

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

WILLIAM FREDERICK ROPE

Interviewed by: David Reuther
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First Secretary, Economic-Commercial Officer	
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State Department Operations Center (S/S-O), DOS	1978-1980
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The Johns Hopkins University-Nanjing University Center for Chinese and American Studies, Nanjing, China; American Co-Director, September 1995-June 1996	

Center for Business Skills Development, American Graduate School of International Management (Thunderbird), Shanghai, China; President, June 1997-August 1998

Elementary School Teacher, DC Public Schools (DCPS) 1999-2011

Substitute Teacher, DCPS Oct 2011-Pres.

INTERVIEW

Q: This is March 9, 2016. An interview for the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training with Bill Rope. I am David Reuther. Bill, let's start at the start. You were born in 1940. Where were you born, and can you tell us something about your family background?

ROPE: I was born on August 27 in New York City's Roosevelt Hospital, today the Weill Cornell Medical Center on the East Side of Manhattan. My father, Frederick T. Rope, was finishing his doctorate at Teacher's College, Columbia, and my first residence was Bancroft Hall, a graduate residence building that still exists at Teacher's College. My mother, Irene King Rope, was a librarian at the time, and my parents did my birth announcement in the form of a library card for a book, i.e., me, listing them as authors and stating that I had a fine frontispiece, etc.

My dad was from upstate New York and a second generation graduate of Cornell University. His father, originally from Brooklyn, had graduated Phi Beta Kappa, after which he went into the insurance business in the Buffalo area. After graduating from Cornell in 1932, my father had trouble getting the kind of job he wanted. I guess he didn't want to sell insurance, and in the Depression time I don't think that business was thriving, because my grandfather did not leave a lot of money when he died of Leukemia before I was born. In any case, my dad did land a job in the town where he'd grown up, a suburb of Buffalo named East Aurora, where the Buffalo Bills now have a stadium. He blamed Cornell for not helping him get a job, and he never gave any money to Cornell as an alum.

So my father was originally a high school Social Studies teacher. And he first knew my mother -- a year his senior -- when she moved from New York to East Aurora and took a job as librarian in the school. They didn't marry there, but struck up a romance; and when my mom moved back to the New York area to be a librarian at Sewanhaka High School in Floral Park Long Island, he followed her, taking a job teaching Civics in Westfield, New Jersey.

My mother had a very different background. Her father, William Cyrus King, had been an oil prospecting engineer working for the Standard Oil Company of Ohio, SOHIO before it merged with ESSO, now Exxon. She was born in Harvey, Illinois, outside Chicago. Her parents came from Findlay, Ohio, where I think they married and where I still have

relatives. I'm not sure of my maternal grandmother's heritage, but my grandfather King traced his roots on at least one side to early settlers who were in Windsor and then Simsbury, Connecticut, as early as 1632. I've been able to take my daughter to a cemetery in Simsbury and shown her her great great great great great great great grandfather, Deacon John Humphrey's grave.

In the early 19th Century, a group of Humphreys struck out for Ohio, which is how my Granddad ended up in Findlay. But once he joined Ohio Oil he moved all around the Middle West and South; and the family moved with him. Among the places where my mother lived were St. Louis and Florida where my grandfather bought land in some kind of pioneering farming venture. My maternal grandmother, Nellie Parker, a strong woman by all accounts, ran the operation and home schooled my mother and her three siblings. By high school, Mother was living in Oklahoma City. She went on to the University of Oklahoma, where she majored in English but was a serious drama student.

After college, my mother lived in Shreveport, Louisiana where she appeared in local area theater productions before going to New York to try to make it on the Broadway stage. There she lived at a place called the rehearsal club about which there is a play called *Stage Door*. To support herself as she sought acting jobs, she worked at the New York Public Library. Although she never made it on Broadway, she got far enough to understudy a part opposite Pat O'Brien. Ultimately, she gave it up and went to library school at Columbia, which in time led her to my dad. She stayed active as an amateur actress, and a librarian, throughout her working life. My father never fully approved of the acting, a result, I guess, of his somewhat conservative and Victorian upstate New York upbringing.

So my parents had different backgrounds. Both were Protestants though not particularly religious. At least as I was growing up after the war, in Chappaqua, New York, they went regularly to church. After they married, in 1936, they traveled twice to Europe, touring at least once by motorcycle. By the time I was born, in '40, my dad had decided to leave the classroom and get a PhD in education. When he finished, we moved to Albany, New York, where he joined the New York State Department of Education as a roving inspector of public schools. Ultimately, this led us to Chappaqua, in the New York suburbs, where I grew up after World War II. Dad had concluded that the best suburban schools were in Westchester County, in Scarsdale and Chappaqua. So when, after the war, my parents wanted to locate in New York, they settled on Chappaqua, where President Clinton lives today. They couldn't afford Scarsdale.

So my earliest, vaguest, most distant memories are in Albany, where my sister, Sandra Justine Rope, was born in 1942. We lived there until 1943. The war was on, but my father was exempt from service until that year because he had a wife and two children. Even though my sister had been born after Pearl Harbor, my mother said they could establish conception before December 7, 1941, and that was good enough for the Selective Service. But it wasn't by 1943, when the need for men his age was greater. He went to Navy Officer Candidate School at Quonset Point, Rhode Island, and upon commissioning as an officer was assigned to a training command at Millington Naval Air Station outside

of Memphis, Tennessee. This because of his background in education. In 1964, when I was in the Navy, I flew in a P-3 Orion into Millington, by then a Naval Air Reserve base. It's still a Navy facility today.

I remember going by train, with mother and sister, from Albany, via Cincinnati, to Memphis, to join my father; and we first lived in an apartment hotel in Memphis. My memories of this time are quite vivid, partly because of the war and partly because of trauma in my family life; and I date them to the early days in that hotel. Decades later, when I was Chargé d'Affaires in Ankara, Turkey, I told the visiting mayor of Memphis that I remembered the view from that hotel, looking out to where the "Fox" River flowed into the Mississippi. The mayor looked at me and said, "It was the Wolf River." So I remembered the name wrong, but the exchange told me that my memory was essentially accurate. The mayor also gave me a mini-key to the city, which I thought was pretty cool, 45 years after I'd lived there.

My father found housing on a plantation called Stratton Oaks, in Bolton, Tennessee, outside of Memphis and near Millington. The plantation had a large enough main house for my family and one other navy family to have several-room apartments. The matriarch of the operation was Katherine Watson, known as "Miss Kate;" but she was a lawyer -- this was 1943 -- in Memphis, and she didn't really run the plantation. Her two brothers did, while she showed up from time to time. I remember Miss Kate as a formidable woman. Years later, later in life when my wife and I named our first child "Katherine," Miss Kate was one of the people in my mind. I wanted our daughter to be a strong woman, and Miss Kate was a strong woman in my mind from age 3.

So we lived on this plantation. Once, when I joined Toastmasters in an effort to reduce my strong fear of public speaking, I had to give a biographical "icebreaker" speech. I found that, although I had traveled around the world and done many things in the State department, I ended up focusing on Tennessee, noting that, after Eugene O'Neill, my favorite playwright was a man named Tennessee. My mother, incidentally, had played Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie* when I was in high school, and I'd helped her rehearse her lines. But it was because -- despite my young age -- my time in Tennessee was so formative for me.

I was happy on the plantation. It was very large, with all manner of farm animals and fowl. It had a lake, areas where sheep grazed, an interior lane where there were cows and pigs and a barn, along with housing of the "colored" hands. I remember watching hogs slaughtered by being hit over the head with a sledge hammer. I remember taking the discarded "runt" of a pig litter and trying to nurse it to health with my mother. With the older, Watson boys, I bottled black widow spiders. I loved the surrounding cotton fields and trips to the cotton gin. I saw a lot of agricultural life, and that I'm sure that influenced me as a Foreign Service China Watcher, in Hong Kong and Beijing, as I became interested in, and reported on, Chinese agriculture.

Among the reasons why this was a formative time was because I learned at Stratton Oaks about race issues and segregation. My mother had lived in the South in her youth, but

despite her father's conservative outlook on life, she was very liberal. She was, for example, a working woman all her life which not everybody in her time was. But to come back to our life in Tennessee, she pointed out injustices around us. I remember going to a concert, an orchestra playing Peter and the Wolf, in Memphis. She pointed out colored restrooms and drinking fountains and things like that. She told me what I saw was wrong. Down the interior lane of the plantation, the black hired hands and their families lived in unpainted shacks. I remember their doorways as being open, like those in Depression-era photographs of Appalachia -- I forgot the name of the woman famous for that photography -- Dorothea Lange, I think.

Q: For Life Magazine.

ROPE: Yeah. But what I remember is unpainted shacks without doorways, with doors always open. It was warm in Tennessee generally. I don't remember the winter very well. I do remember snow but it was actually only hail, big large hailstones I could pick up after one storm. I played with the "colored" children. When my mother was in the hospital with psychiatric problems, I was taken care of by a black man and his wife. He was the head hired hand, and she was the cook for the Watson family. His name was "Pig" and she was "Minnie. "Ole Pig," as he was called by the Watsons lived with Minnie behind the plantation house in an old log cabin with thin logs and stuff chinked in between them. They had a little yard with no grass, and I remember one time seeing "Pig" chase a chicken around that yard and chop off its head; and the chicken kept running around -- like a chicken with its head cut off. Pig and Minnie's house was nicer than what I remember down the lane, but it wasn't great. What I learned about how these people lived stuck with me forever.

I also had a step-grandmother in Louisiana. My mother's mom had died when she was a teenager, and after they moved to Shreveport my granddad married a nurse from Lake Charles, step-grandmother Zera. After my mother's nervous breakdown, I spent time with them, too, and I loved their place, which had a barn, with lots of farm machinery, and a few livestock. "We love our nigras," Zera always said; but the point always was they had to know their place. Miss Kate and the Watson family loved their "nigras, too; but they, too, had to know their place. It wasn't right. I almost weep, now, when I think of this, because those black people were important to me. And when I think of a society where the chief hired hand of a large plantation is called "Ole Pig," I ask myself, "what kind of society was that?"

Q: It is not caring.

ROPE: So that is where I spent some very formative years. And I add to this the fact that my mother had what my father later told me was a physical, "psychotic" breakdown. I often wonder if she tried to commit suicide, whether from the stresses of the war or something that grew out of what's now called post-partum depression after my sister's birth, or something else I don't know; but she had lots of problems and was at times very emotional. She did tell me at that time that she had read that if you took a large amount of salt it would be good for you in some way, and she tried it. It caused her to throw up, she

said. I've always wondered what this story was really about. In any case at one point she broke down. I remember being taken in to see her. She was in bed crying. I remember it very vividly. She wanted to see me, and I was taken into her; but she didn't want to see my sister. I don't remember what she said to me, only that she was crying as she spoke. Then a little bit later I saw her being taken away in an ambulance. I talked with my sister about this recently and learned that when she was in second grade my mother apologized for not wanting to see her that day -- something my sister, who had no memory of the matter, could have done without, I'm sure.

My mother was gone for six weeks, I believe. I remember asking my father if she would die. I don't remember being frightened by that, but I must have been internally. He said she wouldn't. When she came back she said she had her stomach pumped and she had been fed through a tube for a while. These things continued -- though not so severely or in physical form -- when I was in second, third and fourth grade in Chappaqua. She would periodically go away for visits in Southern California with her brother's family, or elsewhere, and her older sister, my aunt Marian, would take care of my sister and me.

I have to confess that this gave me a fear for a long time, as an adult, that I might have a nervous breakdown like her. I got over it partly through psychiatry.

So there are my early years. I've talked too much, but I can fill in more.

Q: You were taking about your mother's family's background, how about your father's.

ROPE: Victorian, New York. He was a Republican initially and had an English family tree, going all the way back to the 13th Century.

Q: They were immigrants at some point.

ROPE: Yes. I do know that my maternal great grandfather was a court stenographer in Buffalo New York who headed the Western New York court stenographer's association and was chess champion of Western New York. He spoke French and loved French literature, and traveled in Europe more than once. Somewhere, I have his chess Grand Master's medal, along with my maternal grandmother's wedding petticoat, a silk shawl purchased in France, and some other memorabilia destined for our daughter Kate. I have a genealogy one cousin's wife put together containing a long family history on my maternal grandmother's side, going all the way back to the 1200's in England -- IF it's accurate! My dad had a cousin named Harlow Rockwell who ultimately became a children's book illustrator with his second wife, Anne Rockwell, whose books I see to this day. I am not in touch with her and when I wrote an admiring letter to her, she didn't answer.

Harlow Rockwell was a commercial artist. When we went to New York from Chappaqua, we would see his Life Savers train advertisements high in the atrium of Grand Central Station. He also designed the new Jolly Green Giant when the Jolly Green Giant went from being realistic to being a cartoon character; and he did other major ads that we could

see in *Life* magazine and *The New Yorker*, and on TV. But he came to hate the advertising world, divorced his wife, married Anne, just out of Mount Holyoke, and became a children's artist whose work we read to our children and which I read to my school children in my post-Foreign Service retirement life.

Q: When the war ends where are you? Where is the family?

ROPE: By the time the war ended, my sister and I were in southern New Jersey living with my father's brother, Barton Rope, and his family while our parents house-hunted, and maybe job-hunted in New York. Because of my mother's condition, I learned later, my father had been discharged from the Navy early. After some time in Shreveport, we drove through the Smoky Mountains and up north to Uncle Bart's house in Mullica Hill, New Jersey where we my sister and I were deposited. I don't remember V-J Day, but I have a visual picture in my mind of where I was on the plantation when there was a false VE day. The actual VE day, I can't remember.

Q: Germany surrendered May 9.

ROPE: May 9. Ok well there was a false VE day. I remember people talking about the war being over when it wasn't. This reminds me that there were German war prisoners on the naval base. I remember seeing them working there. I want to get back to this because I was keenly aware of the war. At night there were dog fights -- for training ---in the sky over Stratton Oaks, with tracer bullets lighting things up. The first toys I remember getting, on what was probably my 4th birthday, was a set of German war planes. They were a kind of heavy plastic, and they were models used at the air base school to train spotters. My father somehow acquired them. My father's fellow naval officers were around a lot. I remember rationing and "war candy." After the war, when my father was working for our delegation to the UN, I saw graphic documentary films of the German concentration camps as they were found after the Holocaust.

All of this gave me a this very clear awareness of WWII, and ultimately WWI; and this influenced where I came out later in life, as a person who wanted to prevent war. Jumping forward, I remember walking into the Operations Center the night the Gulf War started. I knew it was about to start, as did my Middle East bureau counterpart, Jock Covey; but not many others at State knew. Heading into the Center to take over the crisis management group from the Near East Bureau (because we were transitioning from a regional problem to a military problem), I remember saying to Jock, "We've worked all our careers to prevent a war and now it's happening."

Q: So where did they settle. Your father would be eligible for the GI Bill for either education or housing.

ROPE: I guess my parents may have had a VA loan for the house they bought in Chappaqua. My dad's first job after the war was as a special assistant to the president of Teacher's College, Columbia. He was going to be commuting, and since he couldn't afford to live in Scarsdale his target was Chappaqua, about one hour's rail commute north

of the city. My parents couldn't easily find a house in Chappaqua that they could afford, so for a year we rented a house in a remote part of Mt. Kisco, New York called Stanwood. I went to Yorktown Heights elementary school for Kindergarten, about a 45 minute bus ride from Stanwood. We lived there for about a year, 1945-'46. Then they found a small house in Chappaqua. There were a few places where poorer people lived in Chappaqua. This wasn't that, but it was about as cheap a house as could be found there. So we moved there in September, 1946.

Q: And you stayed in Chappaqua up through junior high and high school?

ROPE: Yes. I lived with my family there up until halfway through my senior year. Then my father -- who by that time had been "Wristonized" from the US Mission to the UN and transferred into the Foreign Service -- moved to Paris with my mother and Sandra. I stayed behind and lived with my best friend since second grade, William Roger -- Bill -- Nye in the manse of the Chappaqua First Congregational Church, where Bill's Dad was the minister.

Q: We are returning to our conversation with Bill Rope. Bill, if I understand correctly, after the war you grew up in the Chappaqua area until you went off to college. Looking at your schooling and your life there during those years, what subjects did you enjoy most, and what stands out in your mind about your life in general.

ROPE: I always enjoyed school. It was where I had friends, where I played, and where I enjoyed learning. Academically, I was pretty good in everything except for manuscript. We had three possible grades: S for Satisfactory, S+ for better than that, and S- for less than Satisfactory. Billy Rope's report card was always S+ except for manuscript, which was always S-. It seems to have been genetic. My father had bad handwriting, as does my son, Robert. That's okay for Robert -- he's a doctor. By the time I was in 7th grade I'd been given a typewriter, and I never handwrote papers again. Later in life, as an elementary school teacher, I was able to avoid teaching cursive for 12 years, even though it was a required subject. I always got another teacher to do it for me.

Moving into junior high and high school, I was not so strong in math but did well in most other subjects. I didn't have the best English teachers, and when I hit physics I fared poorly under an eccentric teacher who'd gone to the Boston Latin School and loved to make us take dictation whenever he objected to our behavior. I liked Biology and Chemistry and loved History, Social Studies and English. I wasn't great at Latin, primarily due to disinterest and the teacher. I regret this, since I did so much with language in the Foreign Service and wish I'd seen Latin's value at the time. When I finally got out of it, I studied and loved Spanish, based so much on Latin but so much easier, and loved my teacher, Señora Gallas. If she had taught Latin I probably would have loved it. I enjoyed practical courses, including "Business" -- mostly secretarial skills -- and Home Economics, where we learned to cook. I enjoyed woodworking and making things in "Industrial Arts." I was hardly an artist but liked art and music. I didn't learn to write well until I got to Yale, and even then I learned a lot more about writing and editing in the Foreign Service; but my father was right about the quality of Chappaqua's schools,

still highly rated today. My senior class had a very strong group of girls. I ranked 26th out of 96 in my class but was 5th ranking boy, and I made it into an Ivy.

For extra-curriculars, I was in the dramatics club, preferring work as a stage hand or in set construction to the acting roles my mother probably wished I would take. She had sent me to weekly dramatics lessons when I was eight or nine, but I didn't like them. We had a chess club and bridge club. I learned to swim at the White Plains YMCA and was forced, along with many Chappaqua peers, to take dancing lessons where boys wore neckties and girls wore white gloves. I loved sports and played little league baseball, football and basketball. We lived in a neighborhood with lots of children and nearby woods where we could play all kinds of games, swing from vines, build tree houses, and run freely without supervision. People didn't lock their doors at night.

Within two years of our move to Chappaqua, my father joined the US Mission to the UN (USUN). He got the job through Ben Brown, later an important figure at Harvard's Littauer School of Public Administration, now the Kennedy School. Ben was a fellow naval officer in Memphis. After the war he joined USUN and introduced my dad to the Mission. My father was hired because of his education background, as a public liaison officer with the job of creating programs to educate the American citizenry about the newly created United Nations. It was somewhat analogous to being a USIS officer. He facilitated visits by members of the public, schools, civic associations, etc., to USUN and the UN; and he traveled around the country in support of UN-related symposia, mini-United Nations conferences, and other public events promoting awareness and understanding of the UN. Occasionally I got to go along. Early in Eisenhower Administration, the position was eliminated; but Henry Cabot Lodge, who replaced Warren Austin as our Ambassador to the UN, asked my father to stay on as a press-officer.

So from 1948, when I was seven turning eight, forward, I had a father at United Nations. In a suburban bedroom community largely populated by New York business executives, he was different: active in PTA-sponsored programs on foreign affairs and in other meetings around town, and a respected figure. My mother became town librarian, respected too. She had a well-attended weekly children's story hour that made me proud to be her son. I thus grew up with a father to whom I looked up and a mother who worked, was good in her field, and had acting skills that made her a great story teller. For as far back as I remember, she had read children's books to me; and today, when I am teaching school and reading Dr. Seuss or some other book to children, I like to think my mother is looking down on me. I try hard to do as well as she, using accents, expression, emphasis, or whatever is needed to make stories come alive.

At the same time, because my mother worked full-time, much of the day-to-day work of raising me and Sandra was left to live-in maids, always black, usually not long up from the South. My mother had gone through the Depression and was always worried about money. I suspect she couldn't keep maids because she didn't pay enough; or maybe we were just a way station for the women. In any case, I had a regular turnover of caretakers; but they continued something that started with Pig and Minnie. And again, during these

times, my mother had to go away from time to time, which increased their importance to me.

I had a pretty stable set of friends, and my high school class still stays in touch. I've mentioned Bill Nye, a friend since second grade whose father was the minister of our church -- from a Nebraska Methodist family in which all five sons were ministers. I lived with Bill's family for the final six months of my senior year, and we went on to Yale together. He followed his father into the ministry and later became a psycho-therapist. He performed all the marriages in our family: first me and my wife Priscilla, then our daughter Kate and her husband David Allan, and later our son Robert. We talk or E-Mail regularly, travel together on occasion, and spend time each summer at his family's "camp" in Maine. He's the closest thing I have to a brother.

Q: Did you have any reading subjects that you found particularly interesting, bios, for example?

ROPE: I loved children's books, and my mother fed me a lot of them. Many are still around, and I read them to children today. I liked a wide variety of fiction and was a big Hardy Boys fan. Then I graduated to Sherlock Holmes. I liked short stories. By the time I was ten or eleven, I read non-fiction a lot. One book that stands out in my memory is *Of Whales and Men*, about modern whaling. Another is *Reach for the Sky*, a biography of a famous RAF pilot named Douglas Bader. Later I read Churchill's *The Gathering Storm* and President Truman's autobiography. I tended to like non-fiction more until I got to college, and today I read non-fiction, particularly history and biographies, more than fiction. At Yale, however, I loved English courses and the literature we read, that was entirely fiction -- Hemingway, Bellow, Malamud, Styron, Melville, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Twain, to name a few; and since college I've enjoyed lots of modern American writers. Among those I've liked best are Joan Didion and Annie Proulx.

Q: Now the college choice, now that you were in high school how did you come about to apply to the colleges that you did?

ROPE: One was Cornell, because I was a "legacy" and had a good chance of getting in. I got interested in Oberlin, but once I went there I didn't want to apply because they told me the YMCA was an important part of campus life. I liked Haverford but didn't get to apply because we had a very controlling high school dean who insisted we limit applications to just a few. Colgate, in upstate New York, was my "safety school," and I liked it a lot. But when I went with my father and one of his friends to a Cornell-Yale game in New Haven and we toured the Yale campus, I knew that was where I wanted to go. I did not like the idea of having to join a fraternity, and Yale had a residential college system. At Harvard it's called the house system, but at both it consists of smaller units within the university where you live, have much of your social life, and even take some courses. Fraternities existed as social clubs but weren't an important feature of campus life. I loved the architecture at Yale. I was invited for two visits by an assistant admissions dean, and I was sold.

Q: During high school and that time, were there sports that you were particularly interested in? Did you have a part-time job?

ROPE: I had a paper route, both on Sundays in my neighborhood and on weekdays in a larger area across town. We went to Nantucket for summers, although when I was younger I went to our local school day camp. I played football as a freshman but by the spring of that year had developed Osgood Schlatter's Disease which kept me out of baseball and football until my junior year. I was able to go out for track but didn't run. Instead I threw the shot put -- not very far. I was a starting linebacker in football my senior year and remember how sad I felt after our last game, realizing I'd never play tackle football again. I played intramural touch football and baseball at Yale, along with a lot of squash and pick-up basketball in Silliman, my residential college. As an adult I have been playing softball ever since my first posting in Hong Kong. I still play it today, in two Montgomery County leagues and a Sunday pickup game, the latter thanks to Scooter Libby who got me into it. I also play touch football, sometimes with Scooter, through the winter, even at my age. I'm not much of a tennis player, but I can play.

Q: Now with your father's association with the UN and whatnot, I assume that you were fairly aware of some of the major international incidents of the time. When you started high school in '54 in Asia the first Quemoy crisis had sprung up and resolved itself. How aware were you of foreign issues?

ROPE: I was quite aware. As I mentioned, in his initial work as a USUN educator, I occasionally accompanied my father on outings. One early time I remember was a week-long mini-United Nations gathering with symposia during the day and athletic and other social activities in the afternoons and evenings. It brought together people from many different countries and all six continents. That's where I saw my first Holocaust movies and learned in detail about that. I had many such associations; and my parents were constantly entertaining UN people in Chappaqua. Members of foreign delegations from Asia, Africa and Europe would come out for an afternoon and dinner in an American home, and sometimes this would get quite lively, with people from different countries singing and dancing their local folk songs or what have you.

In 1950, for six months, my father was seconded to the US Occupation government in Japan as an education expert. He was involved in creating an American-style education system (that I believe the Japanese eventually rebelled against and discarded). We had furniture and art that he brought home from Japan, and I had lots of Japanese knick-knacks -- terra cotta Kabuki dancers and the like. After his return, we had Japanese visitors all the time. For two years I had a Japanese "big sister," Akiko Tamiya, the daughter of a man my dad had worked with in Japan, who came to the US on an exchange program. My dad knew Sarah Gibson Blanding, president of Vassar, and was able to arrange for Akiko to go to there. Akiko would stay with us during school holidays and taught me many things about Japan. She came to my school to speak to my sixth grade class, which made me very proud. All of this contributed to my long-term interest in Asia. Akiko, by the way, ultimately married a Japanese diplomat, Koichi Komura. Priscilla and I visited them once in Paris, and I saw Akiko occasionally during stops in

Tokyo when I headed the China Desk. I've lost touch with her now, though, and fear she's dead or not well.

Beyond that, in those days UN meetings were televised. We could watch Security Council hearings live, and I would see my father there. I have one great photograph of him with Krishna Menon in which they're blowing smoke at each other in the Delegate's Lounge, or so it seems. I met Eleanor Roosevelt. I think it was not long after he returned from Japan, when my father took me to Lake Success on Long Island, where the UN was temporarily housed. The Korean War had started not long before.

Q: 1950.

ROPE: Yes. I was nine. I remember going into New York with my father and riding in a limousine out to Lake Success through the brand new Brooklyn Battery tunnel. That was exciting. In the delegate's dining room we stopped by Mrs. Roosevelt's table and my father introduced me. I remember pictures on walls in the halls of the early days of the Korean conflict. And we watched the General Assembly vote to move for the next year to Geneva, after which the new UN Headquarters in New York would be ready. Later I remember distinctly watching Security Council meetings on the Suez Crisis, both on TV and in New York, and I remember the Hungarian Revolution which broke out at the same time.

Q: 1956. What else did you like to watch on TV.

ROPE: We didn't have a TV until I was in high school, though I sometimes watched early kids' things like Howdy Doody or Hopalong Cassidy at friends' houses. What my family watched, when visiting others, was good stuff -- Edward R. Murrow (whose news broadcasts we also listened to every night on the radio); Omnibus with Alistair Cooke; lots of public affairs and foreign affairs stuff. Bernie Kalb is now a good friend. I remember watching a year-end wrap-up in which Bernard Kalb was reporting from Hong Kong. There were the Army-McCarthy hearings, and my mother took me out of school to watch some of them. My parents' friends in Chappaqua -- who tended to be among the few Democrats in Chappaqua at the time -- were all interested in politics and foreign affairs. So that was being discussed around me all the time, and I participated actively in those discussions as I grew older.

I should add here, that Mother's interest in the theater led her to take us into New York, regularly, to Broadway shows. The earliest one I remember is Oklahoma, and about all I remember of that was one scene where the "surrey" came out on stage and another where Jed shot a hole in a wall. I remember well the original production of South Pacific, with Martin and Pinza, and as a family we saw most of the major shows of the 1950s, most often with their original casts. We might not have been the first family to get TV, but we had those shows, even if we sat in the second balcony. When I was in college and my parents were in Paris, I saw a lot more shows, courtesy of my Aunt Marian and Uncle Robert, whom I'd visit on weekends or holidays in New York's Greenwich Village.

They were an important influence in my life. In the early 1950s Marian, my mother's sister, married a wealthy New York architect and city planner, Robert Weinberg. They had a brownstone on Washington Square North and a large house on a hill overlooking the Hudson Valley in Ridgefield Connecticut. We visited them frequently, and I was very taken with my Uncle Robert -- so much so that we named our son after him and I still wear his wedding ring on my right hand. Robert was very attuned to, and at times active in, New York politics (he hated Robert Moses, who had slandered him when he was a young city planner opposing the Spuyten Duyvil Bridge). He had very catholic tastes. On a huge table in the living room at Ridgefield he had all kinds of magazines, from the Nation, New Republic and Commonweal to -- when it came out -- Al Goldstein's Screw Magazine. Over the years I learned a lot from, and in certain ways modeled myself after, Robert Weinberg.

When my father became press spokesman for USUN, journalists were calling all the time. One I remember was William Otis of the AP, who'd been imprisoned behind the Iron Curtain in Czechoslovakia. I and my classmates had read about him in the "Weekly Reader." So I was impressed when one day I answered the phone and it was Bill Otis calling my dad. Besides UN diplomats, my parents entertained lots of journalists at home. Bernie Kalb remembers my father, and he occasionally calls me by my dad's name, Fred. One time he called me Fred so many times in a row that I replied by calling him Marvin, his well-known brother.

This was part of my growing up. Things began to change sometime after 1956 when my father was "Wristonized" as part of a State Department reorganization following a study by President Wriston of Brown. He was given a choice. He could stay on at USUN as a State Department civil servant without job security, or he could join the Foreign Service, where he would have job security but, ironically, would have to accept a transfer away from USUN within two years. By mid-1958, my senior year in high school, he'd been transferred to Paris, along with my mother and sister, leaving me to live with my friend Bill Nye.

My dad didn't have much of a Foreign Service career because, having worked in New York, not Washington, he did not have a lot of contacts in the Department. He didn't fit in, as I suspect many "Wristonees" did not, and I don't think his boss in Paris, Fritz Nolting, later Ambassador in Saigon under Kennedy, was very good to him. In 1960 he was sent to Montreal, and in 1965 he and my mother moved to Melbourne, where he was Deputy Consul General. He retired there in 1968. Although my parents thoroughly enjoyed life overseas and made many new friends, my father's lack of career success took a certain toll.

That influenced me in a very different way. I entered the Foreign Service convinced that loyalty to the system, such as I believed my dad had shown, would not be repaid. I would never take a job just because a personnel officer wanted to assign me there. It was not that I wasn't a team player, but it had to be a job I thought was important. I also thought my dad had been too focused on job security. He wasn't a fighter; he went where he was sent and his career was never the same as it was in his USUN days. My unhappiness over

the way I felt he was treated may have influenced me subconsciously. Sometimes think I entered the Foreign Service to make up for what I perceived to be his failure. In any event, I was determined not to repeat his experience; and I did not want just to follow in his footsteps. I think I avoided that, not only by being an FSO from the beginning but by going into the China field, where I could do my own thing and carve out a completely different career from my father's.

Q: How did you find Yale in terms of the way they introduced the material and the professors? Did any professors stand out?

ROPE: Yale was, and still is, known for the emphasis its leadership and faculty placed on teaching. The great professors didn't just do research or teach graduate seminars. They taught undergraduates. I liked the modern American historian John Morton Blum and political science professor Brad Westerfield, whose course in national security was informed by the fact that his brother was in the CIA. There was a brilliant behavioral political scientist named Karl Deutsch. Hajo Holborn was a fine European historian. I took an introductory seminar taught by Brand Blanshard a wise and kind philosopher, brother of the controversial Paul Blanshard. Paul was known for rabid anti-Catholicism which brother Bland seemed not to share. John Perry Miller was an outstanding economist. Mary Wright was an eminent China historian, considered so good that Yale hired her husband, Arthur Wright another China scholar, in order to pry her away from Stanford. The professor who most influenced my life, however, and who I understand eventually committed suicide following a plagiarism scandal, was a less well-known figure: Harry Benda.

Harry Jindrich Benda taught Southeast Asian history. I took his course for a full year -- with David Ewing, whom I didn't really know at the time but with whom I later studied Chinese at the Foreign Service Institute. He was then a CIA guy, in deep cover, married to former Yale President Bart Giamatti's sister, also aunt of the actor Paul Giamatti. Harry Benda's class covered Southeast Asian history from Majapahit in Eastern Java in the 13th Century and the days of Portuguese and Dutch colonization to the present day, then the 1950's.

This was extraordinarily formative for me. Harry put great stress on post-colonial nationalism and the importance of charismatic leaders. He had been interned in the, then, Dutch East Indies during the War and devoted a lot of his lecture time to post-War Indonesia and Sukarno. Another figure to whom he devoted considerable time was Ho Chi Minh. As the Cold War was playing out in the region, he saw Sukarno as an independent figure playing off the Russians, Chinese and Americans for his own purposes. While the Eisenhower Administration viewed him with great suspicion and was investing in training the Indonesian military officers who ultimately overthrew Sukarno, Benda wasn't concerned. Nor did he worry about Thailand, which he thought would always be able to maintain its independence, no matter whether East or West prevailed in Asia. He spent a lot of time talking about Vietnam. We weren't really into it big time yet, but by the spring of 1961 we were beginning to head that way. Over and over again, Benda stressed his belief that -- no matter what we did -- Ho Chi Minh and the North

would ultimately prevail over Diem and his regime in the south. I believed him.

Ironically, I got a “C” in his course, which prevented me from graduating from Yale Cum Laude. I never understood that, because his final exam leaned heavily on material I had written about in my major paper for the course, on the Philippines, involving Jose Rizal, Emilio Aguinaldo and others from their era. On that paper, I’d received a straight “A”.

Regardless of the grade, that one course made a tremendous impression on me. As we got into the Vietnam War, Benda, with Mary Wright and Hans Morgenthau, was one of the “Teach-in” scholars opposing the war. He’d convinced me long before, and nothing I saw between then and the war’s final end in 1975, or learned of since, has persuaded me that he was wrong.

Q: Let me ask you this. By that time was the campus having to entertain the House Un-American Activities Committee, or was that over by then?

ROPE: I saw a movie on HUAC while I was at Yale, but the McCarthy era was over. I didn’t have much use for people like Noland, McCarran, and varieties of Republicans in the China Lobby, and I didn’t think it made much sense not to recognize “Red China.”

Q: Now in between your sophomore year and your junior year in 1960 you were in the Navy Reserve.

ROPE: Yes. I kind of fault my father for this. After I graduated from high school, I spent two summers living with the family in Paris and traveling in Europe with my sister and family. My Yale home address was Paris, which brings up a minor anecdote. My college roommate is a very fine, substantial person named William K Reilly, still one of my closest friends. He headed the EPA under George Bush senior and has made many contributions in the environmental field. He became my room-mate because he had requested international roommates before entering Yale. What he got was me, because I had an address in Paris, and another American whose father worked for Monsanto in Switzerland.

Q: How did you come to get into the Navy? ROTC?

ROPE: No. Not through ROTC. In Paris after my sophomore year, my father told, me that unless I was sure I was going to graduate school, which would exempt me from the military draft, I’d better think about getting into an officer candidate program; and he pushed that fairly hard. Not having any graduate school thoughts then, I listened. That fall I was recruited by a Yale Greek Classics instructor who was also a Naval Reserve officer into the Navy’s Reserve Officer Candidate (ROC) program. It offered the chance to go to Officer Candidate School (OCS) in Newport, R.I. during college summers rather than spend four months there after graduation. There were financial benefits to it that accrued to me throughout my Naval and Foreign Service careers and still work to my advantage in retirement. Since I would start active duty right after graduation, I would be able to end my tour in the summer, ready to go on to law school or other further

schooling if I so desired. The program did require that in my final two years at Yale I would attend weekly Naval Reserve meetings as a sailor; but the exposure to enlisted men ultimately proved useful when I was a division officer about ship.

In retrospect, ROC was a good move. I was accepted at Columbia business school after the Navy and could have gone there had I wished. I didn't want to go to law school even though I gained some experience a defense counsel and prosecutor in the Navy. I blame my father for pushing me into it, but I really value my naval experience and found it helpful throughout my Foreign Service career.

Q: Now in your Junior year, 1960, the American presidential election between Kennedy and Nixon took place. Were there responses to that on campus?

ROPE: Yes we were following it. Kennedy came to New Haven, and I saw his motorcade. The people who had most interested me, though, were experienced people in the Senate. One was Stuart Symington. The other was Lyndon Johnson, and I leaned toward him. I thought Kennedy was too inexperienced and didn't have much to say except slogans about "getting the country moving." His brother had some association with McCarthy. So I wasn't super pro-Kennedy, and even though I tended to be a Nixon Hater I'm not sure who I would have voted for had I been able to vote that year. I'm still not too keen on Kennedy, since I blame him for leading us into Vietnam. As for Nixon, in 1982 my boss John Holdridge and I had a two-on-one, hour-long meeting with him, and I was impressed. I couldn't be a Nixon hater anymore -- just viewed him, as I view Lyndon Johnson because of Vietnam, as a tragic, in Nixon's case tragically flawed, president.

Q: Is there anything more you'd like to say about Yale before we move to your Navy years?

ROPE: A couple more things. First, like most Yalies I've ever known, I love Yale. With the exception of trig and calculus, there's nothing I studied there that wasn't valuable; and the quality of the professors, my fellow students, and the entire atmosphere was wonderful. Second, because I only went home for summer vacations in my first two years, I spent a lot of time on the lesser vacations and long weekends traveling with, or doing things with, my Uncle Robert and Aunt Marian. Robert was a philanthropist with his own foundation and was a significant contributor to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Urban League, United Negro College Fund and other civil rights causes. I accompanied him and Aunt Marian to fund-raising events and had the opportunity to meet and talk with major African Americans of the day, including Thurgood Marshall, James Nabrit, president of Howard, Benjamin Mays, president of Morehouse College, Charlayne Hunter, who had broken the color barrier at the University of Georgia, and others. This experience reinforced my early childhood experiences. Until we had children, Priscilla and I "tithed" for the above causes, and we still support some of them today.

Q: Now June 1962 you graduate from Yale with a bachelor's degree in history. Did you go right into the Navy?

I didn't go in right after graduation after all. My orders seemed lost in the system. My parents were by then in Montreal, and I got a job on a French Canadian work gang. After about a month of not receiving orders, I went down to a Naval personnel office in New York and finally got an assignment to USS Coral Sea (CVA-43), an Aircraft Carrier home-ported in San Francisco. I wanted a West Coast ship because the action was in the Pacific. That's where the Korean War took place. Vietnam was not yet a war but it had that potential; and I had those connections I've mentioned with Japan. I had taken Benda's and Mary Wright's courses. Also, I'd seen a good bit of Europe and hadn't been to Asia.

Q: So you finally get orders. You had been to basic training so you are an Ensign, an officer. Where are you sent?

ROPE: In August 1962, Coral Sea was in drydock for a major overhaul. So I was sent first to San Diego for training to be an operations officer in Coral Sea's Combat Information Center (CIC). CIC is the radar center of a ship. It was ironic, because I nearly failed the OCS operations course; but when I had a Chief Petty Officer as a teacher in San Diego, rather than a Naval Reserve officer at Newport, I was able to get it right away. Then I had four weeks of air control school. The kind of air controller I became did not involve take-offs and landings. I learned to control fighter and strike pilots in the air. In those days, before the F-4 Phantom came in, Naval aircraft had very limited radar capabilities, and their pilots depended on a shipboard controller who could track enemy planes on radar and direct the pilots to intercepts. A good air controller, by watching blips on a radar and constantly communicating with his aircraft could bring the pilot in 2 miles astern and 2000 feet below an enemy aircraft from whence he could fire a missile and blow the "bogey" up. That's what I was trained to do.

By fall, I had joined Coral Sea in dry dock at Hunter's Point, a rundown area in South San Francisco where O.J. Simpson grew up and where there was a big naval repair facility. My 1,000 foot long carrier was in drydock when the Cuban Missile Crisis hit, and we stayed there until early 1963. During most of the drydock time I and my fellow officers had a wonderful time in San Francisco, playing touch football down in the Marina and frequenting saloons; but I spend some time in Yuma, Arizona practicing air controlling at a Marine Corps air station. The Marines were not impressive. They didn't pay close attention to altitude separations and other things that we were super careful about in the Navy. Once a Marine Corps pilot ejected in the desert, 60 miles north of Yuma. I saw his emergency signal and reported it, only to witness a shockingly lackadaisical response. The pilot was eventually picked up, but I couldn't believe how slow and casual the rescue effort was.

Coral Sea got out of drydock in January 1963. We spent several weeks in the San Diego area for "shake-down" and went aground on returning after our former Navy test pilot captain brought the ship into San Francisco Bay early on a foggy morning. He didn't stop a harbor pilot from conning the ship into a fog bank, which ultimately landing us on mud flats as we headed into Alameda. For me, the disaster had a positive outcome. I had been in my bunk when we went aground, but in the investigation following the grounding, my

boss, the CIC Officer, was faulted for not insisting that we stay with radar navigation, which the harbor pilot had virtually abandoned. That was unrealistic because the nature of San Francisco Bay made it very hard to navigate by radar; but my boss, while not cashiered like the ship's Captain, received a letter of censure, severely damaging his career. As a result, he decided that instead of having an enlisted person as a telephone talker on the bridge whenever we went in and out of port we would have an officer on the bridge to relay messages to the captain. As an Ensign, I became that officer and was on the Coral Sea bridge going into every port we visited in the Western Pacific including Sydney Australia. That was really a nice experience.

Q: Yeah that first cruise was a shellback cruise and you got as far as Australia. Now you would have had shore leave. What cities did you hit in Australia at that time?

ROPE: A Golden Shellback cruise. When navy people go south of the equator for the first time, they start out as "pollywogs" who must undergo an initiation by "Captain Neptune" at the equator. Then they are forever "shellbacks." In our case, Coral Sea crossed the equator precisely at the International Dateline, and pollywogs who are initiated there become "Golden Shellbacks." The ship actually stopped at that point for several hours, and I and other pollywogs had to crawl through tunnels of garbage and undergo other mild hazing before we could join the ranks of Golden Shellbacks upon kissing Neptunes' fat and grease-smeared belly. We then got to swim in the Pacific for a time before we headed on, through the actual Coral Sea, to Sydney. We went to Sydney for the Australian's annual Coral Sea week, celebrating the World War II Battle of the Coral Sea that stopped the Japanese advance toward Australia.

Given the name of my ship and the fact that Australians really remembered that battle, we were treated royally. People from all around New South Wales hosted sailors and officers from the ship. In our very large wardroom we had a long wall covered by invitations, to dances, theater, outings, outback sheep stations, and all manner of things. I saw sailors driven back to the ship in Mark X Jaguars. My officer friends and I quickly found that if we followed normal practice and didn't wear our uniforms on shore leave we wouldn't be recognized. In uniform, though, people would stop to express appreciation and give us rides wherever we wanted to go. One day my room-mate and I ran into a man who dropped everything and spent the whole day showing us around. He took us to his clubs and even gave us money to put in their slot machines. At the Sydney Zoo a woman came up to us and told us how wonderful it was when "our men were off fighting in New Guinea and the Yanks came!" I and another friend spent a day being taken to the Blue Mountains by two young ladies. It was wonderful. Sydney is a great place, to which I've since returned several times. I have warm feelings for Australia and Australians.

From there we went north along the eastern Indonesian archipelago up to the Philippines and the South China Sea. In those pre-Vietnam days we would have more time in port than out. We would be 17 days in Yokosuka, Japan and then out for 14. We went to the Philippines and Hong Kong, where, taking the Peak Tram, I thought how nice it would be to commute on it, which I was doing four years later as a visa officer assigned to Hong Kong. We went in and out of Japan. Akiko's family invited me to Tokyo, which gave me

Japanese people to associate with. At the Tamiya family house. I paid homage to Akiko's late father, for whom a small shrine had been constructed, with his photograph and some of his favorite things, including a bottle of Johnnie Walker Black Label scotch. I had wonderful experiences in Japan.

Q: Where else did you go?

ROPE: Sasebo in Kyushu, Beppu on Shikoku, and Iwakuni on Honshu. We cruised the inland sea. I visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Hiroshima makes quite an impression on you. In Nagasaki, they have a peace park. The bomb exploded north of industrial facilities it was supposed to hit there and wreaked tremendous destruction on a large residential area of wooden houses which were all incinerated. At ground zero there was a kind of green marble column; and what amazed me was the Japanese tourists lining up to have their pictures taken in front of it, all smiling. That was strange.

Q: So how long were you aboard ship then?

ROPE: Two years. We went out for that cruise in late April and returned in November. We did spend a lot of time in serious operations, and we lost a few pilots, after which we worked feverishly for days trying to find them. That was part of an air controller's job, talking to planes searching for survivors.

Q: Was the on board aircraft still the F-4 Phantom?

ROPE: We didn't have the F-4. We had the F-3H. I worked with Phantoms back in the States after that cruise, going to Point Mugu, south of Santa Barbara, for air controlling where we looked at giant maps and controlled planes in a completely different way. But the F-4 Phantom had a radar that wiped out the job of the air controller. It was supposed to be able to see an aircraft at 100 miles and lock onto it at 50, and it had a radar covering 45 degrees on either side of the center line. So it was like aiming a giant flashlight at something. And since the pilots could often see a target at 200 miles and lock on to it beyond 50, all you really did was head it in a "bogey's" direction and pretty soon the plane just took over. I was also a strike controller. Strike controllers kept in touch with attack aircraft en route to their targets. Because I did that on Coral Sea, I knew more than a few people killed in the early days of Vietnam because the ship was one of the two carriers that bombed North Vietnam after Pleiku in February 1965 when the war really began. I was off the ship by then, but I heard about it later from officers who were there.

Q: When did you leave the ship?

ROPE: August of '64. I was quite enamored of a young woman working in Washington whom I'd met when she was at Wellesley, and I wanted a transfer there. To get one, I would have to extend for a year in the Navy, and I was ready to do so for the right assignment. One of my fellow Navy Reserve Officer Candidates from Yale was in the Naval History Division, in the old Main Navy Building in Washington four blocks from where the object of my affections worked. He was working on Navy history by day and

studying for a Master's degree at Georgetown by night. By that time, I was trying to get into Foreign Service and, after failing my first oral exam because the panel found me weak in economics, I wanted to go back to school and build up my resume. So I sought and received an assignment to the Naval History Division and gained acceptance from Georgetown to study, half-time, for an M.A. in Government at night.

Q: Tell me about your experiences with the Foreign Service exam.

ROPE: I first took the written exam as a Yale senior, scoring a 69. Passing was 70. My roommate Reilly got a 69 too; but he had done junior year abroad in Paris and spoke French well enough to pass a language exam that got him five bonus points. He took the oral, but the examiners were very rough on him and flunked him. In retrospect, and given my own experience, that was an early indicator -- that I missed at the time -- of how deficient the Foreign Service entry process was. Bill Reilly was a terrific student. I could never keep up with him academically. And he was a terrific, popular guy who'd been president of his large high school class in Fall River, Massachusetts before doing very well at Yale. He was articulate, and attractive. Ultimately he became the head of EPA. Most recently he co-chaired the commission on the Deep Water Horizon Gulf oil spill with former Florida governor and Senator Bob Graham. He is a major figure in the environmental world. The Foreign Service didn't get him, which was a big loss for the Service though probably better for the country. Anyway, I failed on my first try.

Q: Was that the oral or the written?

ROPE: As I said, I first took the written at Yale and failed. In September 1962 I took it again in Los Angeles, scoring an 84, a big jump from my try at the beginning of senior year. I couldn't take the oral exam when it was originally scheduled, because I was on Coral Sea in the 7th Fleet. Instead I took it not long after President Kennedy was assassinated. I went home for Christmas on leave and then went to Washington, to see my Wellesley friend and take the oral.

My first question was, "Mr. Rope, if you go into the Foreign Service, are you willing to go wherever we may send you? Suppose you are assigned to be in charge of the motor pool in Kabul; what would you think about that?" I responded that I didn't think Foreign Service Officers were put in charge of motor pools; "But my answer," I said, "is that I will go where ever I am assigned." Then I was asked, "If you went to Kabul, what would clothes would you bring." My father had once been involved in developing a relief globe of the world, and I remembered that Afghanistan is on a high plateau where it would have to be cold at times. I knew it was hot there as well. So I said, "I'd want my summer clothes; but I'd want my winter clothes, too." Later, I found they didn't know whether I knew where Kabul was. They hadn't asked me that.

