires that they have people fill out when they do an inspection. You need to do that and what we call a vulnerability survey of the embassy, and find out what the problems are. So we did that and I asked all the section chiefs to fill out this form and tell me where the problems were. We identified 140 issues that needed to be dealt with, one third of them were fairly serious, and I sat down with the section chiefs, we just divided them up, we triaged them, you know, what was most important, what was next most important, and what were relatively trivial items that could be left for later. And we attacked the most important ones right at the top and went to work on those.

We uncovered a theft ring in the warehouse which we had to break up and that involved firing four people, which I can't go into details about for obvious reasons. Needless to say that had a real impact on the embassy and on a lot of people in terms of their attitudes towards honesty when they found out that if you get caught stealing this ambassador will actually fire you. We looked at the reporting program and fine-tuned it to really come in line with what the Department said it needed in the way of reporting, and we reached out to other stakeholders, you know, who also needed our reporting besides State and the Intel community.

There are other stakeholders out there. Department of Energy was very interested because of course Turkmenistan has the fourth largest reserves of natural gas in the world and was a major gas exporter, particularly to China, so there is a lot of information that the Department of Energy needed from us and we were able to start filling those needs as well. So I tried to teach my staff to think not in terms of being a State outpost that only fed State Department and the intel community, but to look at the whole government, what

does the whole of government need from us in terms of information. That was a change of attitude and among some of the section chiefs they had never really considered it from that point of view. So those are kind of the two big things that I did, was kind of broadened the reporting program to look at a broader clientele than they were accustomed to.

Then of course in November 2015 we had two simultaneous catastrophes. One of them was a visit of Secretary of State John Kerry, who was the first secretary of state to visit Central Asia since 1992 when Jim Baker came. So he came and visited all five Central Asian capitals, last one being Ashgabat, where he came for two hours, but of course the advance team came in and we did all this preparation for the visit of Secretary Kerry, and at the same time that he was on the ground we had the Office of Inspector General with a team of about a dozen and a half people on the ground doing a full-blown inspection of the embassy. We had to handle both of those at the same time and SecState visit came off pretty much without a hitch, no major problems, Secretary Kerry did, I thought, a really good job of his interactions with the Turkmen officials, so came in, landed, had his meeting with the president, got back on the plane, and flew out.

But it was funny, after meeting with the president, we arranged that his car would go past the embassy so that the people could see him and he could wave to him on the way by, on the way to the airport, so were driving by, and I said, "Mr. Secretary, if you please, look to the right. Those are the embassy staff out on the street waving to you, so please wave back." He said, "Those are my people?" I said, "Yes, those are your people." He said, "We can't just drive by, I have to stop." Ordered the driver to stop, got out, spent about five minutes talking to people, shaking a few hands, thanking them for their support of the visit, for everything that they did, and then got back in the car and headed to the airport. Just a mark of leadership, that he recognized that he needed to stop and say hello to people and thank them for all the effort that they put into the visit even though he wasn't able actually come into the embassy and greet them.

Q: That's what you have to be like to become a senator and Presidential candidate as well. But still, that's pretty nice to hear.

MUSTARD: That was very nice. So then the OIG inspection report came out—

Q: Was this OIG team a routine inspection?

MUSTARD: Yeah, it was a routine one, there hadn't been one in several years. So this is a routine inspection. It went very well. We asked them to look at things that were not on the list. I said, "I'm not really worried about the stuff we know about, I'm worried about the stuff we don't know about, so please." And before they arrived, I had a town hall meeting with all the staff. I said, "I want everybody to be completely open. If you know of something that needs to be addressed, tell them about it. I want you to tell them the truth, and tell them everything you know. So they ask a question, you answer it, and answer truthfully." They got a lot of good information, put it together, they identified

about a dozen deficiencies that we had not, which we were then able to address over time. And generally it was a good report and the embassy benefited from the inspection.

But that got us into 2016 and in 2016 we noticed that the black market for dollars had reappeared. There had been no black market in dollars, the official exchange rate had been in operation for several years, and you could take Turkmen manat, you could go to any number of places on the street and change them to dollars at the official rate. Dollars started to get short and so a black market started to appear, and then after about a year of that, the government banned any sort of black-market exchange of money, even though people ignored it. As of this week it's up around thirty-nine manat to the dollar versus the official rate of three and a half to the dollar, it's way out of whack.

This was because of the downturn in oil and gas prices in the third quarter of 2014 coupled with the decision of Russia to stop importing natural gas on January 1, 2016, so they were only selling natural gas to China and to Iran at that point. They cut off the Iranians on January 1, 2017, and that meant they were only really selling pipeline gas to the Chinese at that point, and with the reduction in both volume and prices, money was starting to get tight. So we saw this black market reemerge. We started tracking the black market. Basic data collection is something I, of course, had been doing for over thirty years and that's what we do in FAS, so I got my economic section to start collecting information on the black-market exchange rate, and start looking at prices in stores. One of the first things I did in Moscow in 1986 was do price checks and collect price information on foodstuffs. We sent in monthly reports from Moscow on that, so this is the sort of thing that I could teach my people how to do.

As a result we have a tremendous time series of data, of price data, and of the black-market exchange rate, going back to the end of 2015, the first part of 2016, and given the general scarcity of reliable statistics coming out of Turkmenistan, that's a very valuable source of information for the U.S. government.

Q: Why did the Turkmenistanis cut Iran off natural gas?

MUSTARD: I can only speculate. I don't know. It doesn't make a lot of sense to me why you would do that, but my suspicion is that the Turkmen government thought that by cutting off natural gas in the middle of winter, during a cold snap, they could force the Iranians to pay some overdue debts. The Iranians were in debt to the Turkmen for natural gas sales that had been made over the previous decade, and I think they thought they could put enough pressure on the Iranians that the Iranians would actually start paying down that debt. And of course it didn't work. The Iranians refused to make those payments and have refused to renew any sort of gas purchases from Turkmenistan. See, the northern part of Iran doesn't have natural gas. The natural gas in Iran is in the south and there's a mountain range there, such that it makes it difficult to get natural gas up there. It was actually cheaper for them to simply buy the natural gas from the Turkmen and have it shipped across the border, and that pipeline had been put in quite some years ago.

But now the Iranians are simply shipping up their own natural gas. I think they're using it as a liquid petroleum gas. They're shipping it up there, getting fuel up there, and have refused to buy anymore pipeline gas from the Turkmen. Which is unfortunate, the loss of economic efficiency, and it was not a well advised thing to do in the first place. But that's the way the ball bounces.

Q: So it was done solely for their own internal bill-collection issues, as opposed to some geopolitical issue.

MUSTARD: Yeah, it was not a geopolitical issue, it was said strictly a gamble that they could force the Iranians to cough up some money and it didn't work.

Q: Well, whoever recommended that probably lost his job.

MUSTARD: I don't know. We'll never know who recommended that.

Q: And you talked about working in the world's most closed society.

MUSTARD: Right.

Q: Talk about how that worked.

MUSTARD: Well, it was hard to get official information out of government officials. If I went in to meet with a government official, the government official would have a script that had been written for him, and with the exception of the deputy prime minister for culture and mass media and the speaker of Parliament, it was always a man. There are very few women officials in Turkmenistan. But you would go in and the official would read from a script, and if you asked any questions, they would say, Well, we'll get back to you on that. Of course, they never would.

After a while they stopped setting up appointments for me. I had a request outstanding from April 2016 to meet the speaker of Parliament that was ignored until I left in 2019. For over three years they ignored a request to meet the speaker of Parliament. I put in a request to meet the chairman of the Central Bank. That was ignored. It was just difficult to get in to see them. If they decided that you shouldn't meet with somebody they would simply ignore your request, which a lot of folks in Washington could not understand. We had people in the bureau who should've known better, should have known the region, but who could not understand that just because we requested a meeting, that didn't mean we were going to get it. And at one point one of the high officials in the bureau was really taking me to task, because the economy was unraveling, we could see that, and he said, "Of course you're going to meet with the chairman of the Central Bank," and I said, "Well, of course I have requested that meeting. I requested it months ago." We reiterated the request at least once but it isn't coming through. Well, that was my fault in his eyes, that I wasn't able to get that appointment, when in fact I was just one of many

ambassadors who couldn't get in to see these people, either. None of us could get in to see most of the public officials.

So it really constrained you in terms of information collection. On the one hand I would get lectured by the Foreign Ministry to only rely on official sources of information, I shouldn't rely on opposition press that was offshore in Prague and in Amsterdam and Vienna, I shouldn't be listening to those people, I should only be listening to the official news. But then if you read the official news there wasn't a lot of information in it that was really worth writing about. So information collection was difficult. There was a lot of primary information collection and then we would seek to corroborate it however we could.

Q: How many people worked at the embassy, American and then local?

MUSTARD: We had about three hundred local employees, about half of whom are in the guard force, because we had several installations that needed to have 24/7 guard force, and then we had the Overseas Building Operations contingent that was in charge of construction of the new embassy, which is a separate story. There were four of them. We normally had thirty-six Americans, not counting the OBO contingent. Eight of the thirty-six were the Marine security guards. This was after a decision was made that the minimum size of a Marine security guard detachment would be eight, so we had a detachment commander plus seven, what was called the 7+1 configuration. That takes you down to twenty-eight officers and specialists.

Q: Which departments did you have?

MUSTARD: You had a combined political and economic section. You had a management section, of course, the consular section, and public affairs had a very strong section. We had very good public outreach, running our American Corners in three cities as well as the American Center in Ashgabat. We had a Defense Attaché's Office as well as an Office of Military Cooperation. We actually had two military officers as well as some noncoms, and then of course USAID was there. We had a regional security officer, he's also a section chief. We had very, I had excellent regional security officers, all three of them that worked for me. Two of them I periodically used as acting deputy chiefs of mission. They were very good.

Q: Did you have a team meeting on a regular basis?

MUSTARD: Every week we had country team, and country team was one of two times that I asked people to stand when I entered the room. See, one of the things is that when the ambassador walks into the room, the ambassador represents the president and the president of course represents the sovereign authority of the American citizens. So I didn't want people jumping out of their seats every time I walked into the room, which when I arrived, that would happen. I would walk into any room, people would launch out of their seats and stop what they were doing. I said, "No, let's not do that. I don't want to

interrupt people's work because I will be doing a lot of management by walking around," which I did. So I said, "You will remain seated except on two occasions. One is the country team meetings, so when I walk into the room for country team, I want everybody to stand to show their respect for the American citizens that the president represents, and I represent the president, and town hall meetings." When I entered the room for a town hall meeting in our multipurpose room, I asked people to stand out of respect for the American citizens, for that too. So those were the only occasions when I asked that people stand. But yeah, we had country team once a week.

Q: How many people were in those meetings?

MUSTARD: Usually all section chiefs plus our community liaison officer, of course. The duty officer for that week and my administrative assistant would also attend.

Q: So I wondered what it was like to work for so many years in the government but also as a Foreign Service officer then finally become an ambassador. You never saw it as an ego-boosting thing. It sounds like more, you stood up because that was the protocol, like saluting.

MUSTARD: Well, saluting was another thing. The U.S. Marines, you know, when they're standing guard at Post One, standing watch, any time I walked by they would salute me. It got to be a little bit ridiculous, where I would start to go someplace, realize I forgot my cell phone out in the lockbox, would double back, run back in, the Marine salutes as I run by, I grab my cell phone, come out and get another salute. I finally said, "Look, let's do it this way. When I arrive in the morning for work, I will present myself to Post One, you salute. I will acknowledge it to you, to carry on, and let's dispense with the saluting from then on." It took a little bit of convincing but they finally went along with that, and that was the protocol from then on, was that I would get saluted once in the morning by the Marine when I arrived on post and then we would dispense with the saluting. And again, what was the salute for? The salute is an acknowledgment that the ambassador represents the President, who represents the sovereign citizens of the United States, so I wanted people to focus on their jobs.

Q: How did you acknowledge the salute?

MUSTARD: Oh, I had to ask Jonn Slette that. As you know, Jonn Slette was a Marine security guard before he joined FAS and rose up through the ranks, and so when Jonn was working for me and when I was sworn in and the very first time I was going to walk past Post One in New Delhi, I realized, the guy's probably going to salute me because you have to pay a dollar, the first guy that salutes you gets paid a dollar.

