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

JORDAN THOMAS ROGERS

Interviewed by: Thomas Dunnigan
Initial interview date: August 22, 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Soviet troop invasion
President Eisenhower denunciation
Secretary of State Dulles
Families evacuated
Communications
Nagy
Cardinal Mindszenty
Kadar government

State Department; FSI; Spanish language training 1958

Buenos Aires, Argentina; Economic Officer 1958-1959
Economy
Environment
The Perons
Relations

Quito, Ecuador, Political/Labor Officer 1959-1961
Environment

State Department; Reports Officer, Staff Secretariat 1961-1963
Duties
Cuban Missile Crisis

Department of Defense, Foreign Affairs Officer 1963-1965
Military exposure to civilian sector
Foreign Military Personnel

Karachi, Pakistan; Economic Counselor 1965
Beirut interlude
Environment

Rawalpindi, Pakistan; DCM and Economic Counselor 1965-1969
Environment
AID Mission
Chinese
Divided Pakistan
President Nixon visit

Senior Seminar 1969-1970

State Department; Inter-American Bureau; Economic Affairs 1970-1974
Organization of American States (OAS)
GATT

Retirement 1974

General comments

INTERVIEW

ROGERS: Well, good, thanks, but first, Tom, thank you for taking the time and effort to be here. You've come a long way and it's a pleasure to participate in this program but I appreciate your role in guiding it.

I grew up in South Carolina, went to the University of North Carolina and from my childhood had wanted to become a meteorologist. I majored in physics at UNC and had, for whatever reasons, thought of little other than to become a weatherman, a forecaster. When the war broke out, I was in my senior year at the University of North Carolina with a major in physics. I shortened my time there and was able to graduate (they're on the quarter system rather the semester) the middle of March 1942.

Not long after Pearl Harbor, I noticed ads there at the Physics Department offering the opportunity to go to several training schools around the country, one at MIT, for training in meteorology and then to become a weather forecaster in the Army Air Corps. This, of course, was before the formation of the U.S. Air Force. So I signed up for that, was accepted, finished at the university on March 16, caught a train for Boston on March 17, which happily was a weekend and then entered MIT under this program on March 19 or 20. I was there about nine months with a corps of a hundred.

They then selected about half a dozen of us to stay over as instructors for the following class and I was picked for that; following that I went on assignment to an Air Corps base in Newfoundland and spent the remaining part of the war, which was something less than two years, forecasting for transport planes crossing the Atlantic. At that point, of course, most planes wouldn't fly all the way across. They would stop in Newfoundland and we would then route them either to the Azores and up to England, or to Iceland and then down to England.

Shortly after the war ended I was transferred to Presque Isle, Maine, but took a detour in route to persuade a young lady, Sarah Flinn, to marry me. Sarah was in Washington, working as a reporter for the *Evening Star.* All this, Tom, may be hard to believe but is an answer to your question of "What led you into the Foreign Service?" So in the time that Sarah had to give notice to the *Evening Star*, which I think was about 48 hours, we had lunch with some friends of hers: Mary Jo Lakeland, who was then Mary Jo something else but was engaged to marry Bill Lakeland. We had lunch with them and it developed that Bill was just entering the Foreign Service and had already been assigned as vice consul to Quebec. They asked me what I was going to do when I got out of the army and I said I had no idea. I didn't have enough points to get out very quickly and I just didn't know what I was going to do. What I was going to do more immediately was to marry the young lady in question.

But before that happened and before the lunch broke up Bill and Mary Jo said to me, "Well, you might think about the Foreign Service. In fact," they said, "they're now hiring people on a temporary basis to go to Germany with a special program for helping people who were persecuted by the Nazis to obtain visas." I knew nothing about the Foreign Service, but I listened with interest and when lunch broke up Sarah went back to work, Bill and Mary Jo disappeared and I was left with nothing to do. Well, it turned out that the sign-up point was very close by, on New York Avenue I think. So I ambled over, signed something and then forgot about it. We were married and went up to Presque Isle.

This was in October, the war having ended two months earlier. And one day in February the telephone rang and this voice says, "This is Mr. Burns, from the State Department." Well, as a South Carolinian, of course I knew who Jimmy Byrnes was. He had been the Governor of South Carolina and was then the Secretary of State. So I put two and two together and thought Mr. Byrnes, the Secretary of State, was calling me. Well, it wasn't Jimmy Byrnes, it happened to be Findley Burns and Findley says to me, "How would you like to go to Germany as a vice consul?" And I responded that I would go anywhere, if they would get me out of the army.

Things happened. I got out of the army very quickly and in about two weeks found myself on a boat going to Germany. The two weeks was enough to enable me to say goodbye to my family, to take all the training courses offered by the Foreign Service, full of things about protocol, I think that must have lasted half an hour at most, and everything else.

I got to Germany I guess in mid-March, assigned to Stuttgart. Sarah meanwhile, knowing her way around Washington, had managed to get permission to go to Germany very quickly and she ended up there on May 1st, as the third wife, after the consul general's wife, the wife of Consul General A. Dana Hodgdon and the consul's wife, who was working in the code room, whose husband was Fred Mann. Sarah ended up as wife number three.

The work was fascinating. We were dealing altogether with Germans and mainly, of course, Jews and hearing from them all of the difficult problems and treatment they had had, including most of them who had come back from a shorter or longer stay at concentration camps. So I was fascinated by everything that was going on in Germany.

Sarah arrived and there we were. That assignment did not last very long. Sarah had received no Foreign Service training. I had received exceedingly little. We knew nothing about calling on people. And so Sarah was there and never made an effort to call on anybody. We assumed that since we were new we would be told what to do. Well, we weren't told what to do and wife number two arrived, whereupon she was swamped with trips to the PX and use of transportation and so on. Well, we looked at each other and thought, "This isn't any way to handle newcomers. So, this is just a lark for us. We may not stick in the Foreign Service." Sarah says, "I'm not gonna call on anyone." (Actually, I believe she did call on Fred Mann's wife; they had entertained us.) So she never did. I'm

not pointing any fingers but come a couple of months later, someone had to be transferred to Berlin. It turned out to be me, which took us to an even more interesting spot.

Somewhere along this process, maybe in Stuttgart, I think it was in Stuttgart, I took the Foreign Service exam and, since this is in part an exercise in revealing your weaknesses as well as what you would like to call your strengths, I'll have to say that I've known people who took the exam who made a lower score than I did (and who didn't pass) but I don't know anybody who took the exam and passed it with a lower score than I had. My score came out, when adding up all the different sections, came out to be 69.45. So I guess some kind soul rounded the four to a five and the five to a zero and gave me a 70, which got me into the Foreign Service, I guess you can say, by the skin of my teeth.

Q: Yeah, were you in Stuttgart when Secretary Byrnes came there and made his famous speech?

ROGERS: No, I was not.

Q: You had already gone to Berlin?

ROGERS: We were in Berlin, yes. I recall his making a speech in Stuttgart, but for the life of me I can't recall his topic.

Q: Well, sorry to interrupt you but I, now tell us how Berlin affected you when you got there.

ROGERS: Berlin, we were in Berlin two years. I was still working in the visa section, as I did for not quite all of my time in Berlin. But we came even closer to the realities of German life. We were living not very far from the consulate, an easy walking distance. I used to go home for lunch. And it was close enough that Sarah was able to develop what you might call a small soup kitchen and I could send people from the Soviet zone, who were in the worst condition of all (and who made up the majority of our applicants) to our house for soup. And we were very happy to have done that.

We met Germans. We met a rather surprising couple back in Stuttgart, a man who had been a captain in the German Army, we hired him to come in several nights a week to give us German lessons. Of course I had no training in German when I got there. I say of course, maybe I shouldn't say of course but this was right after the end of the war and we didn't have all the luxuries that later fell our way. He had just come back from the Eastern Front. He had been stationed in Bordeaux early in the war and had married a French girl! One didn't hear about that happening very often and we were very surprised. And even more surprised when his French in-laws came to visit them. In Germany, in 1946! His wife, she married him, she went back to Germany with him. She stayed in Germany throughout. I'm certain this did not happen very often but the fact that it did at all was a surprise to us. We liked the couple. We took her to Berlin once for a visit. In fact we saw them, over a period of time, a good many years later.

An amusing story about them: Hans, the husband, worked for the Bank Deutscher Länder, a leading bank at the time. About ten years later, when we were stationed in Budapest, Sarah needed an operation, and I arranged to take her to the Air Force hospital in Wiesbaden. Driving up, we stopped in Stuttgart, getting into a hotel by about 6 p.m. "Shall we call Hans and Odette?" "Well, why not, we can go by after supper." You know how pleased anyone is to have someone from out-of-town phone you at 6 p.m. and say "Here we are! We just got into town!!" Anyway, we phoned them, and they said, "Come over right now, come over for supper." So we went. Steak and champagne!! They lived in the same apartment, no children, stuffed with a lot of new furniture, huge Grundig radio-record player in the corner (this was pre-TV), they'd each gained about 10 kg. Hans still had the same job. But the payoff: Odette said, "How long will you be in the hospital? I'll come up and see you." (Stuttgart-Wiesbaden must be 60-70 miles!). Sarah replied, "Oh no, that's much too much trouble, you'd have to change trains in Frankfurt, don't do it!! " Odette: "Oh, It's no trouble. The chauffeur can drive me up!!" Spiegel Deutschlands. The new Germany!

"Another story from the same trip. Driving back alone to Budapest, it began to snow around Munich. I had hoped to reach Vienna, but around Linz I decided that enough was enough, and found a Gasthaus, and got a room. Typical: big feather quilt on the bed, toilet way down the hall, everything icy.

So I go down for supper, and the only other people there was a table occupied was by several men. They invited me to join them, so I did. I said, "I'll come if you'll speak Hochdeutsch, this Linzer accent is too much for me." One said, "OK, we'll try!" So I joined them and they asked me what I was doing, and I told them I was with the US Legation in Budapest. That was astounding to them. "The US has a Legation in Budapest!! Why on earth?" "Well, Austria has a Legation there too!" "Unbelievable! Deswegen sind unsere Steuern so hoch!!" (That's why our taxes are so high!!)

Berlin, or at least parts of it, was almost totally destroyed. We got there in August '46, I believe. Sarah had a baby in December '47 and shortly after that the problems with the Russians began to be serious. In the meantime I had moved, I'm not sure exactly under what circumstances, I had moved from the consulate and was then working in the economic office under Wesley Harrison, in the office, I guess that was already the High Commission, HICOG or military government.

Q: It's still military government, yes.

ROGERS: So, working in the economic section, probably trying to figure out what I was doing. When the blockade began to come down, things got dicey. Sarah, incidentally, was working, at least until her pregnancy was pretty advanced, she immediately got a job, she'd already gotten the same type of job in Stuttgart, working for the military government earning, it may surprise the reader, a good bit more than I was earning, writing the history of OMGUS. Strangely enough, I've never seen that history published.

Q: OMGUS being the Office of Military Government of the United States.