Then I got creamed on economics. The examiners wanted to know about the gold flow, i.e., balance of payments problem, then an issue for the Kennedy Administration. I didn't understand it at all -- didn't know if it actually involved physically shipping gold out of the country or what. I didn't know what the U.S. gross national product was. I knew what

GNP and GDP were, because I had taken a course in economics at Yale; but on a whole raft of detailed economic questions I was not on top of things. At the end, when asked to make a final statement, I said their decision to ask me a lot of questions about economics made me feel their aim was to probe areas of weakness. I had some in that area, I said, particularly because it had been a few years since I took economics at Yale. Nevertheless, I said, I felt this was an area where I could bring myself up to speed quickly.

I had hoped, I said, that they would ask me about some of the current issues facing American foreign policy, such as Vietnam. I had taken Southeast Asian history at Yale, I said, and had some views in that area I would like to have shared because I felt was an area of strength for me. If I passed, I said, I would go into the Foreign Service. If I didn't I might take the exam again.

Afterwards, the chief examiner told me I had failed. About economics, he said, "You can't be so cavalier. It's a serious subject." Then he asked me if I knew where Kabul was? I said, "Yes, it's the capital of Afghanistan." "Well we didn't know that," he said. I replied that I would have told them but they didn't ask. When I said I'd take it again, he said "we didn't get that impression at all." That night I went to dinner at the house of Bob Frowick, an FSO whom I'd known since he worked for my father in Montreal. He was very much involved in the creation of the ideas for CSCE as a desk officer in EUR, and he ultimately became an ambassador dealing with issues in the Balkans for CSCE's successor organization, OSCE. His brother was the late Halston Frowick, the famous designer.

At Frowick's house that night I was pretty depressed. After listening to my story, Bob said, "You didn't tell them you would definitely take the exam again?" I said, "No." Then he gave me a lecture essentially telling me that I had failed to "beg" the board to let me in and that I had better do so next time around.

This was the background for my decision to come to Washington and extend for a year in the Navy. I came back to DC, enrolled at Georgetown, took one international economics course there, read economics books on my own, and read the Wall Street Journal daily. When I took the Foreign Service written exam for the third time, in the fall of 1964, I only scored a 76; but that got me a second oral exam in the summer of 1965.

At the beginning of that exam, the first question was "Mr. Rope, the last time you were here, you didn't know what the gross national product of the United States was. Can you tell us what it is today?" I looked at the panel and said, "The gross national product of the United States, according to the Chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisors Mr. Gardner Ackley, will reach an annual rate of \$660 billion by the end of this year." I had read that in the Wall Street Journal a few days before. The panel members looked at one another, and none of them knew. "I think it was 500 billion under Eisenhower," one said. Another said, "I think he might be right." I said, "I'm pretty sure I am right." "Well you should know," one replied; and that was the end of the economics questions. Instead, I got creamed on Latin American Culture by a USIS member of the panel. One question was "What was Falla's relationship to Latin America?" I didn't really have an answer for that, but I did know who Falla was, and, given the Kabul experience,

made sure to let the panel know that. “Manuel De Falla,” I said. “Spanish composer. I don’t know. What was Beethoven’s relationship to Germany?” It turns out that was not a bad response. Beethoven used folk music as inspiration for things he wrote and, I later found out, Falla did the same thing with South American dances.” Anyway I got creamed on South American culture.

When it came time for my closing statement, I had prepared a speech, making sure to follow Frowick’s advice to “beg.” I had long wanted, I said, to dedicate myself to a career in the Foreign Service and would work hard to do my very best at it. I recited the things I had done leading to that moment: majoring in history at Yale while also taking political science courses; taking and retaking the Foreign Service Exam; spending an extra year in the Navy so I could come to Washington and study at Georgetown for an MA at night; reading up on economics in my spare time; etc. I would be 26 years old the next summer, I said, when it would be time to leave the Navy, and this was my third time going through the examination process. If the panel did not believe I should pass this time, I said, that would tell me that I just wasn’t qualified and should pursue another path. A door stood before me that I wanted to enter, I said; and it would either open or close for me that day, depending on their decision.

I passed. The chairman of the board told me “It was close; but we were impressed by your motivation.” Begging worked! Subsequently, I advanced faster than anyone in my A-100 class except for one fellow, Dennis Papendick, who’d been an Army supply officer and became an administrative officer. Eventually I overtook him, and then Tezi Schaffer finally passed me up. But I advanced faster than all the rest; and to this day that still angers me. I liked being faster, but if the examination process was a good one, and it took me three tries and some begging to be accepted, why, when I finally did get in, did I outdo almost everyone in my A-100 class? Initially I thought maybe it was an emphasis on geographic distribution in the Kennedy Administration.

Later I came to realize that the last thing any sharp FSO would want to do to further his or her advancement in the Foreign Service would be to receive an assignment to the Board of Examiners. In 1976, when I served on the old FSO-3 to FSO-4 promotion panel, I found that one way to learn if somebody was in trouble was if the person was suddenly moved to the Board of Examiners. Two years later, when someone working for me suddenly lost his security clearance because he was under suspicion, he was assigned to the Board of Examiners. Still later I replaced an Office Director who suffered from an ultimately fatal brain tumor and had lost some of his short-term memory. His ongoing assignment? The Board of Examiners! My conclusion is that the State Department, at least during my time, was picking the worst or the weakest to select the best. One last note that I consider very relevant: during my junior year in college I went to a recruiting session with a visiting Foreign Service Examiner. The man looked at those in attendance, which included several women, and said, “I’m glad to see so many women here today. We have excellent positions for secretaries in the Foreign Service” At that time Yale was not co-ed. The women present were all graduate students. What more need I say?

Q: We are returning to our conversation with Bill Rope. It is 23 March. Bill, in our last

session you spoke about your times on USS Coral Sea and your extension for a fourth year in the Navy so you could have a second assignment, to Washington. How did you actually get that assignment?

ROPE: Coral Sea had one aircraft of its own. With the exception of that plane, when we were operating at sea our aircraft came from shore-based squadrons that flew out to the carrier and operated with us until our mission was completed. Then they flew back to home bases. The ship's one plane was a stubby two engine plane called the "COD," standing for Carrier On-board Delivery. When we were at sea, it would fly to shore bases to pick up mail, supplies and people and bring them out to the ship.

In January 1964, several officers who were also pilots took the COD on a training/business flight to Washington. I hitched a ride, as I did on military aircraft from time to time, generally on official travel. That's how I did my round-trip to Yuma. In this case, my reason was to go to the Bureau of Personnel (BUPERS) in Washington to seek a Naval History Division assignment. It was not hard to get. My record was good enough to garner me an offer of a regular, i.e., career Navy, commission; and while BUPERS would rather have me take a more career-enhancing assignment, if I was willing to give the Navy another year I could have what I wanted.

Q: So you transferred to Washington.

ROPE: In July 1964, I left Coral Sea and drove to Washington, stopping in Shreveport to see my maternal grandfather and step-grandmother. On the day I reported to work and met my new colleagues, the Tonkin Gulf Incident was all over the news. Six months later, US involvement in Vietnam began in earnest when Coral Sea and USS Hancock were ordered to bomb north in retaliation for the attack on the US base at Pleiku; but I was no longer on the ship. While I owed the Navy an extra year, my extension had the unexpected side effect of keeping me out of the war, and for Coral Sea, in those early days, it was particularly tough. No one had anticipated the amount and nature of anti-aircraft fire North Vietnamese gunners could put up, and many friends and people I respected, including squadron leaders, were killed, some flying straight into the ground. At one point Coral Sea stayed on what was called "Yankee Station" for 60 straight days engaging in combat. As friends from the ship passed through Washington over the summer, of 1965, I learned the details. My air controller friends heard the screams of hit pilots over the radio until things got so bad the strike communications frequency we used to keep in touch with them was shut down. I believed what was happening was all wrong, but I think I'll stop here.

Q: OK, fair enough. The job at the history division, let me ask two things. First of all, where was the job, and then what was the job?

ROPE: The Naval History Division was part of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO); but we weren't with CNO over in the Pentagon. We were in the Main Navy Building, built in 1918 as "temporary" housing for the War Department -- the Defense Department of that time. Main Navy lasted until 1970 when it was torn down to

make way for what is now Constitution Gardens. The only landmark from my days there is a small stone house at the southwest corner of 17th and Constitution, situated about 30 yards from where I used to enter and exit the building.

I was in charge of history graphics, especially photographic and art reproductions going back to Matthew Brady's Civil War work, and -- particularly for paintings -- to the time of John Paul Jones. I provided graphics for various Division publications and for historians and researchers in general. I sent a lot of items out to schools and organizations across the country that wanted to display naval photos or art. The head of the division, a "tombstone" Admiral who received his rank only on retirement from active duty, was Donald Eller, a friend of a famous CNO of the 1950s, Arleigh, "31-knot," Burke. Eller was not a trained historian. We had some of them on the staff, but "NAVHISTDIV" was in no way similar to the Army's serious and well-respected history branch. For the most part, what we did was not so much history as PR; and much of what we did reinforced my view, already formed on Coral Sea where I saw millions of dollars wasted, that there was a lot of "fat" in the military budget (my experience at the National War College later in life reinforced this impression, which I still have today).

In any case, I became familiar with a great deal of the photographic record of the Navy, in the Division's own files, at the Washington Navy Yard, and in the National Archives, ten blocks down Constitution Avenue from our building. I drafted a lot of the admiral's prolific correspondence, on all manner of things. It was a very strange place with very odd characters, and I could tell many funny stories about it; but it gave me a 9-5 job with no work to take home. That enabled me to pursue my studies at Georgetown. It also taught me a lot about basic things like how to handle Congressional correspondence and other administrative and government procedural matters that served me well when I was a Vice Consul drafting letters to Senators and Representatives and in the years that followed.

Q: Tell us about your studies at Georgetown; and where did you live?

ROPE: I had already been accepted at Georgetown as a Master's degree student in Government before arriving in Washington. At that time, and perhaps still today -- I don't know -- Georgetown's graduate classes, at least in the Government Department, were all held in the evening. I took a half-time course load per semester and had access to all facilities at Georgetown as well as to my office and the library at the Naval History Division, where sometimes I would go to do research at night. With two other young men, I rented a house in Georgetown on the Southwest corner of 29th and Olive Streets, and I could walk back and forth to my classes. A neighboring house was rented by young women who worked on Capitol Hill. One of them was Mary Jo Kopechne, who later died in Senator Ted Kennedy's car at Chappaquiddick. She was a nice, upright and honorable young woman. I could never forgive "Teddy" for the way he left her to die.

Q: What kind of courses would you be taking for this Masters?

ROPE: Primarily political science. I didn't care for Georgetown much and never had a

course that equaled even those I took as a Yale freshman with graduate instructors or seminar leaders. But I did have some interesting courses. One covered post-War international economic institutions -- Breton Woods, Marshall Plan, UNRRA, US foreign aid, IMF, IBRD, etc. It was taught by John Foster Dulles' sister, Eleanor Lansing Dulles. She was a strong, intelligent, experienced woman whom I liked very much; and she ultimately became the mentor for my MA thesis. Associations with her gave me an insight into the Dulles family. I even met with her once in Allen Dulles' Georgetown home. I took a pretty good course in American diplomatic history from professor Jules Davids. Jan Karski, a Pole who'd been a courier and spy for the Polish underground in World War II, was an interesting teacher. He'd been caught by the Nazis, and his face and frame still showed the results of torture. I took a short course on Latin America and the Organization of American States.

I also had some very annoying courses. One was an international relations class taught by a right wing, opinionated professor named Atkinson, the quality of whose presentations I'd rank slightly better than those of Rush Limbaugh today. I had a very weak course, taught by a pompous professor, on Marxism. I'd taken an excellent multidisciplinary course on Marxism at Yale, and I asked to be exempted from taking this required course at Georgetown. The department head told me, "This is graduate school, my boy," and said I had to take it. It was mostly a waste. I did learn something from a paper I wrote on the 20th Party Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, at which Khrushchev delivered his famous "Secret Speech" exposing the crimes of Stalin.

Q: You mentioned a thesis with Eleanor Dulles as your advisor. What was it?

ROPE: It started out to be a study of US foreign aid in an Asian country and ended as an account of the coming independence to Burma and the early years of Burmese independence, up through the end of democratic government with a military coup led by General Ne Win. This included US efforts to assist the new Burmese government, through Mutual Security Agency assistance and aid from follow-on US agencies. I wrote about Aung San and U Nu and other early leaders. Aung San was Burma's revolutionary hero, assassinated at the dawn of independence. Aung San Su Chi, current leader of Myanmar is his daughter. Though I finished my course work by the end of 1965 and passed my orals for the Master's degree in early 1966, I was still working on this thesis as a junior officer in Hong Kong. I didn't get the degree until January 1970.

Q: You were mentioning to me a course in Latin America. Did you have one specifically on Asia?

ROPE: I took the Latin America course because I'd never studied the region, though I'd traveled there with my Uncle Robert, and was only generally familiar with the history and framework of US relations with the region. My diplomatic history course touched on Asia -- John Hay and the Open Door Policy, Teddy Roosevelt. The story about when the secretary of the Navy was away and Teddy sent out instructions to Admiral Dewey's fleet and so on. And there was my thesis on Burma that required a lot of research into World War II issues in the China-Burma-India theater. That involved reading about the post-war

history of the region and US relations with it. One sidelight was that I read many news items from the 1950s by journalists like Tilman Durdin and others whom I later got to know as a China-watcher in Hong Kong.

Again, the university course that had the greatest impact on my thinking about Asia was Harry Benda's at Yale.

Q: Now as you are performing your Navy job and you are taking courses, what is your status with the Foreign Service?

ROPE: Trying to get in and then waiting to enter. As I noted earlier, at the end of my second oral exam, in the summer of 1965, I followed Bob Frowick's advice and made my rehearsed "begging" speech. The Board chairman said it was "close," but my motivation had impressed them. I still had a year in which to complete my Navy service while the usual pre-entry things like a Security interview and background check, physical exam, etc. were done. After finishing active duty in the Navy in July 1966, I had a few months off and then entered the A-100 Course in October. By the way, the romance that originally brought me to Washington quickly fizzled; but I owe that woman a lot. I didn't have to participate in a war I didn't believe in; I met Priscilla Barnard, who became my wife, a few months after I joined the Foreign Service; I learned a lot about the ways of Washington; and I succeeded in becoming an FSO.

Q: So you joined the 75th A-100 class in October, '66. According to my records that was a fairly large class.

ROPE: There were a lot of us. Before we get to that, I want to digress on something I just mentioned. About the time my active duty service ended, in mid-summer 1966, I was introduced, on a blind date, to Priscilla. I took her to a play named "Rope." When I asked her if she'd like to see a play with a title that was also my last name, she said, "Well. If there was a play named 'Barnard,' I'd certainly want to see it!" That was the first indication I had that Priscilla was not shy!

The mutual friend who introduced us knew I was joining the Foreign Service and interested in studying Chinese. Priscilla had studied some Chinese at the University of Connecticut; and after graduation she took a job at the National Security Agency (NSA), where she studied Chinese and worked in a section dealing with China. She hated NSA and left; but her interest in China and Chinese remained.

Q: Okay. So about the 75th A-100 class, did anyone ever tell you why it was so large?

ROPE: No.

Q: There was an article in the State Department newsletter saying one of the aspects of this class was that there were an unusually high percentage of females, 12 women in a class of 64 people.

ROPE: Well, that was great, although not many of those women had full Foreign Service careers, also true of many men in our class. I've already told you what the BEX member who came to recruit people at Yale said, as he saw a number of graduate student women in the room, "We have excellent positions for secretaries in the Foreign Service." I never forgot that. I remember it as vividly as if it were yesterday. My mother was a working woman; and I couldn't abide a statement like that being made by an FS recruiter. I'm going to jump ahead now to 1976 when I served on the FSO-4 to the FSO 3 promotion board, now the FSO-2 to FSO-1 promotion board.

On that board, we had guidance encouraging us to look with favor on women. It was clearly part of a continuing effort to make up for discrimination against women forced -- before a rule change in the late 1960s, I think -- to resign from the Service when marrying another FSO. While it was true that the rule only stipulated that one of two future engaged FSOs must resign, it wasn't the males who ended up doing it. By 1976 those women, who had resigned in such circumstances and who wished to resume their careers had been reinstated and had also been given promotions they would normally have received had they not had a break in service. Still, we had the guidance I've mentioned, and I took it seriously. So did another member of the board, a former colleague from our original USLO Beijing group, Virginia Schafer -- ultimately Ambassador to Papua New Guinea. Virginia and I worked hard to secure promotions for quite a few women that year, including several who later became leaders in the Department. As I said, I never forgot what the BEX member said at Yale.

Q: So, to come back to your A-100 class. When you walked into the room and started taking classes with these people, how did the other people strike you? Were they coming through the same knothole that you did, or were people coming with different backgrounds. Did people stand out in one way or another?

ROPE: To be perfectly honest when I started looking at my colleagues in that class I couldn't understand why it had been so hard for me to get into the Foreign Service. They were a geographically diverse group, with some women -- but only two African Americans. I had heard that, in the Kennedy years, there was an emphasis on geographic distribution, and I think that may have worked against applicants perceived to be from the East coast establishment or the Ivy League. I don't know whether that worked against me, and I know there were at least six other Ivy League graduates in our class. I also know that when I got to the higher echelons of the State Department there were a lot of Yalies up there -- Jerry Bremer, Al Adams, Ray Seitz, and a good number of others.

I had some good friends in the A-100 class. Unfortunately, quite a few resigned within two years. I think they were turned off, understandably, by the practice of putting brand new officers into visa work for their first two years. I had long known that was the case and planned simply to do my best at it and put it behind me.

Overall, we had some who were very bright people in the 75th A-100 class and some who struck me as quite average. Some, like me, had been in the military. I've mentioned Dennis Papendick, who'd been in the army supply corps. He became an administrative

officer, was promoted rapidly, and had a good career. Another classmate who did well was Teresita Currie. She already spoke 5 languages. In time she married FSO Howie Schaffer and served as a DAS in the NEA Bureau. She's now retired Ambassador Tezi Schaffer. I think she was Ambassador to Pakistan, though I could be wrong.

Q: You have gone through academic experience. You have gone through the Navy experience. What would you finally say about the A-100 class as an introduction to the Foreign Service.

ROPE: It was valuable, though I don't remember a lot of specifics. We were assigned projects dealing with different kinds of foreign affairs challenges and Foreign Service work, all to be done in teams and presented by teams. We got to know one another. Bonding and developing cooperative relationships in organizations is valuable. To digress again, there's a great teacher at Murch Elementary School where I substitute teach a lot, Victoria Otten. When I first met her I asked if she was Al Otten's daughter. She was pleased to meet someone who had met her father, and we became friends. Al Otten covered the White House for the Wall Street Journal and made a particularly strong impression on me in an evening session our A-100 class had with him at State. We had other kinds of programs that introduced us to people in the Department and on Capitol Hill. Recently I ran into a retired FSO named Dan Sullivan who didn't remember me -- for good reason. We never worked together; but I remembered him because I was sent to call on him as an A-100 student. He was Indonesia desk officer, and he told me what his job entailed. There was lots of practical stuff like that.

Q: Come to the end of the six week A-100 class, it is assignment time. Did they give you a list and you made choices or was it just the fickle finger of fate?

ROPE: We were allowed to voice our hopes for assignment. I wanted to go to Asia. That was where the wars happened as I was growing up. While I remember WWII, I was post-war in terms of schooling and Naval experience. To me, Asia was where the action was. My father had served in Japan and I had the childhood interest that resulted from that. I loved my own time in Japan and learned a little Japanese when I was there as a naval officer. But I felt that to be a Japan specialist you should understand economics well, and I had not done so well as an FSO candidate -- though in that second oral I didn't get any more economic questions after I quoted Gardner Ackley. What I did know something about was developing country economics. I had also been to Hong Kong and looked across the border at "Red China." The Cultural Revolution had started and was weirdly fascinating. I had long thought it was a mistake for the US to refuse to recognize or do business with Communist China.

So I expressed a desire to study Mandarin and be assigned to Hong Kong. We had all taken a language aptitude test called MLAT, and I had a very high score. That helped me get my wish. The assignment changed my life.

Q: As one who served in China, I know what you mean.

ROPE: There's one more thing to note -- pressure to go to Vietnam. This is probably in the records of the State Department, but a number of my fellow male FSOs in A-100 -- specifically including young Martin Cooper in my class -- were still eligible for the draft. The State Department could intervene with draft boards and get FSOs deferments, much as college students received, but only on one condition: they'd have to accept assignment to Vietnam as FSOs. I remember Marty Cooper specifically telling me this. I didn't have to worry about it, because I had fulfilled my military obligation; and I had no desire to go to Vietnam. I disagreed with our policy and was opposed to what President Johnson was doing. This was not due to any love for the North Vietnamese. I felt the war was unwinnable and did not accept the "Domino Theory." So to me it was immoral to be fighting it.

Q: About that time when you went off to language training would that be the same building that they were teaching Vietnamese in?

ROPE: Yes and my linguist, Chuck Sheehan, was actually a Vietnam linguist. There were loads of people studying Vietnamese -- some of them very committed, telling me we'd have to be there for decades. I didn't argue with them or say much. I studied Chinese.

Q: Now was this your first exposure to Chinese instruction?

ROPE: Yes.

Q: How did it go?

ROPE: I had an unusual program. Most FSOs going into Chinese language training had been through at least one Foreign Service tour and had, in effect, proven themselves. They were assigned to a full Chinese language course consisting of a year at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) in Washington followed by 18 months at FSI's overseas school in Taichung, Taiwan -- in the 1980s, I believe, it moved to Taipei. Because I was a new FSO, I was only given six months of language training, after which I'd be a consular officer in Hong Kong. I made it my goal to get off "language probation" within those six months.

Q: Tell me about that.

ROPE: I don't know if it still pertains, but in those days when you entered the Foreign Service you took a test in any language you had studied. I had studied French and Spanish in college but didn't do well enough in either language to score a grade of S-3/R-3, which was the requirement in a non-"hard language" to exempt a new officer from "language probation." S-3/R-3 meant professional proficiency in speaking and reading a language. Being on language probation limited an officer's promotion chances until he or she could get off it by passing a language test at the level required. It may have been that one couldn't get promoted at all until one was off probation.

In any case, I made it my goal in Chinese to get off language probation. Chinese was

classified as a “hard language,” and it was! To get off probation in Chinese one needed only an S-2 -- a Spoken-2. That meant one had “conversational ability,” not professional competence, and one didn’t have to be able to read. While that might seem like a low bar, it was incredibly hard to achieve in six months; and while my teachers thought it might be attainable for me, it was far from certain.

I was a lone student. I had four hours of one-on-one tutoring in oral Chinese, per day, coupled with four hours of language lab work, listening to and repeating passages on tape. Then I would go home and spend four hours a night memorizing increasingly long passages that I would recite the next day. All were in Pinyin, the Romanization system used in the Chinese mainland. I did this for six months. Chinese is a tonal language without a single English cognate; and it’s incredibly hard to study day-in-day-out with scarcely a break. Those six months were the closest I ever came to having a nervous breakdown; but I was determined to get off language probation and I did, scoring an S-2 in June 1967. I should note that shortly after I joined the A-100 class I proposed to Priscilla, and she accepted; and shortly after I started Chinese training we were married. It was her support that got me through my final months at FSI.

Q: I can assure you getting an S-2 in that time was an awesome accomplishment.

ROPE: You know. You’ve been through Chinese training.

Q: I have been through it on the academic side as well as the FSI side.

ROPE: I tried to imagine myself as a baby trying to learn how to talk. I tried to sit, relax my muscles and just watch the mouths and listen to the sounds of my teachers. I had the famous Ms. Ouyang, at the time known by her married name as Chao Taitai, and Li Tsung Mi, along with one other teacher, Ms. Lin. To some degree I was able to craft my own course. After a couple of months, instead of just doing all memorization, Ouyang and Li agreed I could have one hour of free conversation a day. That helped a lot.

Q: Now at that time how extensive was the Chinese program? I mean you are a single student but were there other students in Chinese for the longer course?

ROPE: A few. Richard Llewellyn Williams and Alan Romberg -- whom I greatly admire and whose friendship I have greatly valued over the years, particularly when I was running the China desk and he was State department spokesman. Al, Dick Williams, a USIS officer named Talbot Huey, a CIA officer named David Ewing and a couple of others. Huey and an older officer named Bill Keogh were occasionally thrown into my conversation class toward the end. Bill was a USIS officer who went on to Hong Kong as Cultural Affairs Officer -- a very nice man. By the time I got to FSI Taichung in 1969, after working two years in Hong Kong and studying written Chinese on the side, there were a lot more students, though the teaching method was still one-on-one tutorial. Even then, State students weren’t numerous. There were many more other-agency students, particularly CIA.

Q: Well you have been assigned to Hong Kong as a consular officer. Before you go to Hong Kong what were you told your duties were going to be like?

ROPE: I don't know that I was told. My assignment was to be a consular officer, and I'd been through the State consular course between A-100 and Mandarin language training. I was pretty sure I'd be a visa officer.

Q: Immigrant or nonimmigrant?

ROPE: I don't know if that was specified, but I did immigrant visa work for the better part of my first year.

Q: So in June you finish up your language training and move to Hong Kong. Correct?

ROPE: Yes. We sold our cars, did all the usual packing up things, said good bye to friends and Priscilla's parents, sister and brother-in-law, and flew off to Hong Kong via Fiji, Sydney and Melbourne, Australia.

Q: Why that route?

ROPE: My father was still in the Foreign Service and was Deputy Principal Office in Melbourne. He and my mother hadn't been able to attend our wedding and hadn't met Priscilla. So we spent ten days or so in Australia, with two days in Fiji en route. Then we flew to Hong Kong, via Darwin, arriving either in early July.

Q: That was a slightly difficult time in Hong Kong wasn't it? Spill-over from the Cultural Revolution?

ROPE: Yes. It was called "The Troubles." Communists in Hong Kong, no doubt with Mainland instigation, had organized demonstrations in the spring, and the British had been pretty tough in dealing with them, including killing some of the demonstrators. In response, the Communists -- I don't know much about the details and exactly who were the organizers -- were running a kind of low grade guerilla campaign against the British. It would be called a "terrorist" campaign today, and it consisted of placing small bombs around the Hong Kong, on both sides of the harbor. Mostly, the bombs didn't do great harm; but sometimes they did, and they kept the British military busy defusing them. There were something like 400 bombs that were either set off or found and defused between the spring and late summer of 1967. We spent our first two months living in the Mandarin Hotel, in the Central District. I remember one time watching out our window as the streets were cleared for a bomb found at a trolley stop and disposed of by the military. Also, the Mainland, which was the chief source of water for the Colony, cut off water deliveries, leaving the Colony dependent on its reservoirs, already low in the summer of 1967. Water was rationed and turned on only every few days. People kept supplies in their bathtubs. For most of that, we were in the Mandarin, where the water kept running for the tourists.

The troubles had a tremendous impact on the Hong Kong economy. There had already been a big real estate bubble, and as the Cultural Revolution raged in the Mainland, and the marches and bombings occurred, there was a lot of capital flight out of Hong Kong, along with a real estate depression. One beneficial side-effect was that the Consulate General was able to sign long-term leases on some very desirable apartments at very low rents; and we benefitted from that. In August we moved into a newly-leased two-bedroom apartment at Mid-level, looking down on the Hong Kong harbor. I commuted on the Peak Tram. One night we were woken up by a huge explosion. Our bedroom balcony looked down on the Royal Navy Commodore's house, and the sound came from that direction. It turned out to be a small bomb, placed in a culvert just up the peak from the Commodore. No harm, but the culvert greatly magnified the noise.

The troubles ended not long after that when a bomb went off killing two children. The bad publicity from that seemed too much for the perpetrators, and they stopped. The Mainland also turned on the water. It was said that Premier Zhou Enlai, who had the unenviable task of trying to hold things in China together as Mao and his allies wreaked havoc on the country, knew Hong Kong was too important to China economically and intervened to stop what was going on.

Q: Let's get to your job. Was Hong Kong a pretty typical visa mill situation? A lot of applicants with only a few people getting through?

ROPE: Yes, but it had its own characteristics. There indeed were a lot of applicants, and there was also a large and unusual backlog of applications, from people who had been trying for years to get visas, or who had tried in the past and either been refused after lengthy investigations or had their applications sit in limbo, neither approved nor disapproved. Many of these applicants had thick files held at the Consulate General, in contrast to those at other US posts where, using the "Montreal System," visa applicants were responsible for keeping their own documents and bringing them to the visa officer when required. The many refusals or lack of approvals in Hong Kong generated many letters to members of Congress from relatives in the States, or lawyers, or others interested in those cases, resulting in lots of letters from Representatives and Senators for us to answer. There was growing pressure from the Hill for increased rates of immigrant visa issuance in Hong Kong, and Senator Edward Kennedy was beginning to talk of passing a refugee bill to override normal visa rules and allow large numbers of Chinese in Hong Kong to emigrate to the US.

The underlying reason for Hong Kong's backlog was a long history of Chinese visa and immigration fraud, largely based on claimed relationships between Chinese-Americans in the US and Chinese residing in four counties near Hong Kong -- Sunhui, Chungshan, Hoiping and Toishan. Before the reforms of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, the vast majority of Chinese Americans were descended from people living in those four counties; and the pattern of fraud involved had caused the Hong Kong Consulate General to be extremely demanding in its requirements for evidence to prove that the relationships claimed by applicants were legitimate.

This was greatly complicated by the fact that many Chinese people, born in a chaotic time of foreign invasion and civil war, did not have birth certificates, or at least ones that could easily be determined to be legitimate. This made letters exchanged with relatives over time one key way to prove relationships. However, letters were rendered suspicious in the eyes of many consular officers by the pattern of visa fraud existing before 1965. In those days, Chinese from the four counties had developed a system to get around the obstacles to Chinese immigration embodied in the old Asian exclusion acts. It involved false reporting, generally by Chinese males living in the US, of “sons” born in China during trips home. After reporting these “sons” to the INS, the individual in the US would write regular “letters” back to them, sending them to a mail drop run by a broker in one of the four counties. After 18 or so years, these accumulated letters could be sold by the broker to a young Chinese male desiring to emigrate to the US and used as proof of the claimed relationship when applying for a visa.

All of this was laid out in an internal State Department report authored by FSO Everett Drumright -- eventually US Ambassador to the Republic of China -- when he was a consular officer in Hong Kong. It concluded, among other things, that in order for all Chinese Americans living in the U.S. at one point to be legal, every Chinese woman who had been able to emigrate to the United States would have had to have borne at least eight hundred children. Something like that. The “Drumright Report” was virtually of required reading in the Hong Kong Consular Section.

In any case, our file cabinets were crammed with the files of applicants who were virtually in limbo. Many of these files contained fascinating stories of the lives of would-be immigrants in the early days of the People’s Republic. Indeed, they offered a real glimpse into the lives of ordinary Chinese living through the tumultuous period in which landlords were “struggled,” involving beatings, killings, and vendettas of all kinds. Along with this were records of raids made by FSOs from a special operations section that existed in the Consulate General in the 1950s -- FSOs and others breaking into people’s apartments, reporting the escapes of inhabitants running out back doors, and so on.

Against this background, while the new immigration act of 1965 greatly increased the number of Chinese who could apply for and receive visas, the Consulate General’s strict standards for proof of relationships remained. This led to large numbers of visa refusals, despite the fact that the US relatives of applicants had succeeded in gaining approved INS visa petitions on their behalf. Petitioners, of course, had to satisfy INS of a relationship’s legitimacy before INS would approve a petition; and the Department’s rules specified that an approved INS petition should be taken as prima facie evidence that a relationship existed. ConGen Hong Kong, however, refused to do that.

Q: How big was the visa section?

ROPE: There were five of us doing immigrant visas and three doing non-immigrant visitor visas.

Q: That is a fairly large number of officers. Who all were your colleagues?

ROPE: Jerry Ogden, Ovsana Harpootian, Carl McCollum, Steve Hobart, and Mike Milner are five IV officers I remember. Mike Cella was another, though she also did somewhat clerical officer in the office. Mike Milner, a very sincere, intelligent and dedicated individual, became a good friend. He committed suicide ten months after my arrival, and that was very traumatic for me. On the NIV side, the chief was Dick Schenk, later replaced by Ralph Estling. There were others in the section, but I don't remember their names at the moment. Yes, I remember one more. I think his name was Jay Cox. My immediate boss was Sam Karp, a veteran consular officer whom I liked. Above him was Walter Burke, and above him was the Consular Section Chief, Roy Tasco Davis, an enjoyable and amusing man, replaced sometime after my first six months by Tom DeHart.

Q: And how did you feel about the way the work of your section was going.

ROPE: I formed some very definite views as I did this work and watched would-be immigrants be refused with great regularity, often harshly or hostilely by some of my colleagues. My conclusion was that, while it was true that the claims of some of those who came before us might be fraudulent, even recognizing that they had INS-approved visa petitions, by 1967 a large number of Chinese had succeeded in emigrating to the US legally through post-War and post-Chinese Civil War programs, or through a refugee program in Hong Kong in the mid-sixties; or as a result of the naturalization of students who had come from China and never gone back. To me it was obvious that such US citizens would have more than a few parents, brothers and sisters still living in China for whom they could legitimately file immigrant visa petitions. So one might logically conclude that the majority of applicants we saw were in fact legitimate. Yet our practice was to view most, if not all, immigrant visa applicants with great suspicion.

It was also clear that pressures from Washington for increased visa issuance were steadily building. This was conveyed to us not only by a visit from the Department's visa department chief B.J. Harper but in a series of advisory legal opinions from the Department reminding us that INS-approved visa petitions were to be accepted as prima facie evidence of relationship and stating that our principal job was to satisfy ourselves that applicants qualified under all other aspects of the visa law. While these admonitions would generally be sent to us in regard to specific visa cases, it was clear we were being told to stop being so rigid and issue more visas. In the background, as I've said, was the possibility of a Ted Kennedy-sponsored refugee program that would force our hand in any case.

Q: Did you make these views known? What was your own practice as a visa officer?

ROPE: I was only in my first year as an FSO, and just learning. As I grew increasingly confident and confident of my analysis of the situation, I made my views known to colleagues and superiors; but they were generally ignored, and I did not press the matter. Consular officers have a great deal of autonomy in making visa decisions, so I simply made my own decisions with the conclusions I've describe in mind. Walter Burke, in

particular was not a fan of such thinking.

Then in September of 1968, Tom Dehart sent a memo to the Visa Section calling for a sharp rise in visa issuance and overtime work, if necessary, to accomplish it. I saw that as an opening to lay out all my thinking in writing.

I sent Tom, through Sam Karp and Walter Burke, a seven page memo telling him I did not believe we could achieve his desired objective, regardless of how much overtime we put in, so long as we continued to demand the levels of proof of relationships that we had been requiring. I reviewed the communications we'd received from the Department, and advocated a radical change: that we simply agree with the advisory opinions we'd been receiving and accept INS visa petitions at face value. Once we made such a change, I argued, there would be a large reservoir of visa applicants in our backlogged case files whose applications could be approved, meeting the goal of increased visa issuance. We could also switch to the Montreal System and greatly simplify our procedures, which in turn could lead to a reduction in needed personnel.

Sam seemed to like my memo and sent it on to Walter, where it sat, and sat, and sat, much to my frustration. Apparently it did eventually reach Tom Dehart, but he never mentioned it to me. It was as if nothing had happened. I was by that time doing non-immigrant visa work, to which I'd been assigned during the student rush and which I continued to do, working with Ralph Estling. Sometime in October, Tom called me in and told me I was going back to immigrant visa work for what would effectively be the rest of my time in Hong Kong. I said, "You know I've sent you a memo," and I went through all the arguments I'd made in it about changing our ways, breaking the log jam, increasing speed and efficiency, going to Montreal System, etc. Tom listened and said he would read the memo again. Meanwhile, I was to go back to IV work.

Even before I did so, my memo succeeded and sprang me from the Consular Section for good, into the kind of junior officer rotational position that existed in many US overseas posts. After reading my memo, Tom, within days, issued an instruction calling for exactly the changes it advocated. He then assigned me and Jerry Ogden the task of reviewing all our backlogged cases to see which could be approved using the simpler "prima facie" INS standard. Jerry and I worked for about two weeks and approved at least 1,000 cases for visa issuance. People were called in and told to go get TB tests or whatever they needed to update their applications and qualify. Some couldn't believe it. People who'd been denied for four or five years, or longer, received visas. When the job with Jerry was done, I was no longer needed for visa work and was transferred from the Consular Section to the Hong Kong-Macao Section, a combined political-economic section dealing with Hong Kong and Macao.

When I got my final efficiency report for my visa work, written by Walter Burke, Walter barely mentioned my memo and just cited alleged "mistakes" made in Jerry's and my review "in a few cases." I asked Walter if he could think of an example of any mistakes I had made, and he said he couldn't remember but was sure there were some. I complained to Tom that Walter was damning me with faint praise and alleging mistakes that, if they

existed, could as easily have been Jerry's as mine. Tom said he'd take care of the matter, and he did, in a strong reviewing statement that I believe, along with one written on me by Ernie Colantonio when I was in Taichung, contributed to my next promotion.

Q: One of the things that you alluded to was that the visa process did give you an insight into the kind of people who come from the Mainland as to what is going on in China. Did any of the consular officers write up that kind of information or was it so busy you didn't have time?

ROPE: Not that I recall. I did learn a lot from those files, going back to the early 1950's. One of the most interesting aspects was the amount of vengefulness I saw. There were, for example, anonymous letters sent to the Consulate General charging people who were about to be issued visas with being Communists. These were clearly revenge letters, detailing what happened during land reform when Communist leaders were organizing mass struggle meetings and condemning former landlords and other "bad" people. I read graphic stories of people being beaten with iron bars and farm implements. I don't remember what else, but there it jibed with what one might read in books about events in rural China as the Communists came to power.

Many of our applicants came from peasant backgrounds with limited education. I saw them as people sacrificing themselves for their children's future. While I admired that, it also influenced my approach non-immigrant visa work, particularly when it came to students. You know how non-immigrant visas work. The consular officer must presume an applicant is an intending immigrant, and the applicant must demonstrate strong ties to a home he or she will return to in order to overcome that presumption. It's very hard for young people to prove that, especially in a small, crowded, in many ways transient place like Hong Kong, with lots of people who weren't born there. I took a liberal approach to the work, arguing with more conservative officers that it was next to impossible to know which students would stay in the US after 4 years and which would come back to Hong Kong. In any case, I argued, the worst that could happen would be that students adjusting status in the US and receiving immigration "numbers" from the INS would be taking numbers from other Chinese seeking to emigrate. There would be 20,000 numbers per year, and while it might not be fair to immigrant visa applicants if some of those numbers went to students adjusting status in the US, it was clear those young people were better positioned to become successful US citizens than peasants to whom I'd been issuing immigrant visas to for a year.

It wasn't that simple but I strongly believed it was very difficult to assess whether a young person was going to end up adjusting status or coming back. The person you thought was the most determined to go there and come back might end up not coming back; and somebody who would go there planning never to come back might end up deciding he or she didn't like the US and come back. In any case, I felt, students should have the opportunity to study in the United States; and on that basis alone I was a liberal NIV officer.

Q: Now your boss was Tom DeHart. How was he as a boss on your first tour overseas?

ROPE: I liked my first boss, Roy Tosco Davis, better. He was a sage old fellow with lots of amusing stories and very easy to work for. He said nice things about me in my efficiency reports. Tom DeHart was an effective boss, perfectly nice to work for, but more remote. I had problems, serious problems with Burke, who stonewalled that memo I mentioned for a good while. He also picked on Mike Milner. When Mike committed suicide, I went to DeHart and told him about the history of what I knew about the relationship between the two officers, and I appreciated the way he listened to me. He was a source of support for me at a time when I was quite devastated. And I think he took appropriate action. In any case, as a Reviewing Officer I know he later protected me from unjustified criticisms leveled by Walter. I mentioned that earlier.

Q: So you are a lowly officer down in the consular section. Ed Martin was the principal officer in Hong Kong at the time. How did he run the mission?

ROPE: From my perspective he was very good. I liked him. I have to say De Hart wasn't the only person I spoke with after the suicide took place. Privately, I cried, almost literally, on Charlie Hill's shoulder. He was a very fine China-watching reporting officer in the China Mainland section, and our families were close socially. Formally, I spoke with the administrative officer, Hugh Adamson, and he took me up to see the Consul General. In addition to whatever I related about Mike and his difficulties, I talked to Mr. Martin about the isolation we junior officers felt down in the Consular Section, three floors below him, where I felt we deserved more attention. I wasn't blaming him, but I expressed my feelings and got a sympathetic hearing. The experience influenced me much later when I was a DCM and worked hard to keep in touch with my junior officers.

Martin was not loquacious, but he was a very nice, pleasant person, with a lively and pleasant wife, Emma Rose. He wasn't stodgy like his predecessor, Ed Rice. Rice was an "old China hand" who had served in the Mainland before 1950. I remember him saying to me in my introductory call that Cantonese, the dialect spoken in Hong Kong, was a harsh and ugly language. I thought that was silly. So far as I know, Cantonese is much closer to the language spoken in the Tang Dynasty and in Tang poetry than present-day Mandarin. One decision made by Rice that I absolutely didn't like was to compel Priscilla to turn down a job working for Stan Karnow which I could explain.

Q: Stan Karnow was a journalist.

ROPE: Yes. He was the Washington Post correspondent for China and a man we ultimately became very close to. Priscilla saw him almost weekly during his last years here in Washington. I can come back to that. I don't recall how it happened, but shortly after we arrived in Hong Kong Priscilla was asked by Stan to be his assistant, to replace the wife of a Canadian China scholar who was moving back to Canada. Priscilla was desperate for something worthwhile to do and wanted to take the job. In those days, however, she had to have Chief of Mission approval to do so. Rice ruled that for her to work for a newspaper would present a conflict of interest. That might have made at least theoretical sense if I'd been working in the China-watching section, since Karnow's job

was reporting on China; but it was a stretch to apply that logic to me, an immigrant visa officer. A year later when the job was open again, Ed Martin didn't hesitate to let Priscilla take it.

Q: Now you were there from the summer of '67 to the summer of '69. The last nine months you got moved to the sort of China reporting section? How did you get that break?

ROPE: As I've said, the memo I wrote and the results it produced led to a complete change in the way ConGen Hong Kong approached immigrant visa work; and the change lessened the workload. My reward was to move out of the Consular Section; but I did not go to the China Mainland reporting section, as I would have liked. I was assigned to the Hong Kong/Macao Section.

Traditionally, overseas posts have separate political and economic sections; but in Hong Kong the reporting sections were regionally based, with political and economic FSOs working together in two different sections. The larger and more prestigious was the China Mainland Section. They were the China watchers, reporting on the full range of events going on in China, as seen from Hong Kong.

A smaller number of officers were in the Hong Kong/Macao section. They reported on Hong Kong and Macao affairs. The chief of the section, Dwight Scarborough, and most of the FSOs in it were economic officers. US interests in Hong Kong at that time were primarily economic, and, as a British crown colony run by an appointed governor it had little in the way of politics to report.

Q: What were your duties in that section?

ROPE: The only specific duty I had was Export Control work, monitoring the flow of US goods considered sensitive that were on a list issued by the Department of Commerce. To be honest, I don't remember much about this work. I know there were end-use checks involved, to be sure that goods subject to export controls and licensed for shipment to Hong Kong parties actually ended up with those parties and did not go astray -- to prohibited destinations like Mainland China or North Vietnam. And there were licensing recommendations to be made. One regular item that sticks in my mind for some unknown reason is Kodak film -- probably because there was just a lot of it. To be frank, though, I could more easily recite to you the five preference categories of immigrant visas at that time than to recall the export control manuals and categories I had to deal with in Hong Kong/Macao.

That said, I did the work. One guiding principal for me was always to work hard and do my best at whatever I was assigned; but my interests were really elsewhere, with reporting in general and work on Mainland China, which the China Mainland Section was doing.

Q: Now at the time when you moved, Sino Soviet tensions began to pick up -- the Ussuri

River conflicts.

ROPE: Yes. There was a lot going on in the Mainland throughout the time I was in Hong Kong. Whenever I got a break from visa work, or from my duties in Hong Kong/Macao, I could go to a place in the communications center where I could read the China Mainland Section's reporting. Actually, there were two things I could do as a visa officer, because I had a more or less nine-to-five job. One was to take language lessons with a Consulate General teacher named Tang Hung and also a Mandarin course at Hong Kong University. The other was to read China Mainland reporting. I read a lot of excellent cables by Charlie Hill, who later worked for Secretary Shultz, by the way, getting press attention for his micro-notes during Iran-Contra.

All kinds of things were happening in China, including the live-firing incidents on the Sino-Soviet border and tensions that brought about. After Priscilla went to work for Stan Karnow, I read materials she brought home. Hong Kong was filled with China Watchers of all different kinds, from many different countries, and we made friends with many. So I learned quite a bit about what was happening in the Mainland even though my own work was unrelated to it.

Q: Now at the same time there was the war in Vietnam. Karnow and the journalists who are stationed in Hong Kong go down to Saigon and report and come back.

ROPE: Yes. And Karnow used to go and see Prince Sihanouk in Cambodia. The Tet offensive happened. There was a USIS Officer in Hong Kong, Doug Pike, who was a recognized Vietnam expert. He was a major defender of our policy in Vietnam. I don't know exactly what he was doing to influence public opinion about our role in Vietnam, but that seemed to be his job.

Q: You also would have coming out of Vietnam CORDS and the embassy for R&R to Hong Kong.

ROPE: We didn't see many of them. We were much more hooked up with journalists whom we either met through the Hills or Stan Karnow. Bernie Kalb is a friend to this day. I was at a party at Marvin Kalb's house for Bernie's daughter last Saturday. Bernie was there, as was Ted Koppel, whom we knew in Hong Kong and whom I later dealt with when I ran the Operations Center. Another Hong Kong journalist was Robert Elegant. We called him "the arrogant Mr. Elegant."

Q: So actually Hong Kong was quite the China Watching place.

ROPE: It was THE China watching place. Burt Levin was there, and Allen Whiting. Allen was a political appointee who was deputy to Ed Rice for our first year in Hong Kong. His premier book, *China Crosses the Yalu*, focused on China's decision to enter the Korean War; and he was convinced China was going to do the same in Vietnam. Burt, down in the China Mainland Section, didn't agree and wouldn't report the way Allen wanted him to. It was well known that Burt, an experienced Chinese language officer and

top-notch reporting officer, suffered as a result. He received a bad reviewing statement from Whiting and didn't get a job in the China Field when he left Hong Kong. He went to Cochabamba. Do you know where that is?

Q: No I don't.

ROPE: Cochabamba I am trying to think myself. Colombia I think. No. Bolivia.

Q: South America.

ROPE: Yeah. Burt was long in getting promoted from FSO-4 to FSO-3 because of the damage Whiting did. Allen had certain young favorites, and for a while they did well. He was not an FSO. He was a Kennedy appointee who came from INR to Hong Kong as DPO to Rice.

Q: He has Rand connections doesn't he?

ROPE: He was at Michigan and then at Rand. In the 70's, when I was in INR he would come by from time to time, interested in exchanging thoughts on China and interested in grants INR had for scholars. Ultimately he went to Arizona.

Q: Yes, that is one of the last assignments I recall him in. One of the major China Watching places was the Union Research Institute. Would you have bumped into the professors and students and whatnot?

ROPE: We knew, through Priscilla and Stan Karnow, at least one person at that Institute. What I remember is the University Service Center, a place where graduate students doing research in Hong Kong or studying Chinese in Hong Kong could work or receive support. These included Mike Lampton, later head of the National Committee for US-China Relations and now a professor at SAIS here in Washington; John Dolphin who ultimately became kind of a major advocate for human rights in China while working as head hunter in Hong Kong; Stan Lubman, a student of the Chinese legal system; Dick Solomon.

Q: Even though Hong Kong is known world-wide as a thriving outpost on the edge of Mainland China, it's a pretty small place to be for two years. What did you and others at the ConGen do for recreation?

ROPE: By the time we left there we thought we knew just about every road throughout the Colony, both on the Victoria Island side and in Kowloon and the New Territories. We'd also been to all the islands in the Colony. Shopping was a big attraction. At that time, you could buy just about anything in Hong Kong for less than you could buy it in the place it came from. Danish furniture and china, which we bought, were cheaper there than in Denmark; the same was true of Japanese cameras. We bought a variety of modern furnishings there which we still have today and which are quite valuable because they were originals designed by big-name Italian and other European designers. Good tailor-

made clothing and women's shoes could be had at a low cost. Some of the more senior officers and their families belonged to country clubs. And, there was travel elsewhere in Asia. People would go scuba diving in the Philippines or to Thailand. We traveled to Bali twice during our two tours in Hong Kong, as well as Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore -- I'm talking about four years of time there.