Q: I didn't know that.

MUSTARD: Yeah, so I said, "What do I do, how do I acknowledge the salute?" And he says, "Well, you can't salute back, you're a civilian and especially because you're not

covered, don't have a hat on, so you can't salute back, so you just say, 'Carry on, Marine!' And that's all you have to do, and that's how you acknowledge it as a civilian." So I went up to Post One in New Delhi after the swearing-in, presented myself, Marine saluted, big grin on his face, I said, "Carry on, Marine," and slid a dollar coin, I had a George Washington dollar coin, and I slid underneath the tray so he would have his dollar from me.

Q: Well there is the tradition of Reagan saluting the Marine when getting on the helicopter. That's my first recollection.

MUSTARD: That was Reagan, and that's not protocol. That was just Reagan being Reagan, but that's not what, you're not supposed to salute back, because you're a civilian and you're not covered, so that the proper thing to do is to just say, "Carry on, Marine!" Eternal gratitude to Jonn Slette for telling me.

Q: Where is he now?

MUSTARD: He's in Warsaw.

Q: So what was it like dealing with the strategic location, Europe, Russia, Afghanistan? How did that—

MUSTARD: And Iran.

Q: And Iran, right.

MUSTARD: Well, the first person I think in the region to tumble to the way to deal with that was President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, who coined the term, multi-vector foreign policy. The concept of the multi-vector foreign policy is that we're in a tough neighborhood and we have to deal with the Russians, Chinese, Americans, the EU, and then you've got some regional players like Turkey and Iran, you've got Afghanistan with the Taliban and ISIS, and various other actors down there, al Qaeda, what we do about all of this? And so the idea of the multi-vector foreign policy is that you turn your back on the unipolar or bipolar world model and say, we're going to deal with everybody.

The Turkmen took this to an extreme, they borrowed the concept and came up with a concept called positive neutrality, and under positive neutrality, they have no alliances, they are not allied with anybody, but they have no enemies, either, so they have no military alliances. They haven't joined any sort of regional security organization, but they try to maintain at least speaking relations, if not cordial or warm relations, with everybody, with all comers. So they for example have diplomatic relations with both North and South Korea. They only have an embassy of South Korea in Ashgabat, but while I was there the North Korean ambassador to Russia came down for a visit, presented his credentials, met with the foreign minister and with the speaker of parliament, so you know, they try to get along with everybody. They have relations with

Saudi Arabia at the same time that they have relations with Iran, okay? So you know they have an Israeli embassy in Ashgabat but they also have a Palestinian embassy, so you have an ambassador from Palestine, which we don't recognize, and I had to request special instructions from Washington, "How do I deal with him, because we don't have diplomatic relations with the Palestinians, what do I call him, do I talk to him?" They said, Yes, you can talk to him, but you cannot address him as ambassador, you call him "mister." So we chatted, and he and the Israeli ambassador chatted all the time, they had a very cordial relationship.

It was strange in that regard. You know, Armenia and Azerbaijan do not have diplomatic relations, and recently had a war, and yet the Azerbaijani and the Armenian ambassadors were fast friends, they were old Soviets, they went back to the Soviet period. The Azerbaijani ambassador was old enough that in his youth he'd met Stalin, so you know, he'd been around for a long time. The Armenian ambassador was just a little bit younger than I am, and the two of them used to go out and have dinner together and talk shop, so even though they didn't have diplomatic relations, they still had a close personal relationship going back years, and it was odd in that regard.

You saw these sorts of interactions. I would be at formal events and would be positioned sitting right next to the Iranian ambassador, who you know, we don't have diplomatic relations with Iran, and I wasn't supposed to talk to him, but when you're standing next to somebody for hours, waiting for something to happen at one of these ceremonies, gee, it's hot out here, yeah, isn't it, it's hot out here. Not terribly substantive conversations, but, you know, still.

One thing about Iran is that Iran produces the best cobra antivenom in the world, and of course the cobras up in the Kopetdag mountains are among the most toxic, the most poisonous in the world. So we wanted to get some of the Iranian antivenom, and it took us a couple of years to figure out how to do it, because it involved going to the Department of the Treasury. We had to get a license as an embassy, we had to get a license from the Office of Foreign Assets Control at Treasury to get permission to buy this cobra antivenom, which we would then keep in our medical unit. Of course, we can't go to Iran to get it, so then we had to find somebody else to get it, and that turned out to be the German embassy. The German embassy wanted it, too, and they were able to go down to Iran and go buy it, but it took us a couple of years to get all the paperwork lined up and then for the Germans to line up the purchase and drive down there with a cooler, because it had to be kept chilled, and they went down there with the cooler and a bunch of ice packs and came back with our antivenom.

Q: The money change was part of that. You had the license to get the product in but then—

MUSTARD: Well, the Germans just went to Iran with dollars, and I suspect paid dollars for it. The thing about it was, we told everybody, especially we had real heart-to-heart chats with the Marines, when they were out hiking on one of the health paths and health

walks, if you see a cobra, do not do selfies with it, don't get close to it, because if you get bitten by cobra, you have about an hour before your blood coagulates and you die. And if you're up on one of those health paths, it will take you a minimum of an hour to get back to Ashgabat, and by the time you get back in Ashgabat, it's too late for the antivenom to have an effect. The antivenom was around just so that if somebody got bitten in the city by happenstance, we would have the antivenom on hand, could inject them quickly and try to save them, but if you were out in the wilderness some place, or on a hike someplace and got bitten, you could pretty well kiss yourself goodbye. So we told people to stay away from the cobras.

Q: Are the cobras like the ones in India, they go up?

MUSTARD: They can, and they are more poisonous than the ones in India. I never saw one. I saw photographs of them. People went hiking and took a photograph from a distance and would turn around and go back the other way, because if there was one out sunning itself on the path, then you didn't want to go down the path.

Q: I can imagine. What other unique aspects of life in Turkmenistan did you experience, beside cobras?

MUSTARD: Well, I explored a lot. You know, one of the things, so there's a lot to see in Turkmenistan, so we would go out, and one of the things I tried to impress on folks in the embassy is that State Department tends to be very urban-centric, and it tends to be very focused on the capital, and if you want to understand the country, you can't focus on the capital. You can't focus on only the cities. The roots of folk culture tend to be rural in nature, so if you want to understand the underlying psychology of a nation, you have to get out in the rural areas, and you need to get out of the capital city. I haven't seen a country yet in which the country was reflected in the capital, any more than Washington, DC, is a reflection of the diversity that is America.

So I would say, do you consider Washington, DC, to be representative of all of America? And the answer was, of course not. How can you expect that Ashgabat is going to be representative of all of Turkmenistan? Even as small as Turkmenistan is, it's about the size of California in terms of land area, population is, they claim, five million, it's not five million, it's somewhat less and I guess around three and a half million in reality, but even as small as that is, there is still a fair amount of diversity. I urged people to get out and travel, go out and see what's in the countryside, go out and talk to people, visit places and see what you can see.

So we would go out. Of course, 80 percent of the country's desert, and really unless you're into exploring the desert, it isn't that interesting except for some of the archaeological sites, so you're mainly looking at the oasis areas, which tend to be where the rivers are, and where the mountains are. Some of them are just drop-dead gorgeous, and some of the most beautiful places on earth I've ever seen. So I pushed people to go out to see the archaeological sites that are in the desert, go out and see the oases.

I got out to visit people and meet people and find out what's going on outside of the capital city, so in terms of things I learned from FAS, I mean, that was one of the big ones, was the need to get out of the cities and in particular out of the capital city.

Q: Were you restricted?

MUSTARD: Well, yes and no. I mean they have a whole lot of the country that is officially in frontier areas but we made it very clear to the Turkmen that if they tried to restrict us and not give us permission to go into the border areas, we had to apply for formal permission to go to some of the border areas, and we told them, Look if you put restrictions on us— We had a lot of practice with this with the Soviets starting in 1937, that the Soviets used to restrict our movements, and so starting in 1953 we began restricting their movements, and I see that with the latest moves of the Russians we're back to that old practice in Russia, unfortunately. But I said, "You know, if you want your officers in your embassy and in your UN mission to be restricted in their movements, well, go down this path," but otherwise we expected if we put in a request for permission to go to a frontier zone that it will be granted. And it nearly always was. We only had a few hiccups here and there, but by and large, if we wanted to travel someplace, we could travel there and go and see it and come back.

I mapped the country, because there were no decent maps. If you look at what diplomats used to do back in the old days, I mean, going back into the seventeenth and eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, one of the primary functions of diplomats was to figure out the geography of the countries that they were assigned to, and so they would submit maps and they would draw maps and they would bring in cartographers and they would create maps. So I got to Turkmenistan and discovered there were no decent maps of the city, there were no decent maps of the country that were useful for navigating. It wasn't like you could go out and get yourself a Rand McNally map. So we started using OpenStreetMap to map, first the city of Ashgabat, then the country.

Q: OpenStreetMap?

MUSTARD: openstreetmap.org, it's an NGO, and I'm now chairman of the board of it.

Q: I've never seen that on your resume. Is it a Google Maps type organization?

MUSTARD Google Maps is proprietary and is a private company. This is an NGO and it makes the data available free of charge to anybody who wants to use it. It's under an open license, so we collect the data, put it in this database, and anybody can download the data and generate maps out of it if they want to.

And that was the thing, there were a couple of mobile phone apps that you could download and you could navigate around the country using the maps that we generated using the map data that we were collecting. And it worked, and enough people started

really going out and exploring and going places and seeing where they could go, figuring out how to travel around the country. I think we learned a lot more about Turkmenistan the last couple of years I was there than in the previous several years, simply because people were pretty brave about going out and traveling, since they could figure out where they wanted to go and could figure out how to come home.

Q: So was it like what we were talking about with Moldova, that the roads don't have reflective lines on them, and the signs are not reflective as well?

MUSTARD: Well, it varied. The best streets are of course in downtown Ashgabat, which has beautiful streets in the center of the city, but yeah, if you get out into the hinterlands, there were places where we could do no more than twenty-five kilometers an hour because the road was in such bad shape. There were some places in Balkan province where truck drivers drive across the desert on the sand because it is a smoother ride than driving on the pavement. So road quality varied tremendously. There was one stretch of road that we were on in Lebap province, allegedly a major highway, one of the numbered highways, and we did two hundred kilometers in six hours, that's an average of thirty-three km an hour, about twenty-five miles an hour. And that was the best time that we could make on a major highway. The road was so bad.

We had some highways that are fantastic, where you can easily do ninety to a hundred kilometers an hour. There are other roads that are terrible. So you could never tell until you actually drove on it and surveyed it yourself, you never knew what was going to be around the next corner.

Q: Did you get to Merv, or Mary? The Caspian Sea and the Darvaza gas crater?

MUSTARD: Of course, of course. We spent the night at the gas crater, we rented a yurt and then overnighted at the gas crater, yeah, that was fun. I got to the Caspian Sea a number of times. We went out to Turkmenbashy, to the resort, Awaza. There were regularly some sorts of events out there, so we would go out there for events. Of course Merv, ancient Merv, and then north of Merv is the city of Margush, which is an archaeological site out in the middle of the desert that to this day we don't know what civilization was there, because we have found no writing associated with it. If you can't find anything in writing, you don't know what civilization was there. The archaeologists are still researching that. But there's a tremendous amount of archaeology being done.

It really started during the Soviet period, seriously. But the Poles are active there, the Italians have been there, the United States is there under the auspices of the New York Metropolitan Museum, just a lot of fascinating things going on out there, places that they have found, digging down, discovering all these Bronze Age cultures and artifacts. It's fascinating stuff.

Q: Do the Turkmen people see a linkage between other Turkish people?

MUSTARD: Absolutely, of course, well, see, the Turkmen are one of the three Western Oghuz Turkic nations, the others being the Turks, who are descended from the Ottomans, of course, and the Azerbaijanis. So they speak three different languages but the languages are mutually intelligible in much the same way that say Spanish and Portuguese are mutually intelligible. I've been told that the difference between Azerbaijani and Turkish is like the difference between Australian English and American, so Azerbaijani and Turkish are considered to be about 80 percent mutually intelligible. Turkmen and Turkish are about 65 percent mutually intelligible. Most Turkmen have access to Turkish satellite television, so they watch the Turkish soap operas, they watch the Turkish comedy shows, and as a result the vast majority of Turkmen who have access to television understand Turkish quite well.