ROGERS: Correct. And we were somewhat astounded at the extent of black marketing in Germany and I will say the extent of black marketing carried on by quite responsible people. And I can't say that our record was completely clear, meaning purchase of things like china and art and so on with cigarettes. I've never seen much published on the total extent of that in Germany and one can argue both ways, I suppose, about the ethics of it, but it was certainly very widespread in Berlin.

Q: Yes, well, in fact the commanding general's wife, General Clay, set up a black market operation there, which made it semi-official.

ROGERS: Well, I knew she had that reputation.

Q: She did. She set that up there. I wanted to ask you, in the economic section, were you able to meet with Germans to discuss their problems or not?

ROGERS: Not in Berlin. Later, in Frankfurt, yes. But then my job was somewhat different, in Frankfurt.

Q: Any other comments about your Berlin days?

ROGERS: Well, not much. We were able to get out. We went by train to Copenhagen, bought a car and drove it back. We went down to Leipzig to a fair, at one point. My mother came to visit us in the summer of 1947 and we drove with her to Stuttgart and then to Switzerland. So until the blockade came along we did not find it stifling.

Q: You were in Berlin when the blockade began?

ROGERS: When it began. Well, when the antecedents began. When the British plane was shot down.

Q: In April of

ROGERS: April of '48.

Q: Of '48, yes.

ROGERS: I remember being told to burn secret documents, of which I had none but I'm not sure how much my office had. We had a friend in Stuttgart who called us up one night and just said, "I wanted to talk to you before the phone lines all get cut." That was encouraging.

In any event, we left in June of '48 on home leave, but since we had a six months old baby while I was gone I was transferred to Frankfurt. I got home and my father said, "I understand you bought a new car. What'd you do with it?" I said, "Well, left it in Berlin." He said, "You did? How you gonna get it out?" And I said, "Daddy, don't worry about

those things." Of course, I had not the foggiest idea how we were going to get it out. But he kept asking me this all during the time we were there and I never had an answer until we got back to Frankfurt and discovered the car was there waiting for us. I can remember to this day how relieved I felt—at last I could tell my father!. It had been flown out, of course, on one of the transport flights, which had so much to carry into Berlin but very little to bring out.

Q: Well, you were in Frankfurt at the time when OMGUS changed over to HICOG, High Commission's Office.

ROGERS: I guess so.

Q: What was your relationship with the U.S. military, because they're very strong in the Frankfurt area?

ROGERS: We had a military couple living upstairs from us and we were very friendly with them. We saw the military fairly regularly, but we did in Berlin, as well. So I had no official connection.

Q: I was going to ask, nothing officially

ROGERS: Well, that's not quite true. I meant to say that when Sarah was on the boat going to Germany she became very friendly with a group of young Czechs about her age, maybe a half dozen or so, who had been caught in the U.S. during the war and were just going home to Czechoslovakia for the first time. Later, in HICOG, we were told by the military that that a Czech couple had crossed illegally from Czechoslovakia into Germany and he was being held temporarily by the Germans for interrogation. He had worked for the Ministry of Foreign Trade in Prague and we were asked if we wanted to question him. So we cabled Washington, I didn't know what questions to ask. At that point I was working in the foreign trade, interzonal trade division of the economic section of the Political Adviser to the High Commissioner's office. Anyway, I went out to interview this man and in hearing about his history I heard that he and a girl friend had come back on the same boat that Sarah had been on and they had known each other. Small world. So we saw them there and later he came to this country, got a job with Eastman Kodak in Rochester and we saw him once or twice in Washington while he was job hunting. I believe he stayed with us.

Q: Now, you mentioned earlier that you had a chance to meet with Germans in Frankfurt. Were they helpful to you or

ROGERS: Yes, that was the, what we were doing then, we were working on was what was called COCOM, which was an effort to prevent a long list of strategic commodities from getting into the Soviet zone and eventually into the whole Soviet sphere of influence. So, yes, I worked with the Germans a good bit there. I went to Paris with a couple of them, for meetings in Paris on that subject and found them to be quite cooperative.

Q: Good. What were some of the other problems you dealt with there in Frankfurt?

ROGERS: Well, one personal job was, I sort of became John Holt's daughter's dentist, or better put, dental assistant. John Holt was my counterpart in Berlin and his daughter needed to see a dentist occasionally; so I became the person who met her at the airport, sometimes put her up with us for the night and then got her back on the plane to Berlin. I know John Holt is not living now but I saw him and Elizabeth, we saw them several times in Maine in recent years but I don't remember asking him about his daughter's teeth.

Q: Did you have anything to do with the airlift, because while you were in Frankfurt the airlift was going on to Berlin.

ROGERS: Not as such. They were trying to set up this COCOM system and I said that the Germans were cooperative with us. We thought they were. There was a great deal of questionable trade going on between the three Western zones and the Soviet zone and how much we had the wool pulled over our eyes and how much was totally straightforward, I don't know. And I believe you can question now whether the whole effort was in and of itself worthwhile.

Q: Well, Tom, your tour in Frankfurt ended in 1950 when you were transferred back to Washington, to the Bureau of German Affairs.

ROGERS: Yes, I was transferred back, Alex Kiefer and I, I believe, more or less swapped positions. He was working in Washington and he went to Germany. I came back to Washington, I taking the position he had. That bureau was under Hank Byroade, who had been a very young brigadier general, I believe, in the military and then I guess he'd gone to work in Germany and then later became head of the German bureau in Washington. Galen Stone and I were working close together at that point, as was I believe Monty Montenegro.

Q: And what did you do, really, in the bureau?

ROGERS: It was still the basic problem of how to keep items, goods, commodities that the U.S. considered strategic out of the hands of the Soviet bloc.

Q: So you were still dealing with the COCOM problem?

ROGERS: I was dealing with the COCOM problem. Neither Galen or Monty were. But I was still dealing with the COCOM problem, under which, one of the more serious leakage areas was the interzone trade between East and West Germany. I don't know if we ever made a serious dent in it or not. I wouldn't be surprised to find out that we did not. And I wouldn't be surprised to hear all sorts of critiques, both praising the whole effort and condemning it, today.

Q: Did you travel to Germany at all during this period?

ROGERS: No.

Q: Then, after two years of that, you went off to the University of Michigan and a concentration of economic studies, I believe.

ROGERS: Right, I had never taken a single course in economics in college. I was a physics major, didn't know what economics was and then had been working at it, God knows how, in Germany for a couple of years. So I went off there. I must confess I thought that was going to be a wonderful boondock, nice long football weekends. I killed myself, trying to keep up with all these guys who were six or eight years younger and been studying economics all their lives. But it was interesting and I think useful. I can't say I enjoyed it because I had to work pretty hard.

Q: Now, after that year, you're assigned to Budapest. Did that come as a surprise to you or

ROGERS: Well, in the spring of '53, in Ann Arbor, I had a letter from Max Finger, whom I had known and worked with and admired a great deal in Stuttgart. Max was then the economics officer in the legation in Budapest. He asked me if I would be interested in an assignment to Budapest. I'd hardly heard of Budapest before but I read the letter and thought, that sounded interesting, behind the Iron Curtain. And Max, I think this is correct, Max said that if I were interested that maybe it would be a good idea to get myself to Washington soon, because the minister in charge of the legation in Budapest, Chris Ravndal, would be in Washington and I might go by and call on him. So I thought I would do that. So I took the bus to Washington, about an 18 hour trip, camped out on the Montenegros and went in to see the great man.

He was sharing an office with Clare Booth Luce, who was visiting from Rome and when I went in I shook hands with Ravndal and sat down.. Clare Booth was on the phone, so Ravndal looked at me and said nothing. I said nothing, thinking he was waiting for her to finish her phone conversation. After awhile she finished and Ravndal continued to look at me and I continued to look at him. No words were exchanged. Finally, after what seemed to be about a week, Ravndal said, "Do you play bridge?" I said, "Well, my wife loves it. I play it, more or less." Both statements reasonably accurate. So then the looking continued and after another long period of time, Ravndal says, "Well, thank you very much for coming in." And that was the essence of the interview. I won't say that no other words were exchanged, but that's my clear and distinct memory of it.

Anyway, we went to Budapest. This was my first diplomatic assignment. I went there as economics officer.

Q: How many were in the economic section there?

ROGERS: One.

Q: Just one, that was you.

ROGERS: My title was second secretary, economics officer. I stayed there a couple of years. We enjoyed it. We were able to get to Vienna pretty regularly. The work was interesting. We had little contact with Hungarians, less so than in Germany but those we knew we came to like very well and with some we've maintained contact through today. After being there about two years we came on home leave and then the political officer was being transferred and I asked if I could be switched from economics to the political side. So I went back for the second two years and in a different position.

The second two years became much more interesting, thanks to the coming revolution, although no one saw it coming. But the growing dissatisfaction and growing demands being expressed by a broader and broader group of Hungarian people, so that the second year, including the period in 1956 when the uprising occurred, were about the most emotional and exciting period of my entire career.

Q: Tom, going back a little before that, could you sense that trouble was coming?

ROGERS: Well, yes, we sensed that trouble was coming. We described it by saying the Russians were on a slippery slope. We saw that the Hungarians were making more and more demands and were getting beyond the sort of usual limits and the Russians were not reacting in the sense that we had become accustomed to. They were not arresting people, they were not as vociferous in their condemnations. So we saw that things were happening.

People ask, "Did you forecast the revolution?" No, we did not. I think it's safe to say that no one did. Clearly, the Russians had not expected it. Clearly, the Hungarians had not expected it. Clearly the newspaper world, the media had not expected it. The closest claim that I know of now was one made by the Yugoslav Ambassador a number of years later that he advised Belgrade shortly before the uprising that a revolt was likely. I have also seen claims recently that the Soviet military in the summer of 1956 were concerned that things might get out of hand. One of our closest Hungarian friends was then a newspaper reporter for the United Press. She was in London when the uprising broke out.

But we saw that something was happening and I think this illustrates a tremendous shortfall or dereliction on the part of the administration at State, because Ravndal was transferred out, in July, I believe.

Q: Just several months before.

ROGERS: Yes , I'm not sure when a minister was named but no minister had arrived when the revolution broke out.

Q: Excuse me, with Ravndal going, who did that leave in charge?

ROGERS: It left Spencer Barnes in charge. A new minister, Tom Wailes, who I cannot praise highly enough, was sent in. He came in on November 2nd but I'm not certain, now, when he was named. He may have been named in sort of a crash, get somebody in there. But the idea that the post should have been left vacant from July through October I think is a strong condemnation.

Q: Yes, it is but we were, I think our mind was, in the Department at that time, was on the Middle East, what with the war beginning to go on there.

ROGERS: Of course.

Q: And Hungary was just a bothersome problem coming up.

ROGERS: Correct, that's very true, but I don't think it's a sufficient reason not to have

Q: Done something.

ROGERS: Done something more.

Q: It doesn't excuse our, so, Spencer Barnes, he had served I believe in the Soviet Union, hadn't he?