Well let's look forward. Your reward for your first tour in the Foreign Service was you got to take the full Chinese language course. How did you work that?

ROPE: It was a natural progression for someone in whom the Department had already invested six months of language training. I had done well, I had good efficiency reports, and I'd been promoted to FSO-6 and then FSO-5 as early as one could be. I don't think any other assignment was considered for me.

Q: Now did you go back to Washington or right to Taichung?

ROPE: We went on home leave in the summer of '69 and arrived in Taiwan in late October. We arrived in Taichung, following a couple of days of orientation in Taipei, on a two-event day. It was Chiang Kai-shek's birthday, which was a big deal, October 31; but it was also Halloween, and in the small American community, made up of language school families and families from the nearby US airbase, children were out trick or treating.

Q: Now let's get into the Mandarin because you got off language training by getting a speaking score of 2; but here they are going to get you to read as well as speak. But let me first ask, when you came in in October, did you have your own special class or were you put in with a group of others? How did that work out?

ROPE: At that time we still had the luxury of mostly one-on-one instruction. So the fact that I was coming in with only half of what the other students, guys like Chas Freeman, Murray Zinoman and Desaix Anderson had, made no difference. I had already started studying reading with Tang Hung, and I knew about 300 characters; and I'd had two years in which to consolidate my spoken Mandarin, even though Hong Kong in those days wasn't a great place to use it. Anyway, in Taichung we were all individually tutored, though not just by one teacher. We might have four or five hours a day with four or five different teachers.

Q: Now this is still very intensive. It was quite a bit of class work and quite a bit of work after class.

ROPE: Yes, but in terms of stress for me, it wasn't the same. My time in Hong Kong had given me the chance to consolidate what I'd learned in the first six months and to add to it. I even had a bit of a reputation. I remember in Taipei for orientation on the way to Taichung we were invited to Political Counselor Leo Moser's house for dinner. Mrs. Moser said to another guest that I was going to Taichung to learn to speak Chinese like Ted Price. If you knew Ted, you know that was a compliment. He was a CIA officer

whose Chinese was fabulous. Last time I saw him was in Washington. He looked at me with a grin and said, "I've got Angleton's old job."

Q: Now the embassy is in Taipei and the language school is in Taichung. What are your accommodations like, the house?

ROPE: The language school had leases on a number of houses, and we had a 3-bedroom duplex with a small zoysia-grass yard and pond, on a dusty street where mostly foreigners lived. It was walled in front and back to protect against robbers, one of whom was once chased off by a fairly fierce German shepherd we inherited from Frank Scotton. We'd hoped for a Japanese house, of which there were still some in Taichung. Murray and Joy Zinoman had one. I'd first heard of their desirability in from my FSI Washington teacher Li Tsung-mi. That was also when I learned that Chinese drink a lot, something that, as 26 year-old Foreign Service novice I didn't know. Li told me that when you go to Taichung you want to get a Japanese house because the walls are all paper, and if you have a party and somebody sticks a hand through the wall, it's okay. No problem fixing it. And when everyone's drunk and falling down they can just sleep on the Tatami.

There was an air base outside of town. CCK, I forget what CCK stood for. It belonged to Taiwan, but there was a large US air contingent there, and some of our neighbors were US military families. We had access to the PX there and other amenities that otherwise wouldn't be available. Priscilla and I had a great cook, in part because we learned early -- and believed in it generally -- that it's a good idea to pay servants well. She, too, was "inherited" from Scotton, who had left Taichung shortly before we got there. We ate outstanding Sichuan food for lunch and dinner for a year and a half.

Q: How intensive was your program? And did that proximity to other Americans lead to less interaction with the local Chinese?

ROPE: It was Intensive! As I've said, it was all tutorial, one-on-one with a variety of teachers. Like most new arrivals, I started off with a lively but deadly serious and demanding teacher, Chen Taitai (Mrs. Chen). There isn't a lot of grammar in Chinese, but she was a grammarian and a drillmaster! I think I had 5 hours of class a day, maybe more, plus homework; and we had regular oral and written tests. Though I'd learned 300 characters in Hong Kong, to read a Chinese newspaper you need to know around 3,000; and to be really literate you need to recognize around 5,000. I went all the way to literary Chinese in my 18 months there and left with an S-3+ R-4 in Chinese. I think I would have been 4-4 if I hadn't spent the last six months of my time doing a lot of reading in English in preparation for my next assignment, reporting on China's foreign economic relations from Hong Kong.

As for interaction with the local people, though we might go out on a Saturday afternoon to shop at the PX or see an occasional American movie at the base, for us the proximity to non-language school Americans wasn't much of a distraction. We socialized mostly with fellow students and our teachers, for whom one of the perks of teaching at FSI was invitations to lots of dinner parties and events with students. We had a very happy

American-Chinese community there. I don't remember any parties knocking down walls in Japanese houses, but the teachers were an enjoyable and literate bunch. They were also good sources of information on the political goings-on in Taiwan. Some were good KMT members, others were quite critical of the Nationalist government, though these two things aren't mutually exclusive. Some, if not all, I assumed, had to report on us periodically; and we assumed our phones were tapped. Taiwan under Chiang Kai-shek was a dictatorship with secret police, security forces, etc. We could see how lack of political freedom affected our teachers.

The language school also had money for field trips. I don't know if this was true when you went through it, but we were encouraged to travel around the island, sometimes with teachers. I can think of at least three different trips with teachers, not counting weekend outings. There's a lot of beauty in Taiwan, and we fully enjoyed it. So there were many ways to learn and use Chinese. I never felt the same horrible pressures I felt in those first six months in Washington when, as I neared the ending I was so overwhelmed I began to think I couldn't say a word.

Outside the language Center, besides our daily interactions with people in shops or on the street, or during our travels, we did have some friends. Desaix had a circle of young friends who became friends of all of us. We knew artists at nearby Donghai University, and we had artist friends in Taipei, whom we met through our Hong Kong artist friend Hon Chi-fun.

Our closest friends there, by the way, were Murray and Joy Zinoman.

Q: Some language students at various times have said it was a disadvantage being close enough to the embassy because students would be called in for a big visit or a big something and that would interrupt? Did that transpire while you were there?

ROPE: No. We were four hours by train from Taipei. In the summer of 1970, I did get called up for three weeks in Taipei to do visa work, and I didn't like that initially; but it actually turned out quite well. Had I not had that experience I wouldn't have known Taipei the way I did. It was quite a positive time.

Q: Now the ambassador is Walter McConaughy. The DCM was Oscar Armstrong. Did they pay any attention to the language school?

ROPE: I don't know if they did, and I can't remember any evidence of it. Our group of students, or at least all the State and USIA students went up to Taipei with Jerry Kok, our director for my first eight or nine months, for briefings at the embassy. McConaughy talked to us. I remember my impression of Oscar as a very taciturn DCM. The Political Counselor, Leo Moser was a grand guy, as was Burt Levin, who later replaced him. Jerry Fowler was a terrific Taiwanese language officer who really understood the politics of the Island and how the Taiwanese viewed the Mainlanders who had come over before and at the time of Chiang Kai-shek's flight to Taiwan at the end of the Chinese Civil War. I'm pretty sure Jerry came down to Taichung at least once while we were there. It was, and I

guess still is, the “provincial capital” of Taiwan. Another good officer was Charlie Sylvester.

We saw these officers during trips of our own to Taipei.

Q: In the spring of '70 some things were going on internally in Taiwan politics. The USIS office in Tainan got blown up, their library.

ROPE: I had forgotten that, but you remind me that we had an excellent FSO down there, Neil Donnelly. He was another officer who was very knowledgeable about the politics of the “Gimo’s” Taiwan.

Q: And Chiang Ching-kuo visited the United States and experienced an assassination attempt in April of '70.

ROPE: I didn’t remember that either. Studying away I guess. The big issue I remember around that time was the Japan-China controversy over the islands -- barely rocks sticking up in the sea -- that the Japanese call Senkakus and the Chinese call Diaoyutai.

Anything having to do with territory is always sensitive for Chinese governments, and I remember the words of Taiwan’s Foreign Minister at the time, Chow Shu-Kai. “The Diaoyutai,” he said, “have been Chinese since time immemorial.” There were demonstrations in Taipei over this, and it dominated the Taiwan press for a while. Around that time, my Uncle Robert, whom I mentioned earlier, and my Aunt Marian visited us in Taichung, and they took us with them on a trip to Hong Kong. There were demonstrations taking place there, too, illustrating how universally Chinese knees jerk over matters involving sovereignty, or claims of sovereignty. We used to see tear-jerker Chinese movies or TV soap operas in which Chinese citizens wept as they spoke of “our land,” or “our earth.”

Q: But things are taking place on the Mainland, and Canada shifts recognition to Beijing in October, 1970. The U.S. Ping Pong team goes to China in March of '71. You are there in language training and everybody is probably cheering.

ROPE: I don’t know about everybody, but certainly I did. Murray Zinoman, Jerry Ogden, Desaix Anderson, and Chas Freeman would have too, though they were gone by that time -- the Zinomans to Kuala Lumpur, Desaix to Taipei, Jerry to Medan, and Chas back to Washington. You couldn’t cheer about it though, first in recognition of the feelings of virtually everyone on Taiwan, including our teachers, but also because Taiwan was politically a very repressed place in those years. The Mainland from the 1990’s on was freer than Taiwan in the late 60’s and early ‘70s. Both places had Hukou, household registration, which controlled the movement of people’s places of residence from one place to another; but Hukou was actually less difficult for people in the Mainland when I was there in the ‘90s than it was in Taiwan 45 years ago. Hukou, a family’s place of residential registration was hard to change. People were stuck where they were and it wasn’t easy to get permission to move. They had economic freedom, but one didn’t

criticize the Generalissimo or the Kuomintang.

Q: I get the impression that you and your language school friends weren't sympathetic to the authorities on Taiwan.

ROPE: We weren't. Chiang Kai-shek was a dictator, and -- without trying to speak for anyone else -- my view of him was influenced by the books of Teddy White and others that focused on the corruption of the Kuomintang government when he was in power on the Mainland; the complaints of Stilwell about what he saw as Chiang's incompetence and unwillingness to fight the war against the Japanese, on the Mainland and in the Burma Theater; the alliance between Chiang and the Shanghai "Green Gang" in the 1920s; and Chiang's costly decisions in prosecuting the Civil War after World War II. All of us FSOs at Taichung had read *Formosa Betrayed* and knew what had taken place on 2-28 in 1948. We knew the stories of how, when the Mainlanders retook Taiwan from the Japanese and installed Chen Yi as governor, they ripped up railroad tracks and took whole factories on the Mainland -- as the Russians did in Manchuria. And when Taiwanese rebelled against these and other acts, as many as 10,000 people were killed by the Kuomintang police.

That left plenty not to admire about the Taiwan government. At the same time, our policy towards Mainland China no longer made sense. We had no relations with Beijing even though the PRC was a huge country of far greater strategic importance than Taiwan. The China lobby had for years made that very hard to change, but under Nixon it was starting to change. I remember using the Chinese words for "People's Republic of China" in my final oral exam. The way we took our exams there were people in other rooms. I can't remember if they were looking through one-way glass, but they were at least listening in on headphones. I wondered if I knocked anyone off a chair by saying that. President Nixon had said it, though, and I was quoting him.

Q: Right because in Taiwan it was all bandit this and bandit that when talking about the Mainland and its Communist regime. Speaking of appropriate vocabulary you were also supposed to be taught the simplified characters that were used on the mainland. That was an issue of some sensitivity. How did they handle that while you were there?

ROPE: Notwithstanding what I've just said, I don't remember that being a problem at all. We could read Mainland newspapers. I had a wonderful teacher with whom I used to read economics essays in simplified characters. They had been written before the Cultural Revolution and contained outstanding analyses of the international economy, very well written -- to the extent that it would almost bring tears to my eyes to realize how knowledgeable and sophisticated their authors were and to think of what those people must be going through, if they were still alive, during the Cultural Revolution.

At that time, if you wanted to read rich contemporary Chinese, you needed to read material in the non-simplified characters used on Taiwan and elsewhere outside the Mainland. Even the most polemical anti-Communist editorials in the newspapers would be written in an elegant style, rich with 4-character expressions. I had one colleague who

only wanted to study simplified characters from the Mainland, because that was the “real Chinese.” I tried to persuade him that this was a mistake. Learning the non-simplified characters and even archaic literary characters was essential for a full appreciation of the written language; and once you knew those, learning their simplified versions was easy. You couldn’t do it the other way round.

Q: Some have remarked that the teachers had to be careful to lock up the simplified character materials.

ROPE: Maybe they did that, but I don’t recall any fears on that score.

Q: You mentioned stories you might tell about the fears of your teachers when it came to talking politics. What were they?

One simple example was an evening when Chas Freeman and I were sitting with one of our favorite teachers in a hotel room in south central Taiwan. In the early hours of the morning, when we’d all been drinking while talking about history, our teacher said that while he knew the Generalissimo, Chiang Kai-shek, was a good man and a great leader, some people around him had made mistakes. That was the closest I ever heard anyone on Taiwan come to criticizing Chiang, and it was at 2 a.m. under the influence of alcohol.

Once Priscilla gave one of our teachers from whom she took lessons on the side – there being no funds for spouses to study at the language school -- a gift of a picture book on China bought on our trip with my uncle and aunt to Hong Kong. It didn’t come from the Mainland or from a Communist publishing house. Initially, her teacher seemed very pleased with it; but the next day she brought it back and, with great embarrassment, explained that she was afraid neighbors might see it and report her for having it.

One teacher was very active in the Kuomintang party. He insisted to me that, within the party, you could be very free to question policies or political decisions; but you had to keep it in house. Outside, everyone must defend the party. I’d also like to say here that a lot of revisionist views of Chiang Kai-shek have surfaced in the last ten or fifteen years, including work very critical of Stillwell. One example is Jay Taylor’s book, *The Generalissimo*.

Q: Why don’t we break it off here and we can go into your assignment to Hong Kong -- unless you have last thoughts about the language training.

ROPE: There is one thing I want to mention that I did that was in a way similar to the Visa Section memo I wrote in the Hong Kong.

Q: What was that?

ROPE: None of us thought well of the head of the school. I’ve mentioned him by name, but won’t do that again. He put in very little time running the school and was not in touch with what any of us were studying. He was not an FSO, as past directors had been, but

he'd somehow achieved the status of Chinese linguist -- this despite the fact that while his spoken Chinese was good, he couldn't read it. He was a former missionary and seemed almost a missionary disguised as an American language official. His greatest concern, as I and my colleagues saw it, was focused on Emergency & Evacuation planning for the Taichung area in case of a contingency. Emergency evacuation was not something likely to happen and hardly the thing we thought should be most important for the head of our school. He was very concerned however, about missionaries up in the mountains -- how they would be kept safe in an emergency and how they could be evacuated if necessary. He had meetings about this, with maps, pins and strings. It was reminiscent of Catch 22.

In any case, dissatisfaction under him was universal; and when an inspection team came out from Washington to inspect Embassy Taipei and its constituent posts, I wrote a detailed memo to the inspectors about management problems in Taichung, laying out what I thought a good school head's job ought to be, what it was in practice, and how that adversely affected the school. When the inspectors read my memo, one of them, Ernie Colantonio, came down and interviewed me and my fellow FSOs. The net result was a change of leadership by the following summer, when George Beasley became head of the language school and there was a huge improvement in the school's management. I later read what Colantonio wrote about me and I have no doubt that it played a part in my promotion within two years, to FSO-4.

Q: Today is 28 March. We are returning to our conversation with Bill Rope. Bill, we were talking last time about your memo about reorganizing the consular section. You said you found it in your personal files. What is the date in case researchers want to look this up.

ROPE: I can give you a copy of the copy I have, if you wish, because I don't know that it ever became a formal document. I'm inclined to doubt it. I wrote and typed it at home on my own stationery, and the only way it would have gone into the system as a formal document would have been if Tom DeHart or someone else did so. It was 7 pages long and the date was September 30, 1968.

I can't tell you on what date I gave it to my immediate superior, Sam Karp, but I suspect it was immediately thereafter. It was addressed to Consular Section Chief Tom DeHart through Sam and his superior, Walter Burke. It responded to a memo Tom DeHart had addressed to the entire Consular Section three days before mine, calling for overtime and a full-court press to meet a goal of 1,500 immigrant visa issuances per month. As I said last time, my memo said we could not meet that target using then-current procedures. Then I outlined my alternate approach, which ultimately was adopted.

Q: In the past, if I recall correctly, only two hundred people could emigrate to the U.S. from China per year. Is that correct?

ROPE: I'm not sure. That would have been before the 1965 immigration reform act and before my time in Hong Kong. What I do remember is that, due to the history of Asian exclusion acts and things like it, very few Chinese could immigrate to the United States

legally under our visa laws before 1965. There were exceptions at times. One was a special refugee program enacted by the Congress around 1962 to relieve pressure on Hong Kong, which had absorbed large numbers of Chinese fleeing the Mainland, partly as a result of the disastrous "Great Leap Forward." There were refugee camps in Hong Kong, and US AID officers were there working to help them. There were also, you can be sure, lots of intelligence people, British, American, and perhaps others, interviewing refugees to learn as much as they could about life in Mao's China.

Q: What we try to watch while we do these interviews is how you grew as you went through the system and got more and more experience? There you are. You start out in Hong Kong in the consular section. You analyze what seems to have been a major problem and speak up in the forms of that memo. We talked about you going off to Chinese language training, where you also write a memo that seems to have made a difference.

Now we are going to send you back to Hong Kong. In May of '71 you go back to Hong Kong as a political econ officer. You knew you were going to that slot while you were in Language training.

ROPE: Yes; and because I knew that, I sacrificed some Chinese language study time in my last half year in order to read, in English, books on the China's economy and foreign trade. I read the works of Alex Eckstein, Dwight Perkins, and Yuan-li Wu, among others. I also read books on Chinese politics by Lucian Pye, Ezra Vogel, Doak Barnett, and others. I knew I was sacrificing language study time, and I think that's the principal reason why I only ended up with a S3+/R4 as my final grade. I think I could have had a 4/4 if I'd spent all that time just studying Chinese. But I felt I had to do it in order to hit the ground running in Hong Kong's China Mainland Section. In one language class I've mentioned, I read economic analyses from the Mainland, serious articles from before the Cultural Revolution about the international monetary system and so on. So I also focused part of my Chinese studies on economics.

Q: Right. You are assigned as a political officer doing economic work. You were telling us there was sort of a China-watching section and then the Hong Kong/Macao reporting section. This time you are going to the China Section.

ROPE: Yes, it was called the China Mainland section.

Q: The China Mainland section. Now that was under the political section.

ROPE: It essentially was *the* political section, with me and one other political officer, Dick Williams, forming an economic component in it. The sole focus was Mainland China. Down the hall was the smaller Hong Kong/ Macao Section, comprised of a few economic officers. Steve Watkins and Rick Howarth were in that section, good officers without China expertise. Years later, Rick became my deputy on the China Desk. I always call it the "China Desk;" but it was formally known as the Office of People's Republic of China and Mongolia Affairs in the Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs --

EAP/PRC/M.

Q: Who was The Consul General, and who was your immediate boss?

ROPE: The Consul General was a bit of a free spirit but a wonderful and competent man named David Osborn. He had replaced Ed Martin and was replaced, after I went on to Beijing, by Chuck Cross. Sadly, in retirement, David Osborn died in San Diego in a bicycle accident; but that's the kind of guy he was -- not a stuffed shirt. His wife Helenka was an artist, and the Residence was filled with her work.

My immediate boss was a very fine officer named Bob Drexler.

Q: He was the political counselor.

ROPE: Essentially.

Under Bob, I was in the economic sub-section headed by Dick Williams -- Richard Llewellyn Williams. Dick eventually headed the China Desk, some years after me. He had the misfortune of being there at the time of the Tiananmen incident on June 4, 1989 and had to go up on Capitol Hill to defend our relationship with China, which was falling apart -- at least temporarily -- as a result.

Dick was the senior member of the sub-section, but happily for me it was actually Bob Drexler who was my immediate supervisor. I've always liked Dick, but working with him was difficult; he would re-write almost everything I wrote. Our main reporting vehicle was a biweekly economic report, for which Dick covered China's domestic economy while I contributed articles on China's foreign economic relations, mostly trade and aid. Dick would put the report together, and in doing so he often edited me so much that I would lose all confidence in ability to write. That made my first months back in Hong Kong very hard. I was in my first reporting position, and my first real political officer job, albeit working on economic subjects. I had to go out and make contacts in the Hong Kong business community, learn as much as I could about China trade, and put it all down in writing for Washington. Because of Dick's constant over-editing, I was nervous and unhappy.

Fortunately, for any reporting other than that combined report, I submitted my work directly to Bob. He was very sharp and droll, always ready with a good humored quip; and he took genuine interest in subordinates. As I've told him more than once, he taught me all I know about editing. He didn't rewrite, and he always explained his editorial changes. His key aim was to make our product better, and he taught me lots of tricks in doing so. Perhaps the biggest thing I learned was economy of words and variation of style. In later jobs, when I became an editor with people working for me, I tried hard to be as kind and good as Bob Drexler was with me.

In fact, years later, I ran into David Schambaugh, now a professor at George Washington University, at an annual China specialists' picnic organized by Jan Berris of the National

Committee for US-China Relations. In the Carter administration, David worked for me as an intern in INR before going to the NSC as an intern under Mike Oksenberg. He later edited the China Quarterly -- the China equivalent of Foreign Affairs, published in London. At that picnic, David said to me, "You taught me how to write." That nearly brought tears to my eyes; and David repeats it every time I see him! I had to tell Bob Drexler. What Bob taught me, I passed on to a young man good enough to become editor of the China Quarterly. That's the way good organizations work. People who are concerned for the institution teach others, who pass the craft on. To take this digression a step further, when I became a teacher after retirement, I realized I had long been a teacher, because I'd loved teaching our craft to young officers and subordinates. Bob was the one who taught me to be a teacher.

Q: Things are beginning to happen in China again in the summer of '71. I think the U.S. had lifted its trade embargo in '71. What were the Sino-American atmospherics as you came into to the position, and how did this affect you?

ROPE: First of all, there had been "Ping Pong," and from that time on, small numbers of Americans were being invited to China. As for how it affected me, I should mention that I was moving into the most junior job in the China Mainland section, replacing Darryl Johnson, who had been doing it for a year and was moving up to succeed Alan Romberg as a reporting officer on China's foreign political relations. Al was returning to Washington to work on the China Desk.

I was to report on China's foreign economic relations, as I mentioned, essentially trade and foreign aid plus a tiny bit of coverage of China's international banking -- which wasn't much. This had not been a particularly important job in the past. It was where a new officer cut his or her teeth before moving on to report on China's political scene. For me to have the job at this time was an incredible stroke of luck that changed my life.

Q: Tell us what happened.

ROPE: Shortly before I arrived in April of '71, President Nixon made it possible for overseas subsidiaries of American firms to trade with China. It was a limited step that left the main part of our longstanding embargo, with all its export controls, in place. But in the post-"Ping Pong" days, it was a clear signal of US interest in improving relations with China and made possible the beginnings -- albeit indirectly -- of renewed US-China trade, after a two decade hiatus. Darryl had been reporting on that and seeing people in Hong Kong, including American Chamber of Commerce people, who quickly became interested in establishing trade contacts with the PRC.

I took that over and quickly got a lot more business when Nixon made it possible, shortly after I arrived, for US companies to trade with China directly, opening up a wide list of previously-embargoed US goods that could be exported to China and making it possible for almost all US companies to contemplate doing business with the PRC. This created a tremendous amount of interest in the US business community, and Americans started coming to Hong Kong -- the key entrepôt for trade with China outside the Mainland --

seeking to make contact with the Chinese.

The Chinese trading corporations and their representatives in Hong Kong were not ready to respond to US business overtures at this point; but the new situation still put a lot of pressure on me. I was in my first job as a reporting officer, learning not only the nuts and bolts of China Trade -- in itself not easy -- but also making my first forays into the work of making useful professional relationships: learning from other diplomats; meeting with business people, traders, other Hong Kong China watchers, and -- through fellow Hong Kong diplomats -- people who came out of the Mainland or went back and forth.

Q: Who would some of your contacts have been?

ROPE: British, Canadians, Australians, Japanese and, increasingly, American business people, particularly after Americans were first invited to the spring Canton Fair in 1972. Almost immediately after we returned to Hong Kong, Priscilla re-established contact with the Washington Post and soon went back to work for Stan Karnow's successor, Lee Lescaze, followed later by David Greenway. We also re-established or made new contacts with other journalists in Hong Kong, including Peter Kahn of the Wall Street Journal, Maynard Parker of Newsweek, Joe Lelyveld of the New York Times, Arnie Abrams of Newsday, and quite a few others. My father, you'll recall, had been a press officer for USUN. I'd always liked journalists and viewed it as a duty to help them as much as I could. The journalists we knew were a lot of fun. Vietnam was still going on, and we had many friends who traveled there regularly, along with other parts of Southeast Asia.

I also knew -- and often played touch football with -- a lot of young China scholars at the University Service Center, some of whom I've mentioned earlier. Among them were Susan Shirk of the Committee of Concerned Asia Scholars and others from CCAS, including Sam Popkin who later became Susan's husband. They visited China for a month in the summer of 1971 and were received by Zhou Enlai. There was a lot of interest in all this from the US, and Susan and others from CCAS were interviewed extensively. They even appeared on the Dick Cavett Show. Journalists like the New York Times' Tillman Durdin, Harrison Salisbury, Seymour and Audrey Topping, Bob Keatley of the Wall Street Journal, were going into China, often seeing Zhou, and coming out through Hong Kong. John and Wilma Fairbank, Barbara Tuchman and others visited China passing through Hong Kong both ways.

So I was making contacts, learning, and writing about China trade and foreign aid at the same time that American businessmen in or visiting Hong Kong were anxious to get in on the potential new business. They would go to the Consulate General's Commercial Section; but our commercial officers, with no background in the China field, were poorly equipped to advise them about the PRC. I remember one memorandum, written by a commercial officer with palpable excitement, reporting his conversation with a man claiming to be a cousin of Chairman Mao. The reporting officer felt the man could be a very valuable contact for facilitating US trade with China. He was an obvious phony, and he wasn't alone. All kinds of people were coming out of the woodwork. In any case, the Commercial Section wasn't up to the job and ended up referring Americans interested in

trading with China to me. I started briefing business people on how to do business with China -- which I was just learning myself!

Q: Were any of them succeeding with the Chinese?

ROPE: Not at that point. Before the Nixon Visit in February '72, there was no business being done, save for a small amount -- in chemicals and perhaps some other raw materials, sold to China through US overseas subsidiaries.

As I mentioned, Darryl had already begun to deal with the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong. Until then it had been focused principally on doing business with non-China related entities in the Crown Colony, and to a lesser extent Macao. Now, however, I became involved in organizing what became the China Commercial Relations Committee of the American C of C, working with Bill Rosenthal, of Business International, and a young man named Mark Mobius who later became very successful as a manager of Templeton Investment Funds. I would see him in televised ads pitching for Templeton. Very quickly, the subcommittee grew and started having monthly meetings, at which I appeared as a regular briefer.

Q: Now we are in the summer of '71 and something big happens.

ROPE: Yes. One July day I came back from lunch, and Dick Williams greeted me with a big grin. "You'll never guess what has happened," he said. "Henry Kissinger has been in Peking and Nixon is going to China!" Then things really intensified, though -- as I've mentioned -- the Chinese were not ready to invite American business representatives, and none of their offices in Hong Kong had any contacts with Americans, at least so far as I knew then or know now.

But the period from the summer of '71 to the time of the Nixon Visit was an exciting time, with lots of work for me, and for China watchers in general. There was the Lin Biao affair of September 1971, when Lin, formerly known as Mao's "closest comrade in arms," crashed in Mongolia in one of China's recently purchased British Tridents. The plane went down as Lin was trying to escape -- to Russia apparently -- with his family and various advisors. Key generals associated with him were purged, and tales of Lin's alleged "B-52" conspiracy against Mao were starting to emerge. Sherrod McCall, our chief internal political reporting officer, was outstanding -- always quick to pick up on struggles in China. He realized Lin might be in political difficulty at least two weeks before news of Lin's crash broke when he saw an unflattering picture of Lin on the cover of the August 1971 issue of the PLA's Red Star magazine. It showed Lin with his hat off, revealing him to be totally bald. He'd never been pictured that way before.

Q: Now you are in Hong Kong when in October 25, 1971, the UN votes to seat China.

ROPE: Right. We lose the so-called annual ChiRep fight -- the battle to preserve the Republic of China's, i.e., Taiwan's, seat in the world body.

Q: That again draws more attention to China and increases your workload and interests of everybody coming through China.

ROPE: Yes. China, having gone through the Cultural Revolution, with Mao still in command but clearly weakened by its failures and with Zhou Enlai playing the leading role in foreign affairs, was working hard to improve its international standing. There were a variety of reasons, but one for sure was to strengthen Beijing's position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. The border skirmishes of 1969 had brought Beijing and Moscow close to war. Another was the need, evident to many in China, to open up economically to the outside world. Another, no doubt, was to strengthen its position vis-à-vis Taiwan. In any case, the Chinese were seeking expanded diplomatic contacts all over the globe; and a big piece of this -- related to the desire to gain support in the UN -- was expansion of foreign trade and aid. PRC delegations were going all over the place, and China was receiving reciprocal delegations in Beijing.

An amusing example was the visit of General Tantalion, trade minister of Peru. On a mission to Beijing he landed a large contract to sell fish meal to China for use as animal feed. This was typical. Whatever a country might be flogging, the Chinese were ready to buy. Taiwan was doing much the same thing and had been for years. And as the PRC opened up, and began making headway in the ChiRep battle, the Nationalists and the Communists were vying hard against each other, particularly in Africa where there were lots of poor countries with votes in the UN that needed foreign aid. China was adept at signing highly publicized agreements granting large amounts of aid that in practice would be disbursed only in local currency over long periods of time. The Chinese liked show projects, using Chinese laborers sent to do the work, like the TanZam Railway.

To come back to General Tantalion, sometime after his visit, El Nino struck, killing off anchoveta at the bottom of the food chain and greatly harming Peruvian fisheries catches. This made it hard to make good on the General's famous contract. Later, when deliveries were eventually made, there were reports of Chinese complaints that chickens tasted fishy. This was perhaps apocryphal; but things like that did and do happen in China.

After I was assigned to Beijing in 1973, I was once in Guangzhou riding in a car with a Chinese trade official -- probably during the visit of a U.S. trade delegation. The subject of bananas came up. Local bananas were small, not like we get in the US. I said bananas we could buy in Beijing were bigger and better than the ones in South China. I understood, I said, that Beijing bananas came from Central America. No, the official said, they came from Ecuador. I said I was sure they came from Central America. "No," he said firmly. "They came from Ecuador. I was on the trade mission that bought them. There was nothing else to buy!"

Q: Now with all this new interest in China, and it is all filtering through Hong Kong, was there an attempt to beef up staffing in Hong Kong.

ROPE: I don't remember one. I was overworked.

Q: On the other hand if you are in the China field, Hong Kong is the place to be. So I suspect a lot of your Chinese language colleagues and everybody else you knew in the China field were trying to get Hong Kong assignments.

ROPE: Yes and no. There were officers who were perfectly happy to go to Taipei and continue working with the Republic of China as people had for years. For me, China watching was where it was at, and I lobbied hard to go back to Hong Kong, arguing to people in the Department like Paul Kreisberg and Al Jenkins that I shouldn't be penalized just because I had done visa and rotational work in Hong Kong. I didn't foresee that dramatic changes in US-China relations would be in the works, but I strongly believed in the efforts of Hong Kong China watchers to read the tea leaves and keep Washington informed. To me, Hong Kong was where the action was, and China watching was fascinating.

There were also other posts for China types besides Hong Kong and Taiwan. Chas Freeman was for a time slated for Taipei as the Taiwan language officer but ended up in Washington, with Desaix and Sid Goldsmith going to Taipei. The Zinomans, as I've mentioned, went to KL. Ogden went to Medan. There was also a China job in the political section of Embassy Tokyo.

Q: So by the summer and fall of 1971 you are learning your job dealing with China's foreign trade and aid while helping the Chamber of Commerce to get organized for its own dealings with China and advising businessmen who come to Hong Kong hoping to do business with China. But you also have some basic research and analysis to do. How did you go about it?

ROPE: My biggest annual responsibility was to compile a report on China's global foreign trade. That was something the officer in my position put together each spring, covering the preceding year. After being sent to Washington, it was "sanitized" by removing any classified data, if needed, and the key findings were published in "Current Scene," a product put out by USIS Hong Kong. If you can find Volume X, No. 10 of October 1972, you can see a summary of the report I compiled on China's foreign trade in 1971. This is the only piece of work I've ever had published; but when "Current Scene's" source was a Consulate General Report, USIS only attributed it to "The Editor." So I researched and wrote the report, but it was not attributed to me.

I still have a copy of it, and one thing about it is striking. Do you know what China's total foreign trade is today?

Q: Way in the billions, I'd think.

ROPE: It's in the vicinity of \$4 trillion. In 1966, one of my predecessors estimated China's total trade, world-wide, at \$4.2 billion. After a decline during the Cultural Revolution, my estimate was that in 1971 it reached the highest level in PRC history at \$4.6 billion. What an incredible difference between that and today!

Q: How did you arrive at that figure?

ROPE: It wasn't easy. The Chinese didn't publish trade statistics, so I had to work backwards from other nations' statistics and from information published by international institutions like the World Bank and IMF. For commodity break-downs or estimates, there were other things I could also draw on, including a wide variety of international trade publications. One I remember was published by the London Metals Exchange. It tracked world-wide commerce in copper and other metal products and raw materials that China imported or exported. Another was the monthly publication of the 48 Group, an association of UK business people who had been trading with China for many years. Yet another was published by the Moscow Narodny Bank. We subscribed to various English-language Japanese publications, including Nihon Kezai. I was constantly perusing this kind of material for information on China trade deals.

I also had Hong Kong government information. Hong Kong itself was a tremendous consumer of Chinese exports -- we received regular reports on pig shipments to the Colony -- and it was an entrepôt through which a huge amount of China's foreign trade was transshipped. The Soviets put out trade statistics for the COMECON countries, though it was to some degree suspect and denominated in Rubles, a non-convertible currency that had to be roughly translated into dollar equivalents. All this had to be synthesized in my report. I was just learning the ropes of this work -- to make a slight pun -- in the second half of 1971 and the first half of 1972.

By late fall, Priscilla and I were due for delayed home leave. I don't remember when we left, but I know we were away from Hong Kong until January 1972.

Q: What were things like on your return?

ROPE: I don't remember the work side of this period terribly well. More of the same, I think. As the Nixon Visit approached, there was a great deal of excitement in Hong Kong.

Q: Now February 28, 1972 Nixon goes to Beijing. How did that impact Hong Kong? How did you guys see that whole process unfolding?

ROPE: Actually, February 28 is the date of the Shanghai Communiqué, issued at the end of Nixon's "Week that Changed the World," as I think he put it. We China watchers in ConGen Hong Kong were out of the loop as the US prepared for the President's visit. Kissinger was not Secretary of State, and he pretty much cut State out of his diplomacy with the Chinese. His preparatory trips to Beijing were made via Pakistan. I do remember on the trade side that the US licensed the export of an RCA satellite communications station for sale to China ahead of the visit. It was to be placed in Shanghai, to facilitate live TV broadcasts of the visit back to the US. Whatever I knew about that sale, however, came from newspapers.

So we were bystanders watching all that we could on TV. I'll never forget that first scene of the President arriving in Beijing. My office must not have been working, because

Priscilla and I had guests over to watch it with us in our apartment. I eventually became a friend of Ji Chaozhu, the thickly bespectacled Chinese translator who served as translator when Nixon came down the steps from Air Force One and shook hands with Zhou Enlai. We watched Nixon and Zhou review the honor guard at Beijing Capital Airport and then watched as the motorcade drove off down that tree-lined road to Beijing. 14 months later, I had the thrill of making the same trip for the first time, as Chas Freeman met me at the airport on April 30, 1973 to join the USLO staff.

I last saw Ji Chaozhu for lunch in the UN Delegates' Dining Room in the fall of 1994. By that time, after serving as Political Counselor in Washington -- when we had frequent contact -- and Ambassador to Fiji and to London, Ji had risen to the level of Undersecretary at the UN, China's highest ranking post there. Ji had roomed at Harvard with another FSO China specialist, Herb Levin. He had also interpreted at Panmunjom.

Watching Nixon's arrival and the events that followed was thrilling to all China specialists, ending over 20 years of antagonism between the US and "Red China." Even as the most junior of Hong Kong's China watching staff, I had by that time dedicated five years of my life to China work; and my more senior colleagues had been doing so for considerably longer. Looking back today, China and work on China seems so ordinary. Back then, we were dealing with another world, in Cold War times, against the historical background of the Korean War and an ongoing struggle in Vietnam. China had been our enemy. It was wonderful to see this begin to change.

But we remained in the dark about what transpired away from the cameras. There had been two levels of communication in Beijing. The one that counted was the Nixon-Kissinger-Mao-Zhou level, where those leaders and a small number of advisors like John Holdridge and Win Lord on the US side, did the important business. I eventually read transcripts of those meetings when I read in as China Country Director and was struck by the banality of much of it. The second level was Rogers-Ji Pengfei, between Foreign Ministry delegations. There, little of importance transpired. We got something of a read-out on the latter from a couple of FSOs who came through Hong Kong after the trip. Bill Brown was one, but the man I remember most vividly was Cal Mehlert. He had been Rogers' interpreter in the State-MFA exchanges and was pretty cynical -- and amusing -- as he described talks "at the junior varsity level."

Most of what I remember from people who'd been there was anecdotal: unflattering descriptions of Walter Cronkite pushing people aside at every turn to get his face in prominent view; even more unflattering descriptions of Foreign Minister Ji Pengfei; Nixon aides loading up on carpets at the Friendship Store to be brought home on Air Force One; etc. Nothing for the history books.

Q: So what happened in your area after the visit was over?

ROPE: At first, not much changed; but we were looking for signs of change. The big question was whether the Chinese would start inviting American business representatives to China or otherwise begin to trade with us. An obvious beginning would be invitations

to Americans to attend the semi-annual Canton Fairs, formally known as the Guangzhou (Canton) Export Commodities Fairs. Although the word “export” was in the title, in fact it was a two-way trade affair where a huge amount of China’s annual trade with the non-Communist world was transacted. The spring fair lasted from April 15 to May 15. The fall’s ran from October 15 to November 15.

In late March, we began to learn of Americans who had been invited to attend the Spring Canton Fair. Initially, we learned about the most flamboyant ones, who held press conferences or issued press releases, with the likely aim of attracting clients whom they could represent in Canton. Others let the State Department know. Others just showed up at the Consulate General on their way into China; and there were still others about whom we heard from Americans during the Fair or after the fact but whom we never saw. It was a disparate group. I think 30-some in all. Some of them were pretty crazy. “Characters” might be a better way to put it.

Some of the older ones, like Harned Hoose, who spoke Chinese, had been in China before the Communist takeover and wanted to get back and do business if they could. Some younger ones had some familiarity with Chinese and wanted to be facilitators. Some who seemed pretty sketchy, to use a modern term, were out to set themselves up as China trade consultants to business people back home. Some of the latter were good enough at selling themselves that they managed to get into the China trade business and succeed. Others were gone in a few years.

Then there were those who were serious, established business people. Julian Sobin, for instance, had his own chemical company. He was a good operator and self-promoter who knew what he was doing. Another was Julius Klugman, a hog bristles and tung oil importer from New York. China is a huge source of hog bristles, used in paint brushes, and in their absence Klugman and his fellow bristles merchants had been forced to deal in synthetic bristles. Klugman was an elderly, humble gentleman who knew his business and was quick to pick up on opportunities. As soon as the chance to get hog bristles from China again opened up, he got himself invited. As an orthodox Jew, he had many dietary restrictions and brought along his own food supply to Canton. One mark of successful business in China was that one’s host organization, in Klugman’s case the China National Native Products Import and Export Corporation, would hold a small banquet to honor their foreign guest. Mr. Klugman, however, had to tell his hosts that he couldn’t eat the foods he saw around him in Canton, because there was so much pork, shellfish and other things in the food, all of which was likely to be cooked in lard. They insisted, however, that he must join them for dinner; and they produced a great banquet of fruit and other things specially tailored to his diet. He was going to be an important customer for them who became a regular at Canton Fairs.

One serious and very high quality couple was Stanley and Judith Lubman. We had met them through Charlie and Martha Hill when Stan was doing research on Chinese law at the University Service Center during our first tour in Hong Kong. Stan was a professor at UC Berkeley and Judith, an architect by training, had made connections with companies like Crate and Barrel. Both of them were students of China, and Stan was a very keen

observer of people -- Chinese officials, experienced Western business representatives, and the various Americans invited to the Fair. I saw him on his way in and way out and learned a great deal from him that was helpful to me in my reporting on the Fair.

The most important invitees to that first fair after Nixon's visit were a delegation from Boeing, headed by a very sharp Vice President whose name I don't recall; first name was Byron. Sometime during that spring 1972 Fair, he and several of his colleagues called on David Osborn. Bob Drexler and I sat in. Bob briefed the group on China and US-China relations in general, and I briefed and answered questions about trading with the PRC. They didn't need much briefing, though. They knew the Chinese were in dire need of modern aircraft, and they had a clear idea of how to sell their product. Though they went first to Guangzhou, they ended up staying only briefly before being invited to Beijing; and they negotiated pretty much non-stop, over a period of months until they had sold 10 Boeing 707s to China. Those ended up being the last 10 707s Boeing ever made. One interesting sidelight was that the Chinese were sufficiently uncertain that our rapprochement would hold that they bought a far more extensive spare parts package, including I think 100 percent replacement engines, than would normally be involved in such a transaction.

Lockheed also received an invitation to China. They came through after Boeing, possibly not until the fall of 1972. Nothing came of it, though I believe Lockheed did sell at least one L-100 to China many years later.

That's what was going on, and there was great interest in all of it in Washington. I met a good many of the Americans who attended, either during calls on me or the Consul General or through American Chamber events, and sent in reports on how they fared, not in the sense of monitoring people but as indicators of how the trade relationship was developing following the Nixon visit. I reported what they told me about their business transactions. Not confidential information but basic business information and about the atmospherics.

Q: Who did you view as your audience in Washington for your reporting?

ROPE: I and my bosses had most in mind US policy-makers, intensely interested in any reports on how US-China contacts were playing out on the ground. At one point there was particularly high level interest. About a week before the Spring Fair ended, when Nixon ordered the mining of the North Vietnamese port of Haiphong. Bob Drexler had me use all the sources I could to find out if the Chinese were treating Americans any differently in Canton. The answer was no, and we reported that to Washington.

Looking at my reporting audience more broadly, I'd always viewed important consumers to be the China analysts in the national security establishment -- State INR, the intelligence community, and a few on the China Desk and other Washington agencies like Treasury as well as people in the export control community. After it became possible for US companies to trade with China, the Department of Commerce became a very interested consumer, as it sought to get up to speed in order to advise US companies --

through publications and in person -- on how to pursue business with China.

I was my own center of action in the China Mainland Section. There was a lot of attention to my reporting throughout the rest of my tour in Hong Kong. It remained stressful, but there were rewards. I got a great efficiency report from Bob Drexler, who referred to me as "a one-man band." I also got positive feedback from more experienced FSOs in the Section like Jay Taylor and Sherrod McCall, as well as regular advice and collegial support from Darryl, with whom I later had many important collaborative moments during my time as China Country Director. It was a very exciting for all us in the China Mainland Section.

Q: Let me ask this. Did you have any contact with Chinese trade or other officials in Hong Kong?

ROPE: Not if you mean Chinese Communists connected to the Mainland, with one exception. It also relates to the mining of Haiphong. At some point, attending a reception put on by a country that had relations with Beijing, I met a couple of officials from the Hong Kong branch of the Bank of China. This was a very big, though small, deal; because US officials and PRC officials in Hong Kong never met or had exchanges of any kind. So when Washington was looking for clues as to Chinese reactions to the Haiphong mining, Drexler asked me if I could go find a way to call on one of those officials to see if I could detect any change of attitude. I don't know what my pretext was, but I was able to get an appointment and went to see the man. No one I knew had ever been inside the Bank of China in Hong Kong. It was a mysterious place, kind of like when I was in college and there were secret societies that met in large tomb-like buildings. I made the call and it was perfectly normal, with no mention of, let alone lecture or complaint about, our activities in Vietnam.

Q: Now at this time if you were a businessman interested in trading with China, Hong Kong is still the gateway. They don't fly into Beijing, particularly if they want to touch bases with U.S. government representatives. That is where we are. We are in Hong Kong.

ROPE: They could also go through Pakistan and fly in on PIA. If you were Boeing or somebody like that, and had already gotten your feet wet and knew what you were doing, you might do that for speed. Eventually, as China established diplomatic relations with more and more countries, the possibilities for entry by air expanded -- Air France, JAL, Iran Air, Ethiopian Airways, and more. But basically the route through Hong Kong remained the most popular with Americans, particularly if they were headed for Canton Fairs. If businessmen headed for China wanted to visit the Consulate for advice, they ended up seeing me or, if they were important enough, the Consul General with others like Bob Drexler or other FSOs on the political reporting side sitting in, along with me. I would have to give some kind of briefing. Then I debriefed the people in my office or the Consul General's office on their way out.

Q: At this time how big was the whole Hong Kong operation, and what was it like to work for Osborn and Dean, who I think was the deputy?

ROPE: Well if you mean the entire Consulate General, it was a very large operation, much bigger than many embassies, in a building with 4 floors. Besides the standard complement of State Department Officers, political, economic, consular, administrative and -- at that time -- commercial, there was the full range of USIS offices, including a library located nearby; a defense attaché section; a Treasury representative; an FBI office; INS and Customs representatives; and, of course, CIA.

We all liked David Osborn, as I've mentioned. He was eminently reasonable, a nice person to work for, informal and easy going, but also serious and competent. He was good on China, and good at briefing and giving the speeches -- all the things a consul general has to do. I remember him with Henry Kissinger who came through in '73. He handled that very smoothly.

I don't remember David Dean being there in my first year back. Unless I'm remembering incorrectly, we had a wonderful gentleman named Harold Jacobson as Osborn's deputy. We called him "Jake." I think David Dean replaced Jacobson in the second half of 1972.

Q: How was David Dean to work for?

ROPE: I came to like David and generally enjoyed my interactions with him later in my career when I headed the China desk. I did, however, have issues with him related to my reporting in Hong Kong. Bob Drexler left in the summer of 1972 and was replaced by a very casual FSO named Wever Gim. I think I worked for Wever for the rest of the calendar year, though I can't remember for sure. I was still doing the same job, but at some point after Dean arrived, David got the idea of splitting up the China Mainland and Hong Kong/Macao Sections and rearranging their components into a more conventional form of organization. The result was one political section, under Wever, covering both the Mainland and Hong Kong and Macao, and one economic section, covering the same geographic areas. David gained a second hat for himself in the process, as the chief of economic section, and I was moved into that section, working for him.

Q: So David was both DPO and Economic Section chief?

ROPE: Yes. By that time, I had been doing my job for at least 18 months and was pretty confident. In fact, I was doing it well enough that it ultimately gained me assignment to Beijing in that first USLO contingent. China's foreign trade was really beginning to expand, and the PRC was moving into very large deals for whole plants. I tracked this closely. A lot of it was in the realm of chemical plants for making fertilizer and other products, like polyethylene for agricultural uses. The Japanese were doing much of this business, and I had excellent contacts in the Japanese Consulate General. I was predicting that within a year Chinese turn-key plant contracts would reach at least \$1 billion. At a time when China's annual imports in recent years had been around \$2 billion, that was a very large number, and David didn't believe it. I tried to lead him through the logic process, including bringing out chemistry charts to show how if you bought X plant producing one kind of feed-stock material you needed Y plant to go with it. David wasn't

up on the specifics, but he kind of belittled what I was doing and wouldn't sign off on my reporting without changes that watered it down. It wasn't enough to warrant an all-out fight, but it put a damper on my reporting that I didn't like. I was right, by the way. In the end the Chinese bought more than I was projecting.

Q: By that time, you didn't have much time left in Hong Kong.