There were some Turkish comedians who came at one point and were giving some sort of a show, I don't remember exactly what it was, in one of the theaters, and they came away commenting that the Turkmen all laughed at the right places. They laughed at the right laugh lines, they understood Turkish quite well. I had some Turkmen tell me that their children speak Turkish among themselves as the children's language, because they think their parents don't understand, when of course the parents understand just fine, but that's the language that the children speak among themselves, thinking that they can hide meaning from the parents.

Q: Is Russian still there?

MUSTARD: Russian is still there among the elite, the upper crust, the well-educated, but Russian is disappearing over time. You still encounter Russian speakers in Ashgabat, the capital, and in Turkmenbashy, the seaport, but if you go to other parts of Turkmenistan you may not find anybody who speaks Russian any more, especially if they're under the age of about forty.

Ann and I visited a school in Ashgabat once. It had a bust outside of it, which is unusual. We wanted to go up and see who the bust was of, and the teachers came out to see who the strangers were, standing in the courtyard of the school, and we started chatting with them, and it turned out not one of them spoke any Russian. I of course don't speak Turkmen, so we were at an impasse, and one of them ran into the school, came out with their English teacher, and we conversed with her, and she interpreted for us, talking to the other teachers. She could speak English with us but not one teacher in this school in central Ashgabat spoke Russian, which I found rather interesting. Even teachers at this point no longer speak Russian.

Q: So they're pretty independent, then, of Russia.

MUSTARD: They try to be.

Q: You didn't feel, like, any loneliness? You don't have anybody, you don't have other section chiefs to talk to, you don't have any other people, other ambassadors, that you can kibitz with.

MUSTARD: Well, to some degree you did. I mean on certain subjects I could kibitz with other ambassadors. We had ambassadors from the EU, from some of the NATO allies, so I could bounce things off of some of the NATO allies, get some thoughts from them on how we would deal with certain things. Most of the time I was there I had very good people and folks in the pol/econ section who were very professional. I had three outstanding deputy chiefs of mission, all three of them were absolutely fabulous, all three of them became very close counselors and advisers, and people to whom I had no qualms about going for advice. So really, I didn't feel that lonesome, and of course I was there with my wife, we'd been married for over thirty years at that point, had been partners in everything that we had ever done, so I had her to turn to for advice, too, and she's been a very wise counselor for my entire career as well.

So no, I didn't really feel like I was lacking for people to go to ask advice, and I never felt that lonely. I mean, there are some things that you can't share, some things that I will carry to my grave because of the nature of my security clearance and promises I've made not to divulge certain things, but that's not the important stuff. The important stuff is really the relationships that you try to establish with people, so that you can accomplish your mission.

Q: Did you ever have a need, when you were in Turkmenistan, for medical care?

MUSTARD: Not on the local economy. We had a physician's assistant most of the time, or a nurse, in our health unit, and we had a locally hired doctor who was trained back when the country was still part of the Soviet Union, so she had Soviet medical training, which wasn't bad. And of course we provided her and the American medical professional with American pharmaceuticals and things like that. So we actually had fairly good health care within the embassy for the officers, the Americans, but of course the Turkmen had to rely either on local medical care or they had to go someplace else. A lot of people drove down to Iran, a lot of the Turkmen who worked for us would go to Iran for all of their dental care, they would go down there for a lot of nonemergency outpatient procedures in Iran. For inpatient, for hospitalization, there were a fair number who would either fly to Moscow or they would fly to Turkey or they would fly down to a suburb of New Delhi, which has a hospital that caters to Russian speakers. We had a lot of them do that and that was fairly popular. Of course, since we paid in dollars they could allow themselves to do that. The only people who could go offshore for medical treatment were Turkmen who were making enough money that they could afford it.

Q: And you didn't have anything come up for you, or Ann?

MUSTARD: Nothing that required hospitalization. We used some of the local facilities for MRI and CAT scans, that sort of thing. Ann was scanned at a local clinic, for example.

We did have people within the embassy community who required hospitalization and we had to medevac them. I can't go into details obviously for privacy reasons, but we did have some medical emergencies and we had to get people out of the country quickly to get them to medical care. We did have a blowup with medical services at State because at one point we had a medical emergency and said we need to get this person to the nearest good hospital available, and the response came back, no, you have to go to the medical evacuation point, which is London, which was several hours away by air. As a result of that we very nearly lost the patient, we very nearly had somebody die because we were not able to go to a closer hospital that was offshore that we trusted, strictly for bureaucratic reasons. And we raised a big enough stink about it that there was a quote clarification of policy unquote by medical services, saying, no, in an emergency, you go to wherever you can get competent service as quickly as possible. You don't have to go to the medical evacuation point that was designated for your post.

That had been written policy but the fact was that whenever we asked for permission to go to a post or to a country for medical services that was not a medical evacuation point, we were told, no, you have to go to the medical evacuation point. It was all oral and wasn't written down, so when we called them out on it, they said, Well, no, the written policy is that you go where you need to go in an emergency. But of course, that wasn't what we were being told over the telephone and you've been a bureaucrat, I've been a bureaucrat, we both know how bureaucracies work, that there were no fingerprints, that we were being given bad advice, and someone almost died as a result of it.

So I helped raise the stink over that and what was interesting was that headquarters was very unhappy with the stink about that, but we got a bunch of unsolicited emails from people at other overseas posts, thanking us for calling out the upper echelons for that policy, and making it crystal clear that if your life is in danger, you go where you can get medical services.

The issue is money, because if State medical denies you a claim then you're out of pocket for whatever medical services you get, and health insurance might cover it, might not, so the State medical program really needed a recalibration of the advice that it was giving orally to people overseas when they face medical emergencies. Common sense should prevail, but as one wag once put it, common sense isn't that common.

Ann Mustard

Q: How did Ann support you, especially in culinary diplomacy and representational events?

MUSTARD: Okay, well, Ann was my partner throughout. We were married in 1982 so when I joined FAS I was already engaged to her and then when I went overseas she and I had been married for, at that point, about four years, and she was just an enormous support. She traveled with me because as the Soviet Union was a criterion country you always had to travel with somebody who was a NATO ally, you couldn't go out on trips alone, and we couldn't always get someone from the embassy staff to go with me. I mean, sometimes I would travel with a political officer, or if we had a TDYer in from Washington, I could travel with the TDYer, but if nobody else was available Ann would travel with me and would be the other NATO ally. We could go out as two people rather than one. That was a fairly hard and fast rule back in the Soviet period.

Q: Presumably that's so that you couldn't put yourself in a position of being compromised?

MUSTARD: That's right, you always had a witness, so that if the Soviets accused you of something, you have another witness there to say, no, that didn't happen, and also to help keep you out of trouble. We had to travel in groups of at least two any time we traveled in the Soviet Union. Since Ann couldn't drive a stick shift I drove and she would do the field observations. She did the recording, wrote down the notes of what we were observing in the fields, and so a lot of the crop travel that I did during the Soviet period, I was driving and Ann was the one who was recording the observations on a clipboard and a sheet of paper.

In terms of culinary diplomacy, what a lot of people don't realize if they haven't worked in diplomacy is that you do have the formal meetings, where you have one side sitting on one side of the table and then the Americans on the other side, and sometimes they put the flags on the table so you have, you know, the Soviet and the American flag or whatever, but that isn't necessarily where the bulk of the work gets transacted. You have to develop trust relationships and you have to develop relationships with people so they'll open up with you, and they know they can trust you, and can share information with you. One of the most effective ways of doing that is to break bread with people. We had people, even when I was a junior officer, first tour, we would have people to our apartment. We did a lot of entertaining. We couldn't get official Soviets in but we could get other people to come to the apartment and meet us and establish these relationships.

And then, of course, when I became a section chief, we got to Vienna, we had a large house that was suitable for entertaining, we had about a third of an acre garden that we used for entertaining. We would hold barbecues in Vienna and we would have over a hundred people show up. We would grill and do picnic-style entertaining barbecues. We did a similar thing in Moscow when I was there. We had four major events per year in Moscow and then a number of smaller events in between the major events. We would have about seventy people come, so Ann became very adept at preparing food for seventy to a hundred people and she was in charge of all of that.

We started doing Mardi Gras after Hurricane Katrina and she would prepare all of the special dishes that come out of New Orleans, and did it all herself. We would hire wait staff to help us with that, but we put these on and one comment I'd like to make in addition to her support of that, the representational entertaining, was that when I became ambassador, she ran the household. She de facto supervised our representational staff. We had two, what they call ORE staff, official representation and entertainment staff, a house manager who was also a chef and a cleaning lady who was also the sous chef. Ann supervised them and trained them in how to do meal preparation, either for small luncheons, I would have people over and we would have just the two of us, a one-on-one meeting with somebody, or sometimes we would have a fairly large reception. The house in Ashgabat was relatively small; we couldn't have more than about forty or forty-five people, but she would put on those sorts of events. Ann was a tremendous help to me throughout.

I think this is something that is underappreciated in FAS, the role of representation. Our representation budget in FAS covered about half of the cost. By March, halfway through the fiscal year, our representational funds were exhausted, and every year, it didn't matter, from then on we were out of pocket for representational expenses. Every year that I was overseas between 2003 and 2014 working for FAS I was out of pocket about two thousand dollars a year for representational expenses. Again, I think that's too bad, a lot of people just don't do representation because it's a lot of work and about halfway through the fiscal year you run out of money, and I think it's wrong. It's bad because representation is how we make contacts, it's how we establish those trust relationships that are critical to success. It's something I think is underappreciated and isn't done properly in most of FAS.

Q: Did she get any training in how to do that? Or did she rely on her basic skills?

MUSTARD: FSI offers a course in representational entertaining, so she took that course. She was allowed to take that course, and she took that fairly early on in my career, so that was a help in learning how to do it, but the vast bulk of what she learned in terms of how to prepare food and how to prepare for events she learned on her own.

I have to make one comment about an event in Turkey. We had been told the Turks will only entertain formally and that any time we held an event it was going to have to be a formal event, in suit and tie, and we would have to have wait staff in white gloves and the whole shebang, and we just don't entertain that way normally. We were not very good at it, really high-end entertaining, so I decided to do an experiment. I invited my best business contacts in Istanbul to a blue jeans-optional barbecue and told everybody, we sent out the invitations, it was blue jeans optional. We got several inquiries back, what does this mean, blue jeans optional? Mr. Mustard will be in blue jeans and a T-shirt and you can wear whatever you want. If you want to come in a business suit, then come as you are, but blue jeans optional.

We barbecued hamburgers. I bought a bunch of hamburgers and grilled hamburgers on our little Weber grill and Ann prepared everything else. We had very wealthy businessmen in Istanbul who ordered brand-new Levi's blue jeans so they could wear blue jeans to this event, and they were there in sport coats and neckties wearing blue jeans, very proudly showing them off. Some of their wives and girlfriends ordered denim dresses, so they showed up with these brand-new beautiful indigo blue denim dresses that had been tailor-made, they looked like a million bucks, they had gold buttons on them. They just absolutely looked fabulous. They were very happy that they had been invited to an American barbecue and that they could come appropriately attired for an American barbecue that was blue jeans optional.

I learned from that, you can entertain however you want. The big thing is the hospitality, just offering hospitality, offering something to eat, something to drink, and if you're offering the hospitality and you're friendly and you're hospitable, you can really develop some really good relationships. Ann was an enormous help.

Q: Is she from New Orleans? How did she learn to cook New Orleans food?

MUSTARD: She read the Emeril Lagassi cookbook.

Q: Really? Just that?

MUSTARD: Yes, she sat down and read the Emeril Lagassi cookbook and prepared all these great dishes from that.

Q: You mentioned also that in the Soviet days you could not have official Soviets to your house. But you could have regular non-official, not government employees, but citizens of the Soviet Union, you could have them to your house? Like professors or something?