ROGERS: He had, I forget exactly when but he had a White Russian wife. He probably didn't meet her there. He probably met her outside.

Q: So, describe the condition of the legation when the Soviets began to send in their tanks and take a harder line.

ROGERS: Well, on October 23rd and for several days preceding, there were parades and public meetings, speeches, etc., and I went along to several of those, whenever I could. My Hungarian was good enough to pick up something, but not everything.. So I went along with Legation officers Anton Nyerges and sometimes Geza Katona, who spoke perfect Hungarian. So we were fully aware of the increasing demands, the attitude and three, to some extent, the reaction. I remember walking in front of the Foreign Office along with a big crowd and seeing somebody I knew peering our the window of the Foreign Office. I put up my thumb and he raised this to me. That didn't last very long.

Q: The speeches all had an anti-Soviet tone, I suppose.

ROGERS: Oh, absolutely. Increasing demands. The thing came to a crux when the crowd went to the Hungarian radio station to ask that these demands be broadcast. And a group went in, a group of students, I believe, went in to make these demands and did not reappear. But before this, on Oct. 23, after a certain point the parades and speeches seemed to be ending, so I went home. We'd been invited to dinner by a Hungarian newspaperman, who had John McCormick of the New York *Times* with him and he had also invited a Hungarian writer whose comments I very much I wanted very much to

hear. So I left the speeches, went home. When I got home my wife said she'd just got a call from a friend of hers saying things are happening at that radio station, "you'd better get down there." So she and I turned right around, went down to the radio station and saw what I think was really one of the first critical moments of the revolution. The radio station was on a narrow street which was packed with people shouting at the radio station, making their demands when a group of four or five army trucks, filled with infantry, came into the street.

Q: Hungarian infantry?

ROGERS: Hungarian infantry. The Russians had not played any role in this, yet. And the appearance of the trucks electrified the Hungarians. They were yelling and shouting and trying to push the trucks back. The trucks moved forward but then all of a sudden they stopped and couldn't go any further and after a few minutes began to back out. That really electrified the crowd and they jumped up on the trucks and waved flags and the atmosphere changed immediately. I think it was the first occasion when the Hungarian Army had attempted to use force and had found their own soldiers unwilling to fire on their own people.

Well, we left then. We thought that was over. So we left and went on to the dinner but had been there only a little while when both our host and I got calls, I from the legation, saying that somebody had been killed in front of the radio station. So that set off rioting all over town that night, which continued. They pulled down a statue of Stalin, the major, biggest statue of Stalin. Barnes assembled many of the staff at the Legation and we fanned out over town to get impressions of what was going on, then reassembled at the Legation after a couple of hours to put together a telegram for Washington. We got home about three o'clock and at five o'clock I was wakened by Soviet tanks coming into town.

Q: Had Soviet troops been in the country before, outside of Budapest?

ROGERS: Oh, yes. These troops came in, we thought then, from Székesfehévar, which is a town about forty miles away, southwest of Budapest. I believe it was the closest point at which Soviet troops were normally based. Later the Soviets brought in troops from outside of Hungary. One military wife who lived on a main street made a record of tank and personnel carrier license numbers from her window, which provided the necessary identification.

Q: Now when did you get involved in helping rescue people?

ROGERS: Helping rescue people?

Q: Yes, getting them across the border and things of that nature.

ROGERS: I didn't.

Q: You didn't? Well, that was the story that was going around, that you were helping getting people into Austria and so forth.

ROGERS: No, I took the Marton family, he was the AP and she the UP correspondent that I mentioned a minute ago; I took them and their two daughters to Vienna.

Q: They both had Hungarian nationality?

ROGERS: Yes, they all had Hungarian nationality, but they also had passports. This was in January, after the revolution. When the question arises, as to why were they given exit permits, I don't know. I don't know why he was released from prison during the summer of 1956, either. You can say that the release fit in with the growing sense of freedom which was beginning to be felt, as well as challenge to the Soviets. I presume that they were given exit permits because if they were refused there would be a lot of badgering from AP and UP; and anyway they were good reporters who knew and understood what was going on so why not just get rid of them and have it all shut up? They left and they had legal permission and so I took them. That's not the same as, later, my wife particularly worked with another couple who had both suffered from polio in their childhood or as teenagers. They emigrated legally but Sarah was able to get him a job in her hometown of Columbia, SC, but we weren't even in Hungary when they left. So I don't know where the story came from that I conveyed people across the border but I didn't.

Q: You don't want to be a hero, when everybody thinks you were?

ROGERS: Sorry about that.

Q: Now what about the trial of Endre Marton? Were legation representatives allowed to attend that trial, or not?

ROGERS: No, we were not. I remember when he was arrested. He lived next door to us and we were in touch with him, personally as well as

Q: He was the correspondent for

ROGERS: AP.

Q: For AP.

ROGERS: And she, for a long time, for UP.

Q: And you were able to get them out of the country?

ROGERS: But perfectly legally. She was the one who was in London. In the freer atmosphere of the summer of 1956, she gotten a passport and gone to London, the first time she'd been out of Hungary for years and years, maybe forever. Their daughters, they

had two daughters. One daughter is now Director General of the World Conservation Union, in Geneva; the other daughter has written a number of books; she married Peter Jennings. They were divorced and she is now married to Richard Holbrook..

Q: I know him, but I don't know her. What role did Cardinal Mindszenty play during all this and where was he at this time?

ROGERS: He was in prison. I don't know where he was in prison. He was released the last day or so of October, I believe. So he was free for probably less than a week. During this time he made at least one speech, in which I believe he called for the return of church property, but I didn't think it was very momentous. In the Legation we felt that that element of Hungarian society, call it the strongly Catholic element (although most Hungarians were Catholic) had not played a very large role in he build-up toward the revolution. We did not see any widespread demands that he or his supporters would play a major role in the "new Hungary" which for a short time seemed to be emerging.

Q: Now what was the effect in Hungary of President Eisenhower's denunciation of the Soviet use of force?

ROGERS: You mean the effect on the Hungarian

Q: On the Hungarian people.

ROGERS: I'm not sure most of them knew about it. We were constantly being appealed to for help by Hungarians, sort of a generic term but I think most of them were hoping that somebody like Hammarskjöld would suddenly appear in Budapest. We were hoping the same thing and we made the great mistake of supposing that this sort of action was under serious consideration in the UN. I don't think it was. But the Hungarians were always looking to us for help but without being very specific as to what that help really would constitute. A group, maybe it was two-three people, came to my house and spoke to my wife once and read her a long statement she then read over the telephone to a secretary, in which they were appealing to the UN to engineer some sort of truce, is my recollection. But I'm sure most people were not in a position to think through what the West was able to do, whether it was able physically to send in military troops, which would have been a very difficult, complicated and dangerous action, even if they were readily available. I have met military persons since then who were stationed in Germany and were placed on alert, but I think any military action on our part to assist the Hungarians would have run a direct risk of war with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Austria was a neutralized country and to have attempted to ignore that would have opened up a whole array of other problems.

Now what also did, which has drawn down a good bit of criticism, was to assure the USSR that the US had no desire to make Hungary a member of NATO or to become a military ally of the US. Many have thought that this in effect gave the USSR a free pass to do what they wished in Hungary.

One idea which to me is fascinating, and which came from Henry Kissinger, and perhaps others, was that Eisenhower should have called on George Kennan and other eminent Kremlinologists to have recommended ways in which the US could have acted to bring pressure on the USSR to have permitted Hungary to leave the Soviet bloc and to in effect follow the course that Yugoslavia had taken.

Q:. As you know, Tom, better than I, a lot of people say that the U.S. sent the wrong signals to the Hungarian people, through our broadcasts over Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America and left the impression that we were going to do more than we actually did. Did you in the legation have that feeling, too, or not?

ROGERS: I don't know that I can speak for the legation. I felt that way but on the other hand I also tend to think that the main driving force which was exercised by the West and by the United States was the fact that we existed as a free society and without our having to broadcast that. I believe Secretary Dulles, when he was talking about a rollback, a rollback that would involve some physical action, went too far. Certainly, he did not intend to imply that if an uprising should occur that the US would support it militarily. But clearly, many Hungarians inferred that much more support would be forthcoming than in fact materialized. But as I've said, no one anticipated what would develop. I don't believe the legation ever, I don't remember us ever going to Washington and saying, "Cool it!", I don't think we were ever asked in advance to comment on Secretary Dulles' speeches. It's not often a minister will take it upon himself to cable the Secretary and say, "Bud, you did the wrong thing!"

Q: At that time, Secretary Dulles was also having a, was in the hospital.

ROGERS: That was immediately, yes, but he'd been sending these signals for some time, much earlier.

Q: Oh, the rollback, that went back to the early part of his administration. Now at one point, I gather, the Soviets prevented the U.S. diplomatic dependents from leaving. Did that affect you at all?

ROGERS: You mean the convoy?

Q: Yes.

ROGERS: Yes, of course it did, because my family was involved in that. As you probably know, what happened was that the new minister, Tom Wailes, came in. The day before he came in, we had made the decision ourselves, I guess through Spencer Barnes, that all the families would leave. This was based on the widespread and increasing reports that Soviet forces were reentering Hungary. A convoy was made up. One or maybe two men with them. I believe a finance officer and maybe Dan Sprecher, who was then the economic officer, went with them. They had their families there, too. But then the convoy reached the border and was turned back by Russian soldiers. That was quite an unnerving experience for them, because it was in a heavy snowstorm and they had

driven up to the border and then they had to drive back. But at that time, that same day, the new minister had come in from Vienna. We had sent Brice Meeker up in the minister's car, the limousine, to pick him up and bring him back. The convoy arrived back at the legation around eleven o'clock. The minister had come in I think in the late afternoon. He had passed the convoy en route and someone said to me he'd gotten out and spoken to them. They arrived at eleven o'clock, as I believe is described in Bob Clark's memorandum, the minister called a meeting for midnight and decided then that the convoy would leave again the next morning, early, with husbands. The husbands would go to the border with their families and send them across and then they would come back. In the meantime, we had gone to the Russian embassy in Budapest and gotten assurances,,,,,,,,,

Q: This was all at night?

ROGERS: This was, must have been the late afternoon, because we knew, by telephone, that they were coming back. And so we had gotten assurances from the Russian embassy that they could go through.

Q: So, it worked out that way, then?

ROGERS: Not quite. Well, the next morning they went back, with husbands. I went with my family. We got to the border. I had the document in Russian, My memory says it was a Russian document, prepared by the Russian embassy. I'm not sure. It may have been a document that we prepared. How we were able to type it in Russian I'm not sure. But I had a document in Russian with red seals on it and when we got to the border there was a Soviet soldier with a machine gun out there in front of us. So I get out, waving this document and he squats down beside the machine gun.. I waved the document at him and he waves me back. And I walk on towards him and he kneels down beside his machine gun. I accept that argument and go back to the car!