ROPE: Not as it turned out. After the Nixon Visit, Kissinger followed up with visits every few months to Beijing, on all but the last one before the creation of USLO going through Pakistan rather than via Hong Kong. In February 1973, however, he and his entourage, including John Holdridge, did go through Hong Kong. He didn't choose to stay at the Consul General's residence, as he might have, and instead stayed with his party at the Mandarin Hotel. We weren't sure he would come up to the Consulate General for even a briefing let alone any other kind of meeting. I think, however, he got the message that it would look bad and certainly be bad for our morale and State-NSC relations if he didn't see us. So before leaving for China he came up, and David Osborn and those of us reporting on the China Mainland briefed him.

Kissinger was known for eschewing economics. As a grand strategist he did recognize their importance, but he tended to leave that area to a member of his staff, Bob Hormats. In any case, as the briefing began, Osborn asked where he'd like us to start. Henry replied, "Anywhere, as long as it isn't economics!"

So Sherrod McCall began the briefing, covering China's domestic political scene. At one point, he said to Kissinger, "...and unfortunately for you, there's a serious drought in northern China." "Vy (why), unfortunately for me?" Kissinger glaringly demanded to know. "Because you said you didn't want to talk about economics!" Sherrod answered. Henry looked at Sherrod and seemed not to know what to say. Then he realized it was a joke, and kind of huffed out a laugh.

For my part I explained why the Chinese were already asking for Most Favored Nation trade treatment and pressed the argument that the single most effective thing we could do to get trade really moving would be to grant it.

On that trip, Henry and Zhou Enlai agreed that their two countries would establish liaison offices in each other's capitals. A little over two months later, in Beijing, Chas Freeman, part of the USLO Advance Party who'd been working on the China Desk, told me that the State Department had been pressing this idea on Kissinger for some time but that Kissinger had resisted, preferring to make his periodic trips to Beijing without bringing State further into the picture. However, Chas told me, when he got to Beijing this time, Dr. Kissinger found Premier Zhou proposing exactly what the State Department had been advocating; and he had little choice but to accept. If this is really so, I suspect it's in the records of the Department, and/or in Chas's oral history.

Q: I suppose you were all hoping to be chosen to move to that new office in Beijing?

ROPE: I think so. Certainly I did, and thought I had a decent shot at it.

It was an auspicious time for me. Priscilla was pregnant with our first child. Dick Sherman, head of the Japan Desk in the Department, had visited Hong Kong and asked if I'd be interested in the China-watching job in Tokyo. If I stayed in Hong Kong, I would be in line to take over from Darryl reporting on China's foreign relations. That would have been good, too. We had moved the previous summer to a lovely duplex house owned by the Consulate General, looking down on Deep Water Bay. I commuted over the Peak by motorcycle. I remember sitting on our patio one sunny day in late March, looking at the beautiful scene below and thinking that if neither Beijing nor Tokyo possibilities came through and I replaced Darryl in Hong Kong, "this will be my consolation prize."

In any case, shortly thereafter the USLO staffing assignments were announced. I alone among ConGen Hong Kong China watchers was on the list. On April 5, our daughter Kate was born, and a day or two later I received news that I'd been promoted to FSO-4 -- a very early promotion to that level. I remember David Osborn calling to congratulate me and telling me "enjoy it all while you can." Three weeks later, I left for Beijing.

Q: Well let's get to the Beijing Liaison office. How did you get that assignment?

ROPE: I didn't request it. I knew I was under consideration, and I was a logical person to go because trade was going to be an important part of the relationship, particularly in those early days. I was sorry, though, when I was chosen, that some other really good Hong Kong officers -- Jay Taylor, Sherrod McCall, Darryl, who would have been outstanding choices to go as well were not chosen. They didn't begrudge me the assignment, though, and were very congratulatory.

Q: Now the USLO actually formally opens on July 1, 1973, but you go up in April. Did your family just stay in Hong Kong for a while?

ROPE: Yes; and that wasn't easy on Priscilla. I left 20 days after Katy's birth, arriving in Beijing April 30, the night before May Day, after some time in Guangzhou. Priscilla was allowed to stay in our Hong Kong house because we had a brand new baby and arrangements for housing in Beijing hadn't yet been worked out. Fortunately, we had an excellent maid and cook from the Philippines, Nena Melgar who could help Priscilla. She couldn't come to Beijing, but when we returned to the US in 1975 we were able to bring her with us. She was a member of our household until the early 1980's, when she got married and moved away.

On April 25, Priscilla, baby Kate, various friends, and my teacher Tang Hung saw me off at the Kowloon train station. Today you can take a train straight through to Guangzhou, and vice versa; but not then. I took a Kowloon Railway train to Lo Wu station at the border of the New Territories. There I walked over a covered railroad bridge to the Mainland station at Shenzhen. "Zhen" is roughly equivalent to "hamlet" in Chinese, and Shenzhen in those days was just a fishing village, not the large city it is today.

After crossing the bridge and going through entry formalities on the Mainland side, I was directed into a large room for foreign visitors where people were seated at round tables according to nationality. Lunch was served. I don't recall if there were any Americans at my table or whether I dined alone. In any case, after lunch the assembled foreigners boarded a different train for what I remember as a two hour ride to Guangzhou.

I had a great time in Guangzhou. It was Canton Fair time, and I already knew quite a few of the US business people there. I toured the Fair, walked all over Guangzhou, alone or with fellow Americans, including paying a visit to Shamian Island where foreign traders used to be confined in the early days of the "China Trade" and where there were several consulates -- North Vietnamese, Polish, and maybe others. I visited the peasant training institute where Mao lived and taught for a time in the 1920s; saw Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall; and visited other sites. I loved walking the narrow streets and alleys of the old city. Again, not long before, all we Americans could do was travel to the New Territories border and peer into "Red China." Now I was there. It was exhilarating.

Q: You were free to walk around on your own? You didn't have "minders" or notice any surveillance?

ROPE: That was never my experience in Guangzhou. If there was surveillance, it was good enough that I never saw it. As a matter of practice, I always assumed that my room and my phone were bugged, and I still do that in China today though I've never had any evidence that it's true. It's just a reasonable precaution. As for minders, whenever I and/or Priscilla traveled to other cities during our two years with USLO, we had to have China Travel Service guides who occasionally tried, without 100 percent success, to keep us from going out of our hotels unescorted. But in Guangzhou this never happened, and as a general matter I was always able to have at least some time to wander PRC cities without identifiable surveillance.

I must have had a Chinese official point of contact in Guangzhou, though, because I was able to arrange a one day visit to an agricultural commune, with a guide along, hosted by commune officials.

It was a good five days, having meals in the Dongfang Hotel or at a huge lake-side restaurant on the outskirts of town with American business people or other China traders. I knew quite a few, but almost everyone I met was interested in an American headed to that first office in Beijing. This reminds me that I was interviewed by a US TV network before I left Hong Kong, though I never saw nor heard of it thereafter. I assume it ran.

I also made contacts among some of the more experienced, European traders in Guangzhou, French, German, English, and Scandinavian, who were quite social and interested in how things were going for Americans.

On April 30, the Day before China's May Day holiday, I went to Guangzhou's White Cloud airport and took a CAAC IL-62 -- that we called the VC-10sky because it was such

an obvious, though inferior, Russian copy of the British VC-10 -- to Beijing.

Chas Freeman met me, and we took the ride I mentioned earlier, along the narrow, tree-lined road through agricultural land, into Beijing. Chas was a member of the official USLO Advance Party that passed through Hong Kong before I left. Al Jenkins, then head of the Office of PRC/Mongolia Affairs in the Department, but destined to be one of two USLO DCMs serving simultaneously under David Bruce, led it. By the time I got there, Al had gone back to Washington, and Bob Blackburn USLO's designated Administrative Counselor was leading the Advance Party.

I'm now going to tell a story Chas told me on the way in from the airport. It may seem like unnecessary gossip, but you generally ask me what various people were like to work for, and this story and one other I'll relate does bear on the dynamics of the unusual staffing set-up we had at USLO and on various decisions made.

Anyone who knew Al Jenkins knows, I think, that he was a peculiar individual. It was said of him that he considered Henry Kissinger the second most brilliant man he'd ever met. The first, ahead of Henry, was the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

Q: Is that of Beatles fame?

ROPE: Yes. Whatever the truth of that, he was definitely a follower of the Maharishi. Chas loves to tell a good story; but based on my later experience in Beijing, what he told me that afternoon rings true. According to Chas, the Maharishi had given Al a video tape recorder and monitor to bring to Beijing. Al did have such equipment and did have Maharishi tapes to play with it. The purpose, according to Chas, was to set up a Transcendental Meditation center in Beijing. Al was totally into Transcendental Meditation. If you've ever seen pictures of him in retirement, he had long hair, white gown, and wore beads -- the whole nine yards. Occasionally his secretary at USLO, Bobbie Brooks, would find him standing on his head meditating in Beijing. I have nothing against that, per se, but Al was unusual, to say the least.

Anyway, Chas, that day in the car, recounted a variety of odd things about Al's behavior in Beijing. The one that was farthest out, though, was about Al's introductory call on Vice Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua. Qiao was the highest ranking official Al would meet for such a call, and on the way to the meeting Al asked Chas, who accompanied him, if Chas thought it would be a good idea to bring up the Maharishi's idea for establishing a Transcendental Meditation center in Beijing. Chas laughed as he told me his reply: "I think," he said, "you should wait until you've established your relationship with him." Al followed the advice and didn't raise the idea. I know this story must sound exaggerated, if not apocryphal, and I don't know how anyone at that time could have been so naïve as to think the Chinese would agree to a Maharishi meditation center in Peking; but that is exactly what Chas related to me, and I have to say that it was totally in character with the Al Jenkins I came to know.

What specifically makes this ring true is that Al did set up a room in his apartment with

that VCR and monitor. And when he would host diplomatic dinner parties -- I know this for a fact based on my own experience -- he would invite the men to join him in that room after dinner for brandy and cigars, while the women retired with Mrs. Jenkins to another room. This was in keeping with old-style diplomatic traditions now for the most part gone, I think, but fairly common then.

On the VCR, Al would put a tape of the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, with Leonard Bernstein conducting. VCRs were new then, and that fact alone would generate interest. Then, when the Beethoven was finished, Al would offer to play Maharishi tapes and do so if anyone took him up on it.

One morning months after USLO opened, Al came in and told our staff meeting he'd had a dinner party the night before, after which he'd invited guests to hear classical music on the VCR. After that, he said, "I told them I didn't have anything else to play, 'except some old Maharishi tapes, and you wouldn't want to hear those.'" As he clearly hoped, someone did, and Al obliged. Then, Al told us, "Mr. Mirza, the Pakistani Chargé got up to leave. And when we got to the door, he said, 'I want you to know I'm not leaving because you've got that Indian on the TV;' but it was only 10 O'clock, and I couldn't think of any other reason why he'd be leaving."

Q: So you and Chas rode into Beijing. What happened then? What were those first days like?

ROPE: We rode in in one of the old Shanghai cars, almost universally light green or beige -- ours was green -- to the old Peking Hotel. "Before the Revolution" -- a phrase frequently used by the Chinese to refer to all things before the Communist takeover, generally bad -- it had been the Wagon Lis Hotel under French management. The Shanghai cars, to digress further, were bulky five-passenger vehicles with certain lines copied straight from the Mercedes 220S of the 1950s. I know because my Uncle Robert had one. The similarity ended there, however; they were more like a tank than a Mercedes. We had a driver, provided by the Chinese Foreign Ministry Diplomatic Services Bureau that provided all personnel to diplomatic establishments -- or to any one else for that matter, e.g. journalists -- in those days.

The Advance Party was located in the oldest wing of the hotel -- this is before the days of the taller, newer Beijing Hotel which was built while we were there and was still standing in 2013 when I was last in Beijing. Our offices and rooms were all on the same floor. I think it was the fourth floor, and we had the whole west wing of that part of the hotel. It looked out over the Forbidden City over a street called Nan Chizi, running along the old moat. The wall and buildings immediately beyond Nan Chizi weren't considered part of the Forbidden City but were essentially identical in appearance. Imperial officials used to have their yamens, or bureaus, there. Beyond the yellow roofs of the Forbidden City, on a clear day we could see all the way to the Western Hills. I have pictures from those days taken out the window of my room, which was three or four doors down from the office where we operated for the first few weeks. That area along the moat, by the way, was a nice place for walks in the evening. In still-Cultural Revolution China, where everyone

wore blue or grey Mao suits and people were very careful not to show any form of individual self-expression or in any way act out of line, at night, in the darkness walking along the moat, you could see and hear signs of both: voices singing; lovers rustling in the bushes.

To get back to that day, April 30, 1973, I came into the hotel with Chas and met the other members of that first small group: Bob Blackburn, Ray Jones, a long time secretary to David Bruce, a communicator whose name I don't recall, and one or two others. I know I was the fifth American to arrive who was permanently assigned to USLO. Chas wasn't assigned to USLO and was leaving in a few days.

They were a nice group, and it was easy to settle in. Maybe we had cocktails. After dinner, we walked around Tiananmen Square. It was the eve of May Day, and there were huge portraits of Lenin, Stalin, Marx and Engels up in the square, with Mao's portrait on Tiananmen itself looking down. The square was crowded with people, all dressed in blue or gray but out for pre-holiday strolls. There are large stand-alone columns on either side of Tiananmen, and we were amused to see, on the western column, a long red banner that said in Chinese, "Down with American Imperialism and all its Running Dogs."

We were Americans, and we were there; and it was exciting! In those days you could walk right through Tiananmen and on one or two hundred yards further to the Wu Men, the Meridian Gate, of the Forbidden City, with its high imposing walls forming a deep rectangular horseshoe. You could imagine how intimidating it would have been for foreign tribute missions, in imperial days, as they sought to enter. When our car arrived from Hong Kong, I would drive guests through there on their first night, right up to the Wu Men.

The next day was May Day, and there was no work to be done. We went out to the various Beijing parks where all kinds of pageantry was going on -- singers, dancers, comedic duos, and as much decoration as one ever got to see in the drab Beijing of those days. It was propaganda, and some of it was pretty laughable, but it was still a nice introduction to Beijing.

Q: What was the attitude of ordinary people toward you? Did you encounter any hostility?

ROPE: On that day, people were out in a holiday mood -- they didn't get many days off. There were no "golden weeks," as there are now. In general, people didn't speak to us much except when Priscilla and I were out with baby Kate, when the Chinese love of children would break through and spark some interchanges with us. There was a lot of curiosity shown toward foreigners, particularly in places outside Beijing. You'd go into an empty shop and soon find the place crowded with people, just milling around, obviously curious to see foreigners in action.

People couldn't automatically recognize us as Americans; but, when they did know, they were almost universally polite, if not overtly friendly.

One simple example came when we visited an old restaurant. Chas had been given its name by one of our teachers, I think Ms. Ouyang, who knew it before the Communists came to power. It was the Tong Hezhu. We had one of our Chinese local employees look into whether it was still there, and it was. So before Chas left we went there and had a wonderful meal. In those days you didn't order at the restaurant or even order in advance. You just "set a standard," specifying how much you were willing to pay, and the restaurant decided what to serve you at that price. We had a fantastic meal, and Priscilla and I later entertained there often; but what I remember about that first visit was when the Chef came out and greeted us warmly, saying "I used to work for Pearl Buck!"

It was, in certain respects, a kind of honeymoon period. Taxis were one example. There weren't so many cars in Beijing. Japanese Toyota Corollas were just starting to be imported as taxis. But most were the old Shanghais. You couldn't just hail a cab. If you wanted one you had to call a central location; and you had to specify your nationality. It was said that if you were Albanian you would get faster service; but after we arrived, other diplomats complained that when Americans called for taxis they were the ones who got picked up right away.

After May Day, we got down to work, and most of it was logistical. Bob Blackburn sent me out on a purchasing mission to find furniture to go into Ambassador Bruce's residence -- and years later Betty Hummel thanked me for an armoire I'd purchased, because the master bedroom lacked closets. The most important thing we had to do, though, was to arrange for the arrival of two C-141 Air Force cargo jets bringing in a load of supplies, furniture, cars and people for USLO.

A day or two ahead of their arrival, I went out to the airport with Bob Blackburn to translate for him as we explained what we would need to receive and unload these huge planes. Construction of our future USLO compound was already under way, and we had garages where we could store the incoming goods. But C-141s hold a lot, and we needed workers -- some to unload at the airport and others to unload at our future building; and we needed a large number of trucks -- the Chinese could only provide open trucks not nearly the size of what we would use in America. They were like cattle trucks. So we needed many of them, and we needed to stagger their departures so that we could manage the unloading process at USLO. Our tiny staff would have to be split between the locations to oversee and direct the process.

It took a lot of explanation and negotiation to make sure we had what we needed. The Chinese were perfectly cordial; but they tended to avoid detail and would just say they could handle it all so we shouldn't worry. We would say that we had to have so many cars; we had to have so many trucks; etc. They would say, "It will happen; they will be there." We needed to know more than that. We wanted everything nailed down. We could tell the Chinese side didn't know what they were in for, and when the day came they were awed by the two C-141s when they saw them. I remember saying to the man I was walking with out on the tarmac, "we still have bigger ones than this!"

We did get most of what we wanted, and it all worked out, pretty well. We were horrified, though, as loaded trucks drove away from the plane, to see them lining up in a convoy along a road outside the airport, not intending to drive into Beijing until every last truck was loaded. That meant that everything would arrive at our future USLO building at once, with only a few Americans to direct the unloading process. We tried to get this changed on the spot, but we couldn't, and things got a bit chaotic, but it got done.

Incidentally, it was always part of my advice to businessmen to make sure the important details of any deal were nailed down and not just to accept the "we can do it, leave it to us" line. It was important to make sure the Chinese knew what they were getting into and had the capability to deliver on what they promised.

There's a book by a guy named Jim Mann called "Beijing Jeep" about American Motors' unhappy experience doing a joint venture with the Chinese. It portrays the Chinese as highly conspiratorial and dishonest, in a consistent and seemingly well-organized way, taking advantage of American Motors at every turn by agreeing to do things and then reneging. I don't agree with those kinds of characterizations. In my experience, the Chinese -- at least in those days -- were often disorganized and uncoordinated, with authority scattered among different entities. Their knowledge of modern management practices and technology was limited. At the same time they were ambitious, and prone at times to try to take on more than they could chew. So as I read that book, I thought the fundamental failure was on the US side for not doing the due diligence and hard negotiating necessary to ensure that the Chinese would actually be able to do what they said they could. But I digress.

Q: So that was the kind of advice you were already giving businessmen? How soon did you start seeing them?

ROPE: Almost immediately. They found us fairly quickly. Bob Blackburn had already received a few before I got there, and he passed those contacts on to me. I began setting up the Commercial/Economic Section files while we were still in the hotel. Receiving businessmen was a two-way street, of course. I was learning about what they were doing and how the Chinese were dealing with them while also giving fairly common sense advice. One example that came somewhat later but was typical was when a company negotiating the sale of whole plants came to me and said they were hung up on an arbitration clause. The Chinese were demanding that they agree to arbitration in Beijing. The US negotiators, including company lawyers, didn't want that. They could accept arbitration in a neutral third place like Stockholm, but the Chinese were insisting on Beijing. I said, "Would you accept that in any other country?" They said, "No." "Well then don't, I said. Do what you do anywhere else. The Chinese will respect that. Hold out for it." It was common sense advice which generally worked and certainly did in that case.

Also, fairly early on, we started getting correspondence from US companies wanting advice. I would write back with two levels of advice. One was to provide information on which Chinese Import-Export corporation they should deal with and how to make contact

with them. With that I'd provide any additional information or suggestions I might have. The second part was to provide contact information for the office in the Department of Commerce that was gearing up to deal with China trade. One amusing example was a letter very early on that I got from a US supplier of bull semen, complete with a catalogue showing bulls with names like "Starry Knight." I called Bob Godson, the Canadian Embassy Commercial Counselor, whom I'd already befriended while in Hong Kong. He said, "We're in competition on bull semen!" But he quickly added that they should contact the China National Native Products Import-Export Corporation, and I passed on what I learned to the US firm.

Q: So the C-141s arrived, and you got more staff with them. Correct?

ROPE: Yes. Our small group approximately doubled, or maybe tripled when those planes arrived. Nick Platt, the Political Counselor, came in, along with Lucille Zaelit, his secretary, and I think our GSO Mo Morin -- if he wasn't with us there already. There was also a contingent of Marines and Navy Seabees who would do construction work for us. Since they were coming on a cargo plane loaded with both office necessities and some furnishings for residences, some of those in the C-141s actually sat inside the Ambassadorial Cadillac and a yellow van during the flight -- Bob Blackburn quickly dubbed the van "Number One Sun." I don't think John Holdridge came in that way, but he might have. In any case, people started coming in pretty fast, by various means.

Q: What were your working arrangements in the Peking Hotel? What about security?

ROPE: We had one floor of one wing of the hotel. There were hotel staff members by the elevator on every floor who could be called upon for some services but who also could observe our comings and goings. Our main office was in a relatively small suite of rooms, with Bob Blackburn occupying one of the bedrooms, at least at first, and our communications room in another -- I think working off one time pads for encryption. I know we had some capability for securing classified material, and I remember "reading in" in the Office when I first got there -- including reading one particular instruction from the Department I'll mention. I don't remember how we assured that security, but there must have been a system. With the arrival of marines, it would have been simpler; we could have round-the-clock watch personnel. I do know that, as I said, I started the beginnings of our Commercial Economic Section filing system while we were still in the Hotel. They weren't classified, at least not while we were still in the hotel.

As more people came in, our number of residential rooms expanded into an adjoining wing, and perhaps to another floor. I don't remember for sure.

Q: How long were you there? Had the Chinese identified office space for you? What about housing?

ROPE: Residentially, some of us were in the hotel for quite a while. Below the Ambassadorial and DCM level, when housing became available it was allocated according to the order in which we arrived. That's why I remember being number 5. Bob,

I guess, was number two, after Al Jenkins who led the Advance Party. Bob was a smart and savvy guy who knew how to take care of himself, and he got the first apartment below the leadership level. I don't mean that critically; he was a very good person as well as an extremely competent FSO with a great sense of humor. I liked him very much.

To give you an indication of how long people were in the hotel, Priscilla and I moved into our apartment in August. Don Anderson and his wife, who arrived sometime in my first four weeks, weren't in their housing until early 1974.

On the office and residential space front, the British, French, Pakistanis, Soviet Bloc countries and others who had maintained relations with China for years had old, well established buildings as well as apartment blocks. But for the many newcomers brought in by the surge in recognitions of the PRC by from countries all over, new buildings and housing had to be built. A major building boom was under way, almost round-the-clock, in the eastern section of the city just beyond the old city wall in the area of the Ritan Park -- office and apartment buildings, both. The area was Jianguomenwai. Priscilla and I would awake to the tune of pile driving, as building construction, and work on what became Beijing's first "ring road," went forward.

Before I arrived, Bob had already concluded negotiations for a building compound that would be suitable for us. I think it had been earmarked for another country, but we were offered it and took it. It had a residence, where I believe the US Ambassador still lives today, with a two-story office building with a small third floor tower that conveniently housed our CIA officer, Jim Lilley. It also had ancillary structures like garages and work sheds. I can't remember when David Bruce arrived, but I think he was able to move into the residence directly -- where he and his wife Evangeline could use my armoire.

I'm not sure of the exact date when we moved into the new USLO building, but I know that by the time Priscilla and Katy arrived in early June I was already working in my office on USLO's first floor; and I think by that time, or around that time, my boss, Herb Horowitz had also arrived.

I think we may have had a couple of more C-141 flights bringing in furniture, etc., sometime after the first two, though again I'm not sure. One annoying detail I remember is that the General Services people back in the Department chose to send us lots of furniture and furnishings for our apartments by air but sent appliances by sea freight. This meant that even when apartments became available, we couldn't move in because the kitchens weren't equipped. One annoying detail for Priscilla was that I had to make upholstery choices for living room furniture before she arrived, and she hated what I picked out -- with good reason; my ability to judge upholstery cloth samples is limited. Fortunately, we had some very nice modern furniture from Hong Kong that could be shipped compactly and fit into the limited shipment of household goods we were permitted. So we could put together a living room from mostly our own things.

While we were still in the hotel, I traveled with Bob to the Chinese port of Xingang outside the city of Tianjin, to see it and discuss arrangements for receiving sea freight

there. I wrote a report on what I observed at the port. It looked pretty backward, though I was no expert, despite having spent two years on a Navy ship going in and out of a lot of ports. In that sort of situation, which would apply to factories, agricultural areas and other places I reported on to Washington over the next two years, I just tried to describe what I saw well enough, and in sufficient detail, to help informed readers in Washington make their own judgments.

To come back to office arrangements and housing, I don't remember how soon it was, but I think within a couple of weeks of my arrival, say by mid-May, John Holdridge and Al Jenkins were on the scene and had been allotted two apartments in what was called "The Nine Story Building," an older housing structure for senior diplomats in the San Li Tun area, about 5-10 minutes by car from where the Liaison Office would be located. The apartments were opposite one another and took up the entire fourth or fifth floor. Al got the larger, one, which had five-rooms plus a kitchen and storage areas off it; John's had one room less but was still ample. I suppose Al had priority, having led the Advance Party. This was of some relevance later, when we needed a place to house our small school.

Until our new office building was available, John's apartment became Mr. Bruce's office, with John, Al, Nick Platt, perhaps Jim Lilley -- I'm not sure when he arrived -- Bruce staff aide Brunson McKinley, and some others, including our communicators. When I needed to see higher ups, or to deliver cables to be typed, approved and transmitted, I went there. It was about a 20-minute ride from the Peking Hotel.

Q: Going along with the practical side of things, what did you do for money? What could you buy with it.

ROPE: At that time there was a kind of scrip foreigners could buy, since we couldn't buy regular Chinese currency. It may have been "Renmin Piao." The PRC currency was Renminbi, meaning "People's Money," and "piao" meant a form of coupon or ticket. It had an exchange rate similar to what one would get with Renminbi, and we could use it anywhere, including when we were traveling. There was still rationing going on, and diplomats, too, had to use ration coupons. We got coupons for cotton cloth and I guess for rice. You might say there was another kind of natural rationing, as well -- on the supply side. There wasn't a lot to buy in Beijing. You could buy rugs, furniture, and arts and crafts at the so-called Friendship Store -- we called it the unfriendship store for its poor service -- where diplomats and other foreign residents or visitors could shop.

You could buy used furniture in a few shops off Wangfujing Street -- like that armoire. We often bought clothing and old goods in consignment shops. There was also the Number One Department Store on Wangfujing where you could buy new clothes, though not in styles or sizes most foreigners would wear. Foodstuffs mostly had to be bought at the Friendship Store, and since the types and quality available wasn't great, diplomats imported a lot from Hong Kong or from Europe, via the Trans-Siberian Railway. Whatever you could buy was cheap, as was food in restaurants. We saved a lot of money in Beijing, enough to make a down payment on a house when we returned to Washington

-- \$25,000 in two years, which in those days was more than an FSO-4's annual salary.

We also bought some good furniture. New furniture in Beijing was not worth buying. In used shops, however, you could find good pieces that, while often damaged and even rickety, could be restored cheaply by artisans. They couldn't make you a new piece of Chinese-style furniture, but I joked that if you brought them just a splinter and said it had once been a great Ming chest, they could build you a Ming-style chest in the guise of restoration.

Q: When did you finally move into USLO's new quarters?

ROPE: As I said, I don't remember, but I know we were there for at least several weeks before we officially opened, which you've told me was July 1. The Seabees had to get in there first to do some work and construct our security room, "the bubble," where we could have staff meetings and talk without risk of being bugged; and I think other security precautions -- checking for unwelcome devices, etc. -- were also undertaken. But we were probably in place at least by mid-June, having daily staff meetings, with John Holdridge and Al Jenkins alternating the chair every other day.

Q: That was an unusual staffing situation. How did it happen and how did it work?

ROPE: As I understood it, probably from Chas who was back in Washington on the Desk, though I'm not 100 percent sure, Kissinger and Secretary of State Rogers, couldn't agree on who should be deputy to David Bruce. Jenkins, then head of the China Desk, was Rogers' choice, while Henry wanted John Holdridge. John was an FSO detailed to Kissinger's NSC staff and had been with him on all his trips to Beijing. There is the story about how Henry didn't have enough shirts with him when he flew to Peking, and he had to wear one of John's -- despite the fact that John was a tall man and wore a larger size. John was Kissinger's China guy. I think he mentioned the shirts in his book.

Whoever held the job was going to be very important to Washington, in part, I suspect, because no one expected David Bruce to do much. My understanding of his selection, again I believe from Chas, was that Zhou Enlai had told Henry Kissinger that Beijing intended to send a high ranking political figure to Washington to head its Liaison Office and hoped the US would do the same. The Chinese selected General Huang Zhen, a Long March veteran and member of the Party Central Committee who had served as ambassador to several countries including France. This put the White House in a difficult position, because it wasn't easy to find a high-ranking Republican who would like to go live in Mao's Peking.

Nixon and Kissinger settled on David Bruce, who by that time was 75 years old. He was a distinguished former ambassador who had served in that capacity in London, Bonn and Paris. He's also headed the OSS office in London during the War. Despite his years, I suspect Bruce extracted a promise of a premier follow-on posting before agreeing to go to Beijing. After a year at USLO he moved on to be US Ambassador to NATO.

Whenever I or Priscilla had contact with him -- Priscilla loves horse racing, and Bruce liked horses, so they hit it off whenever she ever got to talk to him -- we found him a charming man. I once sat in on a wonderfully impressive briefing on China and its 20th Century history that he gave to a Congressional delegation led by Senator Magnuson. Nonetheless, he was a remote figure who had little contact with most of us. So far as I could tell, he saw his role as limited to representing the US at the highest levels while leaving the rest of the work to his deputies and their subordinates. I have heard the same was true of him in Europe. In any case, Rogers and Kissinger felt it so important to have their own man in the deputy slot that they were only able to resolve the matter through their odd, two-deputies compromise.

Also, because David Bruce was a distinguished ambassador, he had to have an aide, i.e., Brunson McKinley. What this meant was that on the State Department substantive reporting and representational side, we had a four-officer front office sitting on top of four FSOs -- two in the Political Section, Nick Platt and Don Anderson, and two in the Economic/Commercial Section, Herb Horowitz and me. There was CIA's Jim Lilly, but he was off doing his own thing providing information that he got through his channels to the chief of the office -- which ultimately led to his relationship with George Bush. All the others on our staff were Admin, security, secretarial or communications personnel. It was a rather weird set up.

Q: You didn't see Ambassador Bruce daily?

ROPE: No. I assume the Deputies did, and maybe Nick. Certainly I never participated in a meeting in which I or any other officers on our staff interacted with him. I may have been called up to his office once, though I'm not even sure of that; if so it can't have been of much substance. He did come to the office daily, I think, and he was a good host to visiting delegations such as the one I mentioned. I think he also saw Zhou Enlai on at least one occasion, to receive Chinese complaints about US bombing in Cambodia, or possibly to tell Zhou it had stopped, or both. Beyond that, he may have been writing his memoirs.

We did have staff meetings in our secure "bubble," with the two deputies alternating the chair. One day we'd have be Al; the next day John. The difference was night and day. John was a decision-maker and leader -- he'd gone to West Point. Al was the opposite. If you wanted a decision, it was best to wait until John was the leader. Both of them, however, shared a fear of having anything go wrong in Beijing that might play badly in Washington. This also affected, I believe, USLO's approach to political reporting.

Q: What kind of things concerned them?

ROPE: One big source of their worries was the Marine detachment. The Marines, except for the Gunnery Sergeant, were housed in one large apartment; and the Seabee contingent had built them a great bar, beautifully finished, using wood from packing crates. Priscilla and I lived in the same building and entry, down only one or two floors; and we know they did not have wild parties, nor were there any fights, as the Chinese eventually

alleged. Still, they attracted attention. Along with the bar in the Australian Embassy's bomb shelter, where we would sometimes go for happy hour, they quickly became a place where foreign diplomatic personnel and journalists congregated. Inevitably, this hit the Western press, in article about the "Red Ass Saloon," not a name that would please any Chinese Communist. There was an unhappy history of US Marines in China after the War that no one wanted repeated. So this worried John and Al a lot. One precaution they decided on was that Marines would not wear uniforms outside USLO. They would come to work in civvies and change into uniforms there.

But John and Al could worry about far more trivial things, like the time one of our Foreign Service spouses got into a bit of a tiff with waiters in the Peking Hotel dining room because she didn't like something she'd been served. I can't remember specifics but there were enough small things that were blown way out of proportion that it was depressing at times to listen to the discussion. Also, on the reporting side, this worry about the danger that things would happen in Beijing that Kissinger wouldn't like had a negative influence. I can mention that if you'd like.

One decision made early on that I found timorous and discouraging was that Mr. Bruce would not attend diplomatic dinners at the Great Hall of the People, or any functions involving the diplomatic corps. This was discussed at a staff meeting early on; but it was clear the matter had already been decided by our leaders, with Nick likely involved. So far as I could see, it was a decision made at USLO, not dictated by Washington -- though the Department and/or NSC may have been consulted or approved the decision based on a USLO recommendation. The reason given was that since we didn't have the status of a full-fledged embassy, Mr. Bruce would only have the same status as the PLO and might have to sit at the PLO representative's table.

I didn't like this decision. However we were seated, the US was the US. And it should have been possible to find a way around the PLO-US seating problem. One key consideration ought to have been, I thought, that Ambassadors didn't always attend such functions and often sent subordinates, who might not even be their deputies. Indeed, that was a necessity, because foreign leaders were constantly coming to Beijing and being entertained at grand dinners or receptions to which the diplomatic corps and journalists were invited.

In any case, by deciding that Mr. Bruce would not attend such functions, we were also deciding that no USLO staff members could ever attend. This cut us off from multiple opportunities to observe and develop contacts with Chinese officials and to gain first-hand information for our reporting. Deng Xiaoping, for example, reappeared, for the first time since going down in the Cultural Revolution, at a diplomatic reception -- for Sihanouk, who had just returned from a trip to Cambodia. Zhou Enlai made an allegorical speech about a man, in theory Sihanouk, who had been away from his people for a long time but had now returned to them. He was clearly referring to Deng.

If nothing else, we could have decided that Mr. Bruce wouldn't attend but that we would send lower-ranking personnel to represent him.

On a different note, though I really I loved John Holdridge and don't like to say anything negative about him, I would say that our DCMs seemed extraordinarily reluctant to ask Mr. Bruce to do anything; and they often seemed to deal with him through Brunson. One example, that hurt post morale, was their unwillingness to ask him Bruce if we could show movies in the main reception area of the residence.

Beijing in those days was not a great place for entertainment. Aside from visiting the big tourist sites -- Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven, etc. -- there was little to do. If one didn't speak or read Chinese, it could be very isolating. One source of entertainment available was movies from the US armed services circuit. They came in by pouch every few weeks, and we could vote on which ones we wanted ahead of time. Bob Blackburn and I, and others, wanted to show them in the residence, because there was no other space where our 28-member staff, plus dependents and children, could congregate and socialize together.

This need not have inconvenienced the Bruces, whose main living quarters were one floor above; and I'd have guessed they might sometimes attend. Scheduling could have been arranged to avoid interfering with their entertaining desires or obligations. It should have been quite simple; but we never got the chance to try. Al and John said, "We can't ask that of Mr. Bruce," and that was that." So when movies came in, staff members had to check out a USLO projector and show them at home. They could invite guests, and make it something social, but it could have been a much simpler, unifying thing to bring us all together. Not being able to raise something like that with Mr. Bruce was not good for morale.

In one uncomfortable and depressing early staff meeting, the subject of where to locate our tiny school was discussed. We didn't have a lot of school-age children, but there were two Platt boys, one of them today's movie actor Oliver Platt, two Horowitz boys, and several other children. They were to be taught by Pat Holdridge -- John and Martha's fine and capable daughter, just out of college. She would use Calvert correspondence materials. We needed a classroom, and the only obvious place was the fifth room in the Jenkins apartment. It was sufficiently separated from the rest of the apartment that it could be accessed from the front door without intruding on the Jenkins' privacy, and schooling would only take place during business hours.

Unfortunately, that room was where Al either intended to set up his Maharishi tape center or had already done so, and he instantly demurred. Nick Platt pressed him very hard, bringing Al close to tears, but to no effect. Al said the Jenkins apartment had to be a place of total peace and quiet at all times. As a result, a draughty enclosed balcony between the Holdridge and Jenkins apartment had to be made do.

Another discouraging event, at least for me, occurred during my first year when we learned that Boeing would soon deliver the first of the ten 707s it had sold to China. High-ranking Boeing executives would be on the plane, and I thought it a perfect opportunity to showcase renewed US-China relations and the value of trade for both

nations. Herb Horowitz was away, and I was acting chief of our section. I put together a plan to have Mr. Bruce join Chinese trade officials to meet the plane at Capital Airport, with journalists invited to cover the event. Then he would host a celebratory reception at the residence, inviting the Minister of Foreign Trade and other dignitaries from the aviation and trade fields, as well as some from the foreign ministry.

I knew the more established missions in Beijing, like the British, would make a big deal of such a major sale, and I consulted with them as a check on my own thinking. This, incidentally, is the kind of thing George Bush would have done at the drop of the hat.

I put together a cable to Washington outlining all of this and asking the Department to propose the plan to Boeing. Unfortunately, John was away, and there was not a lot of time before the delivery would take place. I couldn't wait for him to return and had to take it to Al for approval. Al immediately rejected it. First, he said, we couldn't ask Mr. Bruce to go to the airport. Second, we couldn't ask him to spend his own money to host a reception. Bruce was independently wealthy, and paid for representational events out of his own pocket rather than draw on our representation budget. I said to Al that, while it was very generous of Mr. Bruce to do that, we couldn't let his generosity keep us from doing important work. The event I was proposing was appropriate and in keeping with what other missions would do, I said, and I could not foresee any bigger opportunity on the trade side for at least a year.

Al was undeterred. "With what we're doing in Cambodia," he exclaimed, "the Chinese won't even come." I assumed this reflected Chinese complaints coming to us on the political side, probably at Mr. Bruce's level, about the US bombing; but again I respectfully disagreed. There had been no sign at any time since I had followed US-China trade, I said, when our actions in the Vietnam theatre negatively affected trade officials' behavior. I thought we could expect the trade minister and other officials including at least lower ranking foreign ministry people. Should there be a boycott, however, we'd know ahead of time, and it would be a signal from the Chinese that we could report to Washington. I got nowhere. The chance was lost.

Q: You said this tendency not to want to do anything that would rock the boat or be badly received in Washington influenced reporting. How so?

ROPE: That summer a new political campaign got underway in China -- the movement to criticize Confucius. Articles began to appear in Chinese media attacking the sage, and the demeanor attributed to him was suggestive of Zhou Enlai. There were even references to the Duke of Zhou. It looked very much to me and Herb Horowitz as though Zhou was under attack. Among the key criticisms of Confucius were his calls to "restrain oneself and restore the rites" and to "restore the old names." It was a classic example of Chinese use of allegory and code words to attack a real political figure. The emphasis on restoring the old system and families seemed clearly to refer to Zhou's moves to rebuild the government -- after Mao had so viciously savaged it in the Cultural Revolution -- by bringing back formerly disgraced leaders. Deng had recently returned to the stage, and for Mao's wife Jiang Qing and her clique that might have been the final straw.

Another fact influencing my thinking was a very unusual article I found in June attacking Peng Zhen. Peng had been the mayor of Beijing before the Cultural Revolution and was one of the first to be purged when it began. No mention of him had been made in the Chinese media since. The article I found excoriated him and said, "There are some people who can come back and some who can never come back. Peng Zhen can never come back." To me, the import of that couldn't be clearer. A leadership fight was going on. Some people, probably Zhou and Deng, wanted to rehabilitate Peng; and others, likely Mao's wife and perhaps Mao himself opposed it.

Why else would such an article on someone who had been long ago banished suddenly appear? I ran to Nick with this piece and told him what I thought. So far as I know, he did nothing with it. Perhaps this was before the 10th Party Congress, held that summer, and perhaps the Peng matter was settled then, at least until Mao's death and the demise of Jiang Qing and her "gang of 4." Peng did come back after that.

In any case, the attacks on Confucius seemed to me to be an attack on Zhou Enlai, related to his efforts to bring back leaders purged in the Cultural Revolution. I remember saying this to our Chinese teacher -- provided by the Diplomatic Services Bureau -- as I tried to puzzle out People's Daily articles on the subject. She said, "Oh no." These odd and contorted articles were "just criticizing old thinking."

To get to the point, ConGen Hong Kong saw the campaign the same way I did, and Sherrod McCall was saying so in lucid cables back to the Department. That quickly led to a split between Hong Kong and USLO over whether Zhou was under attack. John Holdridge and Nick would have none of such arguments, and I thought they were in denial. However much they may have pegged their dissent to the appearance of stability in Beijing, what really influenced them, I thought, was that news of that sort would not have been welcome in Washington.

The last thing Henry Kissinger wanted to hear was that his counterpart Zhou, so important in the restoration of US-China relations, was in jeopardy. That would imply instability that could bring Nixon's China opening into question. So USLO vehemently debunked Hong Kong's reporting, saying essentially, "Things are calm here; we see no signs of trouble." That was true, but one wouldn't have expected anything different. Moreover, our ability to travel outside the capital was highly circumscribed, undoubtedly due to trouble in the provinces.

John received the Foreign Service's Averill Harriman award for constructive dissent for putting down Hong Kong's reporting. Much as I came to love him, this was a travesty. Sherrod should have received the award for having the courage to keep reporting things as he saw them despite all the criticism from Beijing. In the end, Sherrod was proven absolutely right. After Mao died and the "Gang of Four" went down, there was an outpouring of articles in the Chinese press attacking the "Gang" for using the Confucius campaign "to attack our beloved premier Zhou Enlai!"

If I'd had the relationship with John that I came to have 8 years later, I'd have tried to persuade him that Sherrod was right; but John was very forceful in his views and Nick, who was an established star in the China field went right along with them. Herb and I thought differently, but we were doing economic work and weren't consulted. Jim Lilley sided with John and Nick and joined them in denigrating the reporting -- in his case CIA's reporting -- from Hong Kong. Bruce just signed the cables.

That December, I was in Washington on home leave. When I went out to the CIA I was surprised to see a big audience of China political as well as economic analysts awaiting me. I was the first person from USLO to come back and visit the Agency; and though I tried to stick to trade and economics, what people really wanted to know was what I thought about the Confucius Campaign. When I finally expressed my personal view that it was an attack on Zhou Enlai -- who by that time had deflected it into a campaign against a dead man, Lin Biao -- I was attacked acerbically, by the head of the current intelligence section, Charlie Neuhauser. He said the campaign was clearly aimed at Jiang Qing, for opposing US-China rapprochement. I thought that stood logic on its head, and, like USLO's reporting, was influenced by a desire to please the NSC. In my view, the urge to give Kissinger the analysis he wanted was overwhelming common sense China-watching.

When I say Zhou successfully deflected it into an attack on Lin Biao, by September or so the campaign had become "Criticize Lin, Criticize Confucius." By focusing it on the dead traitor Lin, I think, Zhou and his allies defused it, though it went on and even intensified for months. It was somewhat amusing -- Lin Biao was excoriated for being a disciple of Confucius in one breath, while in the next he'd be attacked for his ignorance as a "man who never read books!"

Q: The formal opening of USLO was July 1. Was there a ceremony associated with this? Did somebody come from the Waijiaobu (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)?

ROPE: There must have been somebody from the Foreign Ministry, though I don't remember who. Perhaps the Chief of Protocol, Tang Longbin. I remember we had our Marines out, raising the flag in their uniforms; and about that I need to mention a cable I saw in my first or second day in the Peking Hotel. As for the ceremony, I remember Jim Pringle the Reuters correspondent standing beside me. I made a comment daring him to report on Evangeline Bruce's outfit. It was racy -- for anywhere, even today, but most especially in Beijing. So far as Priscilla and I could see, it included a see-through blouse.

Q: What was that cable you just mentioned?

ROPE: When I arrived and read in, in that first day or so, I saw an instruction cable to the Advance Party from the Department about Marines. It said, almost verbatim, "If the Chinese raise a question about our assignment of a marine detachment to USLO, you should tell them that Premier Zhou and Dr. Kissinger have agreed to establish offices that are exactly like embassies. Marine detachments are part of U.S. embassies everywhere in the world. Therefore, we are having Marines in Beijing." I concluded from this that we

had not discussed the Marines with the PRC. That was a big mistake, at least if we were prepared to back down if the Chinese objected, which they ultimately did. Are you familiar with the story of what happened on our first July 4?

Q: No.

ROPE: As I noted, the Marines only wore their uniforms at USLO; but they were noticed. My Italian counterpart, Gianluca Bertinetto, commented to me about it and said that if we were able to have our guys in uniform perhaps his embassy would be able to do the same with their Carabinieri.

On the morning of July 4, Jenkins and Holdridge were called to the Foreign Ministry. "It has come to our attention," they were told -- Foreign Ministry people were nothing if not high handed and stilted -- "that there are Marines in uniform at the U.S. Liaison Office. If there are marines in uniform this afternoon when the Fourth of July reception is held," they continued, no Chinese officials would be able to attend. This struck panic into the hearts of USLO leadership. There had been regular speculation in our staff meetings over whether Zhou Enlai would appear at the reception. I thought that was a total dream. Zhou didn't attend any national day receptions except those of China's closest allies, like Pakistan. Nevertheless, Nick, John and Al, hoped so.

In any case, the two deputies quickly assured the Chinese that the Marines would not be in uniforms, and Chinese officials came. They were led by a vice or assistant foreign minister. Zhou did not appear.

That was the end of Marines in uniform. From then on they worked in civvies. It was typical of the way the Foreign Ministry dealt with us, in those days when the Cultural Revolution hadn't ended and officials were generally uncommunicative and icy in their dealings with us. Al Jenkins said we should learn a lesson. "The Chinese give you time to correct your ways, and then they come down hard." It was a big mistake not to have negotiated this before we sent Marines out. In any case, when it came time to carry out the instructions in that cable I saw, we caved instantly. I don't think, at that point, John and Al had much choice, and they did what Washington no doubt would have wanted. It wasn't great for morale, though, and I doubt Kissinger was pleased that we'd put ourselves in that position.

Q: Then later the Marines had to leave; didn't they?

ROPE: Yes. I don't remember the exact timing, but it wasn't long after that. I think I was away. Perhaps Priscilla was, too. In August her sister came to visit, and we went with her to Beidaihe for a couple of days. Then she and I took a trip to Xian and Shanghai. Priscilla still wasn't yet up to traveling with baby Kate.

As I understand it, the Foreign Ministry made a demarche to us alleging that the Marines were running an illegal commercial establishment in the form of their bar and citing "reports" that there had been recently been fighting there. The former charge was not

true, since the Marines had some way of avoiding outright sales of drinks to visitors; and the alleged fighting had nothing to do with the Marines or the bar. In our entry, two floors down, there had recently been a fight between two African diplomats. Notably, there was never any similar action taken against the bar in the Australian fall-out shelter.

The Chinese wanted the Marines out and found their pretext. We again acquiesced. They were replaced by civilian security personnel. This incident, too, was bad for morale.

Q: In these early days, other interviewees have commented that living conditions were stark and morale sometimes was equally stark, equally Spartan.

ROPE: Yes. That is one reason, as I said, why it was a bad decision not to ask Mr. Bruce to let us show movies in the residence. Those of us who were China specialists knew from British and other diplomats that life was no picnic in Beijing. China was a poor and bleak place. Everybody wore the same clothes -- blue or grey. On the streets, or in restaurants where ordinary citizens ate, those of us who spoke Chinese had some contact with people, and it was even better in Guangzhou, where the Cantonese were less uptight. But even we couldn't have much in the way of meaningful exchanges, and certainly no Chinese friends. In Beijing, if we got talking with someone on the street, people would quickly crowd around. Eventually some person with authority would tell them to disperse, and it would all end. Even in Canton, where people frequently wouldn't disperse, would be no more than a friendly exchange.

For non-Chinese speakers, and that was the majority of USLO staff members, even this kind of interaction with the local people wasn't an option. And the Chinese with whom they could interact, at the so-called Friendship Store, often seemed downright hostile. They had what today some call "tudes."