MUSTARD: You could try to do that. I mean, remember that professors were government employees, and so they were constrained, too. We couldn't have academics to our residence, but we could have regular citizens. It's just that whenever they came, their names were recorded by the guard. There was allegedly a Ministry of Internal Affairs, which is the police guard guarding our apartment building, and he would take down the names. They all had to show identification, their passports, and so he would record the names of everybody who visited us, and then they of course would get visits from the KGB asking them, why were they meeting with the American spies? So there was a certain amount of harassment of people who visited us but there were people who were willing to put up with that, to come accept the hospitality and do that.

Q: Can you talk about how she supported you in other ways, besides the cooking of the food, and running of the house? How could you be a professional working your way up the ladder and be an ambassador without a spouse that's supporting you?

MUSTARD: Well, there were an awful lot of people who told me I would never have risen up through the ranks of FAS nor would have got an ambassadorship if I hadn't been married to the woman who is the true diplomat in the family. Ann has always been a moderating influence on me and kept me from perhaps succumbing to my worst instincts. She's, I think, there's a fair amount of truth to that, she is someone who has always been a moderating influence in my life.

Q: I've heard that it's a lucky man who believes that his wife is the best cook in the world.

MUSTARD: She's fabulous and we still get emails and Facebook messages from people overseas who say they miss her cooking. They all say they miss me but they miss her more, some of her dishes, her pecan squares or Coca-Cola cake, some of her dishes.

Good Bosses

Q: I would appreciate it if you could, even going back to the first two jobs, what makes a good boss, what experiences were most valuable, what education was most valuable, as an FAS attaché, and also as an ambassador? Then different payoffs, if you don't mind, just keep in mind that a big purpose of these interviews will be young attachés, young people who are thinking about becoming attachés.

MUSTARD: I think in terms of bosses, who the best bosses were, I worked for some terrific bosses. Don Novotny was one of them. John Riesz was another one of them. John was a terrific boss. Garth Thorburn, when I was in Istanbul, he was in Ankara, was the ag counselor. Garth was a true mentor and one of my role models. My day started at work with a phone call to Ankara to check signals with Garth and every day ended with a phone call to Ankara to check signals with Garth and just compare notes and find out what he needed from me and for him to find out what I needed from him.

When I came back to Washington one of the very best bosses I ever had was Ann Veneman, who was deputy under secretary under Dick Crowder for a couple of years, and then moved up to become deputy secretary under Ed Madigan. I interacted with her a tremendous amount on the Soviet stuff and the post-Soviet stuff. She was a great person to work with and to work for. What all these people had in common was they all listened. If you had something that you needed them to hear, whatever it was, they were accessible, they were available. The bosses that I dealt with who were not good all had one thing in common, and that was that they were inaccessible, they were distant, they wanted you to bow and scrape, they wanted you to tell them how wonderful they were, and you know that the two are incompatible. You can't be a good boss and inaccessible.

You have to be accessible to the people and this was a great lesson to me because I've had an open-door policy wherever I've worked. I mean, even as ambassador, I had an open-door policy, and I let everybody know, if you need five minutes with me, you tell

my office manager you need five minutes with the boss, and you will get five minutes with the boss, and this included the local staff, the FSNs.

I had FSNs call me at home when I was ambassador, saying, I need to see you on a Sunday, I need to see you today, may I please come see you. I'd say, "Sure, come on over and we'll have a cup of tea." And you'd be amazed what you learn and you can be amazed at what kind of crises you can avert if you're listening to people and if you take action quickly before something blows up completely out of proportion. So that was an important lesson to me, to have good listening skills and to be accessible to your people.

One of the other things about the really good bosses is that they were decisive. They could make decisions. I didn't always agree with their decisions. Crowder was a tremendous boss when he was under secretary and I literally sat at his left elbow every morning for a couple of years. I got to see how he made decisions and he was accessible. He's another one. Dick made sure I understood that if I needed to talk to him, all I had to do is pick up the phone, call his secretary, Kathy Blythe, and I would be put through to him. I never abused that, I only called Dick if there was an emergency, and I can tell you about a couple of emergencies where I did have to call him, but he was there for me when I needed him, and I only needed him so that I could execute the mission, whatever mission was that he, or Ann Veneman, or somebody else had assigned to me.

Q: Were you in Washington when you worked with Crowder and Veneman?

MUSTARD: Yes. That's the sad story of how I was yanked out of Istanbul.

Q: Oh, okay.

MUSTARD: My curtailment from Istanbul. But you know, you are asking about the good bosses, the great bosses listen, they're decisive, they can make decisions, and they back you up. You know, every manager has to make hard decisions. I've had to make hard decisions. I'm one of those rare people in FAS who has fired people. I documented people. I know how difficult it is, it takes anywhere from a year to year and a half typically to document somebody to the point that you can terminate their service with the U.S. government, even people who have committed crimes. You know, I tried to fire people who committed crimes and was told no, the crime wasn't that serious, you can't fire that person, so people who will back your plays, people who understand that as a manager, if you want to get work out of some people, you have to apply discipline. There are some people who are in the government to work and there are other people who are there to homestead, they're there for the salary and the benefits and the pension, and if any work gets in the way, that's just too bad. Those people need to be held accountable, and accountability is something FAS has a real problem with, which is one of the reasons its morale is so low.

Those are the three big takeaways, I would say, in terms of who the great bosses were, and why, is because they listened, they were accessible, and they backed you as a manager when you had to make hard decisions.

When I was overseas some of the ambassadors were great. I worked for Kathy Hall in Vienna, she was a terrific ambassador. All of the above, always accessible, she was somebody, all I had to do was shoot her a quick email, say I need five minutes with you, and boom, I get a rather snippy phone call from her office manager, the ambassador would like to see you right away. Well, that was great, because, you know, that way it was the ambassador asking me to come up and see her. Or she'd drop by my office, and this is another thing you learn, management by walking around. Ambassadors who walk around to other people's offices to check in on them, that's another good thing to do.

So Kathy Hall was great. I worked of course for the great Arthur Hartman in Moscow, who was one of the great ambassadors and a role model. I worked for Ambassador Sandy Vershbow in Moscow, and then of course Bill Burns was my ambassador for three years in Moscow. He's now up for, he's been nominated to be director of the Central Intelligence Agency, career diplomat, absolutely brilliant man, and also one of these guys where all I had to do was send him an email, say I need five minutes with you and I got my time with him. Nancy Powell, of course, probably hands-down the best ambassador I ever worked for. She was an eighth-grade teacher in Iowa who decided to join the Foreign Service, was a five-time ambassador, absolutely brilliant as an ambassador and as a diplomat, again, one of these people that when I needed a few minutes with her to tell her about something, to warn her about something, or to get her help with something, it was always there, but she never sought to micromanage me and tell me what to do.

Q: Did you have any micromanaging ambassadors?

MUSTARD: Yeah, so I had a couple of ambassadors who tried to micromanage me, and I had to let them know that I won't let you do that, and I had a couple of ambassadors who didn't want to meet with me because I wasn't resident in their country. I was a circuit rider 'cause FAS has regional posts, and you know, I had to point out I'm a member of your country team and if you want me out freelancing, promoting USDA's interests without guidance from you, the ambassador, then you know, that could lead to some undesirable consequences, sir, with all due respect. And that usually was the only message I had to deliver to get in to see them and find out what their priorities were.

Mentoring

Q: How about mentors? You mentioned a number of bosses. Did you have any unofficial mentors that you'd like to mention?

MUSTARD: Not really, because I think that's one of the gripes I have about FAS, is that FAS doesn't really do a great job of mentoring. I tried to mentor people who worked for

me and I'm still mentoring a few people even in retirement, but Mae Massey, bless her, tried to get a mentorship program going. I'm not sure how good it was, because the matchups were pretty much artificial. She tried to get something going where you would have a formal relationship with someone and you would become that person's mentor, and that person in her words would become your "mentee," which is a word I never heard of before.

And I will never forget, she asked me to take on a young junior professional. He showed up in my office, and I asked him how he saw this relationship working. He said, "Well, your job is to see to it that I get only plum assignments, and that I get promoted ahead of the peers in my class, and that I get a plum overseas assignment as soon as I can get into the Foreign Service." And I looked at him and I said, "Don't let the door hit you in the rear end on the way out because that's not how I see the relationship." And I never spoke to him again. Threw him out of my office. And you know, if you come to a relationship of mentoring with that attitude, that the mentor is responsible for assuring your success whether you put any effort into it or not, then the program is doomed to failure. I told Mae, I said, "This is exactly what he said to me," and she rolled her eyes. So, I think mentorship should involve mentoring the people with whom you work, at the place of work.

I mean, I tried to be a mentor to the junior employees who were assigned to me and not just the Americans but also the local employees. I asked them, what are your career development aspirations, what do you want to learn, what can I help you to learn, and if I don't have the skill myself, where can we go to help you acquire that skill set? Those just felt much more natural, and of course, you do run into the people who think they're perfect out of the box, and I had a couple of those who worked for me and refused any sort of mentorship, because they were perfect. One of them went so far as to run around the embassy declaring that person should be the minister-counselor for agricultural affairs and not Mustard because Mustard was an idiot, didn't know anything, and that obviously was not a relationship that was destined for success in terms of mentorship. So you know, it takes work on both sides. The mentor has to put effort into it but the person being mentored also has to put some effort into it, and has to be willing, has to be receptive, I guess, and not everybody is receptive to being told you're not perfect and there are some things that you could learn.

Q: Have you seen someplace else, any other place, like State Department, where it has worked, where mentorship has been maybe more formal and has been effective?

MUSTARD: I'm trying to think in the U.S. government. I have not really seen anything in the U.S. government that works well, but then I haven't had that much exposure outside of FAS and in my limited exposure at the Department of State.

Languages

Q: Switching gears to language, your capabilities, you speak Russian and you speak German as well?

MUSTARD: Yeah, I speak German, and my daughter laughs at me when I speak German, because when we got to Vienna, we put her into a local Montessori school and we continued with that all the way through, so when she graduated from high school she actually graduated from the German school in Moscow, did the *Abitur,* and so she speaks German like a German. And of course the German school system requires study of French, so she also speaks French, and spent a year in Paris working on her master's degree, so her French is quite good. And of course in Moscow we were there for five years, we had her tutored in Russian, so she speaks passable Russian as well. When I try to speak my high school/FSI German, she laughs at me and makes fun of me, and I tend not to speak much German around her.

Q: As you look back on your career, you were in Austria, in Turkey, and in Mexico, where you didn't speak the language, I guess.

MUSTARD: Right. I had a five-week crash course in Spanish before I went to Mexico.

Q: Five weeks. So how would you judge your effectiveness of your time in those posts?

MUSTARD: Well, it was like night and day because, if you know the local language, you have a much better handle on what's going on around you. You have much better situational awareness, and you're in a much better position to give guidance to your own employees and tell them what they should be looking at. You just pick up so much more, and so in Moscow I would watch the nightly news. I would watch documentaries on agriculture and on policy, of what was going on in Russia. I could read the newspapers. I could read blogs. You know, I just, it was—

One major difference between the Soviet Union and Russia when I went back was that in the Soviet Union you were constantly scrounging for information. The information was in short supply, it was scarce, it was a secretive society where the Soviets were hiding things from us. I mean, the Soviet Union did not publish their grain production numbers for five years, from 1981 to 1985, grain production data were a state secret and they were not published, and I was there at the tail end of that trying to figure out how much grain they were producing. And at the other end of the spectrum, when I got there in 2003 the Soviet Union had collapsed, it was a much more open society, there was much more information. So you were drinking from a fire hose and in that respect having a 4+ knowledge of Russian allowed me to differentiate between what was trivial and what was important, also to identify sources of information that previously the ag office had never really tapped into. And so I was able to tap into information sources that nobody else had known about, or had been able to tap into, that I thought were extremely valuable for the work that we were doing in terms of our market research or analysis, understanding of where things are going.

I went from there of course to Mexico, where I was given a five-week crash course in Spanish, which was Guatemalan Spanish, which is not mutually comprehensible with the Spanish spoken in Mexico City, and I discovered that there was practically nothing available in English about Mexican agriculture. It was all in Spanish, so I was really at the mercy of my attachés and of my local staff to tell me what was going on, and this was a problem, because I was there for the most part to give them guidance and to teach them how to do analysis, and I felt like I was crippled, not having a good grounding in the Spanish language. It wasn't quite as bad in India as it was in Mexico because in India English is the lingua franca of a country where hundreds of different languages are spoken, so a lot of people speak English and there was a lot more information available in English. I wasn't as much at sea in India as I was in Mexico, but in Mexico I was really very frustrated by my inability to communicate and my inability to just even read a lot of the information that was available.