In the meantime, Dan Sprecher, who had been in the first convoy, had been in contact with a school there. I don't know exactly how that happened. So much was going on, you didn't pick up all the details. And they were willing to put us up. So we went, this was a substantial number, not only of Americans but of some people from other legations and some Red Cross people and newspaper people and a goodly crowd of probably 70 people and they were able to put us up. Not only that, but they fed us! But we came under Russian guard, with Russian soldiers around the school, for a while. A dispatch to the Department was prepared in Vienna by Bob Clark which gives more details on the entire experience, and I'm attaching a copy. It states that some 70 people were housed (and fed) in he school with an additional 50 in a hospital and another school.

The dispatch does not report, since it happened later, that sometime in the spring of 1957 several Legation representatives (I participated, but I don't remember who else) visited the school to thank them for their assistance and to make a financial donation. I don't remember whether the money was raised locally or included official funds.

Q: What was the UN doing during all this period that gave any aid and comfort to the Hungarians?

ROGERS: I think very little. For one thing, it was the eve of a presidential election. Secretary Dulles was in the hospital for a cancer operation. And most important, the Suez crisis had just erupted. So I think what happened in the UN was, action was being postponed because the U.S. had the impression, and certainly wanted to believe, that they were still negotiating with the Russians. I remember being pretty critical of Lodge, who was I think our ambassador at the UN, because he was willing to let the matter not go forward. Now I blame the legation and I blame myself for my role in this because we did not make a concerted, strong pitch to get Hammarskjöld in there.

If you look back at the Russian reinvasion, the second time, on November 4th, one of the few things that had any chance of stopping that would have been had Hammarskjöld come into Budapest at the right moment and been there physically. But this is complicated by the fact that we were not aware until Nov. 1 that Soviet troops were reentering Hungary, and so it is hard to see how a high-level UN representative could have gotten to Hungary before Nov. 3, when the Soviets were on the verge of their second onslaught.

But we had thought about that a great deal. In fact, there had been rumors that Hammarskjöld had gone as far as Prague and was waiting to come in. We didn't know whether that was true or not. But we never made a flat, specific recommendation that he come to Budapest. The reason we didn't was because we could not imagine that that was not under serious consideration in Washington and New York. But we certainly had thought about it.

Q: It turns out it wasn't under serious consideration.

ROGERS: It was not.

Q: Let us turn to the Hungarian side, again. Imre Nagy took over during these critical days and then he was, how will I say, seized at I believe the Yugoslav embassy or something.

ROGERS: That was a little later. I think what first happened was that the Hungarians sent a team under Pal Maléter, the most successful military commander against the Soviets during Stage One, to negotiate with the Russians over the withdrawal of Soviet troops. During those negotiations they were suddenly arrested. This was only a short time, a matter of a few hours, before the second Russian invasion began, which was early on the morning of November 4th. When that invasion began, then Nagy took refuge in the Yugoslav Embassy.

Q: That invasion was the one where the tanks were shooting Hungarians in the streets and so forth?

ROGERS: No, no. They were shooting Hungarians in the streets earlier. The destruction of Budapest took place on two separate occasions. I'm not sure which was worse. Probably the second. In the first invasion, the Hungarians really stood the Russians off with use of Molotov cocktails. You can argue that on October 24th, when the first Russian tanks came in, (a) suppose they had used tear gas instead of bullets, (b) suppose they had used infantry to support the tanks, (c) suppose they had had a heavy rainstorm. Any of those could have changed history. Well it didn't rain. They didn't use infantry. They didn't use tear gas. But I'm told that the destruction of downtown Budapest by the middle of November was about as bad as it was during World War Two, which was pretty bad. I have a passel of slides which show that.

Q: Tell me, what was the role of the Hungarian press during all this, because I'm sure your legation was following that closely, to see whether they picked up nuances.

ROGERS: Our sources of information were very limited. The British Legation had a daily translation service and we had our own translators. I don't remember whether the British service continued through this period, but it certainly did to some extent, and our own employees were outstandingly loyal. In addition, we were able to monitor the radio to some extent, and also a lot of Hungarians simply came to our door and Geza Katona particularly picked up much valuable information from that source.. And I'm not trying to get away from the press but one of the surprising things about the entire revolution was the fact that all of the infrastructure continued to work. The water supply was good. Power, we were never short of power. Some parts of Budapest, I'm sure they were. Even food supplies came in. There were no widespread food shortages, except for maybe a day or two, throughout that period. The countryside supplied the city.

Q: There was no looting in Budapest?

ROGERS: Oh, I'm sure there was. There was looting. There were atrocities against Hungarian secret policemen. That was one of the things that the communists and the Soviets made so much of, by claiming it was very widespread. I would argue that it happened, of course, and there were pictures of it, of secret police being pulled out and shot but I think it was quite limited, particularly given the history of Soviet control over Hungary after World War II. But looting was extremely limited

Q: Did the legation have any dealings with the Soviets during this period?

ROGERS: Well, I've mentioned the question of the convoy.

Q: Yes, the convoy. But I was thinking legation to legation or something like that.

ROGERS: Well, we had no contact with the Soviet embassy other than over the convoy. However, I had an interesting experience with the British Legation. One thing we have not talked about was our problems with communications. Our normal process of communication was that we would forward and receives coded telegrams through the Hungarian Post Office. Well, on the night of the 23rd, we prepared a long telegram around

midnight, but either then or the next morning the Post Office refused to accept it, claiming technical problems. Certainly by the next morning we had no further communications facilities available, by the time the Russians were coming in. In any event, we lost our ability to send any telegrams early in the period, so we were stymied. How could we communicate? We could try to telephone but we couldn't telephone to Vienna. We tried telephoning to Prague. I think we got through to Prague a couple of times and to Moscow.

Q: Through the back door, huh?

ROGERS: And then during the free period, all of a sudden the communications were open again, the Post Office would take telegrams. We got through to Washington at one point and kept an open telephone or telex line for several hours. I'd hate to see the bill for that phone, at that time. We had an open line into the State Department and various people from State, I know including Bob McKisson, the Hungarian desk officer, maybe Jake Beam, would come down for it and then we'd send upstairs to get Spencer Barnes. That must have been for telex, I'm sure they could have hooked his phone up. I don't know, but we had an open line to Washington. And at one point, on Oct. 29, I drove out to Vienna with the assistant military attaché with a batch of telegrams we hadn't been able to send and sent them through the Embassy there. (I recall, on leaving the next morning to return to Budapest, hearing on the Austrian radio with great foreboding the news of the Israeli attack on Suez.)

But during that period when we had no communications the British did, since they had their own radio. We did not have a radio because we would not allow the Hungarians to have a radio in Washington. I went over to the British legation with a telegram that we wanted them to send to the Foreign Office and I went in a Hungarian tank. I don't remember how we got hold of the tank. (To be honest, I suppose it could have been an armored personnel carrier.) "Just go out and hail me a tank, would you!" I was a good friend of my opposite at the British legation and I went over and showed him the telegram and he thought it was excellent. We were talking about whether there was any possibility of cooperation between some mixture of Nagy and maybe the Social Democrats and we were thinking if you could get something like that the Russians might accept it. It would be a middle to middle leftist grouping. The British minister didn't like it, he wanted much more right wing activity in there and so he didn't like the idea. Besides he said, it's much too long. But the tank would only wait for me about twenty minutes, so we were frantically, my opposite number (who strongly supported our position and I, rewriting this damned telegram, trying to shorten it and keep the Minister from bitching it up too much. They finally sent it but I've looked through the record and I can't find it.

Q: Well it's a shorter version, probably that went.

ROGERS: But I can't find it. I have seen a reference to it in some British source, and I've checked the appropriate volume of Foreign Relations of the United States, but it's not in there.

Q: Any further comments about the revolution, Tom?

ROGERS: I think what the revolution was is well known and well accepted. Probably it was the most unifying event that has taken place in Hungarian history, in unifying practically all the Hungarian population in one anti-Soviet and pro-liberty effort. It was not successful immediately but I'm sure it contributed to the weakening and eventual downfall of the Soviet system. As to what the big issue probably is, what the West or the United States could and should have done, I can only say I remember feeling very strongly that there no realistic possibility of bringing in, trying to use military force. We did believe that some sort of solution, a neutral state copied after Austria, or some leftist type of government similar to Yugoslavia, was worth striving for. But also it was clear that to go very far to the right would sharply reduce any chances of acceptance by the Soviets, and also would not have reflected the general political views of the Hungarian people. Here, I believe we differed from the Department, including Secretary Dulles, who at one point raised the possibility of Cardinal Mindszenty providing a focal point.

Q: Well, those were horrific days, I know. After they were over, what could you do in the legation? Would the new Kadar government see you or would they talk to you? Did we want to see them?

ROGERS: Wailes came in and at that point he came in with instructions not to present credentials immediately. The next day (by then our communications capabilities were back to normal) Washington finally said, "Go ahead and present credentials to Imre Nagy." By then it was too late. He couldn't possibly have gotten to Nagy. That night the Soviets came back in. And so, there he was. When Kadar was put in place, Washington again said, "Don't present credentials. Just wait and see." So he sat there for a month. He came in in early November. He sat there until early February, sometime.

Q: Of course, the Hungarians would not deal with him if he hadn't presented credentials.

ROGERS: No, the Hungarians wouldn't deal with him and that left, where we were before, Spencer Barnes. Wailes was very good for the mission, internally and he was a very good leader, a strong leader and he was welcomed by everybody and I think did the legation a lot of good. But that wasn't why he was sent there. And so finally, in February, the Hungarians said either fish or cut bait. Either present your credentials or go home. And so he went home. I think it was a mistake. I'm not sure I thought so then. But because over a period of time I think the Kadar government gradually modified itself. And, besides, I tend to think it's foolish to refuse to have diplomatic relations with some country because you don't like them. If they're in charge, they're in charge and they're the people you have to deal with. I think the same thing is true today with respect to Iran. And Cuba and North Korea for that matter. The people you really need to negotiate with the most are your enemies. Anyway, Wailes left. Then Gary Ackerson was sent in as chargé, to replace Spencer Barnes who, for his reward, was sent to Bucharest.

Q: Did you continue your dealings with the Foreign Office?

ROGERS: Yes, I saw people I knew. I remember seeing, I was then political officer but I remember seeing the man in the economic or the trade office I had dealt with to some extent, I'd see him at functions now and then and we'd shake hands. We had no significant trade, they couldn't borrow money from us. What dealings would we have with the Hungarian government? We had nothing in the UN that we would argue with them about. All we wanted was to find out how their economy was doing and he wasn't going to tell me that. But on a human level, you're there.

One thing occurred early in that year that I should perhaps comment on. Vice-President Nixon came to Vienna fairly early in 1957, and the Military Attache, Col. Pittman, and I were sent out to Vienna to brief him. We met him at the Ambassador's residence, and waited several hours for him to return from a visit to the border, and finally saw him about ten p.m. I was quite surprised: he asked almost no questions about the uprising, whether the US could have done anything more than it did, what persuaded the Soviets to destroy the new government after they had apparently accepted it, etc. His almost sole interest was in the flow of refugees, and whether the US should seek to encourage more people to leave, etc. I suppose we volunteered comments on the revolution, but that was certainly not Nixon's prime interest. Later, in Pakistan, I participated again in briefing him when he visited there, and was impressed by the scope of his questions and how much homework he had done.