There were the main sightseeing spots, but even they weren't in great repair. In June 1981 with Haig's delegation, my first time back in Beijing since leaving USLO, I was struck by plantations of flowers. They weren't there when we lived there. In '73 - '75, there wasn't grass around the Temple of Heaven -- just dust. Dust was everywhere in Beijing, and in the winter, when it could be bitterly cold, there were dust storms from the Gobi. We would tape the edges of our casement windows with masking tape to try to keep it from coming in; but even then dust would find its way through around the hinge areas and latches. I think, even for those of us who knew what Beijing would be like, the reality was sinking in that this assignment we had aspired to and worked hard to get, and that was so exciting at first, was not going well.

There was practically no entertainment except for socialization with other USLO staff members or people from the various embassies. The Chinese on the political side were up tight. On those occasions when we were invited by the Foreign Ministry to see a Chinese movie, it would generally be propaganda made by Mao's wife -- "The Red Detachment of Women," etc. For those of us who occasionally went to dinners held when delegations came to town, my joking rule of thumb was that if you were a Chinese official, you could talk about three things: weather, food and children. Rarely could you have serious,

substantive discussions. And, of course, many staff members never got to go to such dinners. To some extent, I exempt the trade officials from these negative comments.

We were living in a repressed society, where terrible things had gone on, and it was not surprising that people were afraid to have a lot of personal interaction with us. USLO had local employees with whom we had lots of friendly interactions. Even then, however, we knew that one of our favorite employees, who had previously worked at the British Embassy, had been a leader when Chinese sacked that Embassy during the Cultural Revolution. We didn't hold that against him -- he probably had no choice or was in fear of bodily harm or death if he refused to do that. Years later, at the time of US-China normalization, Priscilla was in Beijing and went to our new embassy for an event celebrating the change from USLO to Embassy Beijing. She remembers exchanging enthusiastic hugs with that same local employee. By that time, though, Mao was dead, Deng was in the ascendancy, and fears were beginning to recede.

In fact, coming to the trade people with whom we had interactions, they had to do business with the outside world, and you could have real conversations with them, admittedly focused on trade. You could feel that they were friends. In Washington around 1978, I was at a luncheon at a private home in the suburbs, for a high-ranking CCPIT Trade delegation. At my table I found a trade official whom Herb and I had known in Beijing. He had been friendly and responsive, but still reasonably formal in Beijing. In Washington that day, however, he was relaxed and having a good time. When the demise of Madame Mao and her "gang of four" came up, he waxed ecstatic: "I don't smoke. I don't drink. The 'Gang of Four' went down, I smoked, I drank for a week!" He no doubt exaggerated, but it was telling about the level of repression people we dealt with in Beijing experienced.

One other thing for me personally was that I was the youngest in that group of FSOs, by about ten years. The others were to some extent of a different generation. Most of Priscilla's and my social life was with diplomats from other embassies. We had a good circle of friends, and we had a baby. Priscilla had lots of contact with other wives and so on. Within USLO many, though not all, of my relationships were purely professional.

Finally, you have to remember that we were in many ways isolated from what was going on in the world. Most of us had short-wave radios and could listen to the BBC and VOA, both major sources of news. The Chinese put out a brief English language news sheet daily, with articles from the international press and news in China; but it was highly filtered. My Uncle Robert had given me a daily mail subscription to the New York Times, "So you can be as informed as you wish to be," he said. That gave Priscilla and me a very detailed source of news, though the papers came in bunches, periodically, by unclassified pouch. They were a great source of Watergate info. The Chinese tried never to mention Watergate, or referred to as "your internal affair." The whole affair amazed our diplomatic friends. Most couldn't believe it could be important enough to bring down a president.

On home leave in December, everyone told us how great it must be for us living in

Beijing. If we told people the reality of life there they would react as though we didn't appreciate our good fortune. I will say that Beijing was more enjoyable after we returned. Our expectations had been lowered, and we'd had time to gain some perspective.

Q: About the time you returned, Nick Platt had to leave. There was a traffic accident where a person was killed. There was some back and forth with the Chinese, and they said he should leave.

ROPE: He wasn't going to be PNG'd. He wasn't found to be at fault. A girl riding a bike in the opposite direction crossed over in front of him causing the accident; but the Chinese did ask that he be withdrawn.

Q: How did the rest of the mission take that circumstance?

ROPE: This happened just before we got back. People were naturally unhappy about it. It was a terrible thing. The Platts were very down, though they seemed primarily focused on its impact on them. In a way they were lucky to be leaving right away. An Australian diplomat, Shelley Warner, whom we had known in Hong Kong and whose father Dennis Warner was a famous left-wing Australian journalist, had a similar accident. In her case, she was terribly upset about what happened. Making it worse, though was that while it was ultimately a fatal accident the man lingered for months. As long as he was alive, the matter couldn't be settled; and she couldn't leave China. I don't think she could leave Beijing. You had to be extremely careful driving in China.

Q: Did you have a car? What was driving like?

ROPE: Most diplomats had cars, and we did. We could drive out to the Ming Tombs and the Great Wall as well as around town. But you had to be very vigilant, because there were so many people along the roads, and on them -- on bikes, pulling carts or in mule-driven carts, or on foot. People weren't attentive to car traffic. Driving to the airport on summer nights one had to be especially careful, because peasants would lie out on the shoulder sleeping, often wearing dark clothing, with few street lights. You had to drive much more slowly than we do in the US and train yourself to look peripherally at all times. I remember when we stopped in Hawaii on our way back to Washington, on home leave, and I drove on a long, straight highway in Maui, it was frightening to drive 55 and have to look so far down the road.

Q: What about travel out of Beijing. I have the impression there wasn't a lot of personal travel around China.

ROPE: That was another morale problem. In order to travel, one needed to apply for permission through the Foreign Ministry. And approval was usually not granted except for a few major cities, like Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Xian. You could go to Suzhou, but even Hangzhou was often off limits. Though Jim Lilley debunked it, his counterparts in Hong Kong were reporting big struggles between factions in Zhejiang, where Hangzhou is located.

When you did travel, you had to have a China Travel Service guide, and opportunities for independently walking around were often limited, though we generally evaded that, at least to a degree. I invented a joke about diplomatic travel in Mao's China: a diplomat returns home from China, and people asks what place he visited most. He answers, "Bu Fangbian." "Bu fangbian," in English means, "not convenient." That was the most frequent MFA answer when we applied for travel, and that's exactly the way it was expressed: "Sorry. Not convenient."

There were reasons for this. Whether or not some of us in Beijing wanted to face it, there was still a lot of post-Cultural Revolution struggle going on in parts of China, including in what I just mentioned in Zhejiang. Ultimately, Deng Xiaoping had to go personally to Zhejiang to address the fighting between factions there. ConGen Hong Kong reported this, but USLO's first reaction was generally denial. At one point Hangzhou did open up, and Lilley went there with his family. On his return, he said the reports he'd seen from his people in Hong Kong were wrong. There was no indication of trouble, he said, and he was going to do something to put an end to this bad reporting. The fact was, however, that you mostly couldn't go to Hangzhou, even though it was, and is, a major tourist destination. Japanese diplomats who visited at the same time as Jim reported differently. Riding on the upper deck of street cars, they could see through office windows; and with their ability to read Chinese quickly they could read big character posters related to struggles between factions.

The Platts visited Wuhan early, where Oliver lost part of a finger to a factory fan. The Holdridges were able to go to Loyang and see the famous Longmen Buddhist caves, and Priscilla was able to go there once with a friend. Late in our tour we were able to go to Shenyang. There were rundown villas at the seaside resort of Beidaihe that diplomats could rent. We went there several times during the summer. But you couldn't travel a lot.

Everything was controlled. You could have servants, but you had to hire them through the Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Services Bureau, the DSB. At least at our level, we had no freedom to choose. We had to wait a long time to get a cook. I guess cooks trained to work for foreigners were in short supply. When we finally got one, he was terrible, and he would smoke bad Chinese cigarettes as he cooked. You could see ashes going into your food. We tried to work with him to help him improve, but in the end we had to fire him. When I went to the DSB to tell them they said, "Mr. Rope, we told you he was no good, but you chose to take him." The fault was therefore mine. "Nevertheless," I said, "he has to go;" but we couldn't have another one. When the DSB broke the news to him, the cook came to us, pulled himself to attention, and said, "My mission has been completed!"

We had a sadder experience with our "Ahyi," a maid who took care of Katy from the time we moved into our apartment until we left on home leave in December. She was a very gentle woman who would hold baby Kate up on the windowsill of our apartment, looking down on Changan Avenue and sing quietly in Chinese, "stop cars, stop cars, Katy wants to go; stop cars stop cars, Katy wants to go." She was excellent in all respects, and we liked her very much.

When we went on home leave, Don and Blanche Anderson stayed in our apartment, and our lovely Ahyi continued to work there. Blanche said that on the day before we returned she and the Ahyi were down on all fours scrubbing the floors to make sure everything was in perfect shape to turn the apartment back to us. However, when we returned we were told by the DSB that our Ahyi was ill and couldn't come back to work for us. They wanted to give us a new maid.

We didn't want a new maid, I said. We'd wait for our original Ahyi to get better. This led to a stand-off for several weeks. If we asked the DSB when she'd be back they'd say she was sick and offer us a new person. It seemed very fishy. Finally I went to the DSB and met with a couple of people. After I said once again that we'd wait until she was better, the lead person I was speaking with said, "Mr. Rope your Ahyi is sick! She is very, very sick! She has gone to her native home in Shandong, to recover. She will not be better for the foreseeable future!"

So a woman who was fine one day, according, to Blanche, was so ill the next that she could never return to our employ. Of course we had to accept someone else, and what we got was a woman who was truly, to use a Chinese expression, a tubaozi -- an "earth dumpling." She didn't know how to make a bed, didn't know how to do anything, and she had no personal connection with baby Kate. Her Chinese name, if you used a different tone to say it, meant "fuck," and we came to refer to her between ourselves as "Auntie Fuck." The one saving grace in the situation was that we never had to fear that, at the end of our tour, we'd have to tear Katy away from someone with whom she would have formed a real bond. We had seen that happen to Foreign Service families.

As for our first Ahyi, we were left to wonder what had happened. I remembered that I had given her a photo of Katy before we left for home leave. Maybe that had been found. Maybe she was suspected of forming too close an attachment to us. Maybe she hadn't done a good job of reporting on us, something we assumed all servants had to do. Perhaps it a matter of her choice, but that seemed unlikely. We just didn't know. And that was typical of many exchanges one would have with Chinese officialdom. Often a Chinese official would be identified as "the responsible person of the department concerned." As a joke, Chas Freeman even had cards for himself printed before he left Beijing: "Fulimin, Responsible Official," etc.

Priscilla and I did run into her again, over a year later. She was running an elevator in one of the diplomatic apartment buildings. There were just three of us in the elevator, but we couldn't have any real conversation. We did say how delighted we were to see her, and she smiled; but she seemed embarrassed. To this day we don't know what had happened to her in the interim. Certainly running an elevator would seem to be a step down from working in a diplomatic household.

In any case, none of this made the society we were living in more appealing. I don't believe much in the value of hate, especially retroactive hate; but once I read Mao's doctor's book, and found that Mao had Lou Gehrig's Disease, which leaves one lucid to

the end, I just came to hate Mao for what he did to China and its people.

Q: I know what you mean. To come back to 1973, you were talking about Japanese diplomats. Now Japan recognized China in '72, so they had much more formal status and would have been useful. Were there regular meetings between Japanese political guys and our political guys?

ROPE: We had interaction with most of the diplomatic corps. We didn't have it with the Albanians or the North Koreans, but with just about everyone else, including Soviet Bloc representatives. Notwithstanding our status or the decision that we wouldn't attend functions at the Great Hall of the People, we were a normal part of the diplomatic corps, invited by embassy counterparts to dinners, National Day Receptions, the gamut of interactions among diplomats in a foreign capital. For myself, I had lots of contacts, and I regularly lunched with a Japanese counterpart.

Q: Would you point to some of the veteran foreign embassies?

ROPE: Well the Japanese for sure. Even if they were new, there had been a tremendous amount of interchange between Japan and China on the trade side, and they knew a lot about China. They also had that language advantage, in that so much of Japanese was originally Chinese. The British, the French, Germans, all the Europeans and the Australians and Canadians were good. We socialized with all of them. On the trade side, we had particularly good contacts with the British, Italians and the Canadians. One the best friends I made in my entire career was John Stern, my counterpart at the British Embassy. Like me, he was a political FSO doing commercial/economic work. Our families did a lot of things together -- picnics at the Ming Tombs, sharing a villa at Beidaihe, joint parties, and he and I had lots of professional collaboration. We kept in touch after Beijing, and Priscilla and I are still in touch with his widow Jean. Tragically, he died of a brain tumor only a few years later. He was one of the brightest and funniest men I've ever known.

There was a dynamic, Chinese-speaking Australian ambassador, and John Holdridge put great stock in Bryce Harlan the ambassador of New Zealand. Often he would hear from Bryce things the Chinese had told him, and I'd write them up in reports for the Department. But no one was really able to penetrate the Chinese inner sanctum. We knew The Tenth Party Congress would be held soon after we arrived. Nick drove around at night looking for signs of activity near the Great Hall, but to no avail. We found out about it from the PRC media after it was either underway or over. There were tunnels leading into the Great Hall from the Zhongnanhai, where the leaders lived. One would think there would have been lots of buses outside the Great Hall, but it went off undetected.

Q: In August of '73 Kissinger replaces Rogers as Secretary of State which may have dealt with the Jenkins-Holdridge circumstance.

ROPE: I suppose that's possible, but I don't know. After we returned from home leave, sometime in the first half of 1974, Al told our staff meeting he'd decided to retire. By that

time Nick was gone, and Don Anderson had moved up to replace him, with Lynn Pascoe assigned from Washington to replace Don. It was a much improved personnel arrangement. Though I recall little of what we said to each other about it, I'm sure we were all glad to see Al go. John was a stable, sensible boss, and he was concerned about his people. One thing he did for us was to demand that Katy, who had been repeatedly sick since our return from home leave, be medically evacuated to a US armed services hospital outside Tokyo.

Something was very wrong with her, but State's medical bureau, or at least the regional doctor in Bangkok who served us, was balking. John was incensed about that and insisted that Katy be medivacked. Priscilla spent three weeks with her at Yokota Air Force Base hospital, where a work-up found she had an immune deficiency. It hadn't shown up until she was weaned from breast feeding on home leave, depriving her of her mother's antibodies; but after that it was a big problem. We were forever grateful for John's intervention.

What really improved morale in Beijing, though, was the arrival of George H.W. Bush. He sent word in advance that he wanted to entertain all USLO staff as soon as he got there, and he did. The Bushes arrived around 2:00 in the afternoon, and they'd been flying for a good while; but by 5 p.m. we were all at their residence for a reception, to meet George, Barbara, and their dog Fred. That never happened under David Bruce. Never. The next morning Mr. Bush was there to chair our staff meeting, and he chaired them every day from that time on.

Q: In November of that year, Kissinger as Secretary of State comes to Beijing. You have a small staff. Here is Kissinger arriving. Can you talk about the pressure on USLO to support such a visit?

ROPE: I can't, really, because I was away at the Canton Fair staffing the suite we had for US businessmen there. I lost the one chance I would ever get to meet Zhou Enlai.

Q: Kissinger seems to have gotten himself on a schedule. November, '73 and November, '74.

ROPE: I was there for the '74 visit. He flew directly from Vladivostok after a summit between President Ford and Brezhnev at Vladivostok.

Q: Tell me about that time.

ROPE: Kissinger came to brief the Chinese on the summit. Since I was on the trade side I had no substantive part in the visit, and I'm not sure to what extent the political side of USLO did. I didn't even see Kissinger, because I had drawn the assignment of duty officer at USLO when everyone went to the Great Hall of the People for a banquet in his honor. I missed the chance to meet Deng Xiaoping, too, that night. He was standing in for the Zhou, who by that time was in the hospital. As the USLO duty officer, I drew the job of helping our duty secretary transcribe Henry's press conference on the plane coming

from Vladivostok. She had to do it from a recording made by Jerry Schecter of Time magazine.

She and I had a terrible time figuring out some of the things Henry said. He has that very thick accent, and one example is that we kept thinking at one point that he was saying “we want,” when he was saying “B-1,” meaning the B-1 bomber. Ambassador Anderson, Kissinger’s press guy, was furious when he came back from the banquet and found we hadn’t finished the transcript, and when I explained our difficulties he snarled, “let me at it!” But he couldn’t figure out what Henry was saying either. So the three of us had to work for another hour or two to puzzle it out and get it off to Washington. That was my fate for the visit. I did meet and speak with Deng years later, when I ran the China Desk.

Q: Now you must have dealt at fairly high levels on the commercial side. You must have dealt fairly frequently with the minister of foreign economic relations and trade.

ROPE: I think he was just the Minister of Foreign Trade then. His name was Li Qiang, and I did see him and speak with him on a few occasions, primarily at USLO receptions for high ranking trade delegations and maybe at an occasional national day celebration at an embassy. He came from Wuxi in east China, and his Mandarin was hard to understand, if he spoke it at all. He always had a translator with him. People joked that the translator was there to translate his Wuxi dialect into Mandarin so he could be understood by those of us who could speak Chinese. I liked him. He had a sense of humor, which couldn’t be said of Foreign Ministry officials in those days. Mostly, Herb and I dealt state trading corporation people, and they did, too. I remember one time we had to go ask, on some American’s behalf if the China Native Products Corporation could sell the American a panda. We knew the answer would be no, and it was; but the officials we spoke with laughed and said, “Would he like to buy some goldfish?”

One other thing about those still-Cultural Revolution days. Aside from the highest ranking officials or counterparts we worked with in the Foreign Ministry, you could never be sure what rank anyone was. Sometimes the higher level cadres had Mao suits made of better cloth. Another sign was pens in their breast pockets, sometimes fancy ones. More than occasionally, businessmen and even we would be referred to “the responsible person of the department concerned.” I’ve mentioned Freeman’s business card.

Herb and I occasionally dealt with the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade -- CCPIT. The head of it was Wang Yaoting. I never met him until years later in Washington, when Priscilla was escorting a delegation he led around the US. He had a good sense of humor. He also liked Maotai a lot. One time at a dinner he said to Priscilla, “Ni hezuile meiyou?” “Are you drunk yet?” His delegation brought cases of Maotai along.

Q: How did your interchanges with the state trading corporations go? Why and when would you go to see them.

ROPE: Herb and/or I would generally go to see them on behalf of US businessmen, to

pass on material they'd provided or make inquiries on their behalf. As I've been indicating, the trade people were generally friendly and straight forward. I have no bad memories of them. We might not always learn a lot, but we did have substantive conversations. I felt very good to be on the trade side. Those people had business to get done. I don't think any of the Foreign Ministry people we dealt with lasted beyond the fall of Madame Mao and the others in her "Gang of Four." They weren't good people.

Q: Now you when you were in Hong Kong reporting on the China economic situation you were telling about all the research you did. It almost sounds like a graduate school project. So now you are in Beijing. What are you reporting, what are your sources?

ROPE: Our work in Beijing was more operational, but we did do reporting, and it wasn't terribly different from what we'd done in Hong Kong, where both Herb and I had served. I reported on Chinese agriculture and on visits to factories, communes and other economic entities as well as on whatever information we learned about foreign trade deals or trade policy. We regularly wrote up trade opportunities for US business that we either recognized on our own or learned of from our contacts, including Chinese trade people themselves.

Q: What was your relationship with Herb Horowitz? How was he to work for?

ROPE: He was great. That he was boss was never in dispute; but we operated interchangeably and were almost always on the same wavelength -- including our views on the internal political situation in China. It was a close relationship characterized by mutual respect, and it carried over to our next assignments. Quite by chance, so far as I know, Herb was assigned as Office Director for East Asia in INR shortly after I was assigned to the subordinate post of Northeast Asia Division Chief.

I had plenty of freedom to operate and report, and though Herb approved everything I wrote -- except when he was away and I was in charge -- he wasn't an "over-editor." I rarely if ever had problems with his edits or suggested changes, and he generally showed me or consulted me on his own reporting work. We had a lot to do -- so much that by early 1974 we asked for a third officer, and we got him in the person of Bob Perito, who had succeeded me in Hong Kong.

Q: Tell me about your work at the Canton Fairs.

ROPE: Starting in the fall of 1973, we maintained a hospitality suite in the Dongfang Hotel, where most of the foreign businessmen going to the fairs or passing through Guangzhou stayed. Herb or I split the duties, spending roughly two weeks each, staffing it. Often we would go out to Hong Kong before or afterwards, for some R&R, scheduling it so that there was always one of us in Beijing. We sometimes had help from Hong Kong, first Bob Perito and later Scott Hallford, who succeeded Bob down there. They were instrumental in getting us complementary soft drinks from the Coca Cola representative in Hong Kong. Adding diplomatic liquor to the mix, we were able to attract most if not all of the Americans visiting the Fair. We provided advice and support

in any way we could and maintained logs to assure continuity in our work. I should add that, once he arrived, Bob Perito participated in this work too, from Beijing.

Q: And the Canton fair was twice a year, so even when you were up in Beijing you are going twice a year to Canton.

ROPE: Yes.

Q: What kinds of things were the Chinese interested in buying at that time?

ROPE: There were commodities like chemicals, steel, all manner of non-ferrous metals, and wheat, mostly hard red winter wheat but occasionally soft white wheat from the Pacific Northwest. Also soybeans. I had a lot of contact with Dreyfus, Cargill and Bunge, particularly after the Chinese found TCK, a wheat smut, in some US grain shipments. They were concerned that it could infect their own wheat, with which they already had big problems due to drought and other things. They even claimed TCK made some consumers sick. The US suppliers discounted the first worry and disbelieved the second; but China was a huge market and they had to address the problem. I was their contact person, and Herb dubbed me “the smut officer.”

Another big area was whole plants. I regularly saw negotiators from the M.W. Kellogg Company, which was negotiating and ultimately concluded a big sale of ammonia fertilizer plants. Like all our businessmen, they were new to China, and the technology and scale of what they had to offer was beyond anything the Chinese had ever seen. That made the services we could provide at USLO quite useful to them. There were also other things we could offer. When Priscilla and I had movies to show at home we’d invite people like that, if they were in town.

One very funny experience Herb and I had was with two Co-CEOs of a major motion picture film processing corporation. Their company was not going out of existence but was converting to other things because their process was no commercially longer viable in the US. It was only good for very high volume movie production, and the only big markets left for them were India and China.

Although we knew nothing about it beforehand, Herb and I learned not long after USLO opened that this company’s UK subsidiary had been working for some time on the sale of one of its film processing plants to China. One day, Derek March, the UK Commercial Counselor called Herb to tell him that the two Co-CEOs were in town and “didn’t understand how we do business here.” He invited Herb and me to come to the Embassy for drinks with them and John Stern at the end of the afternoon.

When we got there we heard a long story from the Co-CEOs -- one based in NY and one in LA -- that they were very unhappy with the deal their subsidiary had negotiated; and they didn’t want to make the sale. Among their reasons was the fact that at any given time something like five miles of film would be going through the plant, in what had to be a totally dust-free environment. If dust got in, film could go everywhere, and they had no

confidence in China's ability to construct and maintain such a plant. Also, because the process was increasingly obsolete, their technicians were relatively old and getting fewer. They were doubtful about their ability to spare some for duty in Beijing, which they thought the technicians would hate. They also didn't have much time to negotiate in Beijing, because they had urgent decisions to make at home. Making things worse, they said, "we took our wives with us first went to Paris. Now they hate Peking and want to leave!"

At best, they said, they could only do the deal if the price were hiked at least 20 percent -- something like that.

This was of great concern to the British. One thing you didn't do with the Chinese, and in most places, was suddenly to raise your price. The more Herb and I listened, however, the more we thought the two Americans were right. So we advised them to lay things out as they had told us to the Chinese, minus their wives complaints, and set a deadline for getting the deal done. This wasn't music to British ears, but the Americans tried it, and it worked. It seemed to drive the chief Chinese negotiator nuts. At times she fled from the negotiating table, and she finally had to be replaced, perhaps to save her face. But the Chinese agreed, provided the co-CEOs would stay on for a week while lawyers worked out the final contract. During that time, their hosts sent them and their wives to Hangzhou, which was open at that time. Seeing this deal go through was a useful lesson.

Q: Now you mentioned visiting American delegations. Did you have a lot?

Yes. We had a fair number. One of the earliest I remember was from the Committee on Scholarly Communications with China. We were still in the Peking Hotel when they came through, and aside from saying hello to people in the group whom I knew, I don't remember much about it. Perhaps Nick and the Political Section handled it. We also had cultural groups, like the Philadelphia Orchestra -- Jiang Qing acted rudely by talking loudly during their concert. The first delegation I dealt with extensively was from the National Council for US-China trade, now called US-China Business Council. This had just come into existence at the encouragement of Henry Kissinger. I went down to meet them in Shenzhen and escorted them in Guangzhou and then in Beijing. Another delegation came from the National Committee for US-China relations. David Rockefeller was the delegation leader, and it included prestigious people from the US arts and academic communities.

I remember the return banquet Rockefeller's delegation gave for their Chinese hosts. It was at Beijing's best restaurant, the Fengziyuan, which served Shandong cuisine. Perhaps Rockefeller paid for it out of his own pocket, because it had the highest "standard," i.e. set-price per person, of any dinner anyone I knew had ever heard of; and the Chinese academic and literary counterparts -- as opposed to Foreign Ministry types -- were extravagant in their praise. The man sitting next to Priscilla gave her a discourse on some of the Chinese fungi we were eating. It may have been Zhou Peiyuan, a distinguished old Chinese scholar, who was Rockefeller's host -- I can't quite remember for sure. The old gentleman gave an effusive toast and compared the dinner to Chinese banquets in

Republican days, “before the Revolution.” Those days were past, he said; but he ended by saying, “After tonight, we may have to rethink our opinion!” I feared he was going to say “We may have to have another revolution!”

Q: You were saying there were a fair number of CODELs.

ROPE: Yes. Very early the Magnuson delegation came. I don’t remember who the other Senators were. Al Romberg was their escort from the Department, and with Magnuson he had his hands full. I remember at one point when we were downtown in Beijing and Al said it was time to go to the Liaison Office. Magnuson scowled and demanded to know what that was. Someone shouted “that’s where Mr. Bush is.” Magnuson responded, “Oh. Well, we should go where he is!” That was the quality of exchanges with him. Al couldn’t get him to give toasts when he was supposed to, and he was generally difficult. He’d been in the Senate a long time.

When we did get to USLO that day, it was the first time I really saw David Bruce in action. We FSOs sat on the sidelines ready to do our part in briefing the delegation; but Mr. Bruce conducted it entirely himself. Bruce had been at the Versailles at the end of World War I. He had tremendous historical perspective, and it turned out he knew a great deal about China’s history. It was a wise and wonderful discourse about where China had been and where it was at the moment.

Scoop Jackson came when Mr. Bush was there. I was control officer for that group. That’s when we learned then that Zhou Enlai was really ill, because Jackson could only call on him in the hospital. It was the beginning of the end for Zhou, though he didn’t die until January of ’76. There were very interesting people on the Jackson staff, particularly his chief of staff, Dickie Fosdick. She was the daughter of Harry Emerson Fosdick, the longtime dean of New York’s Riverside Cathedral, where I was baptized.

We had a delegation led by Senator Fulbright that included Hubert Humphrey, who’d returned to the Senate, and Sam Nunn, along with Barbara Jordan. Maybe Robert Byrd was in the group. I don’t remember. Another group we had was a delegation from the House led by Speaker Carl Albert, who seemed to be in early dotage.

Q: Did these Congressional delegations accomplish anything.

ROPE: Perhaps there were specific things, but this many years later I can’t remember any. Essentially, they were good-will exchanges, educational for both sides and particularly good for broadening support for US-China relations in the Congress.

Q: You know you are living in this brand new environment under pretty Spartan conditions. Did the senators appreciate how Spartan it was?

ROPE: I don’t know. They had meetings, and motorcades to take them from one place to another, plus the usual round of banquets and sightseeing. Our contacts with them were professional. We weren’t complaining about life in Beijing. Still, I think they could see

for themselves.

Q: Now George H.W. Bush arrived in the fall of 1974. How was life working for him.

ROPE: As I mentioned, it was a great lift for all of us. He was a very interesting man. He could be sort of a Gee Whiz guy but you have to remember, this “guy,” was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Yale hiding under a kind of Texas facade. He had a wonderful way with the Chinese. He’d absorb a briefing ahead of time and then bounce all over the lot chatting, being friendly with his interlocutor, and then weaving in points we’d want made, right on target.

Q: So the contrast with Bruce was fairly strong.

ROPE: Very strong. There was a huge change in the day-to-day running of office. Bush chaired the daily staff meetings, and we all were on his team. He was very social and invited USLO staffers to the residence regularly. The Bushes were especially good friends with the Andersons, and Priscilla and I were invited several times to small affairs, including one lunch with just them and then-Ambassador to India Daniel Moynihan, along with Moynihan’s two daughters. We weren’t the only invitees during Moynihan’s visit. Mr. Bush invited the entire staff to come hear Moynihan talk about his experiences in India. He was a lively, friendly, host. One time, when Priscilla and a woman visiting us from Hong Kong arrived at a reception at the residence, Bush greeted them at the door and said, “Just what we need. Some feminine pulchritude!”

One thing Bush did was to invite many friends, and political associates, both public officials like Moynihan and people from the US business world, to visit him and Barbara in Beijing. They were constantly entertaining and showing guests around Beijing. They biked around the city, and Mr. Bush was a big tennis player at the International Club -- not a country club by any means but a place where diplomats could play tennis and swim in a fairly grungy indoor pool.

Years later, when Bush was Vice President, a man showed up in a Chinese foreign affairs delegation to the US who had been Bush’s tennis coach in Beijing. Somehow he got in touch with the Vice President, and the Bushes promptly invited him to cocktails at the Vice President’s residence. Then they invited the Horowitzes, Lilleys, us and others who’d been in Beijing to for a small cocktail party, complete with a Navy band jazz combo providing music. Mr. Bush was his usual lively self and insisted on giving us a tour of the whole house -- even the attic.

To get back to Beijing, Dillon Ripley and his wife were among those who visited the Bushes. When he and Mr. Bush went to the Zoo, they went to see the two Musk Oxen President Nixon had given to China in exchange for the National Zoo’s first pandas; but they could only find one. The Zoo attendants insisted that the other one was inside an enclosure and “doesn’t like to come out.” Several days later, however, on the margins of a meeting at the Foreign Ministry, one official took Don Anderson aside and confessed to him, with regret, that Milton the Musk Ox had died. Then the official added, “Perhaps

you were aware of this. We understand that some Americans were recently at the zoo and asked to see him.”

Another visitor was Paul Austin of Coca Cola. Donald Kendall, president of Pepsi Cola and a friend of Nixon’s had been able to beat Coke into the Soviet Union, and Austin didn’t want that to happen in China. He was very anxious to make at least some kind of call on the Chinese trade establishment while in Beijing; and he gave Herb and me an assortment of literature about products produced by US companies Coca Cola owned to see if there were any that might interest the Chinese. There wasn’t much, but in the end we were able to fix him up with the China National Machinery Import and Export Corporation for a presentation on boilers, which he gave.

Mr. Bush was just great. One more thing about the changeover to his leadership was that, with Bruce’s departure, Brunson McKinley was also re-assigned. In his place we got Jennifer, Bush’s long time personal assistant. She was great, too -- called him “Bushy-tail.” Which reminds me that one characteristic of Bush was that he wrote loads of personal notes to people. After he’d left, and we were back in DC, Priscilla asked him to write a reference for Katy in support of her application to go to Beauvoir School for pre-K. He was then CIA director. He wrote one and sent Priscilla a short note with a copy of a letter saying he was sure Katy would do “just fine.” To Priscilla he wrote, “I hope this doesn’t hurt her chances too much.”

Q: Now at some point John Holdridge leaves and Harry Thayer replaces him. How was Harry to work for? Was that a smooth transition?

ROPE: I’m sure the transition was smooth, though while I remember the Holdridges’ departure I don’t remember Harry’s arrival. Harry is a wonderful man, with whom Priscilla and I remain friends; but around the time of his arrival we went out to Hong Kong where I had a back operation. I’d been having back trouble since the days we were in Hong Kong and had even spent a week in traction not too long before my assignment to Beijing. The condition had worsened over our time in China, and I’d kept in touch with my orthopedic surgeon there. He was a disciple of a man who’d pioneered anterior entry spinal fusions for the lower back in Hong Kong in the 1950s -- going in through your abdomen, behind your peritoneal cavity, to get to your back. The mentor was a British doctor so well known that he’d been brought in as a consultant to treat George Wallace after Wallace was shot. I consulted him on a visit to Hong Kong after the spring Canton Fair in 1975. He advised me to have the surgery, which he was no longer performing due to his age, but for which he strongly recommended his pupil and my doctor, K.P. Chan.

This operation was not performed in the US at the time, but the Department approved my going to Hong Kong for it. So in June 1975, Priscilla, Katy and I went down to Hong Kong. Scott Hallford and his family, who lived in our former house on Repulse Bay Road, were going on home leave, and the Consulate General let us live there while I had surgery. I had the operation in mid-June, and we weren’t able to return to Beijing until late July. By that time Harry was there in place of John. Stan Brooks had replaced Don Anderson, and Bill Thomas had replaced Herb Horowitz. I was still recovering and only

able to work part-time, but my interactions with Harry were excellent. He was a considerate, respectful, thoughtful, modest, and capable boss. I had less good interactions with Bill Thomas, who constantly threw off on the reporting Herb and I had been doing for two years. The defense I developed was to say that the approach Herb and I took was the only way we knew, but I was looking forward to seeing Bill's better way to do it as a consumer in INR. I never saw it! USLO economic reporting fell way off over the next two years.

Q: So let's move on from USLO to INR. At what point did you start looking for the next assignment?

ROPE: In the spring of 1975, out of the blue I received a cable from Personnel offering me three choices, all pretty good. One was to replace Al Romberg on the China Desk, a small section chief job within the Office of PRC/Mongolian Affairs. The second was to be Northeast Asia Division Chief in INR, where I'd replace my former Hong Kong colleague Dick Williams. The third was to be a Senior Watch Officer in the Operations Center.

This was the time of GLOP, the Global something or other program, when the Department had been directed by Kissinger to move one quarter of all FSOs out of area within a year. The story was that he'd mentioned the closing of the Canal to someone in the Latin America Bureau, and the response was, "But, Mr. Secretary, the Canal has never been closed." Kissinger was talking about Suez, not Panama, and it illustrated to him how parochial people serving year-in-year out in the same regional bureaus could become. That may have been apocryphal, though several years later, when I ran the Operations Center, I did find the ARA Bureau to be particularly insular. They liked it that way and resented efforts by the Seventh Floor to intrude into their affairs.

I liked the idea of GLOP. I'd been working on Chinese affairs, or studying Chinese, for eight straight years, the last two of them in Mao's China, and I wanted a break -- to get as far away from China as I could. So I replied that I appreciated being offered the Romberg and INR jobs, but I wanted a "genuine GLOP." Therefore, I said, I'd prefer the Ops Center watch officer job; but I also asked what other GLOP possibilities might be available. Personnel ignored that. I received a reply saying I'd been formally assigned to INR.

Q: So you didn't get GLOPPED.

ROPE: Technically, I did. Bureaucracies find ways to get around dictates that aren't easy to implement. In this case, Personnel put Kissinger's directive into practice by deciding that transferring people from one bureau to another would meet the requirements of GLOP. So I moved from a regional bureau, EA, to a functional one, INR; but I continued to work on Asia. The cable actually said my new assignment "satisfied GLOP." It also noted that this was a substantial supervisory position, not easy for a political FSO-4 to come by.

The latter point was true, and I knew it would be a strong challenge. I hadn't held a supervisory job since Navy days and had never held one supervising Foreign Service caliber people. It would be broader than just China. So while I hadn't sought the job and was unhappy that it wasn't really out-of-area, I accepted it. Then, a month or so later, Herb Horowitz came running excitedly into my office saying, "Bill, you'll never believe this." He had just been assigned to INR as head of East Asia office. So we were going to work together for another couple of years.

Q: What did you understand that job would entail before you got there?

ROPE: I knew INR wrote analytical pieces for people in the Department. I knew Nick Platt had once held the job, and though I was not a fan of his he was definitely a rising star. I knew it was the State Department's link to the intelligence community. I also knew it was not operational, not policy; but my office would be producing analytical material on Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, the two Koreas and even Mongolia. I was particularly interested in the Japan and Korea's aspect of it.

At the beginning I found the transition to being a supervisor hard. In time I came to love managing people and never had a job again that didn't involve that. Early on, though, I found it hard to review things others had written and give anything other than positive feed-back. I had to learn to become an editor and approver of subordinates' work. I had to learn all that goes into directing people. The first time I had to face up to writing a critical efficiency report on a new FSO whose work was not good and who wasn't responsive to guidance, it was a nightmare. Over time, though, I got comfortable at that, too.

Q: Now in that office, were your subordinates Foreign Service Officers?

ROPE: Yes and no. I had Chris Szymanski who later became an FSO but was a Foreign Service Reserve Officer, essentially a civil servant. Carol Hamrin was another FSR and an excellent analyst. I will take some credit for helping her become a better writer, but I tip my hat to her for her hard work, persistence, and, most important, a consistent ability to come up with unique, valuable insights. I have great respect for her to this day. Besides Carol and Chris, I had a first-tour FSO named Tony Wayne -- Earl Anthony Wayne. He was terrific and went far, ultimately becoming an Assistant Secretary and Ambassador to Argentina and then Mexico. He retired as a Career Ambassador. I helped him in the early days of his career, and he was very helpful to me later when I ran the China Desk and he worked for Secretary Haig. It became a mutually beneficial relationship.

Q: Of the "old boy" kind?

ROPE: You might call it that, though we were hardly cronies -- just two FSOs who worked well together and respected each other. Tony worked for me for two years and then had a second-tour posting to Rabat. I guess he was still there in 1980 when I headed the Operations Center in the Secretariat, and he became a candidate to join the Secretariat staff office, S/S-S, also known as "The Line." You worked there around that time. It was an elite office whose members oversaw the paper flow to the Secretary and others on the

Seventh Floor and whose members regularly traveled with the Secretary. Tony was a candidate for an S/S-S job but for some reason Jerry Bremer, then the Deputy Executive Secretary overseeing the Line, didn't want him. I went to Jerry and pushed hard for Tony.

When Jerry relented and Tony got to the Line, he proved me right. He was so good that after the election in 1980 he became the S/S-S officer supporting the Reagan transition team. When he did that well, he became the chief FSO aide to Secretary Haig. That was great for me. About a year later I was heading the China Desk, and we were in a prolonged and tough policy fight. Knowing Tony, and through him Haig's secretary, Muriel, and others in Haig's office, helped me a lot -- both in terms of access and what I could learn about what was going on with the Secretary and on the Seventh Floor.

Since you've shown interest in how Foreign Service relationships work, I can add to this, though it's a digression.

Q: Go ahead.

ROPE: Not long after Tony was chosen as aide to Haig, he called me to say Haig had decided to add another FSO of his rank to the office, and he wondered if I there were any FSOs I'd recommend. I said I'd think about it and call him back. The FSO I thought of was an excellent young officer named Mike Klosson. I'd originally met Mike through Tony in our INR days and knew they were friends. That afternoon I called Tony back, but he wasn't there. So I left a message with his secretary: "Just tell him one word: Klosson." Shortly thereafter, Mike got that job. Over the next two years I was in frequent contact with Tony and Mike -- Haig called them "the young tigers" -- but neither then, nor when I last saw Tony for an afternoon in Paris in 1986, did I ever ask if I'd had anything to do with Mike's selection. In any case, having Mike up there doubled my sources of in-house intelligence and my ability to get my, or my office's, work before the Secretary at critical times.

To get back to INR, Chris, Carol and Tony were my China analysts. Chris tended to do current analysis, i.e., day-to-day events, while Carol focused on larger trends and the kinds of internal political analyses Sherrod McCall did in Hong Kong. Tony was strictly a PRC foreign affairs guy, including economics. On Korea I had an FSO named Jim Yellin, a very good officer and extremely terse writer whom Charley Hill recommended to me. His forte, however, was Southeast Asia; and when a slot came up working for my counterpart for that region, Pat Barnett, wife of Bob Barnett and sister-in-law of Doak, Jim transferred over and worked for her. Then I hired Bob Dorr, an amusing guy and colorful writer who'd had some rough times but did good work for me. On the side, he wrote adventure/pulp stuff for magazines like Argosy. I remember the opening line of one report he did on North Korea: "Kim Il-sung's got problems. And how!" That wasn't standard reporting style in those days, but I liked it and we published it. On Japan, I had one FSR non-producer whose name I won't mention but who ultimately left the Department, no doubt helped in that direction by low ratings from me. Then I had and an excellent Japan analyst in Merrilee Baird, on loan from CIA.

Q: Now let me go bureaucratic for a minute. When did you get there, who are you reporting to and who are they reporting to?

ROPE: We left Beijing at the end of August, I think, but I was still recovering from my back surgery in Hong Kong -- it took a year to fully recover from it -- and I took the month of September off on sick leave. If I recall correctly, I reported to duty in INR on October 1.

I was reporting to Herb Horowitz. We were in what was by far the largest part of INR, the component that did analysis and was part of the overall US intelligence analytical community. There was a smaller group that dealt with the intelligence community on the operational side, with the principal mission of ensuring that the Secretary of State was fully consulted on operations conducted by CIA, NSA, and others. There was a small office that had a kind of inner sanctum, connected to the Operations Center, where the most sensitive and highly classified reports from the intelligence community were kept. Herb, I and Pat Barnett would start our days there, going through material that had come in overnight and picking out items -- often signals intelligence -- that we knew would be of interest to the leadership of the East Asia Bureau. We would hand-carry those reports, in special brief cases, to EA. One other, one-person, office in INR funded external research, contracted out to the academic community. For years it was headed by a very fine, dedicated, and very amusing guy named Ed Goodman. I think that was it.

In the analytical area, INR offices, both regional and functional, generally corresponded to the regional and functional operational bureaus of the Department. Herb's East Asia Office covered the same countries as those of the EA Bureau.

Herb's deputy in my first year was an FSO named John Farrier. In my second year, John retired and was replaced by John Sylvester, older brother of Charlie Sylvester. Both Farrier and John Sylvester were Japan specialists. There was another FSO, "Tusky" Tsukahira, somewhere in the mix. He was a Japan type too, but he wasn't in either my or Pat's division. Pat, by the way, was a career civil servant and a very capable, dedicated, upright person. She'd been in INR for years. Under her, I remember Theresa Tull -- Terry Tull -- along with a mix of people who were FSOs and civil servants. One I remember was a CIA analyst named Stan Bedlington, whom I saw on TV many years later when he occasionally appeared on the PBS News Hour.

To come back to your earlier questions about relationships, I will say that while Herb's deputies were my nominal supervisors, the superior with whom I had the most interaction and from whom I received the most guidance and supervision was Herb. Our close working relationship carried over from Peking to INR. This later proved true in a different way for me when John Holdridge was EA Assistant Secretary and I was his China Country Director.

Q: Now the assistant secretary for INR at that time was Hal Saunders.

ROPE: Yes, the late Hal Saunders. I was sorry to see that he died just two months or so

ago. He was a very nice, thoughtful man and a supportive boss. He was open to subordinates -- a man you could respectfully disagree with. If he ever had negative feedback to give, he gave it in a positive way. His deputy for analysis was a career civil servant who'd been there forever, Marty Packman. As an editor, Marty was a human shredder. You'd send a piece to him and it would come out as if he had put it through a shredder, thrown the pieces up in the air and, then pasted them back together in a totally different order. This was discouraging to analysts and often frustrating to me and Herb; but I had to admit that 80% of the time our material was better after he'd worked it over. Maybe not 80%; maybe 75.

Packman oversaw all our work, but his particular "baby" was the Secretary's Morning Summary. It was a high-quality current intelligence reporting vehicle that didn't go just to the Secretary and his chief subordinates. It went to top officials throughout the national security community and to the President. We got things back from President Carter complimenting us on it. One of them said it was the thing he read first, of all the intelligence community's daily products. I will say that, whether we liked Marty Packman's editing or not, he deserved a lot of credit for our success.

Q: Sounds like you felt you were in competition within the Intelligence Community.

Yes; particularly with the CIA which produced the NID, the National Intelligence Daily, that went to top foreign affairs officials throughout the government and, went in slightly different form to the President as the PDB.

Q: Now you certainly must have had an association with the relevant desks.

ROPE: Yes. In Herb's the bureau was EA; and within that, for me, it was the China, Taiwan, Japan, and Korea Desks.

Q: Was that a command relationship? I mean did they ask you please do a report for us on X or Y subject, or were you just writing the reports you or your INR superiors tasked you with and passing them on to EA. You are the analyst; they are the policy guys. How does that work out?

ROPE: It was not a command relationship, but both of those things were true. We would bring them our products and they would ask us to look into things that were of operational or policy interest to them. They could not formally task us, but our job was to serve policy-makers from the Secretary on down. We did briefings in EA every day, going first, to that room below the Ops Center I mentioned. Herb, Pat, and I, and sometimes Terry Tull, would pick out items we knew our EA colleagues would want to see and show them, during our morning briefings, to EA.

Herb would brief the Assistant Secretary, first Art Hummel, then Phil Habib and later Dick Holbrooke. I would brief the DAS for Northeast Asia, Bill Gleysteen, a truly wonderful man. After Gleysteen, if I had anything of special interest on the China side -- usually the case -- I'd go to the China desk and brief Oscar Armstrong and Stape Roy,

director and deputy director of PRC/M. I'd do the same for the Japan, Korea and Taiwan desks if I had anything for them. Pat and Terry would brief on the Southeast Asia side. On Saturday mornings, one of us would go in and do all the briefings for the same people, or any of them who were in.

Q: How did the formal tasking work?

ROPE: INR was generally self-tasking, with taskings coming anywhere from Hal Saunders, his deputy Roger Kirk -- another fine man whose dad was Admiral Alan Kirk, in charge of naval forces at D-Day and later Ambassador to the Republic of China -- or anyone above their heads, most particularly the Secretary. Below their level, of course, we tasked ourselves. There was a regular morning meeting, chaired by Saunders or Kirk and attended by Marty Packman along with INR office directors, in our case Herb. This was a bit like a newspaper's daily editorial meeting, because it decided among other things what should go into the next day's Morning Summary. Taskings on Northeast Asia would come out of there for me, and I'd assign them to analysts in my daily division meeting. Beyond that, analysts, or I, or Herb would come up with ideas for short or longer reports, or we'd get requests or suggestions from EA or elsewhere in the Department. We'd discuss the latter among ourselves and then the analysts would do the work.

Q: Now you and INR have access to all-source intelligence. CIA, NSA, DIA, everything. So you are massaging and combining.

ROPE: Yes, though if we had hot pieces of raw intelligence it might just be a matter of putting them in front of somebody. For our written work, we drew from many sources, obviously including information from the agencies you've mentioned. I was visited monthly by a CIA reports officer, from what's known as the DDO, or Operations Directorate, who was interested in feed-back on what kind of reports from his side of the house were of greatest use to us. Herb and I also had some contacts with NSA, including one time when we spent a whole day out there and had a meeting with the Director. Just as a quick digression, the INR office that dealt with the operational parts of the IC did come to Herb and me at times, and we had to make approve-disapprove decisions or recommendations on some sensitive operations.

Of course one thing that anybody who has spent any time as an analyst or reporting officer knows is that not all sources of information are classified. Especially in China or North Korea watching work, we drew on items appearing in those two countries' press. Also, we were big consumers of the reporting coming from Embassies, Consulates and USLO. Our business was analytical writing for policy makers, and we used all the sources at our disposal for long and short reports and for daily briefing items.

Q: One of the major things the entire intelligence community works on is the national intelligence estimates. Did any of those come through during your time?

ROPE: Yes; but more frequently INR had to clear off on anything going into the NID, put

out by the CIA. For that, Charlie Neuhauser, my counterpart for China on the current intelligence side was often my chief adversary, because -- as was the case on that visit I made to the CIA when I was on home leave from USLO -- we frequently didn't agree. These were the final days of Mao and his Cultural Revolution and a time of great political infighting in China that would lead to the reforms of Deng Xiaoping. There was a lot of analysis to be done; and frequently analysts working for me didn't agree with their CIA counterparts. If they couldn't resolve those disagreements, they'd be kicked up to Charlie's and my level; and we'd frequently have long fights over NID pieces, which would also go into the PDB. Sometimes, I'd even have those battles with Charlie when analysts below our level agreed but he didn't agree with them.