Q: Why did you go so quickly to Mexico, and not take the time to learn the language?

MUSTARD: Well, that's kind of a long story, Ted. I had extended for a fifth year in Moscow because we were trying to get Russia into the WTO and I had a belief, which turned out to be wrong, that in another year we could have Russia poised to join the WTO and seal the deal. We were very close and Mike Johanns was secretary of agriculture at that point with Susan Schwab as U.S. trade representative. We held this secret meeting in London. A whole bunch of us congregated in London to try and get the deal done, get it in the bag. That failed, that fell through, but I thought, you know, another year here, and I can help make this happen, and of course it didn't happen till well after I left Moscow.

So as I entered that last year in Moscow I started scouting around for an onward assignment and the pickings were pretty slim. Cairo was open, Canberra was open, and Mexico City was open. Cairo had already been promised to Jon Gressel because he'd gone to, I think, Baghdad, been in Baghdad, and so they promised him Cairo as the follow-on to Baghdad. Robin Tilsworth had been back in Washington for seven years and was coming up on the eight-year limit. She had to go overseas, and she wanted to go to Mexico City, so Mexico City was off the table. That left Canberra and Canberra was a one [FO-1] slot. I was in the Senior Foreign Service at that point and so wasn't really eligible for it. When I talked to Frank Lee about it, he said everything is spoken for, you have to come back to Washington, there's no point even bidding.

Well, if there's one thing I learned in the Foreign Service, it's that you should never not bid, even if in dark of night and there're no prospects for onward assignment, yeah, you should still bid. So I went ahead and bid, and I bid on Mexico City, and I think I bid on Canberra, too, and as things turned out, the way it worked out, is FAS has all these rules on assignments, one of which is that if a Senior Foreign Service officer bids on a post and no other Senior Foreign Service officer bids on that post, if all the other bidders are below grade, the Senior Foreign Service officer has to get the Senior Foreign Service post. That's one rule. So that was when Wayne Molstad fell ill up in Ottawa and had to be medevaced, so suddenly Ottawa was on the table and Ottawa had to be bid.

Well, one of the other rules we have is that if you have been back for seven years, if you're coming up on your eighth year, or you're in your eighth year, by law, you can only spend eight years in the United States, you have to go overseas after eight years in the United States, and Robin had been in Washington for eight years. She had to go overseas. And another rule is that if you have been back for eight years you have to bid on all posts available at grade. Robin had to bid on Canada. She was Senior Foreign Service, no other Senior Foreign Service officer bid on Canada, so she automatically by the rules had to be assigned to Ottawa. So Robin went to Ottawa. That opened up Mexico City. I was next in line, and so I got a phone call from Jeannie Bailey asking me if I would accept assignment to Mexico City. I accepted it and that was that. There was no time for language training. I couldn't go into language training for an extended period, so I went down to Guatemala to the Christian Spanish Academy and spent five weeks learning Spanish.

Advice for FAS

MUSTARD: Well, one of the things I think I'd like maybe to have you underscore here is, I think it's important when FAS sends people out overseas that people actually learn something about the countries that they're covering, that they learn something about agriculture as well as the general economy and the general history of the country. You have to know the history, you have to know the culture, you have to know the structure of agriculture, because if you don't, you're walking in blind and you're not able to interpret whatever information is coming at you. So this is the sort of thing that has bothered me about FAS, is that we've been so focused on commodities for years, for the last several decades, it's all about wheat, it's all about corn, all about soybeans, all about cotton, is all about rice, is all about dairy products, whatever. Well, yeah, it is, up to a point.

But then, when you're dealing with individual countries, every one of these countries has its peculiarities, and if you want to be able to analyze those countries and understand what's going to come out of them in the way of commodities, then you need to understand the countries themselves. And that's where I think FAS has missed the boat. We got rid of our country analysts back in 1961 when they were sent over to the Economic Research Service, the regional analysts, and then in the, I want to say the 1990s or thereabouts, maybe it was in the 2000s, when Kitty Reichelderfer Smith was the head of ERS, she got rid of country analysis in ERS, so now there's nobody in USDA who's doing country analysis except for attachés in the field.

And the attachés in the field are there for three, maybe four, years, and then are gone, so we don't, we aren't building up institutional knowledge except among our local staff, and that is not enough. We need to have that expertise in Washington as well as in the field, and we are not doing anything to bring it back. Mike Yost tried with OCRA, the Office of Country and Regional Analysis, but that was an abortive effort, unfortunately, and I think FAS is missing the boat on that, just to stop on that.

Q: That's one of the points you wanted to make, how FAS needs to change. OCRA was not really made of analysts. They would know a lot about the countries they covered, but they only kept those desk officers there for one or two years, and then they moved on to something else. And a lot of the time they spent just preparing briefing documents.

MUSTARD: Yeah, and that's something that the agency really lacks, that we need a cadre of regional analysts, people who really understand some of these countries and regions, and understand how they all fit together.

Q: As you move around, as an agricultural attaché, from one country to another, how do you adjust to the culture? Mexico was very different from Russia, I'm sure it was different in India, and Turkey was different from Vienna. How do you adjust to that? How do you get up to speed on the new culture?

MUSTARD: You know, when you're an attaché, your pillars are the local staff, the local employees, and one of the tragedies in FAS is that periodically we have someone who is anti-intellectual, who comes in and destroys the written products that people have accumulated. Before I went to Mexico I was told that there was a wonderful library in the ag office and that I would be able to read up on a lot about Mexican agriculture by tapping that library. I arrived in Mexico City and discovered that one of the previous attachés had thrown it away. He didn't understand why we had all these materials.

The same thing happened in Moscow. During my five years in Moscow I had accumulated a very large library, two large bookcases full of books and background materials ranging from dictionaries of specifics of agriculture to historical volumes on the history of Russian and Soviet agriculture, including some rare books that I had come across in used bookshops. I have been told that one of my successors arrived and asked why we had all these books on a bookshelf in the office in a language that I'm not sure if it was a he or a she, but anyway, which that attaché couldn't read, and ordered most of them thrown away. I don't understand that. I don't understand why there is this anti-intellectual streak among some of our officers, that they don't see the need for written materials to be kept in the office to provide you with background. But it's there and it's sad, and I think it's something that the agency should do something about.

Because you have two sources of information when you arrive at post. You have whatever is on the bookshelf that previous attachés have accumulated and you have your local staff, and that's about it. Those are your go-to places and in the case of Mexico, because the library had been thrown away by somebody before I got there, I've no idea who, but I had to rely on my local staff to try to educate me. This is what Mexican agriculture looks like, your peers, what you have to learn, so in terms of interactions with the host country government, you also go to your American colleagues elsewhere in the embassy, and some of them are old hands, Latin America hands.

Much as I was an old Sovietologist in Moscow and so I was a source of information to a lot of other officers who didn't have the depth, the background, that I had dealing with the Russians, I liked to turn the tables, and I went to embassy officers who were very much steeped in U.S.-Mexican relations.

I always prepared handover notes for my successors. Some of my successors read them, some didn't. One made a point of deleting the handover notes I left behind and informing his staff that there was nothing I could have told him that he couldn't figure out on his own. I think that's just foolish. Two of my predecessors, Frank Tarrant and Holly Higgins, left me excellent handover notes, and Ted Horoschak in Istanbul arranged a two-week overlap to show me the ropes. We should do more of that. Handover notes should be a requirement.

I want to talk a little bit, just an anecdote about USTR and the relationship FAS has with USTR, which again, I think is problematic, and it's a problem that FAS created for itself. After 1994 when the WTO agreement was signed and the WTO came into existence on New Year's Day 1995, USTR really became the lead pony in trade policy rather than Commerce and FAS. Up until then really ITA over at Commerce and FAS in the realm of agriculture had been the lead ponies. Now USTR was to a much greater degree in a lot of fields, and FAS has refused to really get on board with that.

That kind of a construct has led to some weird things. When I was in Vienna, for example, I was told specifically in one instance when we were having a problem with the Hungarians on bull semen that I was not allowed to talk to USTR. Things came to a head when the deputy minister of agriculture of Hungary announced that he was going to apply their tariff rate quota to bull semen produced by bulls that were in Hungary but had been imported from the United States, and so they would consider that bull semen to be imported and would apply that against the quota, so that any imported semen coming in from the United States would be subject to a higher tariff. That would help protect their domestic industry, and when he announced that, I knew that was a violation of WTO rules and went back to FAS and said, "You know, you need to take this up with USTR. USTR needs to warn their people in Geneva not to do this," and, Oh, well you know what, we can't talk to USTR, and we don't have access, and you know it was all stovepiped. We will have to go up to the administrator and then he'll have to talk to the under secretary and the under secretary will have to talk to the special trade representative, who will then pass it down to the ag team at USTR, and that'll take months to do.

I saw this issue that could be nipped in the bud if we just went like that, so I picked up the phone and called Len Condon at USTR, and explained the situation to him. I said, "Len, what can we do about this?" He said, "Well, Allan, you call the Hungarians and you tell them that if they do this we're going to retaliate against something that they really like to export to us, like their cheese. You tell them specifically that we will slap some sort of reciprocal duty on their cheese to the United States."

So I did. I got that message through to the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture. The minister instructed his deputy minister to receive me to get this message officially, so we got a phone call saying, "Mr. Mustard, please come over to Budapest and see the deputy minister." So I drove over and he was very angry. He sat, he listened to me, and then he said, "All right, I will revoke that order, and we will not count bovine semen produced by imported bulls against the tariff rate quota, are you satisfied?" I said, "Yes, that would be satisfactory, if you do that I will be satisfied." He said, "Good, because the minister made very clear to me that I'm not to let you go back to Vienna unless you are satisfied. He said, 'Mr. Mustard must be satisfied,' so if you're satisfied, I'm satisfied, thank you." Got up, shook my hand, and that was that. He was quite angry about it but again it was because I was able to pick up the phone and call Len Condon and we could work this out. I could get instructions from him.

And of course folks in FAS blew up over that. How dare I call USTR directly and solve the problem quickly, which would otherwise have blown up, become a WTO case taking years to resolve. I was able to nip it in the bud with a couple of phone calls. I think we should operate more like that.

When I was in Moscow at one point an instruction came down to USTR from the folks in trade policy saying that they were not to talk directly to any field officers and at that point, we were in the middle of the WTO negotiations for Russia's accession. It was ridiculous. I was communicating with USTR constantly and someone at USTR picked up the phone and called me, said, "Allan, what's this about? We got this instruction that we're not to talk to you." I said, "Let me run that down."

Bob Riemenschneider was the head of what they called the Office of Negotiations and Agreements, and Bob had been my officemate for a while back in the Dairy, Livestock and Poultry Division, so I had no qualms about picking up the phone and calling Bob. "Bob, what is this about, what's going on with this?" He said, "This is the first I've heard of it." I said, "Well, you need to sit on some people there, 'cause you've got some division directors working for you who are telling USTR that they can't call the attachés and that's ridiculous and it's gonna be counterproductive." So he sat on them and that stopped, but you have this constant effort at the working level to try to obstruct communication between the field offices and USTR, and I think at some point FAS at the working level is just going to have to wake up and smell the coffee, that, yes, USTR is the lead pony on trade policy, get over it, we play a supporting role on that, which they can't live without.

USTR needs FAS. They need our support, they need our expertise, and need our bodies. I mean, USTR just isn't big enough to do the kind of analysis that's necessary to underpin a lot of what we do. USTR needs APHIS, USTR needs FSIS as they need scientists, too. They can't function without USDA, and when you consider that half of all WTO disputes involve agriculture, they can't live without us, so we should just accommodate that reality and let the information flow as freely as possible.

So I ignored any instruction from Washington to withhold information from USTR or not to communicate. They had my phone number, they had my email addresses, we communicated back and forth an awful lot.