Q: Now when did Cardinal Mindszenty come to the legation?

ROGERS: He came early on Nov. 4th.

Q: The bad day, yes.

ROGERS: The bad day, when, after midnight, the Russians began to come back in and when Nagy and others took refuge. We think we had our problem. The Yugoslavs, they had a crowd. They had wives and children, some 30-40 people crowded into three rooms. We had a crowd, too, for a while I guess but nothing like they did. So Mindszenty came on the early morning of November 4th.

Q: This is the man who came to dinner and stayed for a number of years.

ROGERS: Fifteen years, close to that. And probably I should say something about that: I haven't mentioned it but shortly after the Kadar government was set up, it told us we had too many people and requested us to cut the staff by, as I recall, about a third. I'm not certain now how that was done, but I believe we let all or most of the Marine guards go, which meant that the balance of the staff undertook the job of duty officer fairly regularly. One duty of that position was to "walk the Cardinal." On one side of the Legation was a closed-in courtyard, with other buildings on three of the four sides, perhaps l50' x 120', with barbed wire put up on all except the Legation side. Well, we couldn't take the Cardinal outside, so the duty officer would walk around and around that courtyard, twice daily. So over a period of about a year, I spent a good bit of time

"walking the Cardinal." He spoke German as well as Hungarian, so between the two we could communicate. He was quite talkative and since he had been in prison for many years, not well-informed. The Legation provided him with a lot of newspapers, I suppose all the local Hungarian press plus Austrian papers, and he was always asking questions. I remember particularly discussing with him several topics current at the time: the issue of using public funds to transport children to US Catholic schools; and the newly-formed Israeli kibbutz, which he took as strong indications of communist tendencies in Israel.

I liked the old man (he was at least 15 years younger than I am now!), but kept saying to myself how glad I was that no Hungarian government was formed with him at its head. He was a Catholic cardinal to the core, and did not seem to have a clear concept of how political power could be shared outside the church.

Sarah and I paid a brief visit to Budapest, with our son and youngest daughter, in 1967, and called on the Cardinal. To my surprise, he had learned English, and in fact, gave the homily at a mass that we attended in English..

Q: What were your impressions on leaving Hungary, Tom? That the country was going to go through another agony, or they were solidly in the Bloc? Or did you have any impressions at all, you'd been through so much?

ROGERS: We had been there four and a half years and we had known a good many people, some of whom we're still in contact with. Later we helped one couple come here and we were in touch with the Marton family. I was a Unitarian at that point and Unitarianism had a significant beginning in Hungary and I was in touch with some of them. We had a Calvinist family we were friendly with. I was very close to some people, some employees in the legation. Sarah had picked up a surprising number of friends. We knew this period was over and we both had been emotionally very much involved in all of this. I guess it was the end of an important stage of our lives.

Q: During your period there, could you travel around the country?

ROGERS: Yes.

Q: Get to see a lot of Hungary or not?

ROGERS: Oh, yes. Yes, we traveled a great deal. We had been to the Balaton, I or we had been to Debrecen, to Pecs, to Miskolc, up the Danube, and so on.

Now before leaving the subject of Hungary, I'd like to comment on a couple of recent events. The 50th anniversary of the uprising was October of 2006, and two commemorative events took place. The second event in time was the official Hungarian celebration on Oct. 23, attended by a US delegation headed by Gov. Pataki of New York, who I believe has some Hungarian in his background. But prior to that, in September, the US and several other embassies plus a number of NGOs held a two-day conference "1956 and Hungary: The Memory of Eyewitnesses." The US Embassy discovered that I was

about the only person stationed at the Legation during the uprising who was still alive and could stand on two feet, so I was invited to participate. I did so and went to Budapest for most of a week, accompanied by my two oldest daughters, both of whom were old enough to remember the events. The Embassy was very hospitable. We stayed with a Hungarian friend whom Sarah and I had helped to emigrate to the US and who (the wife) had recently returned to Hungary after the death of her husband. It was a memorable occasion, and the three of us thoroughly enjoyed it.

Then, not long after I returned, the Embassy officer who had been in charge of my activities sent me a long email, comprising an article just published in the Journal of the Law School of the Univ. of Miskolc. This article consisted of a critique of the messages sent during the uprising from the US, the British, and to some extent, the Soviet missions in Budapest during October 1956. Many of the US messages I of course had written. I contacted the author to ask questions, and out of that grew an intensive exchange over several months between the author, myself and another colleague from 1956, Ernie Nagy, who had been transferred out of Hungary just a short time before the Revolution. This exchange has just been published in another article in the same journal discussing the activities of the Legation during the uprising and raising a number of fascinating "what-if" questions concerning the Nagy government, the US government, and the Legation.

I am attaching a copy of this article, as well as several documents relating to my visit to Hungary for the 50th anniversary celebrations, and a copy of a dispatch discussing the Nov. 2-3 convoy in some detail.

Q: Well, when your days in Budapest came to an end, Tom, you were transferred to a different part of the world, to Buenos Aires. How did that come about. Had you asked an assignment for in Latin America or not?

ROGERS: No, beats me. I had not asked for a transfer to Latin America. I'm not sure when we got word we were going to B.A. I was about to say it was the first time I got any language training. But when we came on home leave in between my first two years and second two years in Hungary, I think I asked for and got a period of about a month or maybe a little more in Washington to study Hungarian. I had a private tutor in Hungarian. But then when we were going to B.A. I was put into the FSI Spanish program. So we were there, we borrowed Madeline Myers' house, we stayed in her house six weeks maybe and I went to FSI for Spanish language training.

As a personal recollection, I might add that while taking Spanish language training in Washington, I would go home at night and at the supper table would say to my daughters, "OK, girls, let's learn some Spanish. We'll start with numbers: Uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinquo….." After several nights of this, one daughter said, "I'd rather wait to learn Spanish till we get to B.A. It's not a nice easy language like Hungarian!"

Q: What was the state of our relations with Argentina when you got there, because they've been lukewarm, they've been better and they've been worse?

ROGERS: I think they were technically warm but there was a big difference for the individual in going to B.A., coming from Hungary. In Hungary, we were Westerners and people who could wanted to have contact with us. Many people were afraid to but if they could overcome that in one way or another I think we were to some extent sought after because there were so few of us. When we got to Argentina, it was the exact opposite. There were thousands of Americans and relations had not been very good. We were suspicious of the Argentines for hiding all kinds of Nazis. They didn't like us telling them what to do, which seems to be our frequent proclivity. So it was a different personal atmosphere. Whatever the reason, it bolsters your self-esteem to be sought after, and the opposite to be ignored or even shunned. So whereas we felt very warm and liked in Hungary, and that helps your ego, we felt the opposite in B. A. We thought, "What did we do?"

Professionally, we were on warm relations but we were always, seems to me, badgering them. Again, I went back to the economic section in B.A. and I was again, not altogether, dealing with strategic commodities. I remember going in and making pitches for them to stop shipping bauxite somewhere. Whether they did I don't know but they were not automatically very sympathetic to that kind of request.

Q: How many in your economic section in Buenos Aires"

ROGERS: The man who ran it, his name was Ed Cale. He was a delight. He was a very, very nice guy. We had three or four, plus Ed, four, possibly five, but four probably.

Q: So you had a fairly good-sized section. Did you have a particular interest or particular field that you followed?

ROGERS: It may be that because of COCOM that I was switched back to that. I don't remember doing any general economic reports, but I probably did, because they were doing a lot belt-tightening. I remember wondering why Chile could export so much wine and Argentina didn't, because they had excellent wine. So by process of elimination I think I must have focused mainly on

Q: Commodities.

ROGERS: Commodities, and Frondizi's efforts to straighten out the economy. I also did some work, I recall, on efforts to develop trade agreements between Argentina and Chile and others in that part of the continent. Now, I was not there very long. I was there about a year and a half.

Q: Were you there when Vice President Nixon visited?

ROGERS: No, but I was in other places when he visited….

Q: Was there any interest in your Hungarian experience?

ROGERS: Very little. But there was a good-sized Hungarian community there and friends in Hungary put us in touch with some of them and some of them we became very friendly with some. In fact, one woman who was the sister of one of our neighbors in Budapest, not the newspaper couple, was there. She went there not speaking any Spanish. She had a brilliant record as a chemist. She immediately got a job at the University of Cordoba and came down and stayed with us occasionally when she had things to do in B.A. I asked her how she managed to teach not knowing Spanish. She said "I just memorized each day's lesson a day ahead!"

Q: Tom, I wanted to ask you whether there was any lingering effect of Peronism, from Juan Peron's long stay there. Even though he was not in the country, did he had any adherents there, or any people who longed for him?

ROGERS: Oh, yes. As I said, we were there during the so-called Frondizi era, there was what was called the Frondizi straightjacket because the economy had gotten out of control, so a lot of people were suffering. So yes, the Peron days was still certainly well remembered as the good old days, as was Evita. What people really thought of him I don't know. I don't recall any sort of groundswell of hopes that his party could come back into power, but I think it's safe to say that many remembered him with nostalgia, as representing the hey-day of Argentine prowess. There was a good bit of antipathy toward Brazil as Argentina's principal competitor for leadership in South America or the British over the Malvinas or the Falkland Islands. Argentines are I think very sticky people and it's easy for them not to like you and I think we felt that. We didn't feel that we were very popular there. We felt that way because we weren't very popular.

Q: And they were going through economic troubles at the time?

ROGERS: They had a lot of economic troubles.

Q: Inflation, things of that nature?

ROGERS: Yeah, the Frondizi period was supposed to be getting things back in shape. That wasn't easy.

Q: Then after that period of somewhat over a year, you were suddenly transferred to Quito, Ecuador. Tell us about that. How did that come about?

ROGERS: Well, I think what happened was, one, they were going to have a meeting of foreign ministers, of American foreign ministers in Quito and so they thought they had better bolster up the political section temporarily. Ravndal was then ambassador in Quito. And I think Ambassador Ravndal has either a strength or a weakness, depending on how you look at it: he likes to deal with people he knows. He didn't need to have an extensive conversation with me again over whether I played bridge! So I suspect I was sent there because he asked for me. So I went there and my predecessor, Harvey Summ, was held over, so the two of us were there. Well that was fine, because the meeting was about to

occur. Well then the meeting was postponed and then it was postponed again. In fact, it never was held.

Q: You were there but the meeting was never held?

ROGERS: So eventually Harvey Summ was transferred and there I was. Quito was a much more comfortable place to be in than BA. The Ecuadorians liked us. I was put back in the political section. They had a presidential election while I was there. I also was working as sort of a labor contact or labor attaché and that made me in effect a part of AID. So I had lots to do and I enjoyed it. I also got hepatitis while I was there.

Q: That you didn't enjoy, I understand.