Q: And if you couldn't agree?

ROPE: In theory we could escalate, but Charlie was pretty much in charge over at his end, and Herb, was almost always in agreement with me or just left things to me. I think I won more often than not. If we couldn't agree, though, CIA could go ahead and publish the item in question, and we could add a dissenting footnote. Since we wouldn't pull punches in footnotes that meant that the very threat of a footnote, for me, was a potent weapon.

I would like to make one thing clear about the late Charlie Neuhauser. No one in the bureaucracy was a more dedicated supporter of US-China relations than he. Our differences when I was in INR stemmed from my perception that his passion colored his analysis. Hence his argument that Confucius wasn't Zhou Enlai but rather Jiang Qing. Six years after those two years in which we battled so often, Charlie was very important to me. By that time Mao, Lin and Zhou were dead, and Jiang Qing was in prison with the rest of her "gang." It was the early days of the Reagan Administration, and there were precious few China specialists around in places of influence. Charlie wasn't a career China person, didn't speak Chinese, and hadn't served in China; but he'd learned a lot and had a good sense for bureaucracies. He was a loyal friend and great source of advice and moral support.

On the National Intelligence Estimate front, NIEs as they were called were usually tasked by the National Intelligence Officers at the CIA, either on their own initiative or in response to requests from higher ups in the intelligence community, the IC, or at the White House. Key NIEs of interest to my division were about China; and Jim Lilley was the NIO. He had an operational background. I knew that from our association in Beijing that dispassionate analysis was not his forte. I would go to interagency meetings he'd call, where I'd be representing State, and I'd find Jim throwing out proposals for IC analysis that I'd think were totally crazy. I'd think to myself, "How do I shoot this down without harming my relationship with Jim Lilley?" and I'd do my best to reformulate his ideas in ways that would be useful. Sometimes there'd be others, from CIA or elsewhere in the Community who'd do that work for me. I should add that, if I knew ahead of time what Jim had in mind, and didn't think it good, I might have consulted Herb and Bill Gleysteen beforehand.

Q: Can you give me any examples.

ROPE: I'm afraid I can't. It's been a long time; but Jim's thinking was often on the dire side. The closest I can come would be a big meeting he got Bush to convene in the early summer of 1976 to discuss the significance of certain Chinese military operations opposite Taiwan. Some analysts, particularly in the defense intelligence establishment, saw them as directly and intentionally threatening Taiwan. We watched these carefully in INR and saw them as part of nation-wide exercises taking place up and down the China coast. They were not something new aimed at Taiwan and were not out of the ordinary. Our view ultimately prevailed within the community, but not before Jim had called that meeting chaired by Bush and attended by his deputy Admiral Murphy, and more military brass than I ever saw in one room, representing the entire IC. Jim opened it up with a grim presentation leading to the question "will this year's presidential election witness another Quemoy-Matsu crisis?" That was way over the top. While Herb and I presented calmer analyses, we didn't have to do much heavy lifting. No one else took it to that level.

There's a funny story about that. As the meeting broke up, Bush jumped up and shouted across the room at us -- it was a very large conference set-up -- "Herb, Bill, come into my office." In a room dominated by generals and admirals, that was big "face" for us. None of them knew the true reason for it. When we got into his office, Bush just wanted to show us his Chinese carpets!" Jennifer was there, too. It was a bit of a reunion.

Q: To get back to the estimates, were there any that you remember during your time; and, if so, who drafted them.

ROPE: I'm sure there were. Generally the lead drafter for NIEs would be the CIA; but it wasn't exclusively that way. The lead agency would prepare a draft, and it would be sent around the Community. Other agencies would send comments back, and meetings might be held to discuss the estimate. Sometimes those would be very contentious. I'm remembering one now where Robert Bowie, high up in the CIA in the Carter Administration, was trying to drive an assessment about China in ways we in INR totally disagreed with. He was very hardline, anti-Communist. Today, he might be called a Neocon. This colored his views both of how things worked in Communist China and of Beijing's motivations. He was not a China specialist, and I'm not sure he accepted the reality of the Sino-Soviet split. In any case, he was taking estimate drafts and rewriting them to fit his own preconceptions. We were able to derail that, though it took several meetings.

The process of writing of an NIE, by the way, was similar to the NID process. If an agency couldn't go along with an important conclusion it could -- and in my view had a responsibility to -- dissent in a footnote. Footnotes didn't go in at the end. They would appear, in italics, on the page in which the conclusion they dissented from was presented.

I will say that, though INR was a tiny part of the IC, we were pretty good at getting analyses to come out our way. We were determined to make sure our leaders got good,

accurate analysis, and that led at times to arguments that were very heated. It was not in my opinion a dumbing down process leading to a lowest common denominator product. Some people say the requirement that everyone sign off ensures that NIEs or other interagency papers will be just that. That was not my experience, and the footnote option was an important check against that.

Q: This was not a stable time for China. Zhou dies January, '76. Mao dies September, '76 but certainly the transition in China probably put a lot of pressure on the intel community to figure out where things were going, because we had this brand new relationship and our leaders could wonder how solidly it was anchored.

ROPE: As I've indicated, in those early days in Beijing I felt that people didn't want to send home bad news to the Dr. Kissinger about his friend Zhou Enlai. In INR, I felt Neuhauser was inclined that way. Within CIA, there were big fights between the current intelligence shop, led by Charlie, and the long-term intelligence people. The latter we called the "Maocentric School." They tended to see Mao as fully in charge and to see developments playing out just as Mao wanted them to. Charlie's shop was what I called the "Total Conflict School." It tended to see everything in terms of palace politics between Mao's wife and her clique and others like Zhou and Deng. In INR we were closer to that line of thinking, but we often disagreed sharply over interpretations of events.

We just did our best to give our leaders sound analysis, and I don't recall any pressures to slant our reporting in any direction, from the Secretary or anyone else. Hal Saunders was very close to Kissinger, though his expertise lay primarily in Arab-Israeli and Middle East matters. We wrote regularly about the implications of developments for the US or for US-China relations and our views were generally respected and accepted. I do have trouble remembering back that far about particulars -- so much of it was day-to-day; but I remember one important paper we wrote in response to a request from Hal that may well have come from the Secretary. It was a paper written by Chris Szymanski speculating about what would happen when Mao died.

It forecast three possible scenarios. One, which Chris called "Chinese Thermidor," was a counter-reaction in which Madame Mao and her Cultural Revolution clique, ultimately called "the Gang of Four," would be overthrown. In another scenario, her clique would call on people's militias to back them in a power struggle and would prevail. I can't remember the third, probably some kind of middle path, which is what happened in the short run. Our view was that, for a time, at least, Madam Mao's group would hold sway. What ultimately happened was a compromise in which a relative unknown, Hua Guofeng, replaced Mao for a year or two, which would have been more like our third scenario. Then "Thermidor" happened, and the "Gang of Four" went down in flames.

Q: One of the interesting challenges that came up toward the end of '76 is you have a presidential election and the Carter Administration wins. Normally the building in December turns itself to turning out transition papers for the new administration telling them what has gone on so far. Did you guys get involved in a lot of transition papers and

activities.

ROPE: I don't think so; but days before Mao died, in September, I was pulled off to serve on a promotion board. It was the FSO-4 to FSO-3 promotion board. That was the largest single pool of FSOs eligible for promotion -- the ones at middle grade. I had just been promoted to FSO-3 that year, again quite early, ahead even of one of my most successful peers, Chas Freeman, and ahead of others to whom I looked up and who had been senior to me, like Al Romberg. Suddenly I was looking at their files and those of many other officers for whom I'd worked or who'd outranked me in the past. In any case, I was out of INR for several months, doing nothing but promotion board work. I think I returned after the election, but I don't recall exactly when. No doubt we wrote papers for the transition, but we were turning out analyses all the time.

I do remember Al Romberg being up in S/P, Policy Planning, working closely on policy papers involving possible recognition of the PRC with Stape Roy, Oscar Armstrong's deputy on the EA China desk; and we were also in touch with Mike Armacost, then in S/P; but I'm afraid I don't remember a lot more than that.

Q: For a minute let me go into the Foreign Service thing about promotion boards. Explain the work of a promotion board and why are there promotion boards for the Foreign Service.

ROPE: Well, any good civil service system works on promotion by merit; and FSOs are essentially civil servants. Though we weren't in the Civil Service System, our grade structure, health and retirement benefits, and promotion rules were virtually identical to those of the Civil Service. The only difference I remember was that FSOs could retire at age 50, well below the Civil Service retirement age, I believe based on the assumption from years past that FSOs endured more hardships by living overseas and would have shorter life-spans as a result.

In any case, you have to have an organized system for promotions that is predictable and accepted as fair by those who are candidates for promotion. It also has to be isolated from political influence. At State, Foreign Service promotion boards would convene annually and be chaired by a relatively senior officer. There were no permanent members. I don't know the exact mechanism by which members were selected, but, if you were selected, it was kind of like jury duty -- you had to serve. All boards were announced in advance, so everyone knew who would be serving on them. My board had FSOs from all cones -- political, administrative, economic, and consular -- and the candidates we considered came from all cones. We had one "outside" member. I cannot remember whether he came from another agency or from the private sector, but I know he was from outside the national security community. I can think of at least six members on my board, and I'm guessing we would have been seven, since an odd number facilitates voting.

In many ways, we functioned like a jury, voting on each eligible FSO; but unlike a jury's, our decisions were made by majority rule. There was no recourse -- no appeals court. I am not sure if we knew how many promotions we could make, but I don't think so.

Somehow, I think, we had to rank order all the officers whose files we reviewed, or perhaps rank order them by cone. I can't recall how we did that, looking at the largest single group of FSOs, 700-800, I think.

Our Chairperson was Bob Barry, an FSO-1 under the old system -- what today would be an FE-MC, Minister-Counselor. There was no deputy to Bob. We would spend days reading the files of eligible officers and then every few days we'd meet to take a vote. We would read back through the officers' entire files, giving weight to their most recent efficiency reports, but looking at everything. Before voting, we would discuss each officer, going around the table at least once to assure that each board member was called upon to give an opinion. Then we voted for or against promotion. If we didn't recommend promotion, the officer concerned was not rank ordered.

Service on that promotion board influenced me forever, not just in my professional life as a Foreign Service rater or reviewer, but later outside State when I had to write references for people. I found, as we all did on my board, that, over time, raters would describe a person in their own ways, but when you looked at a whole series of reports on one individual, over time, the key features of that person's work and personality would emerge quite visibly and consistently. Praise, of course, is easier for most people to give, so we saw lots of that; criticisms would often be expressed subtly but would nevertheless fit a pretty consistent pattern. One rater might say, "He should speak up more;" or "She should take more initiative." Another might say "a little less reticence on officer X's part would be welcome." In short, some would be direct, and some would dance all around it. But whatever they said, the basic personality would pretty much show through. That gave me confidence in future years, especially when I had to address shortcomings; I could be pretty sure that, if I laid it out clearly, anyone looking at the file would see that I was not the first to say it. Even now, as a school teacher talking to a parent about a difficult child I'll often say "I'm sure this isn't the first time you've heard this;" and generally I'll be right.

Sometimes if we all seemed to agree, Bob Barry might say, in essence, "Okay, is there anyone who thinks this person should not be promoted," or vice versa, and if no one spoke up, that would be that. Then there would be times when we really argued. I remember at one point there was one member of my board who was clearly trying to influence promotions based on his personal relationships back in his home bureau. One time this became so clear that the rest of us unanimously voted one of his candidates down. I remember him mumbling something like "What am I going to say in the Bureau?" From that point on, he lost all credibility.

For the most part, though, I felt our process was extremely fair and unbiased. I did see eye-to-eye in one particular area with another member of my board, Virginia Schafer, the administrative officer with whom I'd served with in Beijing. We weren't close friends, but we were former colleagues who knew and respected one another. And we were both conscious of the importance of promoting women. I had never forgotten what that Foreign Service recruiter said at Yale to the female grad students: "We have excellent jobs for secretaries in the Foreign Service." I think I mentioned all of this earlier.

Anyway, Virginia and I were a little bloc who helped promote a lot of women, some of whom rose eventually to the highest ranks of the Department.

Q: So each file is the accumulated annual efficiency reports on an officer, and you had to read the files for all 700-800 of them and try to sort them out.

ROPE: Yes, and decide who was recommended for promotion and who was not.

Q: And as you read a file, is it not possible to see, "Boy, this guy is really outstanding" or "This guy is not going to make the cut this year."

ROPE: Absolutely. I imagine every board is different because they're composed of different human beings; but for us we could see pretty clearly several groups of people. There were those FSOs who were clearly outstanding and sure to be promoted. There were others who were clearly not. Then there a lot of people in the middle. There were also some who were ten years in grade and would be selected out of the Service if they did not get a promotion. Sometimes we would decide, in effect, "yes he, or she, is qualified to serve at the next level and we're going to promote him or her." Sometimes we'd make the hard decision not to do so, knowing there would be a particularly unhappy result. There was a whole variety of things to be considered.

One thing I learned on that promotion board was that one of the ways to tell somebody had a problem that might not be explained in the file would be if the person was suddenly transferred to the Board of Examiners. Suppose an officer was serving in -- I'm going to make this up totally -- Katmandu; and after only four or five months there, bang the Officer moves to the Board of Examiners, for no apparent reason. In theory, that could be due to a medical or family problem. Generally, however, we'd find other things in the file that would support a conclusion that something had gone wrong; and that was borne out in my personal experience in later years.

Q: What did you learn in terms of your own writing on your own subordinates?

ROPE: Well I already had learned something important in INR from Peter Tarnoff, who was Herb's counterpart for Western European affairs. He was a star of the bureau and had served on a promotion board. When it was time to write ERs, one of the leaders in INR asked Peter to talk to a group of us about how to go about it. The key thing I remember him saying was, "If you've got somebody you think is really good, don't be afraid to sing." I'd already formed my own approach to ERs and thought you should be pretty clear and direct. I didn't believe in "a little less reticence would serve X well..." or whatever. But I always remembered and passed on to others that line of Peter's: "Don't be afraid to sing."

Q: One EER line that I remember was "He shouldn't stand around the buffet table that long."

ROPE: Hah! Also, I saw the importance of reviewing statements that, in time, I found

myself writing. I knew, for example, how important reviewers like Tom DeHart had been in my own career; and generally I assumed that laudatory reviewing statements I received from people like John Holdridge and Reggie Bartholomew played a role in assuring promotions for me. So I always worked just as hard on reviewing statements as I did as a rating officer. I remember one time later in my career when I contradicted a rating officer who didn't face up to addressing his subordinate's manifest shortcomings and just gave him a favorable report. I couldn't let that go and told it like it was -- not in a mean way, but in words that were unmistakably clear. The rated officer hated me for it. He glared at me and wouldn't speak to me for the rest of the time I knew him; but I had to do it, for the integrity of the system.

Q: So being on a promotion board is a great education that one should take if one has the opportunity I suspect.

ROPE: Absolutely; but I don't think I had a choice about it. If not mandatory, it was pretty much expected that you would do it. I think Herb would have liked to have me there, especially when Mao died; and there were some people on promotion boards -- we were all housed in the same area -- who went back to their bureaus after 5:00 to work. I didn't. I had good analysts and was perfectly happy to let them handle it on their own. Also, I worked very hard reading files. We could go in at night or on weekends, or stay beyond the close of normal working hours, and often I did. One man who was happy I was staying away, I'm sure, was Chris Szymanski. He got to write all the breaking-news stuff on the death of Mao and its immediate aftermath, and he carried more responsibility in general.

Q: Well this assignment begins to end in 1977. You have a brand new administration that comes in in January. Were there any particular atmospherics with the start of a new administration.

ROPE: The big question with China policy was, are we going to "normalize" the relationship? Are we going to recognize Beijing? And that is what Stape and Al Romberg were working on. I guess their work probably went into a NISSM or whatever high-level interagency policy memoranda were called in those days. Do you know what I am talking about? Every new administration had its own name for such memos.

Q: Right, national security something memorandums.

ROPE: In INR that was one thing we weren't directly involved with, because we were pretty much kept isolated from the policy-making process. We might hear about them, though the China policy one was pretty close-hold; but did not play in the process.

I do remember Dick Holbrooke's get-acquainted meeting with us in Herb's office. I thought he was a complete jerk -- which a lot of people thought he was throughout his career. I thought that for a long time, but then I became one of his admirers. In fact, the last words I ever said to him, walking away from talking with him after the funeral of Newsweek's Maynard Parker in New York were, "I hope you're Secretary of State!" I

wish he were still with us and that my hope had come true. What is your question?

Q: Did the atmospherics change in any way? What changes did you see?

ROPE: Well Holbrooke was a whirlwind. So there was a big change in EA, absolutely. Not that Habib, his predecessor, wasn't a character himself. Habib had moved up to Undersecretary. Overall, though, on the East Asia side there was continuity of policy. On China, who knows what Nixon, if he had lasted a full second term, might have done; but the trend was definitely toward normalization. It was announced at the end of '78, to take effect January 1, 1979.

Q: Now the Japanese had already made their move on China. They had established diplomatic relations and they had an embassy and what not.

ROPE: Yes. That happened before we opened USLO in 1973. We had, if you will, the Taiwan problem.

Q: That is right. The Zhou-Tanaka communiqué of maybe '71. Because they didn't have the problem of Taiwan.

ROPE: They had it, but not nearly to the degree we did. They handled the Taiwan problem in the same way we ultimately did, creating a "private" organization to replace their embassy in Taiwan and setting up an embassy in Beijing. I don't know if it was exactly like AIT, but something like it. They had to come up with a few other solutions. JAL was an example. JAL, Japan Air Lines, flew to Mainland China but set up a subsidiary airline that flew JAL planes to Taiwan with tails painted differently. There were many arrangements that had been made with Taiwan by the Japanese that were models for us and other governments. The problem we had, as Alan Romberg would explain to me, was how to handle our mutual defense treaty with Taiwan and how to continue arms sales. This was not something I was involved with in 1977 but certainly was four years later.

Q: Right. Now here we are in '77. Your two-year assignment is up. Where did you go and how did you get there?

ROPE: Once again I wanted to get away from China, and I wanted to attend The National War College. I'd learned a lot about the LDP, the Japanese Liberal Democratic Party and Japanese politics, and about Korea and other areas under my jurisdiction in the Northeast Asia Division but it was still heavily China. So by 1977 I had been doing ten years of it and really wanted to get out of area. The War College offered the way out. If nothing else, I'd spend a year studying all different parts of the world. I asked for that and got it. It was a great year.

I had one other thing in mind. There were two important sabbatical years available to FSOs. One was DOD's National War College, which focused primarily on national security issues. The other was the State Department's Senior Seminar, which focused on

the relationship between foreign policy and domestic politics. I became eligible for both when I was promoted to FSO-3, later re-designated as FSO-1. If one went to the War College, one could still go to the Senior Seminar later in a career, but only after a certain number of years had passed; I think six. Since I wanted to be able to go to both, I asked for the War College as soon as I was eligible.

Q: The War College starts in August and ends up May-June. How was that year structured?

ROPE: There was a core curriculum covering major areas of concern in American national security relations. I can't remember exactly how it went on Europe, but we had units on the Soviet Union, China, the Middle East, and Latin America among others. We had an entire unit on military strategy, studying Clausewitz and the like. I'm pretty sure the curriculum included something on NATO, though I was learning about the workings of NATO from classmates and in various seminars throughout the year. All 160 of us would get together several times a week for lectures by leading academics or important figures, who would talk to us about their areas of responsibility or interest. On the other days we'd be in smaller groups related to the current unit of study, or in elective courses.

When we were studying the Soviet Union, we had American Scholars of the USSR. We heard from Rick Smith, a journalist who had lived in Moscow and had at one point been detained in the Soviet Union. We had the head of the Office of Soviet affairs at State. It was the same sort of thing on China. There were specialists on the War College staff for each area, and they were in charge of their parts of the curriculum. For China it was Tom Robinson. There was a wonderful guy named Joe Malone who ran the Middle East segment. I think Harlan Ullman, whose writings I see in OpEd pages from time to time, ran the strategy component.

Our first lecturer was a very colorful and excellent Princeton professor named Marion Levy. His topic was "the modernization process," and what he said that day has stuck with me ever since. He came in with two large shaggy dogs which sat or lay down on either side of the podium. And he announced to us, "Yes. You're right! They're Hungarian Komondor sheep dogs, and if you so much as lay a hand on me, they'll eat you up!"

Then he pulled out a big piece of white chalk. There were two large portable blackboards on stage, and he went to the far left of the one on the audience's left and began to draw a horizontal line. Screeching his chalk across that board and breaking it off as he continued to screech across the right hand board, he screamed, "This is the line of history." Then, reaching the far right side of the second board, he scribbled a tight oval, almost a vertical line, across the "line of history," and shouted, "This is the modern era!" For the rest of the lecture he would point to "back there," meaning before the modern era," and contrast it to "up here" in modern era. One example that still stands out for me was, "Back there, people raised their children for a predictable future! Up here, we don't know what changes will take place in our lives, let alone those of our children!" It was the first of many stimulating lectures for a whole year. Someone else who stands out was Ralph

Nader. I learned then what a total jerk he is; and unlike my view of Dick Holbrooke, that's never changed.

Those are just two examples. We heard from Generals, Admirals, Ambassadors, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, leaders in private industry, and more. During each unit we met in smaller seminar groups led by NWC faculty members whom I found to be quite good. We also had elective courses. I tried to use them to study things I had never worked on. One part of that was arms control, which I studied with a colorful and enjoyable professor named Harley Moulton. He knew a lot of key figures in the arms control community, and brought them in to speak to us. That was a perhaps the most useful single elective I took, that prepared me for assignments I later had in that area. I took a futuristics course at the neighboring Industrial College of the Armed Forces and learned a lot not only about computers as they existed at that stage but about things coming down the pike like cell-phones, PDAs, fiber optics, replacement of regular mail by E-Mail, and other things we take for granted today.

We had to write a major research paper. I did mine on the Pakistani nuclear issue and spent a lot of time reading up on nuclear power and technology as well as nuclear proliferation in general. I spent hours over at the Department talking with people deeply involved in the issue and reading through their files. It ended up as a classified document because of all I learned there.

The familiarity I gained with the Pakistani nuclear issue was useful to me for many years to come. When I ran the Office of Southern European Affairs, there were quite sensitive issues involving Turkey and Pakistan. When, I was Acting PM Assistant Secretary I dissented from a memo recommending that we grant Pakistan a Glenn Amendment waiver so that it could continue to receive US foreign assistance despite evidence that it was pursuing a nuclear weapons program.

But to return to the War College, there was a tremendous amount of reading assigned – about 1,000 pages a week. FSOs were better off in this area than some of our military classmates. We understood that you did not have to do every single thing you were told to do. Our military colleagues, on the other hand, were ambitious high achievers trained to follow orders; so if they had to read that much a week, they'd do their best to get it done. It was doable, but given the course load and other requirements, including the major research paper, it was not always possible. Eventually, there was a minor rebellion of military officers, and requirements were eased. One amusing example I remember was when our instructor for a regionalism course told all we had to do for his course paper was “just go to the Encyclopedia Britannica.”

Q: Now give us a feel for the makeup. You were saying there were FSOs and military officers there. Were other agencies also represented?

ROPE: A quarter of us were civilians. Within that, State officers, mostly FSOs were the largest component; but there were one or two from NSA, maybe six from CIA. One man was from Agriculture, and one or two came from Commerce, Treasury, the Library of

Congress, and the FBI. The military side was broken down by Army, Navy, Air Force, with each sharing a third of the slots. Marines fell under the Navy. I don't remember if there were any Coast guard officers, but there probably were. I know there was a Coast Guard officer when I attended the Senior Seminar.

Q: And all about the same rank, Lt. Colonel, colonel, FSO-3, and maybe FSO2. Was there any travel involved? Did the group travel?

ROPE: Yes. Those were the ranks, though I don't remember any FSO-2s on the State side. We did have one major trip. People formed into groups and went all over the world. Unfortunately, in my year there was a budget problem; and I was among an unlucky few who didn't get to take a foreign trip. However, an Air Force colonel on the faculty, Bud Watts, organized a small group to study energy. We went to New York and met with people from the American Petroleum Institute and then to Texas to meet with oil companies there, including Aramco representatives who gave us a very thorough presentation of Saudi Arabia's geography, geology, and oil dynamics. I learned a fair amount about US tax laws that was also valuable. The majority of my classmates went on trips to Asia, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Q: Because the State Department couldn't support it budget-wise.

ROPE: It wasn't the State Department budget; it was the War College budget, and I just had bad luck on the draw.

Q. So how would you sum up your War College year?

ROPE: It was fantastic. We've just skimmed the surface here. I found the military strategy and NATO-oriented components of the course extremely good. I had some background from my naval service which had included controlling aircraft aboard a carrier, but the exposure to army and air force officers and the multiplicity of issues they deal with was terrific. Whether it was logistics and the "tooth-to-tail ratio" or debates among army officers over our ability to withstand a Soviet armor drive into Europe through the Fulda Gap, it was eye opening. The arms control course I took with some very capable military officers who'd been engaged in arms control work, where I learned about things like CEP -- Circular Error Probable -- was tremendously useful later in my career, both working on China and in the Politico-Military Bureau. So was the major portion of the curriculum devoted to the Soviet Union.

In some areas, I learned a little about a lot; but in others I learned a lot about a lot! The War College Building, designed by Stanford White and Associates, is itself a marvelous place to spend a year. It has a great open-stacks library. We had social events and sports activities -- I played lots of squash and some softball. All of this ensured that we developed relationships across agency and service lines. NWC is a great institution. It does a terrific job of preparing middle-grade officers for leadership positions.

Q: So I think we can leave the National War College. Did you have an assignment set up

before you went there?

ROPE: No. I had to look for my next assignment that spring. There was a bidding process. I don't know when it came in, but somewhere in those years a process was developed, maybe as part of GLOP, in which job postings were sent to FSOs world-wide, and anyone could bid on them. While bureaus could still play a role in deciding who got to be put into what jobs, you could at least find out about, and bid on, any job for which your rank qualified you. I bid on a job in which I would have been your boss in S/S-S, the Executive Secretariat's "Line."

Q: The Operations Center?

ROPE: Not the Ops Center, though that's where I ended up. What I bid on was the other major office director job in the Secretariat, designated S/S-S. That was about as prestigious a place as one could find, because of the close working relations between "Line" officers and the Secretary and top leaders of the Department. They traveled with the Secretary wherever he went, and within the Department they sat astride the flow of memoranda to the Secretary and other Seventh Floor leaders. S/S-S Director was another job Nick Platt had held -- in fact it was in that capacity, not as a China specialist, that he went on the Nixon Visit to China in 1972. And you were on the Line.

So I bid on the directorship of S/S-S. Peter Tarnoff, the Executive Secretary, had known me slightly in INR and in any case knew me by reputation there. He already had his candidate for S/S-S, Art Hughes; but he sent word to me asking if I'd be interested in heading the Operations Center, S/S-O. I can't remember what other things I might have been looking at, and I know I did not consider S/S-O totally desirable; but it was still a big job for an officer at my rank and age. I interviewed with Frank Wisner, Peter's deputy overseeing S/S-O, and when I was offered the job I accepted.

Q: It is interesting because you have gone from Hong Kong, to the very beginnings of Beijing USLO, and now this job puts you way up there in the Secretary's office. You have seen the Foreign Service now from the trenches to the heights. What was your sense of what the Operations Center was going to be about?

ROPE: I knew pretty much what it did because my colleague from Hong Kong and Beijing, Bob Perito, was a Senior Watch Officer in the years before I took the job. I knew S/S-O was a 24/7 operation. I didn't know the degree to which it was involved in long-term crisis management, though I had some idea. As it turned out, there were loads of crises my Ops Center tour. Crisis management was handled in a separate area of the Center, adjacent to the regular 24/7 Watch. Bob hadn't been much involved in it; but I found that as Director I was constantly involved.

Q: Now let's look at the Operations Center to begin with. It is 24/7, so you have got three shifts of people. If you are the manager you don't sit all three shifts.

ROPE: No, that is right. The great thing about the Operations Center, if you are in charge

of it, is that it has to function 2/3 of the time when you are not there. In fact, when there are no crises it's a 9-5 job, with weekends free. On the other hand, if a crisis erupted, I could be called in any time of day or night. All this said, I had no experience working in S/S-O, or the Secretariat, and while I'd been a watch stander aboard ship I knew nothing of the nitty-gritty details involved in Ops Center work. So between the War College and S/S-O, I went in on my own time and stood watches with Watch teams. I also did that periodically as Director. I had to know all that the watch officers' jobs entailed in order to supervise people effectively, in what had to be a zero-defects operation.

Q: Now how many people would be in the Operations Center?

ROPE: I think around thirty, though I don't remember exactly. There were five Senior Watch Officers, five Junior Watch Officers, all FSOs. The SWOs were FSO-4s, what would be FSO-2s today, and the JWOs were usually second-tour officers. There was at least one Operations Assistant, and sometimes two, on duty at any given time. There was a military liaison section of several people who came from the Pentagon but reported to me. There was an INR watch officer located in a space directly adjacent to, or below, the Ops Center; but I didn't supervise those personnel. There was a deputy director and a secretary to the two of us, and at least one administrative assistant. The first person to hold that job during my tenure, Marie Connolly, had been on the Ops Center staff since it was first created around 1960. In my second year, though, we took over responsibility for State's portion of FEMA's nuclear war government relocation center in a mountain outside Washington, and Marie became responsible for that.

Q: Oh. You don't mean Colorado?

ROPE: No, but it was like that, like NORAD. It was, essentially, a huge fallout shelter in the mountains of Virginia to which the top officials would be evacuated in the event of a nuclear attack. By the way, Peter Tarnoff and his deputies would be among them. I was designated to stay and act as Executive Secretary back in DC as the bombs went off. Probably you would have been with me.

The facility was built during the Eisenhower administration. I don't know if it still exists, but FEMA ran it; and FEMA leaders were unhappy that they had no State Representative at the facility. A State position existed on FEMA's organization chart, but State never filled it. One day Pat Kennedy came to me with a proposal. He was a bright, energetic staff assistant to Under Secretary for Management Ben Reed, and he had a spectacularly successful career. Today he is the Undersecretary for Management. I saw him last October at the Chinese Embassy's national day celebration when he was the top ranking US representative.

Pat wanted to relieve pressure from FEMA by having S/S-O take responsibility for staffing the State position there. For that purpose, he would arrange creation of a less-than-full-time S/S-O position, for an officer who would regularly go out to "the Mountain" and represent us. I agreed to his proposal provided that we could put Marie in it and gain a promotion for her. She liked the idea, and we did it. This solved a

management problem for me that I won't go into, and I got to hire a new officer to do administrative support for S/S-O.

Q: Of course this whole 24/7 thing is to keep the Seventh Floor connected to itself in case something pops. The Operations Center knows where everyone is at any given time and can hook up Assistant Secretary A with Assistant Secretary B and listen in and take notes or follow instructions.

ROPE: Yes. We had a phone system that enabled us to connect people into conference calls, and we often served, in effect, as a switchboard for the Secretary, the President, and top Department officials who needed to be connected to each other. Sometimes it could be a nuisance. Assistant Secretaries like Holbrooke would use us for long conversations with overseas ambassadors that would keep the costs off their budgets but take up a lot of our phone time.

Since we generally knew, or could quickly ascertain, the whereabouts of all key Department and Bureau leaders, one of them could call in and ask to be "patched" to another at any time, and we could do that. It was rudimentary compared to what digital communications systems do today, and it wasn't secure; but it was utilized all the time. Our watch officers didn't normally serve as note-takers, though they could do that if asked. In Kissinger's time, there was a full recording capability incorporated into the phone system, and I believe he had all his phone calls recorded. That was prohibited by the time I got to S/S-O, and while we had the capability we did not use it.

Q: The Ops Center also functions as a communications center of sorts. Correct?

ROPE: It's not a communications center, per se -- not the kind that encrypts, decrypts and distributes cables, but there were a variety of top-level and highly classified communications routed and distributed through us. Our SWOs determined distribution of what were, paradoxically, called NODIS cables. NODIS stood for "no distribution." That meant there was no routine or automatic distribution of those messages via the regular communications network. Instead, the Department's communication center sent them to S/S-O for distribution.

NODIS cables could come from any embassy, but the majority came from places where there were major US interests and operations or places that had temporarily become hot spots. They contained extremely sensitive information or recommendations and were intended for a very restricted Washington audience. An example was Robert White, our Ambassador to El Salvador. There were major problems there, and White was an active and passionate Ambassador. He used the NODIS channel frequently, and we would decide the recipients of his cables. NODIS distribution decisions were made by the SWO on duty as soon as a cable came in. In White's case, the cables would always go to the Assistant Secretary for Latin America, known as the ARA Bureau, and to the Secretary and others on the Seventh Floor who had an interest in his issues. Other bureau leaders who might be recipients might include the assistant secretaries for INR, the Political Military Bureau, and Policy Planning; but distribution would be very limited -- in some

cases, it might be restricted to just the Secretary and one or two other addressees.

The Watch would call recipient offices to alert them when NODIS cables came in. Every weekday, and on Monday morning, I would review all NODIS cables from the previous day or the weekend, sometimes adding an addressee or two. My bosses, Frank and Peter, might also instruct us to add someone or, on rare occasions, have us run around and pull something back that was judged too sensitive for the distribution it had received. This part of the job was great for me personally because I was seeing top-level traffic on key issues all the time.

The best cables I saw during my Ops Center time, as I remember it, came from White and Bill Sullivan, our last Ambassador to Iran. Sullivan's cables were terrific. They also had to be handled carefully, not just because he was reporting almost daily meetings with the Shah but because he was very outspoken, sometimes scathing in his references to what some in Washington -- maybe Brzezinski and Carter -- were doing or thinking of doing.

I think we also played a role in distributing LIMDIS, limited distribution, cables, but I don't recall exactly. LIMDIS was kind of a dying category.

While S/S-S was strictly concerned with the flow of internal paper to and from the Seventh Floor, except when its officers were accompanying the Secretary abroad, S/S-O's job was to keep track of everything external that was of urgent importance to the Department; and we had many sources of information. Embassies could call breaking news into us, we had teletype machines, AP, UPI, Reuters, etc., that our Operations Assistants monitored. Our defense liaison officers kept us in touch with the Pentagon. There was a secure phone linking all the national security operations centers and the FAA together. We had direct and secure communications with CIA and NSA, and so on.

Our number one job was to make sure that any reporting or information that needed the top-level Department attention reached leaders as quickly as possible and, at times, to coordinate and support any actions to be taken in response -- particularly at night, when people were not in their Department offices. Secondly, we were there to make sure the many offices and bureaus of the Department received breaking news quickly. We did that through alerts made by phone or put in boxes for bureau staff assistants who had mail boxes in the Center that they regularly checked. We also put together a daily press clipping booklet in the early hours of each morning that included major news stories and cartoons on foreign affairs and the Department or national security community appearing in the US press. I forget how this operation worked, but we ran a lot of copies of our booklet daily and it was widely circulated on the Seventh Floor.

Q: Now you had all sorts of incidents to deal with. In February, '79, Spike Dubs was killed in Kabul. How would this have come to the Ops Center's attention and what would you have done for example?

ROPE: I used to say that my job was best when things were at their worst; because whenever there was a crisis I would go in to help organize, support, and when necessary

orient, personnel called in to deal with it. On that night I got called around midnight. Our ambassador to Afghanistan had been kidnapped. You call him "Spike;" did you know him?

Q: Yes.

ROPE: I did not, though I know how upset people who knew him were when he was killed. I don't recall how we first got word that night -- I suspect from an Embassy call to the Watch. In any case, I was called around midnight. I don't remember who else had been notified, but initially the people who came in to deal with the problem were a Middle East Bureau Deputy Assistant Secretary -- it might have been Peter Constable or Maury Draper; I don't recall for sure. Others included our office director for Afghanistan affairs, NEA Administrative Office Director Sheldon Krys, Tony Quainton, the Department's counter-terrorism director and his deputy, and some others.

Although my predecessor, Roger Gamble, had added a second crisis management area to the Center just before I took over, both of them were occupied. So I set this group up in our teleconferencing room. We had an open phone line to our Embassy in Kabul, and the people I've mentioned were interacting with the Embassy and others in the US government, trying to find out what was happening and seeking ways to stop it. We knew Dubs was being held in a room with Russians right outside, and we wanted to get the Russians, chief backers of the Kabul regime, to stop it. They didn't.

It was an incredible night, written up by that night's SWO, Leo Wallemborg and his JWO in the State Department magazine. Bernie Gwertzman of the New York Times, whom I briefed the next day at Frank Wisner's request, also wrote a story about it that led the Times front page a day later. The dates, here were February 14, 1979, and I think Bernie's article appeared on February 15. I briefed Bernie using the logs from the three watches of that night, one ending at midnight, one from midnight to 4 a.m., and the last from 4 to 8 a.m. logs. Every SWO and his JWO had to stay after their watch ended to write up the log, just as happened in when I was on Coral Sea.

By this time, the Shah had fallen in Iran, and NEA had a round-the-clock Iran Working Group in our main crisis room. I don't remember who was using the second room, perhaps a group dealing with Nicaragua. As we were trying to deal with Ambassador Dubs' kidnapping, the Watch got an alert around 2 a.m. from the CIA saying that our embassy in Tehran was under attack. I ran into the Iran Working Group area, where the only person on duty was an elderly officer from the Voice of America. Despite the fact that by late evening in Washington people were going to work in Tehran, the working group rarely had anyone of any level of responsibility on duty at night.

I told the VOA guy the embassy was under attack. He said, "I know." We had a permanent open phone line to Embassy Tehran, 24 hours a day, and I saw that he had made an entry into his log 15 minutes earlier saying "We are under attack;" but he hadn't told anyone! Instead, he was calling into the phone "Who? What? Who are they?" and was getting no replies. I put the phone onto a speaker so that anyone who came into the

room could hear it and called Henry Precht, the office director for Iran. I told him he needed to come in which he didn't want to do. He was a cantankerous guy; and while I was talking to him -- should I continue with this story?

Q: Sure.

ROPE: I am going to tell it. I said, "Henry, the Embassy is under attack. You've got to come in." "I am not coming in," Henry said, "call Bob Martin." Bob was his deputy. Then all of a sudden automatic weapons fire started crackling over the phone. I put the telephone up to a speaker and said, "Henry, that's automatic weapons fire! You've got to come in." He said, "I'm not coming in. It's too late now!" The Watch had been alerting people higher up, and one member of the team ran in and said, "Mr. Saunders is coming in." He was then Assistant Secretary for NEA. I said, "Henry, Hal Saunders is coming in." "I'm not coming in!" he said. "Henry," I said, "Mr. Newsom's coming in." Newsom was the Under Secretary for Policy, third-ranking officer in the Department. Still Henry was refusing. "Henry," I finally said on learning it from the watch, "the Secretary is coming in." "All right," he said, "I'll come in."

Anyway within an hour or less people assembled in the crisis room with Vance trying to figure out whom he could reach in the Iranian leadership to try to stop what was happening. All we could get from the embassy was silence; the automatic weapons fire had ceased. Vance, Newsom and Precht were trying different channels of communication outside of the Embassy. I'm not alluding to CIA communications, though there may have been those, but to private channels. The Secretary knew a lot of people in Iran, some of whom were considered moderates within the leadership. Around 4 a.m. I was back in the main Watch area when a very sleepy President Carter called. We still didn't know much about what was going on, and I'm afraid the only time I ever got to brief a President I had little to say. I tried to put the President on to Precht, who was beside me, but Henry paled and pointed down a hallway to Mr. Vance. So I got the Secretary on the phone and the two discussed whether to cancel a trip to Mexico scheduled for the next morning or not. In the end they decided to go.

It was a hectic and tragic night. At some point, with Russians still outside the door, Dubs was killed. Somehow the Embassy Tehran situation was resolved by 6 a.m. Gwertzman's article ended with me going home to take my daughter to school.

That was bad, but we had other nights, and days, like that. When I took the position, Roger was very proud of the new, two-area configuration he had created so we could deal with two crises at a time. By the time I left in 1980, we had four; and at times we had all of them occupied.

Coming back to Iran staffing for a minute, it's worth mentioning that the real mainstay of the Iran Working Group was an FSO named Mark Johnson. He was capable, steady, and possessed of great common sense. He carried a heavy load throughout the hostage crisis.

Q: There are the separate rooms with their own phone and computers and what not.

ROPE: Not so much computers in those days, but with their own banks of telephones, televisions, private conference rooms, typewriters, etc. They were staffed by the relevant bureaus, and often had other agency representatives in the mix. We had to deal with the Jonestown tragedy, for example. That was a huge consular operation because so many Americans were in danger and soon found to have died in Jonestown, and the Department was flooded with calls from anxious relatives. Anything fast-breaking, that couldn't be handled by the Ops Center Watch, given its other duties, and was too much for one office or a bureau to manage, would come to us. Hijackings, kidnappings, attacks on embassies, even the US boycott of the 1980 Olympics required a working group in our spaces. I had the power to give names to working groups, and the one I picked for that one was S/OL.

Q: There was one incident in Colombia in February 1980 when M-19 attacked the Dominican embassy with ambassadors in it during their reception.

ROPE: Yes. That was very short-lived, though. I don't remember the details. You remind me, however, of one thing I said earlier when talking about the origins of GLOP. There was one bureau that was by far the most difficult to get to respond to the Seventh Floor, at least from my perspective. That was the ARA Bureau. Their countries were more or less in our time zone, and when an emergency or crisis happened, ARA's instincts would be to open up phone lines between their offices and the embassy concerned and keep everyone else out of it. If something serious broke out that required top-level attention in and a crisis team to deal with it, it would be my job to get those people to come and set up in one of our spaces, so that our Watch and everybody on the Seventh Floor, and in other interested bureaus, like Public Affairs, Congressional Relations, etc. could easily follow and when necessary become involved in what was going on. The ARA people liked to keep it all to themselves; and there would be times when something would break and we'd be unable to contact them -- or even the embassy in question because they'd all be on the phone to each other, tying up the phone lines. It was maddening. That alone was a reason why they needed to be up with us. Our communications resources were far greater than those of any office or bureau.

Q: One of the things about the working groups operating off the Operations Center was there would tend to be different bureaus staffing them. I mean you would have a consular officer or whatever, so they were not just the Colombia desk. It was a multi bureau working group.

ROPE: Right. Take Jonestown. That working group was headed by a DAS from ARA, John Bushnell. He ran the group and dealt with the press, somewhat clumsily at times; but all those officers from the Consular Affairs Bureau, for reasons I've mentioned. In any major crisis involving US interests, there are likely to be at least some Americans in danger. In Jonestown, that was the main focus. There would be political-military people if there were military aspects to a crisis issue. If it was a hijacking, we'd likely have an FAA representative, etc.

Q: Now things had gotten pretty dicey for the Operations Center in November, 1979

because Tehran is seized and then the embassy in Islamabad is attacked.

ROPE: The Islamabad incident was short but very tense. The hostage crisis was a long-term problem. That working group had been functioning for a long time, and once the Embassy was taken over for the duration -- of the Carter Administration anyway -- there was also a hostage spouses group. We couldn't house them in the Ops Center but were able to give them a large conference room nearby.

The attack on our embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan was very disturbing, because we not only had people taken hostage, at least briefly, on the compound, but we had people trapped in the Embassy, and it had been set on fire. Ambassador Hummel was not in the Embassy. I think he was in his residence. In any case, he sprang into action, calling counterparts in the Pakistani government, urging them to act to rescue our people and keeping us informed by phone. I don't recall who all was there as we dealt with it, but they were the same kinds of people I mentioned on the night when Ambassador Dubs was killed -- Sheldon Krys in particular. He was only in charge of administrative affairs in the NEA Bureau, but he was very capable and decisive, and whenever there was a crisis involving NEA, he was there.

We were operating in our teleconferencing room where we had what was basically a big-screen telex display -- a primitive version of today's instant messaging. We could talk through a teletype directly into the communications center of the embassy, which was a safe room to which all employees in the Embassy had retreated.

The only way out for our employees was through the roof, but there were attackers on the roof who had to be cleared before they could get out. I remember one teleconference exchange where the lead officer in the Embassy, perhaps the DCM or Political Counselor, was asked how people were doing. He had reported previously that the employees were sitting calmly and all was orderly. This time his answer was "We are okay, but it's getting hot in here." People were down on the floor because of smoke. It was a bad situation. For whatever reason, the Pakistanis were extremely slow to send in police and security personnel to clear out the attackers. There were humiliations perpetrated on some embassy personnel who were not in the safe room but were held on the grounds by the people who took over the compound.

Security forces did eventually get there, and our people escaped through the roof. Pakistan was an important ally of the United States. So it was smoothed over. Things I heard that were done, particularly to female personnel, may never have been reported.

Q: Like what?

ROPE: I can't say. I wasn't there, but stories filtered back to us from people who were. It didn't involve sexual molestation, per se, but it was unacceptable.

Q: Now included in the time frame that you were in the Operations Center was April, 1980 Desert I, the failed rescue.

ROPE: Yes. That led to Vance's resignation. I remember the aftermath of it. I don't know that the Operations Center was involved. It was a DOD/JSOC operation. Perhaps I've just forgotten. But it was a super-secret operation that very few people know about until it was over.

Q: I can imagine they would be; but when Vance resigns, everybody on the Seventh Floor must have been quite taken aback. What was the atmosphere at that time?

ROPE: You have to remember there was a Vance-Brzezinski struggle going on over lots of stuff, particularly involving arms control and SALT II. Marshall Shulman was Vance's arms control man. He was a Soviet expert from Columbia, a very nice, mild-mannered man. The struggles between him and Brzezinski are well known, and the larger struggle between Vance and Brzezinski that went on throughout the Carter administration is also well known. Vance's resignation more or less made Brzezinski the winner.

I don't know of anyone in the State Department who was happy that Vance was resigning. We weren't blaming him, and I think most of us thought he was right to have opposed the rescue mission. His replacement, Senator Muskie, was a wise gentleman, savvy about Washington; but I don't remember him having much impact. By the time he was there it was the last year of what proved to be Carter's only term.

Though they weren't exactly parallel, when we were fighting the policy battle over Taiwan Arms Sales in 1981-82, I thought it was the toughest fight in my experience since Shulman-Brzezinski.

Q: Let's stop for a minute to get back to the functioning of the Operations Center itself. How did the shifts work? How did you manage an organization which never has all of its employees there at any given time? How did you pick people to work for you? What did you look for? What did your deputy do? Who was your deputy?

ROPE: We had a fairly unusual shift pattern, unlike what I'd seen in the military or what other operations centers, like CIA's used. Our watch teams would work six straight days and then have three days off. Within those six days, they would rotate around the clock. On days one and two, the team would be on duty from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. For the next two days, they'd do 4 to midnight. On days 5 and 6 they'd cover midnight to 8 a.m. Three days later they'd start again. When I joined S/S-O it had been operating like that for years, and the watch officers and other personnel were happy with it. When I went out to visit the CIA operations center, my counterpart there thought it was crazy. People there would do one shift for an entire week. Then they'd rotate.

On the managerial side, my initial deputy was Lowell Fleischer. He had been a SWO and moved up to the deputy position shortly before I arrived. He knew all the ins and outs of how the Center had to function and handled the routine aspects of Center management, including scheduling, arranging coverage when people took leave, standing watches when we needed short-term replacements for SWOs, etc. I did the recruiting, the interface

with our bosses, other Seventh Floor offices, Bureaus, and other agencies. I was also the chief scrutinizer of our work, going over every log and all important actions taken by our watches after the fact, and making corrections or providing guidance as needed. I was also chief overseer of our crisis management work, making sure bureaus established teams in our crisis management spaces when needed, helping them set up, and ensuring a timely and effective information flow from working groups to Department and interagency leadership.

After a year, a long-time friend of mine from my A-100 class, Tom Reynders replaced Lowell. I recruited Tom as a SWO early in my tenure and he proved totally reliable. He had a lot of experience as a staff person on the Seventh Floor, knew how the Department worked, had excellent judgment, and was calm and collected no matter what the situation. He was exactly the kind of person we needed in a SWO; and once he became deputy, he was pretty much an alter ego for me. He moved up to replace me when I left.

As for how we managed an Ops Center staff that could never easily be brought together, I stood watches periodically and tried to be out on the floor a lot, making sure everyone on the staff, whatever their position, had access to me and my deputy, trying to foster an atmosphere in which people were free to discuss anything with us, from personal issues to opinions on how we should operate -- what we needed to change or do better, etc. This is important in any organization, but particularly so in a place where stressful situations can crop up any time and there are natural stresses from constantly changing hours.