Q: I can imagine though that that would ruffle the feathers of those who were trying to coordinate things back in Washington.

MUSTARD: There was one case, we were in the middle of the Russian accession negotiations and I was asked for my assessment of something. I sent in my assessment and about two weeks later someone from USTR came to Moscow on a completely different issue, didn't have to do with agriculture, she came down to my office, walked into my office, closed the door and said, "I just want you to know that everybody in USTR respects you, and we do take everything you say seriously." I kinda looked at her and said, "What brought this on?" She said, "I just want to make sure you understand that we think you know what you're talking about when it comes to Russia, and we do pay attention to your reporting."

I said, "Thank you, and what precipitated this?" She said, "Well, a few weeks ago there was a meeting in USTR and FAS was there, we were there, State was there, and we were debating, you know, how to interpret the latest Russian movement, and you know, what it meant, and an argument broke out because there were differences of opinion as to how to interpret something that the Russians were doing. At some point somebody brought up one of your reports where you had said something, and the person from FAS said, 'Oh, Mustard doesn't know anything about Russia,' and I just want you to be aware that both State and USTR think you do know a lot about Russia, and we listen very closely to what you say to us." I said, "Thank you for that."

So I circled back to folks in FAS who were in the room when that happened. They confirmed, yes, this actually happened, and they both reluctantly admitted, yes one of our people did say that about you, that you don't know what you're talking about when it comes to Russia, which I thought was a bit strange. So again, there is this attitude that I think is not healthy, that a) you have to win every argument with USTR by any means, and b), you're willing to throw your own people under the bus in pursuit of that goal. I just don't think that's healthy.

The fellow I worked with a lot on India was Arun Venkataraman over at USTR, who was terrific, just a great guy and Arun and I really hit it off and had a great working relationship.

Q: Those guys work as hard as you do.

MUSTARD: Absolutely. They work very hard.

Q: They're smart, and you put the two of them together. Great demanders in my experience, too. And that's not necessarily a bad thing. Could you give some

recommendations to the younger professionals who would like to at least achieve the level that you did? Nobody can do it exactly as you did it, and I agree that it was not a meteoric rise, it was steady, step by step. To me, it seemed like your career didn't have any falters, though I suspect it was a little more dramatic than that. How would you recommend to other people, to younger people, moving through FAS, how they should manage their careers?

MUSTARD: A couple of things. One of them is that FAS has retained a very parochial attitude, both with respect to the rest of USDA and with respect to the rest of the U.S. government, which I don't think is healthy. I think FAS needs to recognize that it is the overseas arm of the entire department and when you go overseas as an attaché you don't represent the administrator of FAS, you represent the secretary of agriculture, and that actually Ann Veneman, God bless her, put that in writing with Department Regulation 1051. So that is something I think the hierarchy of USDA needs to understand, and that the hierarchy as well as the rank and file of FAS need to understand.

We have forgotten that when FAS was first created back in 1930 it had a very close affiliation with the other bureaus, now we call them agencies, of USDA. We worked very closely with the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, of course one of the spin-offs of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics was the National Agricultural Library. I was one of the few officers that had contact with the National Agricultural Library and was constantly on the lookout for publications that they would be interested in acquiring. Most officers don't even think about that, and yet I think it's one of the things we should be doing. We should be promoting collection of information that is of broad use for the entire Department of Agriculture, not just for the Foreign Agricultural Service. So that's my first recommendation, is if you if you really want to succeed in FAS, I think one of the reasons I succeeded was because I took a much broader view of the role of the attaché as a USDA employee, not merely as an FAS employee, saying, we're here to serve the entire department and to look out for the best interests of the department as a whole, not just for FAS.

And integrate yourself into the embassy, because you get more than you give. If you give up a little bit of time—like I said, when I was in Moscow on the first tour, I spent maybe 5, maximum 10 percent, of my time doing general reporting for the embassy that went back to all the rest of the U.S. government. And I got much more than that in return, people helping me, people who would travel and come back and report to me what they heard, what people told them. They were going to do price surveys in stores that you know, in cities that I wouldn't have time to visit, you got much more information out of it than you gave up. And the other thing that gave you was credibility within the embassy.

At one post I discovered that FAS officers were not on the roster to serve as duty officers. Every week a duty officer is assigned from the Foreign Service complement at post to cover emergencies that occur after normal working hours. FAS officers are in the Foreign Service, but at this post were not on the roster. I changed that and insisted that my attachés be on that roster and serve as duty officers. There was some grumbling, since it

included extra work, but it integrated them into the embassy and made clear to the State officers that FAS officers are also in the Foreign Service, something a lot of State folks don't realize. I've lost count of the number of State officers who asked me why I had a Foreign Service commission certificate on my office wall if I work for Agriculture.

If you look at where we are right now with respect to Moscow, for the first time since 1943 we do not have an officer in Moscow, we haven't for months, and as of this year, we won't have any local staff. We won't have any USDA employees as of this year in Moscow for the first time since 1943, and one of the reasons for this is that State and the other foreign affairs agencies don't see the value of having somebody from USDA in Moscow when they have so many other priorities. What value do we add? What do we bring to the table that is of value to the rest of the foreign affairs community?

My answer to that historically has been, we are the rural eyes and ears of the ambassador, not only the foreign eyes and ears of USDA, and that was how I sold myself when I was overseas, as, yes, I report to USDA, and am payrolled by USDA, but I also work for the Foreign Service writ large, and for the ambassador, in some cases for seven ambassadors, I made myself useful. If people want to know what's going on in a rural area, can you go out there and scout around? Because if I go out as a political officer, I stick out like a sore thumb, people say, Oh, the political officer has come out here and is snooping around. With you looking, it's the agriculture guy, oh, the guy from agriculture, he's just out there looking at the cows and the pigs and the horses, who cares? Okay, so you can go, you can come back, and you can report back, here's what I heard, here's what people told me, you make yourself useful.

We're seeing now what happens if we don't do that. I don't know when we're going to get a USDA presence back in Moscow again, because State doesn't see the value in having an agricultural officer in Moscow that's of benefit to the embassy, and at this point it may be a long time before we see a USDA employee in Moscow, which is gonna cripple us.

Q: I thought it was the Russians who are putting the limit on us, or is it a combination?

MUSTARD: It's a combination, because the Russians have put a limit on the number of people we can have in the embassy, so when you have a limit like that, you're going to go down the list, you say, okay, who is needed and who is not needed? Do we need NASA people there because we're still using Russians to launch people into space? We would probably still need a NASA office. We didn't have a NASA office there back in the 1970s and '80s. We do now, okay? Just as one example, do we need more law-enforcement people there than we did in the 1980s. Absolutely, we have a tremendous law enforcement presence there because we're dealing with organized crime, are dealing with transboundary, transnational terrorism, are they more important than an agricultural attaché? This is a decision that State's going to make, okay? And at the end of the day if they look at it and they say, Agriculture wasn't doing anything for the embassy to make itself useful to the ambassador, they lose, okay?

And I think that's what's happening here, is a lesson for FAS, so my recommendation not just to the up-and-coming attachés, but to the agency writ large, is make yourself useful to the embassy, and make yourself useful, integrate yourself, with the rest of the foreign affairs community so they understand the value that you bring to the table. It isn't just the commodity reporting, it isn't just the trade policy work, it isn't just the market promotion work, it's your ability to see what's going on outside the capital and be that source of information on the rural areas that oftentimes is the first place things start to happen when things start to change.

And other than that, my other piece of advice, I think, for the up-and-coming people is don't be a Johnny One-Note, or a one-trick pony. Master all of the things, all the skill sets that are required. I mastered management. I studied leadership. FAS wouldn't teach me leadership so I went out and I taught myself leadership. I read widely. I did some formal study of leadership. When FAS did get around to giving me leadership training, I discovered that my leadership philosophy was considered to be best practice. It was a confirmation of what I already knew.

Learn analysis. Build up your analytical toolkits and don't really think that the Internet is going to be the be-all and end-all of your sources of information. Use your sense of curiosity to go out and find out what's going on in real time on the ground. Travel, travel, travel! Get out and see things with your own eyes, because if you think you can sit in the capital city, read newspapers, and read the Internet, and know what's going on in the country, you're deluded. If you're not there, if you're not seeing things with your own eyes, you're missing stuff, and I learned that time and time and time again.

Do learn the marketing stuff and then trade policy. Policy is policy is policy. Learn trade policy, but also learn the domestic policies of the countries that you run, because domestic policies drive trade policies, and if you want to understand the trade policies of the countries, you have to understand their domestic policies, and to understand the domestic policies, you need to go talk to the farmers and merchants. And again, you don't do that without getting out and traveling, going out and meeting people, talking to people, finding out what they're saying, what they're thinking, what their point of view is.

That's something that only we as agricultural attachés can really do, so kind of as a wrap up, one of the more interesting conversations I had was with the regional psychiatrist, whom I encouraged to come and visit at least every six months to come and meet with my staff. I encouraged my staff to meet with her and said, "Look, sit down and talk to her. Tell her what stress in your life is. She can counsel you on how to cope with stress, coach you with simple coping mechanisms, even if you're, you know, perfectly mentally healthy, saying, if you're not crazy like I am, just sit down and walk through what are the sources of stress in your life, and she can help you with some coping mechanisms." All this was important, because if there was somebody who was having a problem and needed to see the regional psychiatrist, there is a stigma attached, whereas if everybody met with the regional psychiatrist, then, you know, there's no stigma. So I said,

"Everybody meets with the regional psychiatrist, please do this for me, do it for your staff," so this worked out pretty well.

We went out to dinner one night and she asked me the usual questions, over the sources of stress in your life, what's bothering you, and we talked about various stratagems for dealing with stress, and she said, "How's the transition from being chief of the agriculture section in New Delhi to becoming ambassador?" At that point I had been in Ashgabat for about a year and a half, and I said, "You know, I hadn't really thought about it. You just asked me the question, but nothing really jumps out at me."

The thing was, being a section chief in a large embassy is not that different from being an ambassador, because you're dealing with policy, you're dealing with programs, you're dealing with people, and you're handling money, and you know, those are the four big things that you need to be able to deal with as a section chief. I think having been a section chief I'm a lot more sympathetic to the other section chiefs and the demands on their time and the constraints on them than a lot of ambassadors I worked for who never were section chiefs, who were either political appointees or in some cases I had some ambassadors who were such stellar risers, water walkers, that they went straight from being a mid-level officer to an ambassador without having been either a DCM or a section chief.

I think that's problematic because ambassadors who have never been a section chief don't understand or are not sympathetic to what section chiefs do, and don't realize that section chiefs are not there at your beck and call 24/7 just waiting for the phone to ring, that they have their own things to do. So that was kind of a revelation to me, that in fact my transition from being a section chief to an ambassador was relatively smooth. The learning curve was not as steep as I had thought it would be.

Because I was dealing with policy, programs, people, and to some degree with money, and if you can deal with those as a section chief, you can deal with those as an ambassador. If you're lacking one of them, if you're a Johnny One-Note, if you're great on a particular program but you've neglected your skill sets in other areas, then you'll be a failure most likely as the ambassador, unless you have a bunch of people who are propping you up.

Q: Some general wrap-up questions. What are the attributes that propelled you forward and also things that held you back?

MUSTARD: I made a list of the things I got thinking about that after you sent me that question, what were the attributes that I possess that really, I think, stood me in good stead. I think that number one is that I have good listening skills, both in terms of information collection and also in terms of willingness to hear what people have to say if they think they have something important to tell me. Too many people want to be the one that's talking. I tended to want to be the one who was listening and hearing what people

had to say, and I've always seemed to do a lot more listening than talking. That was important.

I think it's important to keep your ego in check. I had colleagues who announced that they would not drive their own cars, they wanted to have a chauffeur overseas. I thought that was ridiculous. Or people who said that if you needed to get in their offices, you needed to make an appointment, get past the gatekeeper, to get in to see them. I had an open door policy. I wanted people to feel like they had access to me, so I think having—it's one thing to have a healthy ego, it's another thing to have an ego that becomes an obstacle. I've seen too many of my colleagues who allowed their egos to become an obstacle to getting any work done.