ROGERS: Right; and it was a smaller office and I enjoyed Quito. I enjoyed the labor work, we were trying to push labor unions in a direction which was neither too far to the left or to the right, and I believe we were having some success. Adlai Stevenson and Douglas Dillon were both there, and I was control officer for both. So I thought Quito was a much more interesting place for me than Buenos Aires. And the Ecuadorians were not nearly as standoffish as the Argentines.

Beyond that, Sarah and my family were happy there. Sarah had her last child, a son, and the girls were growing older, went to Spanish-speaking schools and learning the language, we were able to travel some around a very beautiful country. So all in all, if you're happy in your assignment and your family is happy, what more can you ask?

[NOTE: The following has been prepared after a portion of the interview was lost.]

Then, after about a year and a half in Ecuador, and more than three years out of the U. S., I began to wonder about my next assignment. I presumed that this would be Washington. Our children of course became more and more excited over the prospect of returning to the US, since we had not had home leave during those three years.

My current recollection is that the first news or intimation of my next assignment came in the form of a letter from one Tom Dunnigan, advising me that I had been assigned to the Department to replace him as Chief of what was known as the Secretariat. The Secretariat, or S/S, served the Executive Secretary, who was then Luke Battle (and later, while I was there, Bill Brubeck), to the Secretary of State, then Dean Rusk. The Secretariat had at least three main functions, as follows:

1) to control the paper flow between the various Bureaus of the Department, as well as from other governmental Departments, and the Secretary of State. Thus a memorandum from Bureau A to the Secretary would immediately arouse several questions: was it complete; were all necessary references attached, and very important, were appropriate clearances and/or comments from other concerned bureaus attached?

2) to control the paper flow between the White House and the Secretary of State, in fact between the White House and the Department. Appropriate control of this flow was

even more important, involving as it did relations between the President and the Secretary.

3) To accompany the Secretary on trips abroad, and there to facilitate the preparation of daily cable selections from Washington and posts abroad for him, as well as to assist in the preparation of reporting cables on his activities, and to assure that he had available all the information that was required.

There were also a myriad of other functions, such as the preparation of briefing books for the Secretary on current problems, the handling of verbal requests from the White House, and on and on. But in brief the responsibility was to maintain order for the Secretary and to assist him in being responsive to the White House.

The staff of the Secretariat consisted of its Chief, a Deputy and about 8-10 staffers, mostly Foreign Service Officers. It operated under considerable pressure, at least under President Kennedy, who wanted immediate responses and action, and who not infrequently phoned directly himself to desk officers for information or explanation.

In brief, the place jumped!

One of its major responsibilities turned out to be on the alert for people in the Department trying to sneak something into the Secretary without someone else, who might object, hearing about it. Another, it goes without saying, was to follow up on any request from the White House to make certain State's response was prompt and adequate.

I was there during the Cuban Missile Crisis, which of course, and very properly, had everyone on pins and needles. There were several channels then in use between Washington and Moscow, one from Washington to the US Embassy in Moscow, and the other through the Soviet Embassy in Washington. One night when I was on the late shift (we were then running 24/7, as the saying is now), we had an urgent message for the Soviets to be delivered to the Soviet Embassy. Well, our regular messenger was gone, and since I was about to leave, I said I'd run it over. I was driving our second car, a beaten up old black Ford, about twenty years old, and I've always wondered what the FBI thought when this old wreck pulled up about 3 a.m. in front of the Soviet Embassy and some joker gets out and goes to the front door with a big envelope in his hands.

Prior to the Cuban Missile Crisis, I was taken out once for a tour of the facility where certain people would be taken in the event of a nuclear attack, to keep the government functioning. That was rasher scary, in particular the concept that if you were at work when it happened and were on the "go" list, you went, leaving your family to fend for themselves. I had an aunt in North Carolina who sent us a key, but how Sarah could have managed if I had been at work, or even how we both would have managed, thank goodness we'll never know.

One more point on the Secretariat: it was a sharp staff. The Deputy, Jeanne Davis, was top-flight, and for years after I left it, and even after leaving the Department, I kept seeing how one or another FSO that I had known there was excelling either as Ambassador

somewhere or as renowned expert in one or another foreign affairs area. Must have been the training they got from me, or more likely, from Tom Dunnigan before me!!

Q: Well, Tom, in 1963 you went over to the Department of Defense to help them out. Those were the days when Secretary McNamara was riding high in Washington and you were handling foreign military personnel who came to this country?

ROGERS: No, I wasn't handling them. I was working in the office under Norman Paul and below him was a man who, his brother had been Attorney General for a while under Kennedy.

Q: Katzenbach?

ROGERS: Katzenbach, yes. His brother was deputy assistant secretary for whatever, which involved a great deal to do with foreign training. We came under pretty heavy pressure from Bobby Kennedy. Bobby Kennedy was very interested in the type of civil contacts that all of these military types had, which I thought was a good thing. They were here for military purposes, but this exposure is very worthwhile, so let's get on with it. The civilians in the Pentagon were sympathetic. They could feel the pressure. So things worked out. I was very busy. I liked Katzenbach. I thought Katzenbach appreciated me. Paul and I got along fine. I went off on a couple of trips with Paul, here and there. We even went on a round the world trip once, not Paul, four or five of us and I had a frightening personal experience but I don't know whether it's pertinent to this.

But if you said to me "Were you able to increase the exposure to civilian life in the US and what impact did that really have?" I would say that eventually the program changed the way foreign military were handled here. They did get exposure to our system and to many more civilians than had been the case earlier. What the long-term impact that had on the personnel involved, the foreign military, I don't know, but it certainly didn't hurt. Now, living close to Carlisle, PA, where the Army War College is located, and having a good bit of contact with the War College through the Harrisburg Foreign Policy Association, I've been able to see something of how they handle the problem today. They have a whole panoply of foreign military students, from all over, and I think they do a pretty good job, particularly in arranging civilian sponsors for the foreign students, who are normally here for almost a year, and with their families. I can't really compare how the military handled foreign students fifty years or so ago with how it's done today, but I would like to believe that our efforts helped to convince the military of its value.

Q*: What countries did these people come from?*

ROGERS: Oh, all over.

Q: All over, except communist countries?

ROGERS: Correct, but of course, that's changed today. I know the War College today has military officers from all over Eastern Europe; I'm not sure about Russia, but my guess is they participate also.

Q: Did you do much liaison with State?

ROGERS: No, I don't remember any.

Q: And travel, you were able to travel occasionally?

ROGERS: Yes, I traveled around quite a bit to military bases, sometimes with Paul, sometimes I think by myself. Even went to Panama once. I never ran into overt opposition but sometimes you get the sense that military people say, "What is all this about? Why are we doing this?"

Q: You're skating next to my next question, which was, did you sense any hostility from the peace groups that were forming in this country at the time?

ROGERS: No. I never ran into them.

Q: Because as you know, they've been trying for years to close down the School of the Americas in Georgia, things like that.

ROGERS: Yes but I don't think that had begun at that time. I've run into some people here who have been pushing that. and I saw the movie which I believe the opponents to the school had some role in or at least were pushing. One of the reasons that I've looked at that somewhat askance was because of this assignment. But then, we didn't probe into the question of military training, or how the military personnel who were trained here would function (politically) once they got back home. That would have thrown us right into a political cauldron. I frankly have a hard time now remembering what was going on politically or politico-militarily in countries in Latin America outside of my assignments.

Q: Did you brief the foreign groups when they came to this country?

ROGERS: No. We had no direct contact.

Q: Was there any asylum requests while you were here?

ROGERS: No.

Q: They were all willing to go back and

ROGERS: Not that I was aware of. I'm not sure that we would have been aware, had there been any.

Q: Most of those who would come here would not be the type that would seek asylum. Who decided which countries would be invited?

ROGERS: That's a good question. Ideally, it would be the Pentagon with input or approval from the State Dept. But in fact I don't know. I never heard anything about it when I was in Ecuador or Pakistan. Once it was agreed to invite the country, I suppose the military attaches or military mission would play some role in the selection of individuals, although I suspect there was not much objection from our side.

Q: Or our ambassadors may have something to say about this.

ROGERS: Yes, at least the first time. After that, it become pretty routine.

Q: Well, after two years in the Defense Department, you moved across the world to Pakistan and at first to Karachi and then to Rawalpindi, I take it.

ROGERS: Well, it was a little more complicated than that. We were scheduled to sail sometime in September of '65 and we were in New York ready to get on the boat and late on the afternoon before we were to sail the Department calls up and says, "We've just cancelled your boat trip because war has broken out between India and Pakistan and so we're not sending anybody there right now, families at least." And I said, "You've cancelled this boat trip? What the hell are we going to do? I've got four children here. We're sitting here in New York, ready to get on the boat. What are we going to do? We can't go back home. Our goods have been shipped . Our house has been rented" So they said, "Well, okay, go to Rome and then we'll see what we'll do." That was fair enough. So we went to Rome, got a hotel, saw Rome, had a delightful time, ten days. And then they said, "All right, take your family to Beirut. Leave 'em there and you go on." At that time, Beirut was a charming place. Did you ever know Jean Farr?

Q: Very well, in Berlin, yes.

ROGERS: Well, put a halo around her head. No, make it a double! Jean Farr was in Beirut. So we went there. I was going as economic counselor to Karachi and I stayed in Beirut a day or two, helped Sarah find an apartment and then left. It was the worst thirty days Sarah ever had in her life. She had four children there (we had left our eldest daughter in her first year in college) One was a would-be senior in high school. Which high school? Should she enter school in Beirut? Do the others go to school (we were supposed to sign a contract for the entire school year). We lost contact. Sarah gave out of money. It was awful. But Jean Farr was a tremendous help.

So I went on. My predecessor had not been assigned yet. He was still there. This seems to be my fate. So I come in, there I am. What am I supposed to do? Well, he's still there. He's functioning. What is he supposed to do? Well, at that point the embassy is about to move to Islamabad. This was, at that time, late October or November. Pakistan is not very cold but it's not tropical, either. So it's decided that I would be almost the first one to go to Rawalpindi.

Well, my family finally arrived after a month, bad enough for me but horrible for them.. The major problem was lack of communications and lack of knowledge as to what happened and to what would happen? But finally they got to Karachi, just in time to move on to Rawalpindi. Winter clothes of course were with our household effects, which had been shipped to Karachi. We put the two older girls in school in Karachi, parking them with the head of the U.S. military mission there. We went off to Rawalpindi with two other children, no winter clothes and with my predecessor still functioning in Karachi. Finally he leaves and the embassy is gradually transferred up. Actually, the first winter in Rawalpindi was very pleasant. Little of the embassy was there and things were quiet. I can't remember what the two children with us did about school, they probably taught each other. Sarah had taught the older children for a year in Budapest, perhaps we put them in the same correspondence system. (Note: my daughter who was there has reminded me that she and her brother, who was about five, stayed home and read books! "The best year of my life," she says!

Q: How about the war? Had that ended by this time?