One help for me early on was a memo sent to me by two junior watch officers, Marshall McCallie and another FSO who I think was about to depart S/S-O. Their memo expressed concerns about morale and detailed a number of fixes they believed would make S/S-O function better. I met with them, agreed with them on most if not all of their suggestions, and tried to put them into effect quickly. Marshall was outstanding. I called him “my big Eagle Scout!”

We changed watch teams with some frequency, to ensure that people could work interchangeably and to foster camaraderie. From time to time we had parties, in the Ops Center, away from the main Watch area or outside, scheduled at times calculated to maximize the number of people who could attend. There was a long-standing practice of posting memos to the Watch from me or my deputy that was part of the required reading-in before going on watch, and we had a large handbook of practices and procedures for handling the many different kinds of issues and emergencies we could be called on to deal with. We updated it as necessary.

We had to be a zero-defects operation, and that’s what I tried to impart to all my people. We couldn’t afford to miss any kind of emergency message, whether about an embassy under attack or a mercy mission for someone in Latin America who had been horribly burned and needed to be medevacked to the Army’s major burns facility in Houston. How fast you reacted when you learned of a problem could make a difference of life or death. You never knew what you might come upon and you couldn’t afford to make mistakes. At the same time, we couldn’t let that intimidate us. We needed to foster pride in what

our people did and facilitate their enjoyment of working together on the Watch. I think we achieved that.

I remember my CIA counterpart telling me that work in their ops center was very stressful because “You might have to call the Director in the middle of the night.” That would have been a way different atmosphere from that of S/S-O, where our people interacted with the Secretary and other high-level people regularly. In fact that was a key benefit of the job.

One big mistake that had been made years before I got to S/S-O was the case of Simas Kudirka, a Lithuanian seaman on a Soviet ship who had jumped onto a Coast Guard ship and asked for asylum. I don’t recall the details, but he was turned back to the Russians, and it was a scandal. As a result, the Operations Center was made the interagency coordination point for any asylum case anywhere in the world. We fulfilled the same role for Coast Guard drug operations or other incidents involving seizures on the high seas. There were many different things we did besides watch tickers and cable traffic. I remember coming back from lunch one day and on our speaker I could hear Ham Jordan negotiating with one of the key players involved in the Iran hostage negotiations, one of the shady characters -- either the Argentinian or Parisian lawyer -- who served as go-betweens. We had been asked to patch Jordan to his interlocutor, and a State Department interpreter was in the Ops Center facilitating, along with, I guess, a note-taker.

You asked about recruiting. I had an unusual luxury in those days that I believe few if any would have today. I could look at the personnel files of anyone under consideration for an S/S-O job. For Senior Watch Officers, I looked for a combination of ability, experience and -- most of all -- stability. I wasn’t after high flyers so much as people who had proven to be reliable officers with good judgment, from any cone. On the Junior Watch Officer side, I did want potential high flyers, and we got some very good ones. Frank Wisner encouraged me to look especially hard for good female and minority FSOs, for which I didn’t need encouragement; and I hired some outstanding officers in that area -- Jane Becker and Mildred Patterson, to name two. One minority FSO I hired, Ruth Davis, ultimately became Director General of the Foreign Service.

Q: Now being in the cockpit of the State Department and knitted in to everybody else’s op center, do you have any sense of how the White House worked with State and State with Pentagon and those sorts of things.

ROPE: With the exception of what I’ve mentioned about Vance and Brzezinski, particularly in the Salt II area, I thought things worked pretty well. We had a special channel for sending things to the White House. I knew my counterparts at the CIA, White House Sit Room, etc. The Operations Center telephone system needed to be upgraded, and we needed still more crisis management capacity. So I looked at different operations centers throughout the national security community with that in mind. The best one in town, I thought, was the FAA’s.

Q: How did the upgrade work out. Was that a lot of work?

ROPE: These were the days before the break up of “Ma Bell,” and I became a real phone company hater; because we kept being offered expensive ATT upgrades all using equipment that had to be rented and used old technology. I had Booz, Allen, Hamilton do a study for us, the end result of which was that we did nothing. So much would be coming on stream in another year or two, things that we couldn’t get from the Ma Bell -- conference calling from any phone, call forwarding, all kinds of things you take for granted today -- that I thought we should hold off. I thought we’d probably need to buy our own equipment -- not done in those days -- from a company like Nortel. I went to Wisner with that recommendation, and he agreed.

Q: Now you are also sitting, as you said, in an interesting position in State watching people who have risen quickly in the Foreign Service, Peter Tarnoff, Frank Wisner, Art Hughes. Do you have any comment on what it was like to work with Peter Tarnoff?

ROPE: Although later in the Clinton administration I was disappointed in Peter -- he was just not a leader and not accessible -- I thoroughly enjoyed working for him in our S/S days. We had a weekly staff meeting with him, Frank, Art Hughes, me and Peter’s other deputy, first Clay McManaway, then Jack Perry, and ultimately Jerry Bremer -- also Ray Seitz, who replaced Frank at the end of my time and was very easy to work for. I liked all of them except Perry, who was once abusive to me, and Bremer. Of Jerry, Tom Reynders said, “That man is incapable of having power and not abusing it!” Jerry could be friendly and was highly competent at staff work, but he wasn’t always easy to deal with.

I learned something about the care and management of the Secretary. Secretaries are human beings, and on trips Peter and Frank -- one of whom would usually be with him while the other “stayed home” -- would exchange cables about how Vance was doing personally. Overall, I thought Peter ran a good operation, and I liked Art Hughes a lot. Ultimately I lost out on a job to Art when we were both in competition to be DCM in Tel Aviv under Tom Pickering. I was runner-up and told Tom, who was kind enough to call me about his decision, that no one could feel bad losing out to Art Hughes.

Wisner was a dynamo. He knew everybody who was anybody. If you needed someone to call Averill Harriman, Lloyd Cutler, or any other major figure in town, Frank knew him -- maybe because of his father who had been a high ranking CIA officer. When Frank was away traveling with the Secretary the S/S front office would be dead. When he was there, there was always a lot going on. He could be intimidating, but I liked him a lot.

Q: Wasn’t Art Houghton one of your A-100 colleagues up there at that time?

ROPE: He was, but not for long. When I got to S/S-O, Arthur was Vance’s number one aide. I think he came from the Corning Glass Houghtons, and his family knew the Vances. I don’t know if that’s why he got his job. He resigned from the Foreign Service shortly after I arrived, saying he was going to take a year off to sail around the world with his son. I never saw nor heard of him again.

Q: Now at the time you are up in SSO, the China thing unfolds. December 15, 1978 the White House announces normalization. Normalization takes place January 1. What supportive role did you have in those kinds of circumstances?

ROPE: I would like to say a lot, but the answer is practically none. Frank called me into his office one December afternoon and told me we would be sending communications out shortly telling all posts about the Normalization announcement. Harry Thayer was by then head of the China Desk, and I remember Frank saying "Poor Harry. He doesn't know." Whether that was true or not I don't know; but the Normalization negotiations were a very close hold operation, involving Holbrooke, Mike Oksenberg at the NSC, Brzezinski, and I don't know who else in Washington, plus Leonard Woodcock, USLO chief and his deputy, Stape Roy, in Beijing. Stape had been Oscar Armstrong's and Harry's deputy, but by that time he had left the China desk.

None of the communications for that went through the Ops Center; there was nothing in the NODIS channel about it. They must have gone in what was called "Back Channel." When I later took over the China Desk, I did see those communications. Frank told me about the announcement in advance for some procedural reason that I don't now remember. It was exciting to learn what was about to happen.

For a while after that, we housed a working group led by Chas Freeman that handled the many practical issues that needed to be dealt with on the US side of normalization. For S/S-O, though, there wasn't very much that we had to deal with on China in those two years. It was a good reminder for a China specialist that there's a whole lot else going on in the world besides events in the Middle Kingdom. A lot was happening in Central America, in Nicaragua, where Somoza was overthrown by the Sandinistas and in El Salvador. There was the fall of the Shah, the hostage crisis. What else? Well, we've talked about some. Spike Dubs; Islamabad; Jonestown.

Q: The seizure of an embassy in Colombia. Desert I.

ROPE: We were just into, or in on, a whole lot. I never knew when my phone would ring at night. One night I was on the phone from home for about 4 hours. A Soviet bloc person was defecting, and several agencies with competing interests were involved. One didn't want the person to defect. Bizarre things were happening -- USG people with changing names trying to get onto the base to talk with the guy. He didn't want to talk to them and was determined to seek asylum. I was determined that we protect him until very high level people could make a decision. So I and the SWO kept telling the duty Sergeant at the installation, who was keeping these odd people away, that he was doing the right thing. "If he doesn't want to see anybody he doesn't have to." This went on from 2 a.m. until 6, when we finally got David Newsom the Undersecretary for Political Affairs to speak with other-agency counterparts who stood their people down. The man received asylum.

Q: Excellent.

ROPE: It was a very interesting job. People would say what a tense job I must have; but it actually wasn't. First of all, any operation that can operate 2/3 of the time without the boss there has to be pretty self-sustaining. Second, I was always calmer in a crisis; and when things got bad, with top level people making decisions on matters of import, I could not only facilitate their work but have my own input. It was a great education in how the State Department works, as would have been your time in SS-S.

Q: That is the benefit of these jobs. You are seeing the whole government structure from a height. You are not only looking down through the State Department offices and the assistant secretaries and office directors but to the other agencies and the White House.

ROPE: And seeing NODIS cables, seeing ambassadors making pleas for policy or actions or weighing in at the highest levels with their views on what needed to be done, seeing how they operated, that was valuable too. You could learn a lot about overseas operations.

Q: Desert I results in Vance Resigning and Senator Muskie coming in. Did you see much of him in that brief period, only about a month or so before you left.

ROPE: It wasn't long before I left. He was a serious, thoughtful man and a good listener. He toured the Ops Center early on, and at one point I had to go out to his house to oversee the installation of secure telephones there. I know from that experience that Mrs. Muskie was very pleasant. I gained some perspective on him and made contacts with his staff, led by Leon Billings, which was helpful when I moved on to Political-Military affairs -- when Reggie Bartholomew would debrief us on his interactions with Muskie on arms control and on Muskie's meetings with foreign counterparts on arms control, in which Reggie was very much involved.

Q: You had said you got interested in arms control at the National War College, and in fact your next assignment in 1980 is out of the Ops Center and into the Political-Military bureau. Could you discuss how you sought out that job.

ROPE: I didn't. I had conversations with Tarnoff and Wisner about where I should go next, and one day Peter told me that Reggie Bartholomew, the Political-Military Assistant Secretary, wanted me as an office director. Reggie called me and asked if I'd like to be the director of PM's Office of International Security Operations. It was the State Department office that coordinated with the Pentagon on matters involving overseas military exercises. It was a paper work, liaison kind of thing. I thanked Reggie but declined.

Then Dick Holbrooke asked me if I would be deputy head of the China desk under Chas. He said that he knew that relations weren't good between Chas and me, but he wanted me to take the job. I went to Chas and related the conversation, saying certainly from my perspective Holbrooke had mischaracterized things, and I wanted to make clear that, though I didn't want the job, it wasn't personal in any way. I just didn't want to be a deputy office director, which Chas understood. I went back to Holbrooke and declined, whereupon he sent me to John Negroponte, his Deputy Assistant Secretary for Southeast

Asia. John interviewed me for the office directorship for Indonesia, Malaysia, Burma, and Singapore and offered me the job. I accepted.

That was going to be it; but Reggie called me again and said he had another job for me. He'd talked to Dick Holbrooke, he said, and Holbrooke agreed I could accept Reggie's offer and back out of the EA/IMBS job if I wanted to, with no hard feelings. The job Reggie offered was directorship of PM's premier office, the Office of International Security policy (PM/ISP), dealing with arms control and strategy issues worldwide.

On looking into it, I thought ISP would be a far more interesting and challenging job than IMBS. So I went to Holbrooke, told him what Reggie had said, and asked if it were true. Dick said it was. I was free to take the ISP job and pass on IMBS with no hard feelings. "Are you sure," I said, "because I made a commitment to you and I'm ready to honor it; but if I am free to go to PM, I will." Dick said yes, I was free to do so, and that was the end of it. John Negroponte didn't like it and called me an opportunist; but we ultimately got along when I later returned to EA and at times reported to him.

So I went to work in PM, which did prove to be a challenge. I didn't know things would get hot as soon as I got there and that my office would have one of the few important and active issues in a summer when everything was stopping because it was an election year. The issue was TNF negotiations, later known as INF. On the day I reported to PM, Helmut Schmidt was in Moscow, where he gained Brezhnev's agreement to enter into negotiations with the US on what were then called theater nuclear forces, later intermediate nuclear forces.

The intermediate nuclear systems in question were GLCMs, ground launched cruise missiles, and Pershing II ballistic missiles the US was preparing to deploy in Europe. Those deployments would be in response to Soviet deployments of SS-20 missiles, intermediate range, MIRVed, ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads. The SS-20s raised the potential danger of "decoupling" the US from NATO -- the idea being that the Soviet Union was gaining the capability to do a sudden nuclear strike on German and other European targets leaving the US, not attacked itself, in a position where it might not feel compelled to retaliate or found the consequences of doing so for its own security too great. NATO had agreed to the deployment of GLCM and Pershing II as a way of ensuring that the US could respond in kind to an SS-20 strike in the NATO theatre without the becoming engaged in a wider nuclear war.

NATO had also agreed that the US would be willing to negotiate away its planned deployments of GLCM and P-II if the Soviets would agree to remove and destroy their SS-20s. This was called the "two-track approach."

The Soviets had refused all negotiation proposals until the day I arrived in PM; but when Brezhnev told Schmidt they'd negotiate, ensuring that negotiations would get under way, he also ensured that I'd get a baptism by fire; because PM was the lead bureau within the Department for the negotiations, and ISP was the lead office within PM. What I quickly found, however, was that I'd actually have only one officer in my own office working the

issue while 5 or 6 other arms control experts worked on it in different PM offices that I did not control. My job would be to coordinate the work of these people without having supervisory power over them.

Studying arms control at the War College was one thing. Getting up to speed quickly on TNF while managing PM's multiple power centers was another. And there were other, competing offices in the Department, not to mention experienced arms controllers throughout the interagency community ready and willing to drive USG policy.

To complicate matters, initially my chief TNF officer wasn't very good, though a very good replacement officer came in during the summer -- a smart, capable, prickly guy named Joe Presel. I would have been happy to have Joe, but he hadn't asked for, and didn't want, the assignment; and he'd been trying to get out of it even before I arrived. I tried my best to convince him to stay, but he got the job he really wanted and left after less than a month. Then I hired a sharp and experienced -- as well as very funny -- FSO named Kathy Shirley. She didn't want to serve in PM, either, but she performed well.

Although I'd run the Operations Center and this was my third managerial assignment, I'd never been in a policy bureau. So I had to learn that side of things too -- how to manage, some might say maneuver through, the clearance process, interagency meetings, etc. I thus had to master something technical while also learning bureaucraties. And, in PM, you could add "intra-bureaucraties." The various experts working on TNF in PM didn't all get along; nor did all of them want to share information with each other. Just figuring the power dynamics of PM and getting cooperation from these people was a tall order.

Q: In the TNF negotiations who would be the lead negotiator?

ROPE: Reggie. The great Reg. He was leader of the NATO working group, composed of his counterparts from the then 14 other countries. They met regularly in Brussels. Negotiations hadn't actually started, so there was some time to pull together a NATO position. The first thing was for the US and USSR to follow-up on the Schmidt-Brezhnev agreement by formally agreeing to negotiate. That was done by Muskie and Gromyko at the UN Bilaterals in September. Actual negotiations started later, well after what proved to be my short tour in PM.

But preparatory work had to get underway right away. Our negotiating positions had to be worked out in NATO, meaning, essentially, that we had to have a U.S. position that Reggie could get accepted within the Alliance. Anyone who knew Reg knows he was a dynamic and demanding leader; and he liked to have lots of different views coming to him. Hence the scattering of TNF people all around the bureau, not all of whom were nice guys. I would find myself left off distribution of key papers or not told of meetings until after the fact. This was particularly true of an assistant to Reg, Lee Siegal, on leave from Wesleyan University, who was happy to be the chief and sole source of TNF advice to his boss whenever he could.

This is where I met and came to like Dick Clarke -- Richard A. Clarke, who became a

figure of some note at the time of 9/11 and in the cybersecurity realm. Nine years later, when he became PM Assistant Secretary for most of Bush I he made me his principal deputy. Dick was not only a fine, creative thinker on arms control, he was completely open and helpful to me as I learned the issues and navigated the PM and interagency terrain. He worked in a kind of policy planning part of PM, under a guy named Bill Barnet. Barnet's deputy was Arnie Kantor, who later replaced Bob Kimmitt as Under Secretary under Jim Baker.

Anyway, I managed to do the job I was hired to do and, in the end, got a great efficiency report from my immediate superior, PM DAS David Gompert, reviewed equally favorably by Reg; but it was hard. I have to admit that, today, 36 years later, I don't remember many of the day-to-day details. I've always said, however, that I learned more about bureaucratic maneuver and infighting in 4 months under Reggie than I did at any other time in my career. Later, when I was running the China Desk in EAP and we were in constant fights with Rick Burt's PM over the Taiwan arms issue, my boss, Tom Shoesmith would chide me for being too sharp-elbowed with PM. I said to him, "Tom, you don't understand. In PM they cut their teeth fighting among themselves for turf. Then they go outside the bureau and try to eat everyone else's lunch!"

Q: Let's get a sense of how these things are getting together. Your office and bureau are shaping the way to handle the issue. But there must be regional bureaus and other agencies even that are submitting their own thoughts. Are there inter agency meetings that you are going to, and who runs those?

ROPE: Yes. We had regular interagency meetings in the EOB chaired by a very sharp and easy going NSC guy named Jim Thomson. We had various Pentagon representatives, one of whom was another sharp and friendly guy named Frank Miller. Spurgeon Keeny represented ACDA. I was generally the lead person from State, though Avis Bohlen, from EUR was usually there as well. Avis was deputy director, I think, of EUR's premier office for Western Europe, RPM -- regional political military -- which was effectively the NATO desk in the European bureau. Avis was Chip Bohlen's daughter and as fine an FSO as I knew during my career. Not all her subordinates were so great, and we had conflicts with them from time to time. Regional bureau people just don't like to surrender the lead on a key issue to a functional bureau like PM.

It was Reg, however, who was the chief USG strategist on TNF. We could send him all the papers we wanted in preparation for his meetings in Brussels, but in the end he'd call all his TNF-ers into his office, along with his deputies, and then virtually think out what he intended to say at NATO before us. He'd strut back and forth dictating talking points to Ollie, his faithful secretary, while we watched him perform. I found that one could influence Reg by nodding approvingly when he said things one agreed with and looking puzzled when he seemed to be going off track. But he was the guy. We would have to clear his presentations with DOD and NSC, but he was pretty much given his head.

It was a short tour, for reasons I'll explain. In addition to TNF, I had a colonel working for me who did a lot of policy work on Southwest Asia, and we did some work preparing

the way for a new US-UK agreement following the British decision to buy US Trident missiles for UK submarines. I had officers, of varying quality, liaising with EA, ARA and other regional and functional bureaus.

Q: Why was your tour so short?

ROPE: Primarily the change of administrations; and I was having a terrible recurrence of back trouble before that. My 1975 spinal fusion surgery had been very successful, but I was having new problems just above the fused area, and something went really wrong in October. I was hanging on; but as it became increasingly clear that we'd be heading into a new administration, I gave up and went into Sibley Hospital for traction treatments that didn't work. I returned to PM briefly at the time of the election, but shortly thereafter I had to go in for a second spinal fusion operation. I had a totally exploded disc, and there was no way I could have gone much longer without having it fixed. I spent most of the transition time convalescing. By December I could come into my office a little bit to look at transition papers. By that time we had a very capable officer on loan from academia, David Schwartz, who had replaced Kathy Shirley. He wrote excellent papers on the two-track decision and issues to be addressed in the TNF negotiations.

Q: Now Reagan wins, so there is another transition to a new administration. Even if you were off line a little bit do you have any sense as how the PM bureau was seen by the new administration transition team?

ROPE: Our new Secretary, Alexander Haig, put a journalist, Rick Burt in charge of the PM bureau. Haig had been NATO commander and Burt was a well-regarded national security reporter with whom he'd had lots of contact. So Burt replaced Reggie. The change from Carter to Reagan was nothing like the transition from Ford to Carter. The latter had been very professional and smooth. Policies may have been changed but there wasn't a lot of strife and there was continuity of career personnel. In the early Reagan days, it was something else entirely. There was vindictiveness and banishing of career officers who'd served at high levels.

Reggie, Peter Tarnoff, and Arnie Raphel, who'd been Vance's top aide, couldn't get jobs. They ended up at FSI studying Spanish together. Reg and Arnie ultimately landed on their feet, and their careers continued upward. Peter ended up resigning from the Service, later to return as Under Secretary in the Clinton Administration. There was an FSO who'd been involved in Central America policy in ARA whom the "Reaganauts" didn't like at all. I think that was Jim Cheek. He was banished to Nepal, where I believe he was DCM for four years.

Q: So the atmospherics of this transition weren't good?

ROPE: There were a lot of crazies jockeying for positions. The papers being written by civil servants and FSOs in PM were professional and straightforward. But rumors were flying around PM about who might be brought that were alarming to people like Dick Clarke. Ultimately, the PM that emerged was reasonably good and included people like

Richard Haass, for whom I later came to have great respect; but there were a few very ideological people. There were even more in Policy Planning under Paul Wolfowitz. I remember a paper written by someone in S/P that began, "Whenever there are two superpowers, Athens-Sparta, Rome-Carthage their relationship is always one of struggle and confrontation! So it must be between the US and Soviet Union." Florid stuff, without sound reasoning to back it up. I can't say much more, this many years after the fact. What I remember is what happened to me and where I ended up.

Q: Okay. The new administration starts in '81. My impression is the office you were in, the Office of International Security Policy disappears and is changed.

ROPE: It might have disappeared in name, but TNF was still its big issue. Burt, however, had a favorite he wanted to bring into PM and put in that position. That was Jim Dobbins, known to many as "the Dobber." So I expected to be out of a job. Burt and Bob Blackwell, his principal deputy, called me in, brought some wine out of a refrigerator, and said, in effect, "have we got a deal for you." They wanted me to head PM's Office of Foreign Military Sales, which handled commercial sales that didn't go through DOD.

The bulk of military sales, which are government-to-government, do go through DOD. It procures systems from U.S. manufacturers and sells them to foreign governments. There are many advantages to that for recipients, and most foreign governments go that way. In some cases, however, they do not and just buy from US manufacturers directly. Those sales must be licensed, and State is -- or at least was for all my time in government -- in charge of licensing those sales. The PM office I was being offered is responsible for that. It was not my dream job.

I don't know that I declined, immediately, though I declined the wine. Burt and Blackwill did solicit my views on personnel in the Bureau, and there's some irony there. I told them Dick Clarke was really good. If I were staying on in the TNF office, I said, I would make him my deputy and teach him how to manage. Dick wasn't the smoothest at interpersonal relations; but, hey, what did I know? Eight years later he'd gone from working-level civil servant to PM Assistant Secretary, and it was he who was asking me to be his deputy.

Q: Sounds like PM/ISP was a hostile takeover, but you landed on your feet.

ROPE: I did. In my interactions with Burt and Blackwill I didn't much care for either of them -- though I ended up working for Burt four years later in EUR, and Bob and I got along to an extent in the next two years, as we interacted on China. Burt was very important to me in September of '81 when we were seeking to dissuade Haig from a course he was seeking to pursue on arms sales to Taiwan. We can come to that later. In general PM was a big pain in the neck on China, though, and I had lots of fights with them.

Q: So what happened next? How did you get to EAP?

ROPE: John Holdridge, under whom I'd worked along with Herb Horowitz in Beijing,

had become Assistant Secretary for EAP. I went to see him to congratulate him and inquire about returning to the Bureau. I didn't have go very far. When I mentioned that I knew Chas Freeman would be leaving the China Desk, John said, "And you want the job." I said, "Yes," and that was it.

Q: Today is 1 April, 2016. We are returning to our conversation with Bill Rope. Bill, we ended the last tape with the Reagan Administration setting itself up in the State Department and something went awry with the office you were in. What were the options provided you out of PM?

ROPE: We left off yesterday after what you described as the hostile takeover of PM, and I guessed you could call it that. I had a job offer to stay in PM in an office directorship I didn't want. John Holdridge, under whom I'd worked in Beijing, had become EA Assistant Secretary. I went to see John, and he all but offered me the office directorship of the Office of People's Republic of China and Mongolia Affairs, EA/PRCM, on the spot. There was one other candidate who had approached him, but he made clear that I would be his choice. I can't remember when the name of the East Asia Bureau, EA, was changed to East Asia and Pacific Affairs Bureau, EAP; so I may use the abbreviations interchangeably. I think in 1981 it was still just EA.

I was still recovering from my second back operation, the first having been done in Hong Kong in June 1975. I was going to PM intermittently, looking at the transition papers being produced by my office and having discussions on my future. I had joined the Watergate Health Club and was taking big blocks of time to go there for my one form of doctor-approved recovery activity -- swimming. My former deputy in PM/ISP, Jay McNaughton, gave me a book on swimming, for which I've been forever grateful. It helped me get up to a mile or more of continuous freestyle swimming at a time, and I've used swimming as a means of conditioning and even -- in assignments where I had daily access to a pool -- a way of planning my work or my day ever since. By around February, I was in EA and able to be a pretty active office director, though I was still going to the Watergate and swimming an hour or so, sometimes twice a day.

I needed an interim assignment, because Chas wasn't leaving PRC/M until summer. I don't recall how it transpired, but not long after Inauguration Day I succeeded Priscilla Clapp as the Director of the EA Office of Regional Affairs, EA/RA. Looking at my efficiency report for my work in RA this morning, I was surprised to note that in two places it said I inherited an office with low morale working on disparate functions that needed to be pulled together. I got a lot of credit for doing that.

I have to say that no one ever discussed with me the idea that RA had low morale, and I never noticed that. I enjoyed it, and maybe the RA staff just liked working with me; or maybe it was the fact that a new administration was finally in place after that long lag between election campaigning and office-taking that created the impression of low morale. I've always found Priscilla Clapp to be a fine person. She went off to Burma, I think. In the summer, when I took over PRC/M, I was replaced by Paul Gardner.

Q: He was an Indonesia guy.

ROPE: A long time Indonesia hand and a very nice man.

Q: I think the point about regional affairs was it handled all kinds of miscellaneous things if you will, the UN, I think the public affairs officer was in that office, so it was a real grab bag of issues and personalities, and therefore could have been difficult to run because it didn't have the focus of a country desk. Is that right? Also you had a military officer.

ROPE: Regional offices generally handle issues that cross intra-bureau office lines, or require specialized expertise, or coordination among several offices. Political-Military matters were one example. We had an excellent Lieutenant Colonel, whose first name was Gene, handling them. I can remember his face, but can't get back his last name. He focused on USG military assistance programs in East Asia and region-wide policy statements that went to Congress. We had a Congressional relations person, and we had Kathleen McDougal, a long-time, experienced RA staffer who handled UN and other international organization issues. I don't remember supervising the bureau press officer. It was not a large office, but we had interesting issues.

Q: What would be some examples?

ROPE: In the early part of the Reagan Administration, as I was saying yesterday, there were some very right wing people in the Department and the administration. A big theme was fighting Communism. The Reagan defense budget was moving forward. Our rhetoric towards the Soviet Union had toughened. On the military assistance front, I found you could justify just about anything, by saying it was for standing up to Communism in Asia. We made arguments for increased military sales and military aid to Singapore. There were officer training programs for Singapore and Indonesia that we wanted to ramp up. We had to fight for budgets, and while I believed in those programs on their own merits, I remember shaping arguments for them that would play to this anti-Communist mind-set.

IO is the main Department bureau dealing with the UN and international agencies, but it routinely had to clear instructions to USUN affecting EA interests with us. Kathleen McDougal was a pro. She didn't require much supervision but kept me fully informed of her issues and was a very cooperative colleague.

One issue on which I was particularly active and successful was the quest for a new director of the IAEA. There was a Japanese candidate whom the Tokyo government very much wanted elected. The Japanese were unhappy that Japan wasn't well represented in the top echelons of UN organizations, and their candidate, I think his name was Imai, was well qualified. Backing him would be an easy way to respond to Japan's sensitivity and to demonstrate that we didn't always support Europeans. Japan Country Director Bill Clark wanted the US to back Imai, and Mike Armacost, the DAS over both of us, was for it. So EA supported Imai's candidacy within the Department, and RA -- most particularly I -- carried the water.

Our position horrified the OES bureau -- the Oceans, Environment and Sciences Bureau. It strongly wanted us to back a European; and in one big intradepartmental meeting up in OES chaired by an OES DAS who may also have been acting Assistant Secretary, the man was very unhappy when I pushed hard for Imai. In the end, OES lost and EA won when Haig approved our position. Many people don't know Haig was on MacArthur's staff in post-war Japan. He was; and he believed strongly in good US-Japan relations. Imai was not elected, but we accomplished our objective vis-vis the Japanese government.

I had a variety of issues like that. The repeal of the Russia grain embargo was another. I was called in one Saturday morning for a meeting chaired by a DAS or office director from the NEA Bureau. I don't recall why it was NEA that was in charge, but it was. Those attending were informed that the President had decided to lift the embargo on grain sales to the USSR. It had been imposed by the Carter Administration after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and candidate Reagan had promised farmers he'd lift it. So the decision was made, and State's job was to explain it to the world. At the meeting, NEA circulated a draft cable to go to all US posts instructing them to inform host governments of the policy change. The draft stated flatly that we were making the change for domestic political reasons. The NEA people leading the meeting wanted EA and other bureau representatives to clear, so the cable could go out.

The grain embargo had been a big deal, as was our decision to boycott the Moscow Olympics. I didn't agree that in announcing its repeal we should openly admit we were doing so for reasons of pure domestic politics. To me that was shameful -- not the way a great power behaves, and I didn't mince words.

"I don't know what you do in NEA," I said, "but in EA we don't lose face!" No one would respect the justification the draft cable contained. "You can say what you want in NEA," I said, "but in EA we'll say 'it's served its purpose!'" In the end, I got to draft the cable that went out worldwide, using my proposed approach.

Some years later, this came back to bite me. I was interviewing to be DCM in Dacca. I didn't especially want to go there, but I thought it would be interesting and needed a DCM job. Howie Schaffer, the DAS in NEA responsible for Bangladesh, suggested I interview for it. During the interview, my tour in RA came up and I mentioned this involvement with the grain embargo cable. Suddenly, I realized that the ambassador-designate who was interviewing me was the very office director with whom I'd been so tough that morning in 1981. I just stopped in mid-sentence and somehow changed the subject. Afterwards Howie told me I wasn't getting the job. "Somehow," he said, "the chemistry wasn't right."

Q: Shifting targets for a moment, regional priorities was basically the Bureau's contact with Congressional relations and the Hill itself. Did your guy only liaise with H the bureau of Congressional relations or did he go up to the hill from time to time?

ROPE: I can't remember going up to the hill from my RA position, though I did it a lot when I was in PRC/M. Then I'd go up with John Holdridge or on my own; but then it was with Will Itoh, H's East Asia person. It may be that much of RA's Congressional Relations work was more mundane, like answering Congressional correspondence, or putting together routine reports. I just don't remember.

Q: Well let me make the point that in the interviews I have done, from time to time there seem to be some bureaus that take a very strong hand in their bureau's relationship to the Hill, so they make sure their bureau guy goes up. They just don't wait for the H-assigned guy to go to the Hill for them, whereas other bureaus wait for H to carry their water. I guess I am asking how active did the Asia Pacific Bureau want its congressional relations guy in your office, how deeply involved did they want him to be, or were they just waiting for Will Itoh in H to carry the water?

ROPE: We cared a lot about Congressional Relations. They were absolutely critical in my time in PRC/M, and the work we did there, with John in the lead, convinced me that if you take the time to explain a policy well, and work really hard at it, you can succeed with any policy that makes sense. This experience and conviction later served me well on the Southern Europe Desk when we were up against Tony Coelho, House Whip in a Democratic-majority Congress, opposing an Armenian Genocide resolution.

But to come back to your question, Will Itoh was an excellent officer who eventually became Ambassador to Thailand. He was smooth and sharp in an understated way; and we never saw him do anything other than look out for EA's interests. He constantly alerted us to Senators, Members, or other people who needed tending and committees we should see. We were completely in sync with him and also with Jim Montgomery, the DAS in H who oversaw him. So it wasn't a matter of "leaving it to H." To steal a Maoist phrase, H was our close comrade in arms!

You remind me, though, that in PM we had a very savvy, experienced civil servant named Bob Mantel who handled Congressional relations for the Bureau. He was a PM institution. When I was the principal DAS and went to the Hill to testify, I may have had somebody from the H bureau, along, but Bob was the one who counted -- the guy I relied on. In the case of RA, I know we had a Congressional affairs component. I just don't remember much about it. Again, I suspect Congressional correspondence was its main responsibility.

Q: Let me ask you one thing. Part of the way in which the department organized itself was where it put the Taiwan-related people. I believe they put them into regional affairs.

ROPE: Yes. There was a three-officer Taiwan desk headed by Don Ferguson that functioned as an independent office but was listed under RA on the EA organization chart. I think it may have been RA/TC -- Taiwan Coordination Staff. I had no control over it. This was part of the de facto, but not de jure, approach we took to Taiwan after US-PRC normalization; and Ferguson's office worked closely with AIT Washington.

There was one other responsibility I had during my time in EA/RA. It was an assignment from Mike Armacost. Almost as soon as I got there, Mike had me meet in PRC/M's conference room with Reggie Bartholomew, Chas Freeman, and Chas's officer handling political military issues on the China desk, Jeff Buczacki. The subject was how to change our policy banning weapons sales to China, i.e., how to begin to make US weaponry available to the PRC.

I thought this was a terrible idea when it first surfaced in a 1975 Foreign Policy article by Mike Pillsbury and was championed by Mort Abramowitz in the Carter Administration Defense Department. Post-normalization, however, I'd come to see it as a natural extension of fully normalized US-PRC relations -- something that would enhance contacts and cooperation between the US and Chinese military establishments. That was important given the PLA's role in domestic politics. It would need to be approached cautiously, but it made sense to me.

Mike had asked Reggie, who was by then gone from PM and out of a job, to meet with us as kind of a consultant. Reg was a bureaucratic master, and his advice was that when there's a new administration and you want to get something like this done you have to go all out for it early. By summer, he said, when everyone has settled in, it will be much harder to do. So Jeff, with whom I had a close relationship from when he was a Junior Watch Officer working for me in the Operations Center, was given the job of drafting a paper proposing that we change policy and be willing to sell arms to China. My job was to exercise some oversight over him and advise him as he developed his paper. Reggie was soon out of the picture.

Jeff's paper went through a number of iterations as he circulated it informally, in the Department and with working-level staff in DOD/ISA.

Q: So you were doing this from your Regional Affairs base and Chas, the Office Director for PRCM was not involved?

ROPE: I'm sure Jeff kept Chas informed of his work and got feedback from him, and I'm pretty sure I was talking with Chas about it, if only in passing. RA was right next door to PRC/M. Jeff would bring his drafts to me for comment and suggestions as he went through them, working towards a point where, normally, we'd move to an inter-agency process and a document, to be approved by higher levels containing a recommendation or recommendations for the President.

Jeff wasn't finding a lot of support outside EA and maybe PM, so it wasn't moving quickly and was nowhere near the inter-agency stage when, on a Saturday morning in late May or early June, Mike Armacost brought me to a meeting with Secretary Haig, John Holdridge, Chas, Rick Burt and Judge Clark, Haig's deputy who was personally close to Reagan and later became NSC Advisor. The subject was what Haig should seek to accomplish in his upcoming visit to Beijing. I'm not sure how much I said in this meeting. It was the first time I'd been in a meeting with Haig or anywhere near that level in the Reagan Administration; and I hadn't yet replaced Chas.

Two points in the discussion stand out to me today. One was of passing significance, the other much more important.

Q: What were they?

ROPE: The first was bureaucratic. An important part of the visit would be an exchange views on world issues, and we discussed how the Secretary should present administration views. Burt jumped in and said "We'll do your presentation," something EA would normally have done, clearing it appropriately. Before anyone from EA spoke up, however, Haig said, "OK." The result was a big headache. The work was assigned to an officer in PM who was a terrible writer and didn't know what he was talking about. He wrote what was referred to as "globaloney." It was so bad that Haig ended up re-writing it himself on his way to China. When Burt made that move, I learned Mike Armacost isn't a perfect speller -- on the note I passed him saying "what is Burt doing?" Mike wrote four letters: "hoar."

The really important thing, though was how the decision to make China eligible for US weapons sales was made. When we turned to what Haig might say and do on US-China relations, EA laid out various proposals that the Secretary accepted. Then he asked what more he might do. Burt, again pre-empting EA, said "We could sell them arms." I don't recall what Mike, John or Chas said, if anything, but Haig quickly responded "let's do it;" and that was that. EA was tasked with the Secretary's talking points, and Chas was responsible for doing a memo that would be the basis for seeking the President's approval of Haig's planned initiatives.

Q: That was all? No interagency discussion?

ROPE: Not the normal kind. Maybe Weinberger and other national security leaders were consulted; maybe there was an NSC meeting covering it before Haig left for China; or maybe Haig got it done with the President with only minimal involvement of others; but there was no interagency process as such. The normal work leading to an important Presidential decision did not occur. I don't know if I ever saw Chas's memo, but it was short and wasn't Buczacki's paper. It wouldn't surprise me if Haig and Burt had been talking about this subject well before that meeting, very likely in the context of what to do about arms sales to Taiwan and the FX fighter issue that was to haunt me when I replaced Chas -- and have a negative impact on my career.

Looking back after I left the China desk, I concluded that by June of '81 Haig had hit on a strategy for accommodating the President's desire to sell the FX fighter to Taiwan while avoiding trouble with Beijing. It was, in effect, an attempt to buy the Chinese off by selling them weapons systems. It may be that Burt, who didn't really understand China, came up with this idea on his own and sold it to the Secretary. In either case, stories Bernie Gwertzman wrote in the New York Times on the eve of Haig's visit, clearly based on leaks from somewhere, probably Haig or Burt, said this would be Haig's strategy. Whether or not those stories were accurate, and I think they were, they clearly influenced

thinking in Beijing. Maybe that's what Haig had in mind; if so, he no doubt came to regret it.

One last thing about my work in RA is that, in my efficiency report covering it, Mike Armacost mentioned our work on "Polish contingency preparations." I don't remember that at all, though at the time the Soviets were threatening to invade Poland, and Mike thought it important enough to mention in an ER. Ultimately, the situation in Poland was the peg on which we hung the President's decision not to sell the FX, to Taiwan in January '82.

Q: Now in March of '81, I think Ambassador Chai Zemin came to the White House, and that was a very important part of the new administration trying to develop a relationship with China. Were you on the margins of that since you were down in Regional Affairs?

ROPE: No, I wasn't. But from that base in Regional Affairs I had a lot of contacts within EA and the Department. Sometimes I worked with people on the Policy Planning Staff headed by Paul Wolfowitz. He, by the way, is the one person who -- fecklessly -- opposed all that we did in the August 17, 1982 Taiwan Arms Communiqué. Anyway, I did some freelancing around the Department on how to manage Taiwan and the PRC.

When thinking about how things were developing with regard to the PRC and Taiwan, it's important to remember that Michael Deaver, one of Reagan's "triumvirate" of counselors -- the other two being Meese, and Baker -- had been, up until the day before he joined the administration, a registered lobbyist for Taiwan. Richard Allen, NSC chair, had also represented Taiwan and was very anti-PRC and pro-Taiwan. He had talked quite openly -- I saw him do it at the Department in the summer of 1980 -- of "re-recognizing" Taiwan, which he seemed to think the Mainland government would accept. His attitude was that "they," meaning Beijing, "need us more than we need them."

All of this the PRC knew and wasn't happy about. In early 1981, the head of Taiwan's de facto embassy in Washington, the Coordinating Council for North American Affairs, was secretly allowed to call on Reagan in the White House, and Beijing probably got wind of that. There was also the growing possibility of an advanced aircraft sale, i.e., the FX, to Taiwan, which Beijing strongly opposed, as we'll see. The decision to have the President receive Chai was one way of reassuring the PRC, though it clearly didn't on the aircraft issue.

One bit of involvement on my part came when the China Desk was tasked with developing guidelines for how we would treat Taiwan's representatives in Washington. I saw a draft Chas had done up in Carl Ford's office in Policy Planning. Carl had been an aide to John Glenn on the Hill and was serving a short time in S/P before returning to work for Glenn. Like Glen, he was very pro-Taiwan and suspicious of the PRC.

I was in Carl's office, and he showed me Chas's draft rules. I thought they were far more restrictive than necessary and also not smart in the early Reagan environment. Ford didn't like them either. I gave him my own views: Taiwan had been hit hard enough by

Normalization and the limitations necessarily imposed by that. We didn't need to rub it in. Whenever possible, I believed we should do our best to give Taiwan "face." Beijing had agreed in the Shanghai Communiqué that there would be unofficial, "people-to-people" ties between the US and Taiwan; and that could be used to justify a lot of informal contact with Taiwan. I saw no problem with their trade representatives being allowed to call at the Department of Commerce, for example, which they ultimately were.

So I encouraged Ford to shoot down the more humiliating ideas in the draft and gave him some suggested re-writes. I don't know what became of that, but what ultimately emerged was much more reasonable than what Carl had shown me. We did allow CCNAA commercial officers to go into the Department of Commerce on grounds that it was part of normal commercial, cultural, and other informal relations. You'll note, incidentally, that we included Chinese re-acknowledgment of US-Taiwan unofficial ties in the text of the August 17, 1982 Communiqué.

Q: It was a people-to-people relationship. And therefore ultimately they could go into commerce, they could go into other places, they just couldn't go into the State Department.

ROPE: Yes.

Q: And on the Taiwan side, AIT could go to any government agency in Taipei. They just couldn't go to the ministry of foreign affairs.

ROPE: I think what happened that day helped me in future dealings with Ford, with whom I'd not previously been well acquainted. I think he understood that, whether or not we agreed on policies involving Taiwan, I was not out to do Taiwan in. Later, on the eve of President Reagan's decision not to sell the FX to Taiwan, I had a further exchange with him in which I tried to persuade him that Chas and I -- notwithstanding what I just said about my reaction to one draft -- were the true conservatives. I said this because the goal of people like Freeman and me was to preserve all we could -- and even improve the status quo -- for Taiwan by not letting it become an irritant in the US-China relationship. Whenever that happened, as I saw it, Taiwan ended up the loser.

So Chai Zemin went to see the President, and EA breathed a sigh of relief. Somewhere along the line it had been decided we would not try to re-recognize Taiwan. There may have been an official policy paper about that, though I never saw one. A lot of these things were handled ad hoc, by the Secretary with the President.

Q: Now in June 1981 Chas leaves and becomes DCM in Beijing, and you come in as director of the office. Let's set the scene. How is the office organized?

ROPE: I had a deputy director, Scott Hallford, who had served in that capacity since the previous summer. He and I had been friends from the time he took my old Hong Kong China Trade job while we were in Beijing. Priscilla and I and baby Kate stayed in the Hallfords' house -- also our former Hong Kong house -- while they were on home leave

in 1975 and I was in Hong Kong for my first spinal fusion operation. We liked each other's work and tended to see eye-to-eye on most, if not all, issues.

Below us was a political section headed by Dennis Harter. Under him were Terry Otis, who handled political-military issues, replacing Buczacki; Neil Silver, a very capable officer with a quick and subtle sense of humor; and Dean Welty who handled Human Rights issues. In my second year we had an old A-100 classmate of mine, Sheldon Krebs, whom I recruited to do human rights under Barbara Schrage, another highly capable FSO, whom Scott and I recruited to replace Dennis.

We also had an economic section. Scott and I got together when I was still in RA and recruited Richard Mueller and Richard Boucher to be numbers one and two in that section. Richard Mueller was later Consul General in Hong Kong. Richard Boucher was an especially capable, aggressive and enjoyable young FSO who was later State Department spokesman and had an extremely successful career.

We had a non-officer-level person, Daria Novak, who dealt with delegations and the support of delegations. We had another officer who dealt with exchange programs. We also had a Hong Kong/Macao officer, initially Keith Powell and later Steve Young. Steve was another very bright and aggressive FSO who went on to be Consul General in Hong Kong and an Ambassador in Central Asia. Another FSO on the desk at that time was Hank Levine, now with the Albright/Stonebridge Group, who later married our number one Chinese interpreter, Vivian Yang. We had a communicator who had worked for me in S/S-O, Conrad Bellamy, keeping track of routine consular matters and the rapidly growing number of students from the PRC in the United States. We had several secretaries: Marian Robinson, who worked for me and Scott, Connie whose last name escapes me, and Helene Vonnegut -- Kurt's niece -- Finley. In total, we were 17 people and were the largest office in EA. I think we were also, after the Soviet Desk, the largest regional desk in the Department.

Scott and I were a happy and aggressive recruiting team, and were quite open-minded about helping non-Chinese language officers who wanted to get into the China field do so -- unlike the "Japan club" as I was later to discover. A few years ago, I had reason to contact Joe Donovan, principal DAS in today's EAP. I thought he'd never met me before, but to my surprise he told me had and added, "you changed my life!" Turns out that in 1983 he was a Japanese language officer seeking to study Chinese and go to a China post. He wasn't optimistic about his chances, but I put him in touch with Scott's successor, Rick Howarth, and we made it happen.

Q: OK, now who is above you.

ROPE: At the beginning, until about October, my direct superior was Mike Armacost. He was Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary and dealt with China, Taiwan, Japan, and Korea while also supervising my former office of RA. I really liked him. Above him was John, who reported to the Secretary. After October, Mike went out to be ambassador to the Philippines and Tom Shoesmith became my nominal supervisor. He was a Japan

specialist who had once headed the Taiwan Desk, in days before Normalization. Although I interacted with him a great deal, I'm not sure he was ever comfortable with our work on what would become the all-consuming issue of the FX and Taiwan arms sales. On anything important dealing with China, I worked directly with John, though Tom was always informed of what we were doing.

Once John left and Paul Wolfowitz replaced him, I think Tom was more comfortable. We got along well enough, though at times he was a bit hard on me, and ultimately he refused to support my desire to study Japanese and lateral into the Japan field. Thinking back on this, I relish one time when I was up in his office and he was not happy with me about something. His Secretary came in and said the Vice President wanted to speak with me on the phone. The conversation was not of great consequence -- Bush had an old friend in his office who wanted advice about doing business with China -- but I enjoyed getting the call in Tom's presence.

Q: Now Chas has gone out to Beijing.

ROPE: To be the deputy chief of mission.

Q: To be the deputy, but Woodcock has left in February and Hummel doesn't get there until September.

ROPE: Yes. Stape Roy was there as Charge d'Affaires when I went out ahead of time for the Haig visit in June. Before the Secretary's arrival, I met with Stape and did the other things one does as an incoming country director, meeting members of the staff, socializing, etc.

Q: You're talking about the June 14-17 Haig visit to Beijing.

ROPE: Yes. I took over the desk around July 1. Chas was on his way to Beijing where he replaced Stape Roy as Chargé. Art Hummel didn't get there until September.

Q: Now the arrival of the Reagan Administration created a whole new set of policy issues as you have been describing. How do we handle arms sales and grain sales? Grain sales if I recall from an earlier period were very important for example because it was cheaper for the Chinese basically to feed their country from maritime grain than to grow it themselves. They were buying grain in large quantities.

ROPE: Yes. Grain sales to China, however, were not part of the grain embargo, which was strictly limited to the USSR. The Chinese continued to buy grain from the US, as they had since I was in Beijing. You'll recall that I was called the "smut officer" back at USLO. The lifting of the grain embargo had no effect on China, unless it increased the price of grain because there was another buyer in the market. I don't know about that.

Q: Let me ask this as you are starting this desk even though you have had this exposure in Regional Affairs. What did you see as the atmospherics that you would be working in. I

mean the relationship has started.

ROPE: Do you mean atmospherics within the Department?

Q: Within the Department.