Focus on the mission rather than on yourself or on making money. I had some colleagues who joined the Foreign Service and focused on making money, collecting antiques that they could sell then when they got back to the States. You wouldn't believe some of the things I've come across in my career. But I think focusing on the mission has helped because that's given me the credibility to continue to do good work and to execute missions.

A sense of curiosity—I think you cannot function overseas if you don't have a sense of curiosity and don't wonder what the country looks like and don't get out and travel it to see what it looks like and don't meet people to find out what they think. If you don't have a sense of curiosity, you're going to miss a lot of stuff. You have to be a hunter as well as a gatherer. You know, it's one thing to gather whatever comes your way and be a vacuum cleaner. It's another thing to go out and be a hunter, and to look for things actively. It's your sense of curiosity that spurs you into being a hunter as well as a gatherer.

I have good writing skills. I owe that to my high school teachers who taught me how to write, and the writing skills, I think, stood me in very good stead, both with the reporting and in terms of trip reports that people would actually read and learn from. Learning how to write persuasively, how to make arguments, I think that was an important attribute.

Constant learning, which is kind of a corollary of the sense of curiosity, that I was constantly learning, constantly acquiring new skills, fresh knowledge. If you're not constantly learning, then you're falling behind. Sometimes even when you are constantly learning you're falling behind because you can't learn fast enough.

The service orientation, that we're a service and we're there to serve others, whether it's to collect photographs or whatever. A funny story about collecting photographs: Kirk Miller, when he was general sales manager, sent a request out to three overseas posts. One of them was Moscow, asking for photographs of equipment used in agriculture in the three countries. I happened to have a whole bunch and of course I was shooting digital at that point. It was a trivial task to just take some of these digital photographs and email them back to Kirk. He was astounded at how many photographs I had for him to select from. He asked, "Where did you get all these?" I told him I took them during my travels,

you know, I go out and travel and I take these photographs because I know that at some point somebody's gonna want photographs, and you never have enough photographs. People are always asking for a photograph that you don't have, then you kick yourself, say why didn't I take that photograph? So, you know, the service orientation, that you're ready for inquiries because you're worried about what somebody is going to ask for and what they're going to need.

This goes into leadership, too, the servant leadership, that you're there to make sure that your subordinates are successful. When I would meet my new staff I would tell them 50 percent of my job is to help you be successful, is to make you successful, because if you're successful, I'm successful, and if I'm successful, the agency's successful. We all have to succeed so I'm here to help you be successful. Tell me what I need to do for you to help you be successful. That concept of servant leadership, I think, is lacking a lot of times. That has, I think, stood me in very good stead, too, because not only do you help others become successful, which makes the agency successful, it makes the government successful, it engenders this tremendous feeling of loyalty, that people become loyal to you because you're supporting them and you're helping them. You're making them successful, you're giving them the tools that they need to be successful, and they will then reciprocate. They help you to be successful, too, and it becomes a virtuous circle. I think that was very important.

I guess the last thing is a sense of empathy. People are not machines. People need downtime. People need encouragement. There are times when people take a blow and they need to be picked up and dusted off and you need to encourage them. Sometimes they just need a shoulder to cry on and if you're the nearest shoulder, it will be your shoulder they cry on, even if you're the boss. So a sense of empathy, of knowing when to be hard-nosed and when to be the shoulder they think they can cry on, and knowing the difference. You don't want to be a sap and have the guy who is not doing any work come to you crying that he can't do any work because life is so hard and difficult, you know, then you just get used. But you need to have that balance of being a hard-nosed manager when it's necessary and being an empathetic manager when it's called for.

I guess that's it for you in terms of the attributes that occurred to me when you asked that question. You asked what held me back. I think the one thing that probably held me back more than anything else is my lack of political smarts. I've never been able to play politics. I've always been one of the truth tellers who call the shots as they see them, and that's not always political. I'm not always the most diplomatic person when I tell people what I think, so I think my lack of political smarts has held me back and caused me a certain amount of pain at times.

Q: You have to have that integrity, the ability to speak truth to power. You can't be political all the time. Any more thoughts you have about what FAS ought to do to make itself more effective in the future?

MUSTARD: The one metric that I want to point to is the best places to work survey. If you look at the best places to work survey of government, since 2009 FAS has been pretty close to the bottom and agency morale is low. Agency morale across any agency is a reflection of management, which tells me there're some serious management problems in FAS. You and I know what some of them are. I probably don't know what all of them are because I haven't worked in the agency since 2014, but I think if you look at the agency, it has done a very poor job of training managers and leaders. Those of us who have succeeded as managers and leaders are pretty much autodidacts who taught ourselves how to be leaders and managers.

The agency has not really taken seriously an obligation to inculcate proper management, particularly personnel management, and the agency's been heavily politicized, so I think a couple of things. First of all, I think the agency needs to take management and leadership seriously. It needs to stop mollycoddling people who aren't doing the work and stop catering to special interests, and needs to focus on the mission. It needs to do a little bit of weeding, I think there are some bad actors in the agency who need to be weeded out.

I'll stop right there. I think the metrics of the best places to work survey speak for themselves. I think one of the things that FAS could do is to start doing 360s on managers and start identifying the managers who get bad 360s from their peers and their subordinates, because those are the people who kiss up and kick down. I mentioned to you that when we did the 360s while I was ambassador that my approval scores were in the low- to mid-nineties, which is extraordinarily high for any sort of senior executive to have approval ratings that high. Anything in the sixties and seventies is considered pretty good. I scored in the nineties and I did it for four and a half years, so you know it's not rocket science. If somebody as politically obtuse as I am can be a leader and manager who gets good ratings from subordinates and peers, then obviously it's something that pretty much anybody should be able to do if the incentives are there.

But if the incentives aren't there and if people aren't trained in how to do it and some people just are not capable of leadership—some people have character defects and lack intellect or have some sort of a psychological inadequacy, they're not cut out to be managers and leaders. So give those people technical jobs and keep them out of management. Let them do the number crunching, let them do the technical writing, let them do the analysis, keep them away from management. That's what the agency needs to do.

End of interview

Appendix: Remembering "APD" Twenty Years Ex Post

Special TWIM Supplement:
Remembering "APD" Twenty Years Ex Post
a reminiscence collected by Allan Mustard

Today Embassy Moscow and its three consulates, various satellite posts, and affiliated outposts are served by over 750 highly skilled, often bilingual, and very dedicated foreign national employees. In 2006, the embassy is connected to Washington with dedicated telephone lines, multiple high-speed internet connections, and DHL. Complaints about life at Embassy Moscow today are of the variety, "Snow removal woke me up this morning," "High-speed internet service in the city is so expensive," and "The commissary is out of Texas toast."

Life used to be ever so much more interesting. And it was only twenty years ago. On October 22, 1986, the Soviet government declared five additional American diplomats *persona non grata,* on top of five expelled the week prior. The Foreign Ministry also unilaterally withdrew all 183 foreign national employees from Moscow and Leningrad, plus another seventy-seven personal maids, teachers, and other private staff. Overnight, we became the only U.S. diplomatic mission in a foreign country with no Foreign Service nationals.

Relations were already strained. The Reykjavik summit had been a disaster. On August 23, the FBI arrested Soviet UN employee Gennadiy Zakharov for espionage; the Soviets retaliated by arresting U.S. journalist Nicholas Daniloff on similar charges. During Daniloff's detention, on September 18, the U.S. expelled twenty-five Soviet diplomats accused of espionage. The Soviets responded with expulsion of five U.S. diplomats on October 19. The U.S. countered by expelling five Soviet diplomats in direct retaliation, plus fifty alleged KGB and GRU officers from Washington and San Francisco, ostensibly to bring Soviet staffing to the same level [251] as U.S. levels in Moscow [225] and Leningrad [26]. The U.S. also ordered the Soviet government to cut its UN mission staff from 270 to 165. These moves were done with the knowledge that the Soviets did not employ American nationals in their missions and an expectation that the story wasn't over quite yet. The Soviets responded by PNGing five more American diplomats, pulling our FSNs, and limiting the number of embassy guests and TDYers.

One of the embassy officers expelled was Mike Matera, the human rights officer. Kathy Kavalec remembers "the great PNG party at the near dacha where we waited for the newscaster to announce the expulsions, and cheered when they read out the names, probably spurred on by the beer and indignation." When Mike was named, he carried out some cake to put on top of the KGB surveillance car stationed outside the dacha.

The First Days

Ambassador Arthur Hartman, the most senior career ambassador in the Foreign Service, lost his chauffeur. Margo Squire recalls the first day without FSNs:

" —I had to work a press event at Spaso with Amb. Hartman. Because I was running late, I drove my car over, and after the event, the ambassador asked me for a ride back to the embassy. Serge Schmemann of *The New York Times* walked out as Hartman was folding himself into my tiny Toyota Starlite and took a photo, which he gave to *AP*. The next day *The Washington Post* and *NYTimes* carried this photo— My fifteen minutes of fame."

Ambassador Hartman, DCM Dick Combs, and Administrative Counselor David Beall decreed that all embassy staff would henceforth engage in All Purpose Duty, each in turn, in alphabetical order, to perform the housekeeping tasks that previously had been done by FSNs. Only the ambassador and DCM were exempted. Margo Squire recalls the first group, made up mostly of people whose last names began with B, christening themselves the "Killer B's" and going to work. She adds,

"I'll never forget [PAO and FE-CM] Ray Benson bursting into our weekly P&C staff meeting that afternoon and boasting about how well he had washed cars. David Beall, I think, had to move a sofa up thirteen floors in a building without an elevator."

Kathy Kavalec recalls,

"[W]e had Elie Wiesel when the whole thing began, and—the expulsions and loss of Soviet staff were announced while I was squiring him around town. At the embassy reception for him Mrs. Hartman and the marines served popcorn since there was no house staff."

"And I remember going out to the airport on the bus to meet a delegation of codel wives, including Mrs. Teresa Heinz [now Kerry], who thoughtfully brought us a cooler full of fresh produce, only to find the embassy had decided, in all its wisdom, not to provide a van to pick them up— [I always felt bad about that]. The ladies graciously agreed to ride the city bus with me to their hotel—"

Another question was whether the Marine Ball, scheduled for November, could take place at Spaso House without FSN support. The marines provided their own music, several of us embassy officers volunteered to take turns tending bar, and other volunteers helped with meal service. We made it happen, but not without a few misadventures.

Things were no better in Leningrad. Then-DPO Jim Schumaker remembers,

"The next thing we had to do was to invite our FSNs back to the consulate for one last time to get their final paycheck. It was a very sad occasion— We knew, of course, that there were quite a few informers among our FSN crew, and that UpiP, the KGB-supervised agency that provided our employees, even held regular debriefs on

Thursdays. But many of these employees were our friends as well, and quite a few had divided loyalties. For some, their old lives were over."

The Routine

Running an embassy or consulate without FSNs was a lot of hard work, particularly in the Soviet Union's "deficit economy," where basic necessities like food plus hygiene, medical, and office supplies all had to be imported. The U.S. press focused on the poor, poor American diplomats who, boo-hoo, suddenly had to clean their own homes and offices. That wasn't the half of it.

All travel arrangements now had to be made by language-qualified officers, and the rule of thumb was that it took one day of preparation before and one day of paperwork after travel for each day on the road. Since all travel had to be approved by the KGB, we often spent days preparing for trips for which permission was denied at the last minute. All high-priority messages to Soviet officials and all requests for hotel accommodations for visitors had to be hand-delivered, a time-consuming affair that required functioning autos. All cars also had to be washed daily, for under Soviet law, driving a dirty car in the city was against the law—and this in a city famous for its mud.

We chipped ice from sidewalks and hauled snow. We humped furniture. Finnish contractors were building an ice barrier [to protect pedestrians from the massive icicles that formed on the back of the chancery each spring], and one afternoon a semi-trailer loaded with thirty tons of sheet steel and I-beams arrived. We unloaded it in thirty-below weather. Since these tasks were not in our job descriptions, the embassy could not, by regulation, provide protective clothing, so we mail-ordered at our own expense coveralls and heavy gloves.

Several embassy spouses reported to A/GSO Rich Jaworski the first Monday and refused to leave until assigned jobs for which they never received compensation. GSO dispatch was operated by Pauline Clark, and the consular section was augmented by a mix of spouses and nannies plus Zachary Lent and Jean McKenzie, two Russian language instructors who suddenly had no pupils with time to attend class.