ROGERS: Well, the war ended slowly. It began in early September. I think it was largely over by mid-October or so and families were allowed to come back. So it must have lasted close to two months. We took a week to get to Italy and then ten days there and then Beirut. So by the time Sarah and the kids were allowed to come to Karachi, which I believe was close to the end of October, the war was either over or in a truce.

We had a huge AID mission in Pakistan, a very active mission, So I was coming in as economic counselor in an embassy with an on-going, effective, very large mission. This was contrary to the situation in Quito, where there was a very small mission and I had a specific, respected role. I had no such role in Pakistan. If anything I was supposed to critique what they were doing. So I found it much more difficult to find myself a position and role in Pakistan. Of course, we had some dealings with the Pakistani government, but there was always this elephant in the room.

Q: Who was the ambassador at that time?

ROGERS: The ambassador when I got there was Walter McConaughy, a long-time career diplomat. He was followed shortly by two political appointees. I forget the name of the first, but he was intelligent and hard-working. I must confess I forget his name. An amusing story about him. When he first arrived he gave a reception for all the US staff, including the Consul General from Dacca (now Dhaka). When he came through the receiving line the Ambassador asked the CG where he was from. "Tulsa, Oklahoma, Sir." The Ambassador to his wife, "Don't we own a bank in Tulsa?" "No, we sold that bank five years ago!!" But this Ambassador wasn't there long; he was picked up by Lyndon Johnson and sent to Vietnam, to be one of several ambassadors, which I suspect didn't make him very happy. He died not too long after that. In Dallas several years later with the Senior Seminar, I paid a quick visit to his wife. They were both very nice people.

The second Ambassador was Benjamin Oehlert, who had been CEO or close to that of Minute Maid Orange Juice. We got along quite well, but I would not rate him as highly I would his predecessor.

But nevertheless, the experience of working under three ambassadors, the moving of the Embassy to Rawalpindi and then Islamabad, and dealing with a government which was also split between two "wings" was not only a challenge but fascinating. And also of course conditions in Pakistan were far different from what they must be today, with much more internal tension, the threats from al-Qaeda, and so on. For example, we drove once with our children to Kabul for a few days, with no problems. Also our daughters, plus a niece who spent almost a year with us enrolled in a Pakistani college, moved freely around town in Pakistani clothing, and I'm not sure they could do either today.

.Q: What can you say about the ties between the Chinese Communists and Pakistan?

ROGERS: Well, I can say more about the problem of ties with India. We didn't hear much at that time about the Chinese, who had a big embassy there. I think much more significant were their problems with India. We tried very hard for a while to get both India and Pakistan to cap or reduce their military budgets and we thought for a time they might do it, but it didn't fly.

Q: I asked that question I think because of the concern that Pakistan might be furnishing things to China that we wouldn't like them to do and so forth.

ROGERS: Well this was in '65 to '69. I don't recall that China, at that point, was a very big issue. I think, as I said, India was a constant irritant and problem to the Paks.. For example, if we flew to what was then called the East Wing, now Bangladesh, air traffic couldn't fly over India. It had to go around, which meant an eight-hour flight rather than three or four.

Q: I was going to ask you, did you ever get to East Pakistan?

ROGERS: Yes, I got to East Pakistan, one of those endless flights around, over Sri Lanka, I guess, and traveled around the country, down to Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar, up into the area which was largely Buddhist, and north of Dacca into the area of large tea plantations. At that point Pakistan only had about I guess fifty or sixty million people. Now its twice or three times that. One of the things that we tried hard to push there was family planning, in both wings, but obviously it hasn't been very successful. Who knows what the population might have been had there been no such effort.

Q: Or in India.

ROGERS: Well, anyway, during my time there as economic counselor, I had some excellent, excellent people on my staff. Tony Quainton, Sharon Erdkamp, she later married a Pakistani but he died. I think she resigned and after he died she came back in.

She was then known as Sharon Ahmad and I believe she was appointed ambassador to some African country but the appointment stymied for some reason and never made it.

Q: The reporting, the economic reporting from East Pakistan, did that have to go through you at the embassy or did that go directly to Washington?

ROGERS: I think both. But mostly, they reported directly. But then if you put together an overall economic report for the country they would send it through us. By and large they were independent.

Q: Did you foresee a split coming between the two?

ROGERS: Did we? No, I can't say that we did. One reason for that is that lots of the government employees were Bengalis.

Q: Even in West Pakistan?

ROGERS: In Islamabad. This was the national government. Yeah, I had several very good friends. Most of them seemed to be Bengalis. When I was going to Bangladesh, I was talking to one of them and he said, "Well, are you going down to Chittagong?" I said, "Yes, I'm planning to." He said, "Well, what you should do is go into the Chittagong Club because it has a very strange odor. You'll notice this strange odor." I said, "Really? What do you mean, a strange odor? What kind of odor is it?" He says, "It smells like money." And it did. I don't remember the political section at that point forecasting any split.

Q: Was there tension between the two sections or

ROGERS: There was, but there was also tension within the western half between one section and another, so I wouldn't say that it was

Q: Enough to cause a split. Any other thoughts about your tour in Pakistan?

ROGERS: Yes. Maybe the record doesn't show it, I'm not sure, but about halfway or maybe a little bit more than halfway I was made DCM from economic counselor and that was not a very pleasant business.

Q: How did that come about?

ROGERS: Well, I was moved up because Ambassador Oehlert wanted to make some personnel changes and persuaded the Department to go along with it. I thought it was altogether unwarranted but I was moved up to DCM for about my last, I guess about a year and a half. I was there about four years. We dealt with all levels in the Foreign Office.

One story of my time there warrants telling. I was playing golf one Saturday morning and somebody comes tearing out from the pro shop and says, "The Foreign Office wants you on the phone, now!" I guess I was temporary chargé or something. So I called 'em up and they said, "We have a question. We have a message from our embassy about the visit of President Nixon. Is the figure for the number of journalists 30 or 300?" I said, "What visit from President Nixon?" They said, "Don't you know about this? Well, if we can suggest it, maybe you better give up your golf game and drop over here." We didn't know anything about this. This was during Kissinger's hey-day. So we didn't know anything about it. So I go over to the Foreign Office and they tell me what's happening, when the president is coming. And so I said, "Well it can't possibly be 300 journalists. They placed the dot in the wrong place." Was I ever wrong!

Well, that was the beginning of a long and arduous hassle. One of the most interesting questions that consumed endless time was how do you get the president off the plane? The White House preparation team that came out was discussing all the momentous aspects of the visit with the Pakistani Chief of Protocol. I was there and the question was how do you get Nixon off the plane. And the Paks said, "Well, what we do normally is this: the plane stops, the chief of protocol goes up the steps and welcomes the visitor and escorts him down to the bottom of the steps, where the president of Pakistan is waiting to shake his hand and the chief of protocol introduces the two." And the White House team says, "No, no, we don't do it that way. We can't have anybody on the steps with the president." And the Paks say, "Well, we've received the Queen of England. We've received the Shah of Iran.. We know how to do this. This is the way we do it." The White House says, "Well, we don't do it that way. This is the way we'll do it. The chief of protocol can go up the steps if he wants to but the president comes down the steps by himself and first. He's not going to be preceded by anybody, even your chief of protocol," meaning you. Well, they gave in on that.

Then the White House says, "Now, the route that we're taking in from the airport," to the guest house where he would be staying, "we need to line that with people." And the Paks said, "Well, he's coming in on Friday afternoon, which is our Sabbath and it's going to be 105 degrees or higher." The White House asked how many people are there likely to be along this route and the Paks said, "Well, not many, given it's Friday and the heat. Not very many." And the White House said, "That's not gonna fly. You've gotta have people out there." Well, they went back and forth, back and forth. Finally, finally, they lined it up with soldiers, some in civilian clothes. I don't know whether they issued civilian trousers and shirts for the occasion or not.

So this went on and on. What is it, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely? But I think there ought to be another line, but I can't make it rime: proximity to power corrupts, proximity to power is worst of all.

Q: Did the president stay with Ayub Khan, then, while he was in Pakistan?

ROGERS: They had a guesthouse. He stayed there. He didn't come to Islamabad. He came to Lahore and so almost the whole Embassy came down there. He stayed in a guesthouse in Lahore.

Q: Now, this was the famous trip to China?

ROGERS: No. The trip to China, I believe I'm right, Nixon didn't come to Pakistan. Kissinger came through Pakistan en route to China, but we knew nothing of it. Maybe the Ambassador did, but I doubt it.

Q: He didn't go through Pakistan. He went directly to China.

Q: Didn't know anything about the Kissinger visit? What was President Nixon doing in Pakistan? Was this a good will visit or was he visiting India, too?

ROGERS: Yes, he had just visited India. This was some time after his visit to China, I believe. Now, he'd been to Pakistan earlier while he was out of office. At that time he did come to Islamabad and we were called in to brief him. And although I'm not an admirer of Nixon's, I will stay that on that visit he asked good questions, was interested, he listened and what more can you ask? This was a different experience from my earlier report on briefing him in Austria on the Hungarian revolution, when he was interested in refugees only.

Q: He was good on the foreign policy side.

ROGERS: Well, I certainly must give him kudos for his trip to China and what followed.

Q: I would have thought with the president coming out we would have nominated and named an ambassador there, but who knows? Well then you were on your way back to Washington and the Senior Seminar, I take it, after Pakistan. That was a year for refreshing and I think everyone I've talked to who's been there found it worthwhile. You have any comments on that Senior Seminar year?

ROGERS: Oh, I thoroughly enjoyed it, and thought it very worthwhile. I liked the people we were with. We had quite a substantial, we had a very excellent program. I thought it was well carried out. We could determine a good bit of it ourselves. For example, I went to Indianapolis and had a long interview with the mayor of Indianapolis, who now is Senator Lugar from Indiana.

Q: A wonderful man, too.

ROGERS: Now whether it's used, as some people say it is, to park people they have a hard time placing while they decide what to do with them or park them until they've got a job for them, that's beyond my ken.

Q: I always thought it broadened them.

ROGERS: Yeah, I think it broadened me.

Q: And sorry to see the thing ended.

ROGERS: I thought very highly of it and I certainly enjoyed it.

Q: Did you travel overseas, or not?

ROGERS: No.

Q: You stayed in this country?

ROGERS: Stayed in this country but we went around to a good many different cities and universities. We went to Duke. We went up to Boston, spent some time at Tufts. We went to New York City. We went to New Orleans and Dallas, we went to North Dakota to a missile base (or could that have been while I was in the Pentagon?)—I believe it was the Senior Seminar.

Q: Anyway, it's a broadening experience. When that year was over you were assigned here in Washington

ROGERS: And I think one of the most important things they do, they make you write a paper, they make you think about it. I've still got my paper. I'd better read it before I discharge you, see if I can give any wisdom to the State Department from that.

Q: Well, I was gonna say, when this was over you were assigned to the Bureau of Interamerican Affairs and I believe you handled economic affairs for the whole bureau, among other things.

ROGERS: That was a good, that was an interesting period. I mentioned earlier we were working on reducing US tariffs for exports from South America. Actually, it was from all of Central and South American and the Caribbean, and part of a larger effort involving developing countries, I think. And I believe we made some progress there. We were able to do that, through what was then called the GATT, I guess.

Q: Did you have any relationship with my old organization, the U.S. Organization to the American States?

ROGERS: No, not much. We worked through then-Ambassador Doug Henderson, was the ambassador. You know Doug?

Q: No, I know of him, because he came after me. He came before me.

ROGERS: Was that your, were you ambassador to that organization?

Q: No, we had J. William Middendorf, who'd been my ambassador in the Hague, too, at the OAS.

ROGERS: No, we didn't have much to do with the OAS, except, maybe, we went to several negotiations, extensive negotiations, on these things I was discussing and the OAS played a role there, too, but there we were dealing mainly with people from different countries.

Q: Yes, that's true. How about your relationship with the Interamerican Development Bank? Did you have much?

ROGERS: No. We were largely a reporting unit and the major negotiations took place in these international GATT sessions. But we had several of those. We had some in Uruguay, Punta del Este, we had long sessions, maybe two there, because I went to one and my deputy had a heart attack at another one there.

Q: How did we handle policy with Chile after Allende was elected? That was quite an upsetting thing in this country, in the early 1970's.

ROGERS: We were only involved in, really, we weren't involved much in dealing bilaterally, with bilateral problems. We were dealing with multilateral problems. So as far Allende was concerned, that didn't impact on us.

Q: Was there much interference by the White House in anything you were doing?

ROGERS: No.

Q: They stayed away from it.

ROGERS: They probably didn't realize how important it was.

Q: Well they certainly did in the Chile case, when Mr. Kissinger got involved. Did you get involved at all in the Alliance for Progress?

ROGERS: I don't think so. I suppose that was carried out mainly bilaterally and through AID missions.

Q: AID missions, I think largely. It was already ten years old.

ROGERS: No, I don't remember anything. We had a significant staff, myself and about three, maybe four, officers, so that was a significant staff.

Q: Well I think it was losing some of its steam by this time, anyhow. During the Kennedy years, I remember, it was riding very high and very important. Did you have a feeling our ties with Latin America were deteriorating during this period, in the Seventies? Did this come up at GATT meetings and so forth?

ROGERS: No, I looked on our bureau as being basically friendly towards and with the South American and Caribbean countries and our opponents were principally special interests in this country. Well, this happened earlier. I was once involved in Pakistan on textile imports. It took place in Karachi and we had somebody I'd known from Germany, George Jacobs, who came out. He was either the or one of the principal leaders, but he had with him somebody from either the Department of Commerce or, my recollection is, it was a private textile organization, who played a big role in those negotiations. I was amazed. He sat right in with the delegation.

Q: Wasn't bashful at all?

ROGERS: Not at all and he would, in effect, draw a line beyond which we couldn't go. We were trying to increase quotas for different types of textiles and we could only go to a certain point. That's why I'm saying, you asked if we were, how we felt towards Latin America and I'm saying that I felt that what we were doing in the Department of State, we were trying to be helpful and friendly and our major obstacle was domestic. I think that's a legitimate concern, of course. But the major opposition came from commercial interests in this country.

Q: Did you get to travel much in this job? Did you get down to Latin America often?

ROGERS: Yes, to some extent. I went to Punta del Este. I went to Colombia. Saw my first embassy fixed up like an impregnable castle. You couldn't get in or get out. I guess that's the way they all are, now.

Q: So, any other comments about your work in ARA? Did you feel they had strong leadership, or not? Or did you feel any need for leadership?

ROGERS: Well, we had the assistant secretary and then the man directly over me was Dan Szabo, who was a newcomer to the Department. He was the deputy assistant secretary, I guess, for economic affairs. He was pretty impatient at times with what we were able to do. Who we did not have was somebody like, was it Elliot Abrams?

Q: I remember Elliot. I worked with him a bit when I was working in OAS, or USOAS.

ROGERS: We had a fellow who was a big shot at Sears who was, I thought, quite reasonable. This must have been in '73. Nixon, in effect, got us off the gold standard. We were all called in on Sunday night, I think, to hear about it, how we would handle it. I don't recall that we had any particular action to take. I guess the individual countries did, but we didn't.

Q: Well, Tom, in 1974, after this lengthy career, you decided to retire. What do you think now about the Foreign Service as a career? Would you recommend it to young people or not?

ROGERS: I don't know. In terms of foreign policy, I think that those of us in our time period were among the most fortunate, because we came along in a period when, first, U.S. foreign policy, I think, was probably as productive as it ever has been in our history. Secondly, embassies were in a position to have some impact on foreign policy. I wonder, many times, about both of those points nowadays. I'm increasingly concerned about our foreign policy, most particularly in this administration, but not altogether. I was critical of some things that Clinton did as well. But I'm also increasingly questioning how much Washington is trying to deal with problems without much input from embassies and the Foreign Service. It seems to me that part of that is because of communications improvements. We now have instantaneous communications, and so it's human nature to rely on yourself rather than the man who is on the ground. Part of today's problems stem from something that State, and of course the Pentagon, don't have enough of: Arabic speakers. Well, the Department has never had as much money as it asked for and should have had for training. Well, I think if the Department had had its way, we would have had more Arabic speakers all along. But for whatever reason, it seems to me that embassies now probably have much less impact than we did. We had little enough. And more factors. One is physical danger, which seems to be increasing all the time. Another is family separation, and this also seems to be rising rapidly. And still another is the size of our offices abroad. When I went to Budapest last September, it was amazing to compare the size of the Embassy staff then with what it had been fifty years earlier. Certainly I'm convinced a small office is the choice if you can get it! The latest issue of the Foreign Service Journal (May 2007) has an excellent article relating to some of these problems.

So there are certainly some negative factors. On the other hand, if you want to be involved in international affairs, I would certainly choose the Foreign Service over the military, or a career in intelligence. But if you're talking seriously to someone, don't overlook the negative factors.

I think I had a very interesting and, for myself, fruitful life. The chances of that happening again, I wonder about. So the short answer to your question is, when you say would I recommend it, I don't know. I would not recommend it to the degree I would have fifty years ago.

But, on the other, hand, who knows? Times may change. Life abroad is certainly challenging and interesting. I think, no, I know that Sarah was delighted with the life that we led. For my children the answer is more complicated. I believe it would be worth quoting in toto, and I've done that just below, their responses to my query "Did you gain more or lose more from growing up in the Foreign Service?" But that doesn't altogether answer the question.

Q: Well thank you very much, Tom. This is Tom Dunnigan saying goodbye to Tom Rogers on August 22, 2006 for the Foreign Service Oral History Program of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training.

***

DAUGHTERS' RESPONSES

There follow the four responses to a query I sent to my four daughters: "did you gain or lose more through growing up in the Foreign Service? Why?

First:

My answers are somewhat similar and somewhat different from A's (see next following reply):

There is a question for me.

Gained: An appreciation of and understanding of other cultures, languages and people, a tighter knit family because often my sisters were my closest friends during moves, an opportunity to see the world, a facility with languages and an ability to be in strange surroundings and with strange people that few people I know have.

Loss: Always leaving behind a home, friends, a culture/language that I was familiar with. Always starting over again. Never belonging, always being an outsider. When we were on home leave, still being the outsider, the "Yankee". When we finally came home in 1961, finding out that home for you and Mother wasn't home for me because I was still an outsider, a "nerd" who didn't know how to fit in, didn't know what clothes to wear, how to fix my hair, what TV shows everybody else had grown up with.

Another loss: a sense of placelessness that makes me wonder when I'm "home."

As a child, the losses were tremendous, the gains questionable. As an adult, the gains overcome the losses. But I still wonder if the Foreign Service realizes how difficult its life can be for children.

Second:

There's no question here. Gained more: an appreciation of and understanding of other cultures, languages and people, a tighter knit family because often my sisters were my closest friends during moves, an always fascinating dinner table conversation, an opportunity to see the world that still makes Rob jealous, continuing friendships with a wide variety of people from the past who lead very interesting lives.....

Loss: I'd be interested in hearing someone who didn't come home to the US at the height of puberty. Moving to BCC from anywhere would be difficult. Moving there from HCJB was more so. But moving is difficult, and I think actually there were a lot of kids coming and going at BCC—unlike when we moved our kids to Moorhead MN at approximately the same age!

Another loss: a sense of placelessness that makes me wonder when I'm home."

Now, if you'd asked me this question at 14.....!

Third:

I love your question and E and A's answers. I'm often asked that question, and I always say, absolutely, gain. I doubt I'd be embarking on a life in Mexico today had I grown up entirely in Florence, SC or even Bethesda. (I doubt I'd have gone to Vancouver, or married Barry). What were those gains? Being around many diverse people, not only from the local culture but also the Canadians, British, etc. My best friend in Quito was Anne Meade, daughter of the British Ambassador. She introduced me to painting daisies from her garden.

There were losses, yes. Moving from a small, intimate school in Quito to Radnor Elementary and then to a large, sophisticated junior high in Bethesda was the biggest shift, and I don't think I was prepared at all, not that there was much you and M could do to help me prepare. I think the insecurities of the first half of my life did have to do with all those changes (between moving to Bethesda, to my first year at Tulane, I went to 7 schools).

But I read somewhere, and this has become an anchor for me, that our vulnerabilities equip us for life as much as our strengths, and I've come to rest on that. I too wonder where 'home' is... but I notice that a lot of people who do know where 'home' is aren't necessarily very interesting to me! Plus, the world is filled with refugees and immigrants and displaced people and I just figure I'm one of them. I also read that an essential element in the life of a writer is to have been an outsider in childhood, to have been given the 'gift' of not belonging. I am not as much a writer as I wish I were, but having often felt like an outsider who didn't belong, it gave me a new way to look to my childhood, and I've adopted it.

I too would like to see your essay/report. Thx for asking,

Fourth:

Absolutely: gained more: it made me different from everyone I ever knew who didn't have the opportunity. The biggest influence was accepting other ideas, other ways, realizing that other people live in different homes, worship different gods, eat different foods but are really the same as us in so many ways.

In a funny way, it also made me appreciate my own country more; seeing it from a distance sometimes I didn't see all its faults as much but appreciated its freedoms and its openness.

My education was only spotty in 6th grade (like...not there!) but the education I got from seeing the world meant so much more. In fact I think in Pakistan I was really well taught; better than at Whitman. It's true that entering high school was rough and I didn't have that sense of a home town that my kids have, but I would never give up what we had. Plus entering high school can be rough anyway!

I'm not sure foreign service kids today have the kind of freedom we had, so even if I could I'm not sure I could replace for them what I had. Also, what I loved about our life is all the places you took us; not so much the famous sites, but rather all the wild places: Kaghan Valley, Murree, Africa, Afghanistan, Kashmir, etc. I remember the crazy camping trips sleeping in weird hotels and riding around in rickety taxis better than what a famous building looks like.

I could write all morning. It was a gift. Thank you.

End of interview