The embassy and consulate imported food, supplies, and equipment each week, all of which had to be cleared through Soviet Customs. Howard Clark spent all day at Butovo clearing one shipment, and wrote a telegram about his experience that was read by Secretary of State Shultz. Mike Einik recalls this work as "a) cross between Monty Python and Dante."

We brought in monthly air shipments of fruits and vegetables on Pan Am, and had to send people to Sheremetyevo in sufficient numbers both to clear and to guard them from being stolen. On Wednesdays, we received our weekly food shipments by train from Helsinki, including a metric ton of milk [since Soviet milk was unsafe]. On December 19, APDers,"unloaded eighty thousand pounds of commissary dry goods, fifteen thousand

pounds of lumber, and seven thousand pounds of mail. All of it got warehoused and/or delivered on the same day— We also had a snowstorm on Saturday/Sunday. It has been dealt with as well, and by the same people." Even routine repair work was complicated. Science Officer Larry Goodrich was on APD when a truckload of concrete arrived.

"On one of the coldest mornings of the winter, the embassy had to take delivery of a load of concrete to repair some steps at the back of the building. So we APDers reported to the parking area as a typical Soviet flat-bed dump truck with no gate at the back showed up and simply dumped its load on the ground before us. We spent the next twenty minutes or so frantically shoveling the concrete into the step forms before it set, or froze, or both."

At least Moscow had the luxury of rotating APD. Leningrad was a different story, as Jim Schumaker relates:

"Early on, it became clear to us in Leningrad that we did not have the personnel to run a rotating roster. All of us would have to be on APD all the time. Fortunately, we had a fair number of enthusiastic volunteers. John Floyd, our Seabee, was able to keep the consulate's systems running while doing basic maintenance tasks in his spare time. John also volunteered for some of the more dangerous work, which included roping himself to an iron railing and lowering himself down the roof to clean off icicles and snow. Bea Burns volunteered to be the telephone operator. The husband of our consular officer, who himself was a retired FSO and had been consul general in Sydney, volunteered to be the consulate driver and also make customs runs— Everybody volunteered for something, and everything was covered by at least one person."

"New Year's Greetings From The Titanic"

The weather held through mid-December, then as Christmas drew near, the thermometer plunged. We were later told the winter of 1986–1987 was the worst in fifty-four years, second worst in 105, and colder than the winter that defeated Napoleon's army. Whether this was true or not, we went through several weeks of temperatures below minus-thirty-five Celsius. At that temperature few cars will start. By mid-January only six cars in the embassy were running [the ambassador's limousine and a pickup truck for jump-starting other cars were kept garaged]. My Volvo hatchback was one of the six, only because I arose every two hours at night, started the engine, ran it for an hour to recharge the battery, then went back to bed for two hours before doing it all over again.

Commercial Attaché Mike Mears wrote a cable detailing the U.S. Commercial Office's travails, noting that things couldn't get much worse. Then January 12, a steam pipe blew in USCO, at that time housed on the ground floor of what is today Novinskiy Bul'var 15. Mears and his administrative assistant, Cheryl Dustin, arrived to discover boiling water pouring out the front doors. When the water was shut off, so was the heat, and the next morning USCO had six inches of ice on the floor, a glacier extending to the sidewalk, and condensed ice inside all office equipment. The summary paragraph of Mears's next telegram to Commerce read, "Things did get worse."

Shortly after Christmas, the steam pipe feeding the embassy heating system ruptured. The interior temperature of the embassy chancery plunged to thirty-three below zero within a day, and heat was not restored until spring. People worked indoors all winter in long underwear and down coats. This event spurred Supervisory GSO Jane Becker to send a cable titled "New Year's Greetings from the Titanic."

Another consequence of the round of expulsions emerged about this time: a spike in vandalism, home intrusions, and automobile sabotage. The KGB had routinely engaged in harassment at the rate of about one or two incidents per week, but the frequency jumped to one or two per day. Margo Squire had her car's exhaust pipe sawn through. My [and many others'] apartment windows were opened and left open when the temperature was thirty-five below zero. Larry Goodrich relates,

"[T]he Soviets especially liked to prey on empty embassy apartments. One night—[a]n embassy telephone operator's ceiling fixtures were filling with water cascading in from the empty apartment above— We found all the windows open [it was mid-January], which had caused one of the radiators to freeze and burst. We fought our way through the spraying water and turned off the water supply to the radiator. Then we went down to the staff member's apartment, where I emptied his ceiling fixtures with a turkey baster, taking care not to electrocute myself."

Hoses were slashed on washing machines, causing apartment floods. The lug nuts on DCM Combs's car were loosened, and the right front wheel fell off in traffic. Diesel fuel was poured into gas tanks, and it jelled when the mercury dropped, plugging fuel lines. We later learned that the PNG'd KGB and GRU officers had been unleashed against us. Keeping an embassy operating under these conditions was trial enough—we thought. Little did we know what was coming next!

But there was good news. State had awarded the "omnibus contract" in early November and contractors would come in the spring. All-Purpose Duty might soon be behind us. Christmas carol lyrics were rewritten and posted on the walls of the chancery's two elevators, including "Here We Come on APD" [to the tune of "Here We Come a Wassailing"] and "God Rest Ye Merry, APDs."

The rub was the personnel ceiling. To make room for contractors, embassy management cut direct-hire staff and juggled the numbers—tandem couples were counted as one. Since Consular Officer Jill Byrnes needed official status to issue visas, and her husband, Political Internal Chief Shaun Byrnes, did not, Shaun was listed as a spouse on the diplomatic list. And so it went with every other tandem couple State could lure to Moscow.

HERE WE COME ON APD

Here we come on APD to make the compound clean,

We are the best-paid janitors that you have ever seen.

[REFRAIN]
And a clean floor to you,
And clean sinks and toilets, too,
And the omnibus contractors will save us all next year,
Yes, the contract will save us all next year.

We're not the Soviet char force that you have seen before,
But we are members of the Moscow diplomatic corps.
[REFRAIN]

GOD REST YE MERRY, APDS

God rest ye merry, APDs, there's no hard work today,
The mail goes out on Friday next, the milk run's on Wednesday,
The dry goods all came in last week, so it's a slow Tuesday,
Oh, tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,
We'll just wash some cars in comfort and joy.

The Agriculture Section lost its secretary slot to make room for PAE, so I took over that job on top of my reporting tasks. Then David Beall and A/GSO Kaara Ettesvold recalled my ability to touch-type in Russian, so I was directed to work half-time for the Administrative Section. The typing ability made me fairly popular, since I was one of a very few who could prepare travel notes necessary for embassy employees to move around the country, on top of translating and typing packing lists in Russian for arriving and departing personnel.

The Lonetree-Bracy Scandal

That February the notorious Lonetree-Bracy scandal broke. The curious can read about it in Ron Kessler's book, *Moscow Station*, which though containing more than a few inaccuracies provides the most accessible account of one of Moscow's worst episodes. One consequence was a shutdown of all the embassy's secure electronic communications. Another was confiscation of electric typewriters [they were presumed compromised]. Ambassador Arthur Hartman relates that years later, high-ranking KGB officers admitted to him they hyped the Lonetree-Bracy case to cover the real intelligence leaks of Robert Hanssen and Aldrich Ames, so much of the added burden was actually not necessary.

We were in a chancery with an ambient temperature well below freezing. We had no typewriters. We drafted classified and LOU telegrams on yellow legal pads using ballpoint pens, a courier flew them to Frankfurt, and a secretary in Frankfurt typed and transmitted them. At thirty below zero, ballpoint pen ink freezes in about five minutes. We learned to keep three ballpoint pens inside our down jackets, where body heat could

thaw the ink. You wrote with one pen until it froze, put it back next to your body, and continued drafting with the second pen, and so on, rotating them.

International direct dialing did not exist in the USSR. There were two dedicated "Washington lines," and each section had to sign up days in advance to get a fifteen-minute block of time. The alternative was to go to the post office, order international phone calls a day in advance, and pay eighteen dollars per minute [you had to specify the duration of the call and pay in advance, then hope the call went through when someone was at the other end to answer]. E-mail didn't exist yet.

About this time, Steve Young accompanied Chargé d'Affaires Dick Combs to a meeting at the Foreign Ministry. Steve recalls,

"As we settled down to our tea and cookies—the Russian took on his best fake sympathetic tone and said, 'Deek, how are you making out over there?' It suddenly dawned on me that the Soviets were convinced we were near the end of our rope, and would any day come in seeking terms to resume the old arrangement with UpDK workers. And a new understanding flashed through my mind: these were the real aristocrats, professional Soviet diplomats who would never stoop to clean toilets or lug refrigerators up narrow stairwells. They had mirror imaged us, not for a moment grasping that Americans are always ready to roll up their sleeves and do what is necessary to get the job done."

In his citations of a series of Superior Honor Awards for the State Department personnel at post, Secretary of State Shultz, a Marine Corps veteran of World War II, referred to the conditions faced by embassy and consulate general personnel in the Soviet Union during this period as akin to those faced during war.

The Spring Thaw

As springtime approached, the U.S. government responded. DOD was the first, sending a half-dozen army drivers to chauffeur the ambassador and drive our trucks [until then, first Ambassador Hartman and later Ambassador Matlock had been driving themselves in an armored Opel sedan, and David Beall had seriously considered sending Steve Pifer, a truck driver in college, back to the States for special training in truck driving]. The first contractors appeared in April. Heat was restored to the chancery and new telecommunications equipment was installed.

Metaphorically, another historic thaw was taking place. The relationship between Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan warmed up following the disastrous summit in Reykjavik. Congressional interest increased commensurately, so with no FSNs and only a handful of contractors, we began hosting either congressional or secretary of state delegations each month, starting in summer 1987 and culminating in the Moscow summit in May 1988. As the summit date approached, a suddenly cooperative UpDK sent workers swarming over Spaso House and the exterior of the chancery to repair, clean and paint. The summit

delegation numbered over a thousand, accompanied by over a thousand journalists, outnumbering us 8:1—but we handled them.

The thaw had practical consequences, for though in the near term there was no chance of foreign nationals coming back to the U.S. missions, UpDK and UpiP became somewhat more cooperative. Jim Schumaker remarked,

"It turned out that Moscow's decision to withdraw our FSNs had been just as much a shock to our Leningrad Diplomatic Agency counterparts as it had been to us— A few people in each organization did what they could to help us, easing our administrative burdens considerably. More often than not, our requests for under the table assistance were granted immediately, and unofficially, and it really helped."

It seemed that foreign nationals would never come back to Moscow and Leningrad. They would not have, if not for an earth-shaking event. Jim continues,

"[The Marine Corps guard scandals], coming during the same time period as the Moscow embassy construction scandal, the NPPD incident, the bugged typewriters affair, and the Edward Lee Howard defection, ruled out the idea of rehiring Soviet nationals. Congress was on the warpath, and the FBI and other counterintelligence agencies were busy turning over every rock just in case some new intelligence scandal had been overlooked. The issue was closed, forever. No Soviet employees would ever be allowed to work at our missions in Moscow and Leningrad. There was just one catch, of course: only four short years later, there would be no Soviet employees anywhere, because the Soviet Union itself had passed into history."

The All-Purpose Duty veterans were a varied group that, under enormous stress, kept this mission operating—despite overt Soviet efforts to force it to collapse. Perhaps this experience partially forged our characters. An unusually high proportion of APD veterans went on to ambassadorships (Jane Becker, Mike Einik, Mary Ann Peters, Ed Hurwitz, Jim Schumaker, Priscilla Clapp, Eric Edelman, Steve Pifer, John Herbst, John Ordway, Steve Young). Many more served in highly responsible positions: Shaun Byrnes as envoy to Montenegro, COL Bob Berls as an adviser to the secretary of energy, RADM Ron Kurth as president of the Naval War College, and others too numerous to list here. One thing we have all carried with us, though, is a deep and abiding appreciation for the work of our foreign national employees and American contractors, wherever we've been posted.

Allan Mustard is the only APD veteran currently posted to Moscow. He limits his official duties today to running the Agriculture Section of the embassy. He can still touch type in Russian when required.

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