ROPE: In EA, they were good. I liked and admired Mike Armacost. He was extraordinarily easy to work with. He later played a role in my assignment to Turkey as DCM when he was Undersecretary for Political Affairs. He's as fine an FSO as I ever worked for -- a good diplomat and experienced Washington operator. We were on the same wavelength on US-China matters and how to deal with Taiwan, as was John.

Included in that was agreement on the importance of assuring Taiwan's security. The three of us never discussed our reasons for it, so I don't know exactly where the other two stood. I never saw a strategic value in Taiwan as a piece of real estate, and I didn't think the American people would, if the chips were down, be willing to go to war with China over it. Kissinger told Zhou Enlai when they first met in July 1971 that Taiwan was just a domestic political problem for us. I didn't see it that flatly. To me, maintaining the status quo with Taiwan, at least until Beijing and Taipei could reach a mutually agreeable resolution of their differences, was vital to assuring stability in East Asia. It was also important, as Reagan put it in an August 17, 1982 statement that I drafted for him, not to abandon old friends, though it was regional stability that to me was paramount.

John and Mike probably viewed things similarly; we just never discussed our precise underlying rationales. I know John and I felt strongly we must never become involved in another war with the PRC, either directly, as in Korea, or by proxy, as in Vietnam.

We also knew that the Taiwan Relations Act was the law of the land, and we were not people to violate the law. What we wanted to do, while carrying out the TRA, was to keep Taiwan from becoming an issue in US-China relations. Were that to happen, it would not only have damaging implications for our position in Asia but could negatively affect Taiwan's security. As events played out in 1981-82, I think this very last point proved true. To me, when push came to shove, the US would always choose its interests in big China over those in little Taiwan; and even President Reagan wasn't willing to reverse the priority. Witness his ultimate approval of the work -- including the key details -- leading to the August 17 Communiqué.

Q: OK, what I am looking for is a little more detailed discussion of the policies that you were asked to implement.

ROPE: If you mean at the time I took over leadership of PRC/M, there are two answers to your question. Looking broadly, there was still a lot of uncertainty about the Administration's attitude toward China. Haig, regularly referred to our relationship with Beijing as "strategic." He saw it as an essential counterweight to the Soviet Union and as important to our position in East Asia. The White House, however, was wary of the PRC

and elements there were strongly inclined toward Taiwan.

I've mentioned Allen's views and Deaver's background. I wasn't privy to the President's thinking. He seemed to recognize the importance of maintaining the relationship Nixon had started, and that was clearly demonstrated once we got into real trouble over Taiwan arms sales. At the same time, he was sympathetic to, and had long-standing experience and relationships with, Taiwan. After Nixon first announced his opening to China, it was Reagan he dispatched to Taipei to assure Taiwan of our continued support.

At DOD, the tension between the China relationship and support for Taiwan was also evident. Richard Perle was an ardent anti-Communist, skeptical of Chinese intentions, and very tough on the export control front. I don't know where Weinberger stood, but I think he would have shared subordinates' initial mistrust of Beijing. Rich Armitage, at ISA, treated me with suspicion when we first met in July after I sat in on the Chinese military attaché's initial call on him. He told me he wasn't sure I could be trusted. I told him I was honest and that he'd find me a straight-shooter. Today we don't encounter each other very often; but I'd say we're good friends.

It's important to keep in mind when talking about Taiwan and DOD that so long as we sell weapons to Taiwan, which takes place under the government-to-government US Foreign Military Sales Program, DOD will remain Taiwan's only point of official contact with the USG. The fact that it's official only strengthens Taiwan's determination to hold on to it. And for DSAA, the military sales arm of DOD, Taiwan is an important customer. Foreign military sales play an important role in DOD's domestic procurement system. Besides earning money, they enable the US to achieve economies of scale by reducing our weapons systems' unit costs.

In any case, five months in, the Reagan Administration could be fairly said to be finding its way. A decision had been made at some point not to re-recognize Taiwan; but a major policy fight was brewing over the question of whether or not to sell the FX, to Taiwan. To further underscore the ambivalence within the administration, we were not able to achieve any broad statement of US policy toward China until almost a year after I took over the China Desk, when Walter Stoessel, then Deputy Secretary, gave a speech to the National Council on US-China Trade in June 1982. Even that speech got me an irate call from a right-winger in PM who was outraged that it mentioned one publicly known fact - we had begun negotiations on a peaceful nuclear energy agreement with the PRC.

One minor illustration of the uncertainty of things, and indicator that we in EA weren't so sure of what even the Secretary might do, was Mike Armacost's decision to have me accompany General Vernon Walters on visits to Seoul and Tokyo after Haig's June visit to Beijing.

Q: Tell us about it.

ROPE: Walters, whom Haig had brought into the Department as an Ambassador at Large, was an extraordinary character -- a great raconteur, incredible linguist, clever and

patriotic man with broad contacts, extensive experience, and high integrity. He'd been deputy head of the CIA under Nixon, where he played a minor role in Watergate and was one of the few people involved who emerged unscathed. He'd held a number of top intelligence positions, spoke five languages, and had once been interpreter for Vice President Nixon on his rocky -- literally -- trip to Venezuela. His autobiography, *Silent Missions*, detailed a variety of behind-the-scenes operations he'd been involved in, including serving Kissinger as a go-between with Le Duc Tho during Vietnam negotiations in Paris.

Mike was concerned the Secretary might be planning to send Walters on another "silent mission," this time to Taiwan after Haig's visit to China. If that transpired and it became public that we'd sent an official State Department ambassador to Taipei, a contretemps with Beijing would ensue that might undercut whatever Haig accomplished in Beijing. Still, if Walters was to go, Mike wanted someone from EA along, to advise him and report back to EA on what took place.

So, without stating his rationale, Mike asked Walters, whom he knew well, if I he'd like to take me along on his post-Beijing travels. I was then still Office Director of RA. Walters agreed, and on Mike's instructions I got a regular, non-diplomatic passport, to be used in the event of a Taiwan "silent mission." Mike didn't instruct me to try to stop it or send a message back to EA tipping him and John off ahead of time. He just had me prepare to go. As it happened, Walters only went to Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo before returning home; and I went with him.

In Hong Kong, Walters' activities were limited to a call on Tom Shoesmith, still Consul General there. In Seoul, he briefed then-President Chun Doo-Hwan on Haig's visit, and I briefed Chun on things to watch for in an upcoming plenum of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee. Among other things, I told Chun the keys to the Plenum would be to see how far down in the pecking order Hua Guofeng fell and whether Hu Yaobang would become head of the Military Affairs Commission, in addition to having the position of CCP Secretary General. Chun liked the briefing and had me given a silver medal. We also called on South Korea's intelligence chief, an old professional friend of Walters, and had a couple of official dinners in Seoul. In Tokyo, we called on Ambassador Mansfield before flying off to Hawaii, where Walters stayed with Clare Booth Luce and I flew on home.

The point of all this is that the EA front office, in June 1981, was sufficiently unsure of what we might do with regard to Taiwan that it could not be sure what our own Secretary might be up to. I thought, by the way, about what the impact on my future position would be if Walters did go to Taiwan with me along and it became public; but I thought that would be the least of Washington's worries.

One sidelight to this digression about Walters was the exchanges he and I had with interlocutors about the Taiwan arms issue during that trip. It says something about the kind of guy he was, and where I stood on the FX question even before I became China Country Director.

Q: Yes?

ROPE: While the Haig party was in Beijing, Walters disappeared for a day or so. It was said he was indisposed, possibly a reaction to Chinese food; but I suspect he was on a Silent Mission with Chinese intelligence people. You may recall there were press reports that the US and China had intelligence cooperation programs, including a US tracking station in Xinjiang, moved there -- after we lost our tracking stations in Iran when the Shah fell -- for the purpose of tracking Soviet missile tests. To this day, I can't confirm that; but the stories did appear in the New York Times. In any case, the General went missing for a while, and when we got to Hong Kong it didn't sound like he'd spent two days in bed.

Meeting with Tom Shoesmith and speaking about the Taiwan arms issue, he announced with all the friendly bluster that characterized him, "I've been to China and I'm an instant expert! And I can tell you, the Chinese don't care a bit about Taiwan. You go ten miles down the road from Peking, they never even heard of the place." In response, I gave my view that the Chinese cared a lot about Taiwan. Shoesmith agreed.

Walters said the same thing in Seoul, at a dinner with a lot of Embassy staff at the residence of John Monjo, Charge d'Affaires. There, in a big circle before dinner, he launched into an identical spiel; but he prefaced it with, "I know Mr. Rope here, of the East Asia Bureau, doesn't agree with me, and I will invite him to respond;" and I did. A little later we were sitting privately with Monjo to go over what Chun Doo-Hwan was like and what Walters would say in briefing him on Haig's visit. Once again, Walters launched into his spiel about Taiwan, and this time my response was more emphatic. "The Chinese do care a lot about Taiwan," I said, "and this FX issue is going to break the back of the relationship." Then I added, "I'm going back to Washington and do everything I can to stop it!"

The next day we went to see President Chun. Walters gave his briefing about the visit as planned. When he came to the Taiwan arms issue, he said, "The Chinese are incredibly sensitive about Taiwan!" None of what he'd been saying to Shoesmith or at Monjo's house.

Two days later, we were in Tokyo having breakfast with Mike Mansfield. When Walters came to Taiwan, he said, "The Chinese don't care at all about Taiwan. You go down the road ten miles and they never even heard of the place." Then he called on me to give my views. That was the kind of guy he was. He liked blarney; but when it came time to really do his job, with the ROK president, he did it. We got to like one another, and throughout my time on the Desk he'd periodically call me up to his office to chat. He reminded me of my Uncle Robert.

To get back to your question, involving specifics to be implemented as I took over the desk, we had to move ahead with certain new policies announced during Haig's visit.

Q: Well let's go to the Haig visit. Who did the papers for that?

ROPE: The "globaloney" paper was done in PM, as I said, and I believe in the end Haig wrote his own talking points. The bilateral briefing papers and the briefing book itself were put together in PRC/M, cleared appropriately, approved by John, and sent to the Secretary. I wasn't involved in that.

Q: And what happened during the visit?

ROPE: The secretary had two meetings with China's foreign minister, Huang Hua, one with Geng Biao, the Defense Minister, one with Premier Zhao Ziyang, and one with Deng Xiaoping, titularly only a Vice Premier but in fact China's de facto leader. From my point of view, the last one was the most important; but we should go to the Huang Hua meetings first.

Q: Go ahead.

ROPE: The first session with Huang was an exchange of views on the world situation. John or Mike gave Chas the job of attending that session as note-taker. I was to serve as note-taker in the second, bilateral session. Of the two, that was the key meeting, because in it Haig was to present three new US initiatives aimed at advancing US-China relations. It was also the meeting in which Huang could be expected to raise the issue of US arms sales to Taiwan.

In the second meeting, Haig's first initiative, from which the other two followed, was that the US would treat China as a "friendly, non-allied state." This strange formulation was designed to enable us to amend some regulations -- or in some cases seek changes to US laws -- lumping China into the same category as the USSR and its satellites. Within that, Haig expressed our intention to liberalize US export controls on China. Finally, and this was the last part of his presentation, he said we were prepared to sell arms to the PRC. I think he caveated it by saying we were willing to do so on a case-by-case basis or in some other way made clear there would be limits to what we would do. In going through the foregoing, he expressed a clear US desire to maintain and improve the US-China relationship.

Q: How did Huang respond?

ROPE: It would have been nice if he had echoed our desire to further advance the relationship and shown at least some appreciation for the new steps Haig had outlined. For example Haig's expression of willingness to sell weapons to China actually responded to a Chinese request for weapons made of Defense Secretary Harold Brown during the Carter Administration. But Huang wasn't interested in anything other than berating us about Taiwan arms sales.

He drew himself up and launched into a long diatribe focused on that single issue, starting with, "The one billion Chinese people cannot be bribed!" He ignored everything

Haig had said and spent the whole time denouncing Taiwan arms sales as ‘interference in China’s internal affairs.’ If there was one thing Huang was great at, it was repeating himself over and over, droning on and on, with his capable translator, Yang Jiechi, now State Counselor with the foreign affairs portfolio, interpreting it all. That was the essence of the meeting.

Obnoxious as Huang’s presentation was, it was not a surprise. There had been a steadily growing drumbeat in the Chinese press denouncing US arms sales to Taiwan. This had been building since before President Reagan took office, and the volume had been very shrill in the weeks preceding Haig’s visit. This, after all, was why people like Bernie Gwertzman were writing stories about how Haig would handle the Taiwan arms issue. And the way Huang phrased things at the outset made it seem clear he was referring precisely to Bernie’s pre-departure NY Times article on Haig’s strategy of selling arms to China in order to gain PRC acquiescence in arms sales to Taiwan.

Q: How did the Haig delegation respond?

ROPE: No one liked it, but I don’t recall a lot more. What was Haig supposed to say back? “Oh, thank you, Huang Hua, we won’t sell any more arms to Taiwan?” or “We appreciate the fact that you haven’t attacked Taiwan?” Haig made clear that our relations with Taiwan would remain unofficial and that our arms sales would be for defensive purposes only. He did not try to make it more of a debate. Huang was not the final decision-maker, and his manner was pretty much always the same. When Vice President Bush visited Beijing in May 1982, when we were negotiating the Taiwan Arms Communiqué, we sent some new proposals to Beijing in advance of Bush’s visit. They represented substantive concessions on our part, but all Huang said to Bush was “I’ve read your latest proposals and they are nothing! You have done nothing since I first raised this matter!” -- referring to China’s demand that we agree to gradually reduce and then cease arms sales to Taiwan, which Huang presented in October 1981 at the Cancun Summit. Haig did manage to shake Huang up in one session just after Cancun, for which I wrote his points; but at this point, mid-June, there was no point in arguing with him.

Q: Whether or not there was a reaction when the delegation got together later to discuss what had happened, did the delegation understand that they had really been told this would not fly.

ROPE: Well, we knew Huang’s wouldn’t be the last word on the subject. It would be the meeting with Deng that counted. For my part, immediately after the meeting I was absorbed with writing it up and didn’t have much time to talk with anyone. One thing I can say is that, not having been involved in any previous Haig meetings with the foreign officials, my approach to writing the reporting cable was to emulate reports I’d seen of Kissinger’s meetings, which were long and detailed. I pretty much set down all that had been said on either side, a virtual memcon, and then wrote a page and a half summary. When Haig saw the cable, he hated it. He called John me to his suite and berated us, saying, “We don’t need to report all this stuff.” In the end, he said we should send the summary and give the body of the cable to him. What he did with it I never knew.

Q: All right. So what else happened during the visit?

ROPE: I wasn't in any of the other meetings, but I read the reports of them, particularly Stape Roy's write-up of the meeting with Deng Xiaoping. The latter was critical. All were more important than the meetings with Huang Hua.

With the Defense Minister, Haig repeated what he had told Huang about our willingness to sell arms to China, and the Defense Minister responded positively. Very quickly after the meeting, the Chinese gave us a request list that PLA logistics chief Liu Huaqing had given to Harold Brown. It asked us to sell China three US weapons systems: the Mark 48 torpedo, a certain type of armored personnel carrier, and I-TOW anti-tank missiles. I don't recall how it transpired, but either in his meeting with Geng Biao or at some point thereafter Haig conveyed an invitation for Liu to visit Washington to discuss the matter further.

Another meeting was with Premier Zhao. Haig invited him to visit Washington on President Reagan's behalf.

The most important session was with Deng; and the key exchange was about Taiwan arms sales. There, Deng did not depart from the standard line that arms sales were an interference in China's internal affairs, but he did not take the uncompromising approach of Huang Hua. I may not be remembering Deng's precise wording, but it was something close to the following: "The Taiwan issue is a very sensitive issue for any Chinese government; and any Chinese government that doesn't handle it correctly could have serious problems and even fall from power."

Q: Any Chinese government.

ROPE: Yes. Then he said, "About Taiwan arms sales. They are an interference in our internal affairs; and if there is too much interference in our internal affairs, our relations could come to a standstill or even go backward." The Chinese words for this last phrase, "go backward," were "dao tui."

Now I hope you are with me and can see the difference between Huang Hua's statements and Deng Xiaoping's. Deng didn't say "if you keep selling arms to Taiwan, relations will come to a standstill, or go backward." He said "If there is too much interference in our internal affairs, our relations could come to a standstill or even go backward." In other words, what Deng was really saying was, "you can do some interfering in our internal affairs, but if you go too far, there will be trouble." That is what I tried to communicate at every level to which I had access throughout the summer of 1981, ultimately without success, even though I had a long argument with Haig about it in October.

As for "dao tui," Deng was no doubt referring, implicitly, to Beijing's downgrading of relations with the Netherlands after the Dutch sold a submarine to Taiwan over Beijing's objections in late 1980. For the US, the equivalent of that submarine was clearly the FX.

In fact, the standard interpretation of the PRC's move against the Netherlands at the time was that Beijing was "killing a chicken to scare the monkey," i.e. making an example of the Dutch to let the US know what could happen if we went too far.

Certainly that was my analysis. Whenever I was spoke with anyone of influence about the FX issue, I would tell them "Don't you see what Deng was saying? He's saying you actually can interfere in our internal affairs by selling arms to Taiwan, just don't go too far," and by that he means "don't sell the FX!" And while I was making that argument over the summer, the Chinese were making it clearer and clearer the FX was precisely what Deng had in mind.

Q: I think perhaps we need to talk more about this FX question. What was it? What was its history?

ROPE: We do. We have to go back to the Carter Administration -- policies pursued then and assurances given the Chinese.

At the beginning of the Carter years, when Al Romberg and Stape Roy were developing papers on how we could go about normalizing relations with Beijing, it was always recognized that our mutual defense treaty with the Republic of China and the Taiwan arms issue would be the thorniest issues to be managed. In the negotiations over Normalization, the US was able to deal with the treaty by agreeing to abrogate it formally, which would take one year after US-China Normalization. To make that more palatable to Beijing, the US made clear we would sell no arms to Taiwan during that year. The Carter people did not, however, clearly address what would happen after that one year, though they knew we would have to continue selling Taiwan arms.

Instead, they prided themselves on addressing the Taiwan arms issue obliquely, trying to finesse it. For example, Carter made a vague reference to future Taiwan arms sales in one discussion with the Chinese; and the next time Vance saw a Chinese representative he said, without restating Carter's words, that "what the President had to say last time was very important."

At the last minute, however, Brzezinski and others worried that they might not have made their intention to resume arms sales to Taiwan after the one-year hiatus clear enough. So USLO chief Leonard Woodcock and Stape, his DCM, were sent to Deng at the last minute, just before the two sides were to announce Normalization, to make sure he understood that in a year arms sales would resume. Deng was incensed and said, "Why are you bringing this to me now?" After his tirade he said, "What should I do?" Woodcock urged him to proceed with Normalization. If I recall correctly, he said that many things can happen in a year, implying that somehow the issue could be resolved. So Deng agreed to proceed; but he reserved the right to bring the matter of Taiwan arms sales up again. That is why those exact words are in the August 17, 1982 Communiqué.

Deng was further angered when the Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act, which made explicit that we would, as a matter of US law, continue to sell Taiwan arms -- to the

extent needed to maintain its self-defense capability, with that judgment to be based on need alone, without reference to other considerations like our relations with Beijing.

Arms sales did resume after one year; and because the hiatus had led to a sizeable backlog of items needed by Taiwan, the level of sales in the first year after sales resumed was extremely high -- well beyond the average levels of previous years. That, actually, was very helpful later on, when we got into negotiations on what became the August 17, 1982 Communiqué.

That's the Normalization background. Still earlier, however, the Nixon-Ford administration had already been exercising caution about what it sold to Taiwan, to avoid provoking the PRC. Sales of aircraft were particularly sensitive, since they could be used offensively as well as defensively. When we made a decision to sell F-5Es to Taiwan, via co-production, in 1974, for example, Kissinger made a point of telling Zhou Enlai that the co-production would be phased out within five years. In fact, however, it was extended well beyond the original time and projected numbers of aircraft.

There was one other piece of background critical to understanding how we ended up with an issue involving the FX. During the Carter years, there was concern within the administration that the US was selling weapons systems to third world countries that were inappropriate and that those nations could ill-afford. Reggie's predecessor in PM, Les Gelb had championed this idea and led an ultimately unsuccessful effort to gain international support for global reductions in conventional weapons transfers. It was within that context that the Carter Administration decided it would no longer permit the sale of top-of-the line US fighters to most non-Western countries. I forget the exact details, but that's essentially it. Instead, Carter encouraged US weapons manufacturers to develop a new, cheaper fighter -- not quite as capable as our F-16s but still relatively advanced -- for sale in non-Western markets. This future plane came to be called the FX.

There was a competition to build the FX, with one very significant wrinkle. The competing manufacturers would have to finance development of the new aircraft on their own. DOD would support and market it but would not bear development costs. This was a major deviation from normal practice, where manufacturers could compete to build a new system for the US knowing DOD would cover their development costs even if they lost the competition.

Two companies were in the FX competition. One was General Dynamics which already produced the F-16. The other was Northrop which had long been producing the F-5 series. General Dynamics' proposal was simple -- put a less powerful engine in an F-16, giving it scaled down capabilities without involving costly airframe changes. This meant GD had little money riding on the project.

Northrop took a wholly different approach, sinking a lot of its own money into developing a completely new aircraft. It was billed as the F-5G, a follow-on to the F-5 series Northrop had manufactured for over a decade; but it would in fact be completely different. Whereas the F-5E and all predecessor F-5s were twin-engine aircraft, the F-5G

would have only a single engine, with a completely new airframe. The result would not be quite as capable as fighters in the U.S. inventory, but it would still be very advanced. Indeed, Northrop claimed that its version of the FX, this newly developed F-5G, was the equal of the F-16, or better.

The possibility that the FX might be sold to Taiwan worried Beijing; and in September 1980, Dick Holbrooke assured China's DCM in Washington, Han Xu, that the US would not sell it to Taiwan. I read the report of this meeting as I read in before taking over the China Desk. It wasn't a terribly hard assurance for Holbrooke to give at that point, since the market for the FX would still be wide, encompassing most non-NATO countries.

I'm a little hazy on some of the history as we moved from Carter into Reagan, because I was in PM and recovering from surgery, after which I was in RA, and we're now 35 years away from that time; but the basics are that PRC anxieties were high following Reagan's election, and the worry extended to the question of whether we would go back on Holbrooke's promise and sell Taiwan the FX. The Dutch submarine sale and subsequent downgrading of Sino-Dutch relations was widely seen as a warning to the incoming administration not to do so.

Then, at the outset of the Reagan Administration came a devastating development for Northrop. Shortly after taking office, Reagan cancelled Carter's policy of not selling advanced aircraft to non-Western countries. I think this became public when we approved a sale of F-16s to Venezuela early in 1981. At one stroke, that wiped out the market for the FX, worldwide. No country would want to buy an untested aircraft intended to have less capability than the F-16 when it could buy the real McCoy -- full-fledged F-16s. This was no problem for General Dynamics, which saw its market for full-up F-16s expand globally. Northrop, however, had at least \$100 million tied up in the new, single-engine F-5G and almost nowhere to sell it. I say "almost nowhere," because there remained one place where the US would not sell top-of-the-line equipment if an acceptable alternative was available. That was Taiwan; and arguably the F-5G was a suitable replacement for aging F-5s.

Once the decision to cancel the Carter policy was made, pressure from Northrop, on the administration and on Congress for an FX sale in the form of an F5-G sale to Taiwan grew rapidly. At the White House it fell on decidedly friendly ears. Among other things, Northrop was a California company, and Northrop's president, Tom Jones, was a close friend of Reagan's -- close enough that the Joneses and the Reagans even spent New Year's Eves with each other. As for Richard Allen, there was no question that he totally backed selling the FX. By the time I took over the desk, Northrop lobbying amounted to a full court press. I was personally lobbied hard by Rick Inderfurth, a former NSC staffer under Carter who had gone to work for Northrop as a lobbyist; but I was hardly a key target. The main focus was on the White House, DOD and the Hill.

The Chinese clearly had wind of this; and as the first half of 1981 unfolded, there was a steadily increasing outcry in the PRC press denouncing US arms sales to Taiwan, reaching a crescendo as the Haig visit drew near.

In my view, this did not just reflect Chinese foreign policy concerns. As Deng had implied in his conversation with Haig, Taiwan was an issue that could be used by domestic opponents to put pressure on him, or even bring him down. Looking back now, from the vantage point of 2016, with a totally different, far more modernized China, involved in virtually all the world's international institutions and connected to the United States in multiple ways, it's easy to forget how tenuous things were in 1981. Mao had been dead only five years. Deng's reform program was barely 3 years old. Deng, down three times during the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath, had substantially consolidated his power; but even eight years later, in 1989, if you read the Tiananmen Papers or Zhao Ziyang's account of events at that time, he wasn't the sole decision maker.

There were lots of issues being fought out in the Chinese leadership in the '81-'82 period, and Deng wasn't invulnerable to attack. At one point Carol Hamrin in INR found a curious article in the Chinese press implicitly criticizing Zhou Enlai for a stand it said he took during the lead-up to the Long March, when Mao, Zhou and others were up in Jinggangshan, their revolutionary base in Jiangxi, and being pressed hard by the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek. They knew their days in Jinggangshan were numbered, and they had to decide where to go to escape Chiang's pressure. Zhou, the article said, advocated going east not west. East was towards Chiang, implying willingness to compromise with the Nationalists. West was the way of the Long March -- west towards Sichuan and eventually up to Yan'an, where the Communists could get Soviet help. The latter was the chosen course and -- in orthodox Communist eyes -- the correct decision.

Carol saw this as an allegorical article possibly related to a struggle over the direction of Deng's modernization program, moving away from the Soviet model and leaning toward the US. If so, she posited, Zhou was being criticized -- unusual in itself -- but the real target was Deng. The allusion to going east would be not to moving toward Chiang Kai-shek, though that could be interpreted to connote Taiwan, but to moving toward the US. Carol thought some person or persons high up in the leadership had to be behind that article.

Q: You are underscoring the importance of analytical issues when one approaches China, given the lack of inside access that you have, and you are reminding me of, the academic's name escapes me when the first analysis was done pointing to the Sino-Soviet split. It was done by a University of Washington professor and was a very sophisticated, nuanced reading of the language the Chinese were using. China analysis even at the time you were the office director was still a very sophisticated business. There was not a New York Times that could tell you where the votes in China lay to guide for you. You had to be alert and sophisticated.

ROPE: Right. What I'm talking about might seem a bit of a stretch, though Carol didn't think so, but it recalled for me that article attacking Peng Zhen that I'd brought to Nick Platt back in USLO days just before the Confucius campaign broke out. Be this as it may, there was no mistaking the drumbeat opposing US Taiwan arms sales in the PRC media

coupled with the example of China's downgrading with the Netherlands. We had to take Chinese complaints seriously and keep in mind that one couldn't take Deng's position as pre-eminent leader, and his opening to the West, for granted.

It's also easy to forget that the time we're speaking of was one of major tension between the US and USSR. The Soviets were threatening to invade Poland, as they had Hungary and Czechoslovakia in the past, and we were engaged in a major military build-up against them. If one subscribed at all to the Kissingerian view of the US-Soviet-China triangle -- I always thought in terms of a quadrilateral encompassing Japan -- it was clear we could ill afford to alienate China at such a time.

Finally, there's one more complication that needs to be understood. It's not new that there was tension between Haig and people at the White House from early on, certainly including Allen; and one thing happened during the Haig trip that contributed to that in a China context.

Q: What was that?

ROPE: There must have been some sort of NSC meeting before Haig went to China, though I'm not sure. I was still in RA. Perhaps Chas Freeman has addressed it in an oral history. One way or the other, Haig did have Presidential approval of the decision to sell arms to China. However, that approval was conditional. Haig could inform the Chinese of the decision during his trip; but he was to make no announcement of the new initiative until sometime after the trip. Perhaps it was a matter of wanting to break the news to Taiwan before it became public and/or to give Congress a heads up. Maybe DOD wanted time to hash through the details. In any case it was not to be announced.

At his press conference following the final dinner, however, Haig slipped up and made the new policy public. That seriously ruffled feathers at the White House with counterproductive consequences. I think the Secretary was tired, and maybe a bit overconfident. Notwithstanding the unpleasantness of Huang Hua, following the Deng meeting, the visit was being treated as a great success. A final ceremony was held after the final banquet, at which Stape Roy and a Chinese official signed a consular accord agreeing to the establishment of US consulates in Shenyang, Wuhan, and Chengdu. The ceremony was beamed back to the US on live TV, with great fanfare and lots of smiles on both Chinese and US sides. You'd have thought we'd just signed a SALT agreement or something. Everyone felt good.

From there we went to the Minzu Hotel where Haig gave a press conference. A number of foreign journalists were there, many of them based in Beijing, along with some Chinese journalists. The locally based foreign journalists hardly asked any questions. Instead, two sharp journalists traveling with Haig -- Karen Elliott House of the Wall Street Journal and the Times' Bernie Gwertzman -- got multiple shots at him. Gwertzman asked Haig if we were going to sell arms to China. Haig dodged. House zeroed in with something similar. Haig was less definite. Gwertzman came on again: "Did you agree to sell arms to China?" Haig quietly said, "Yes."

I really liked Haig, notwithstanding his fiery nature, and I think he was just worn out. Holdridge was appalled. Haig had violated instructions and angered the White House. Allen immediately got Reagan to make a statement, before Haig left China, reaffirming that the US would carry out the Taiwan Relations Act, which the Mainland hated. This led to a quiet protest to Haig on the Tarmac at Beijing airport, delivered by Zhang Wenjin. The White House wasn't the only place that was displeased. DOD didn't like Haig's disclosure either. It was an example of the kind of thing that ultimately caused Haig's demise; and it made it more difficult to gain consensus on matters involving China.

There. That's a lot of background!"

Q: Now to go back to my earlier question, you're back from Beijing and in charge of the China Desk. What were your immediate tasks?

ROPE: We had to come up with an arms package we could present to Liu Huaqing when he visited Washington; but we first needed a concrete plan for how we would transact weapons sales to China, and we had to explain it all to Congress. Many on the Hill were suspicious of our intentions and not happy to have been caught by surprise.

I don't recall much about the details. Perhaps I was focused just on settling in, while the Desk went about the routine tasks of preparing talking points for the Hill and coordinating with DOD and other bureaus at State. Perhaps the major questions of implementation had already been worked out under Chas before I took over.

I did go with John to testify before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and I think we must also have briefed the SFRC. By that time we were able to tell the Congress we did not intend to make China FMS-eligible, which could qualify Beijing for credits -- or at least more favorable terms -- as well as ongoing DOD support. We didn't rule that out for the future, but we made clear we'd be moving cautiously, on a case-by-case basis. On one point, we had a set-back. Key Senators and Representatives extracted a promise from John that we would not make China eligible for foreign aid.

We had no plans to do that, but I hated the idea of tying our hands with a commitment when we didn't know what we might want to do with China at some future point. The PRC was a poor country, and if relations continued to improve we might at some point want to offer some form of foreign assistance. There seemed to be no alternative, however, if we wanted Hill support for, or at least acquiescence in, our decision to sell China arms. John needed to make that commitment.

As for the three military sales requests we had from the Chinese, we knew from the outset that DOD would not, and should not, agree to the sale of torpedoes to China, let alone the highly advanced -- for the time -- Mark 48, which could be sold only to NATO allies. From my perspective that was manageable. We'd simply say, "sorry, only close allies get it, and that's our policy worldwide." That would have been accepted. But with

the torpedo out of the question, our aim was to gain DOD agreement to grant the other two Chinese requests, for I-TOW and APCs, which would be most useful against the USSR.

Again I don't recall how the work on that went. At that point, there were not many high-level people in the interagency community, particularly at a political level, with whom I could work closely. There was far more skepticism of China than eagerness to move ahead. I talked fairly often with Jim Lilley, at the NSC, who was generally supportive, though hard to read, and whose boss was Allen. Jim outranked me on organization charts, and in my first month he was more likely to have most of his contacts with John.

Below Jim's level, there was never an NSC China expert as long as I was in PRC/M. You often find academics in NSC positions, or FSOs on loan from State; but in those days, the number of such people in tune with the conservative inclinations of the White House was small, particularly on China. The name of June Dreyer, a pro-Taiwan conservative academic from Florida, cropped up occasionally as a possible working-level NSC China staffer, but she never got the job.

Q: So what happened on those two other systems?

ROPE: We were not successful. Again, I don't remember the details, though I must have been involved in the effort; but despite strong pressures downward from John, reflecting what he was getting from the Secretary, as we worked the issue through July and into August at staff levels, we could only get DOD to agree to sell TOW, not I-TOW missiles. Similarly, DOD would only agree to a lesser APC than the one the Chinese wanted. These were not weapons systems that would be aimed at Taiwan. They'd be useful against the Soviets. Still, DOD wouldn't budge. Perle and his shop were no doubt afraid the Chinese would copy the technology. This should not have been worrisome at that stage in PRC weapons technology development. Though it was true they'd tried to copy the Boeing 707, the project had been an utter failure. As for Rich Armitage, he was, as I've noted, skeptical; and he was attuned to the overall suspicions of China that permeated the new administration outside State.

Meanwhile, the Chinese were asking two questions of us, and we were ignoring one while being indefinite on the other.

Q: What was that about?

ROPE: At our annual 4th of July reception in Beijing, there was an exchange between our Chargé -- I guess it was still Stape -- and then-Assistant Minister Zhang Wenjin. Stape queried Zhang about when Liu Huaqing would visit Washington. Zhang did not have an answer but responded with two questions of his own: "What is Liu going to get, and what are you doing about sales to Taiwan?" Later in the month the subject came up again, after Chas got to Beijing. Again I think the interlocutor was Zhang Wenjin. This time, when Chas asked about when we'd see Liu, the second half of Zhang's question was, "What are you doing about advanced aircraft sales to Taiwan?" This happened at least one more

time during the summer, with the second part of the Chinese becoming ever more specific -- to the point at which Zhang asked, "What are you doing about the F-5G?!"

Each time, we were tasked to draft instructions for Embassy responses to Zhang; but each time, given the state of play in Washington, we were unable to answer the second part of Zhang's questions. Nor could we do much better as to how Liu would fare in DC. All we could say was we were sure General Liu would find us forthcoming, without being more specific.

I don't see how this could have done anything other than fuel concern in Beijing that we were planning to proceed with an FX sale to Taiwan. Moreover, if they ever seriously thought of going along with Haig's idea of acquiescing in an FX sale in exchange for US weaponry, I doubt they would have been willing to accept less than they'd asked for.

Haig no doubt understood this and was pressing John hard to come up with DOD agreement to sell I-TOW and the more advanced APCs. My staff, however, was getting nowhere, and if John was doing anything to push for these systems at a higher level I'm not aware of it.

By late July, or so, Haig was losing patience with our inability to get what he wanted. I think it was Tony Wayne who was the source of a first-hand report I received of a Haig-Holdridge exchange one morning at the Secretary's daily staff meeting. The Secretary asked John how we were coming on getting DOD approval for the systems Beijing wanted, and John was unable to report progress beyond the lesser systems DOD would agree to. Haig blew up and said, "John, get off your fat ass, and get it through your thick skull, we're going to sell arms to China in September so we can sell arms to Taiwan in January!"

I greatly regret that I once mentioned this to Pat Tyler, NY Times Beijing correspondent, when he was interviewing me in Nanjing in 1996. I told him, not realizing he would put it into a book he was writing, solely to make the point that Haig really did hope to buy the Chinese off on the FX issue by selling them weapons. When Pat sent me an advance copy of his manuscript a couple of years later, I asked him please not to use the quote; but he refused. Then Jim Mann picked it up for another book. John was pretty angry when he found this out and told me so; but he never denied that the exchange occurred. All I could do was apologize for my indiscretion. Since it's out there, though, I mention it now because it is the clearest example I ever saw of Haig linking PRC and Taiwan arms sales.

One other thing happened about the same time that may have played into this issue. I cannot remember my source, but I'm quite certain it happened. During a visit by Lee Kwan Yew of Singapore, Richard Allen asked Lee to pass a message to Chiang Ching-Kuo on Taiwan, reassuring Chiang of our intentions on Taiwan arms sales and indicating that Taiwan would get the FX. The report I received seemed perfectly credible at the time, and I've never had any reason to doubt it. Lee and Ching-Kuo had a close sub-rosa relationship and were frequently in contact with each other. So if Lee was given such a message, it would have been delivered. That in turn raises the possibility that Chinese

intelligence got wind of it.

Q: You seem to be telling me that all the work on trying to gain DOD approval was at your level or below.

ROPE: That's what I remember. I don't know of anything at higher levels. And I think that's indicative of the state of play in relations between State, the White House, and DOD. Haig had regular breakfasts with Weinberger. If getting those weapons for China was so important to him, why didn't he take it up directly? Why didn't he get the White House to make it happen? The answer's obvious. He didn't think he'd succeed. At least in the summer of 1981, issues involving Taiwan and the PRC were just too fraught with potential conflict.

Q: What happened in the end?

ROPE: Nothing. Although we didn't have a definitive decision from DOD, sometime in August or possibly early September, perhaps after Zhang Wenjin's third query about aircraft and what Liu would get, the Chinese "postponed" Liu's visit, with no explanation given. It was clear the reason was Beijing's unwillingness to move ahead further with the US with the FX cloud hanging out there; and that probably would have been true whether or not we were able to offer up I-Tow and the desired APCs.

Q: As you have described this, it's an interesting illustration of domestic forces, domestic economic forces, impacting on foreign policy, in this case on both sides. Now let me jump to another subject. Art Hummel is the Administration's new ambassador. He wasn't a political appointee. Do you have any thoughts on how he was picked, or why he was picked or what he was supposed to represent?

ROPE: There's more to say on how that summer was progressing with regard to FX, but I suppose we can discuss it later.

How did Hummel get there? It would have been John Holdridge's selection to have a career China person there; but of course the White House would have had to sign off -- and I'd bet Jim Lilley, mercurial person though he was, would have been in Art's corner. At any rate, that decision had been made when I reached the China Desk. Art was already nominated and was well qualified. He'd been EA assistant secretary in a Republican administration, at the end of the Kissinger-Nixon-Ford era. He'd been ambassador to Pakistan -- we've talked about the day his embassy was under attack, when his people were in the lockdown room where it was getting hot and he was working his phones trying to get the Pakistanis to take action to save the day. He'd been an ambassador twice before that, in Burma and Ethiopia.

You've suddenly reminded me of one thing, though. I don't recall when he was confirmed and when he planned to arrive in Beijing, but I remember one day that summer we somehow got the feeling an FX sale might be imminent. Art was very worried and immediately talked about speeding up the process of getting him out to China so he'd be

in place if and when a sale occurred.

On the political appointee side, you're right. We'd never had a career FSO in charge of USLO or our embassy in Beijing. Incidentally, one morning back in 1977, when I was doing my INR briefing for Harry Thayer and Stape Roy, the two of them asked me for ideas on who might succeed Gates as Carter's USLO chief. They already had normalization in mind and wanted somebody who was not only a solid Democrat but a good negotiator. My first suggestion was Leonard Woodcock, but I promised to see if my colleagues up in INR had any bright ideas and report back. They liked the Woodcock idea too, and I think we came up with him some additional names on a list for Harry. I've known a bunch of people who claim they were responsible for Leonard Woodcock's selection, and I don't claim it; but I will say sometimes, even not-great minds can think alike.

Q: So let's go to another subject. The Desk's interaction with the Chinese embassy. The Chinese actually have few English speaking officers, so they are not really running around town. Did you have opportunity to have extensive interaction with the Chinese ambassador and his staff?

ROPE: Yes; but aside from Ambassador Chai, I'm not sure I agree with you about inability to speak English. Certainly Han Xu, who'd been Chai's deputy, had friends all over town. I never liked him, but he knew everybody. For me, the officer who most stood out was Ji Chaozhu, the political minister or minister counselor. Ji interpreted for Nixon and Zhou Enlai during the 1972 Nixon Visit, including, visibly, when Zhou greeted President Nixon at the bottom of the stairs coming off Air Force One and when Zhou and Nixon toasted at banquets. I've also seen a picture of him interpreting for Mao in Mao's last year, when Mao was so far gone Ji had to lean very close to hear and understand what Mao was saying. He was born in Brooklyn, or, if he wasn't, grew up in Brooklyn. His English was wonderful, and he was a smooth, savvy guy, with good contacts in Washington. He was savvy in terms of how to get along within his own system, though I believe he had his bad times during the Cultural Revolution, and I'm pretty sure Han Xu had it in for him.

Q: Why do you say that?

ROPE: When Ji got to be an ambassador, he was sent to Fiji, a place nowhere near what he deserved. He ultimately became Ambassador to London and later became China's highest ranking official at the UN, an Undersecretary. That's when I last saw him, for lunch at the UN in the fall of 1995. I got the distinct impression talking with him that day that Han had been behind his Fiji detour. We talked about Fiji because one of my last FSO assignments was as temporary Chargé in Fiji, where I felt exiled, too.

I first met Ji in early in January 1981 around the time of President Reagan's inauguration, at Chas Freeman's house. He was on a mission to find out all he could about the incoming administration and its intentions toward the PRC. He knew John Holdridge well, and I think he was somehow involved in an effort by John to head off inaugural

invitations for visiting officials from Taiwan. Then he went back to Beijing and came back a few months later, assigned to the Embassy.

Anyway, we had perfectly good relations with people at the PRC Embassy, socializing with them from time to time and interacting as an embassy and foreign ministry normally do. At one point in February 1982, when it looked like our negotiations on the August 17 Communiqué were on the rocks, John asked me to invite Ji for drinks with John and me at my house, and Ji came. I don't know whether it helped the process along, but Ji encouraged us to stick with it. There were also plenty of good English-speakers below Ji's level. One I remember, was Hou Zhidong who later became an important PRC ambassador dealing with Arms Control.

Q: I asked this because in the earlier times the Chinese seemed to have trouble figuring out the American system and would complain to the Desk about some Senator's comments or something like that. We would have to say well that is just the American system.

ROPE: That was more, I think, before my time; though in my time we had a good example of that -- on Beijing's part at least -- in the form of the Hukuang Railway Bonds case. I remember Chas talking about what happened when, at the time of Normalization, the Chinese were told that if they wanted to gain possession of Twin Oaks they would need to go to court. Until normalization, Twin Oaks was the ROC ambassadorial residence in Washington, not far from where I live, near the National Cathedral. It was sold at the end of 1978, just before Normalization, to a Taiwan businessman -- sold for a dollar or something like that. The businessman was fronting for the Taipei government, but in theory this put Twin Oaks into private hands. Then, under the same arrangement, it was made available to CCNAA.

I remember Chas saying that we told the PRC at the time if they wanted Twin Oaks, which they did, they needed to go to court to challenge the entire transaction; but the Chinese wouldn't. They viewed it as humiliating, below the dignity of a sovereign government to go as a plaintiff into court. They wanted the State Department to go to court for them, but that wasn't possible under our legal system. State could support them with a legal opinion favorable to them if they would take the initiative to bring a case in court; but the Chinese wouldn't do that. Lacking our tradition of an independent judiciary, the Chinese just couldn't understand, or refused to accept, that the US does have one. So they lost Twin Oaks. I didn't have anything like this until the Hukuang Railway Bonds case in my second year, after the Taiwan Arms issue was put to bed, but it was similar.

Let me underscore, however, that it may not be true that Chinese diplomats can't understand such things; they may well understand but be unable to persuade their leaders at home that what we say is so.

Q: Now as you progressed from 1981 through the rest of your assignment, you also would have gone to the embassy for the national day celebrations and Congressional things or

high level visitors. Were they getting good at doing that?

ROPE: They were always good at that; but you need to understand that as 1981 wore on, first with the FX issue unresolved and then with the PRC's demand that we stop arms sales altogether, productive bilateral exchanges slowed to a standstill. President Carter visited Beijing as a private citizen that summer, and we sent a delegation for talks on a possible US-China nuclear technology agreement in September. A Chinese science and technology delegation led by China Academy of Sciences President Fang Yi, with Han Xu along, visited around the same time. In November, Treasury Secretary Regan led the US side in annual US-China Joint Economic Committee talks in Beijing, where not much transpired, but at least it was not marred by the atmospherics of Taiwan Arms. After that, there were no US-China exchanges beyond those directly connected to the Taiwan arms issue until we concluded the August 17 Taiwan Arms Communiqué.

Q: You said there was more to say on the FX front that summer. Maybe we'd better get back to that.

ROPE: Once the Chinese wouldn't proceed with the Liu visit, I was more convinced than ever that an FX sale would break the back of the US-China relationship and lead to a downgrading of the kind the Netherlands and China had over the late 1980 submarine sale. It would represent exactly what Deng had been speaking of when he warned that "too much interference in our internal affairs" would make our relations come to a standstill or even go backward. As pressures in favor of making the sale, within and without the bureaucracy, became more intense -- from Taiwan and its lobbyists, from members of Congress friendly to Taiwan, and from Northrop -- I was lobbying anyone of influence to whom I had access against it.

Q: What do you mean, "to whom I had access?"

ROPE: At this point, I'd only been in two meetings with Alexander Haig -- that first meeting when he decided we'd sell arms to the PRC and the brief one in Beijing when he didn't like the cable I wrote. I'd taken notes his UNGA bilateral with Zhang Wenjin in late September of 1981, but I'd never had a chance to discuss policy or any other matter directly with him. That was true throughout my first three months in the job and didn't change until I drafted a memo in October that sent him through the roof. We can discuss that in a bit.

For the most part, I was arguing against the FX within the Department, with politically-appointed contacts in Policy Planning, with people in PM, with Woody Goldberg, the Secretary's top aide, whom I knew through Tony Wayne, and others. I also did so with Jim Lilley, though I had to be careful about it, given where he worked. Of course it was also a subject of conversations with Mike and John, who agreed with me, and I definitely talked about it with people I trusted on Capitol Hill.

In this context I want to mention two things. One regards my judgment as to whether Taiwan needed the FX. The other involves two studies commissioned by Jim Lilley in the

summer of '81.

Q: Okay. Tell us.

ROPE: First, I was not against an FX sale because of the threat it posed to US-China relations. I couldn't have done that if Taiwan really needed it; but it didn't. Based on all my experience, living on Taiwan and in the PRC, working in INR and PM, and serving as a fighter intercept controller on a 7th Fleet carrier, I was quite certain Taiwan's defenses were adequate to deter the PRC from military action. Taiwan's coastline opposite the Mainland consisted of shallow mudflats going out for miles that would, in themselves, be a strong defense against forces invading by water. The other side of the island was lined by steep cliffs, coming down from mountains close to 10,000 feet high in some places. Mainland aircraft were backward. The PRC, theoretically, could throw all its airpower at Taiwan, including biplanes which China still had, and overwhelm Taiwan's air defenses while destroying its the airfields; but that would leave it vulnerable to attack from the USSR, not to mention the possibility of having to deal with the US. In that scenario, even the most advanced fighters in the world would do little more than delay a Mainland onslaught.

What mattered was Taiwan's ability to maintain a credible deterrent. For that, I was certain the F-5Es Taiwan had would be more than adequate. And in the political atmosphere of 1981, domestically and vis-à-vis the PRC, I thought we could manage the question of aircraft for Taiwan by selling more F-5Es, with slight improvements such as a heads-up display and some other things that would not raise red flags in Beijing. In my opinion, somewhat upgraded F-5Es, replacing aircraft reaching the end of their service life, would not cross Deng's "too much interference" threshold.

Finally, since I thought it virtually out of the question that the Mainland, without extraordinary provocation such as a declaration of independence by Taiwan, would seek to "liberate" Chinese compatriots on Taiwan by inflicting the kind of casualties and devastation that would inhere in an attack on Taiwan. As I've said, I believed the most important element in protecting Taiwan was to keep it from become a major irritant in US-China relations.

The other thing I want to mention is that, while I never quite understood his motivations, Jim Lilley came out of a meeting in John Holdridge's office one evening in late July or early August and told me he was going to commission two intelligence community studies.

One would address the question of whether Taiwan needed the FX in order to maintain a sufficient defense capability. The other would address the impact on the leadership position of Deng Xiaoping of an FX sale, should one occur. Both studies would become National Intelligence Estimates. I was certain what the outcome of the first would be. The outcome of the second would be more speculative, but I assumed it would be a judgment that an FX sale would endanger Deng's position within the PRC leadership and therefore endanger the policies of reform and opening to the West that most people believed served

US and Western interests.

I never knew exactly why Jim ordered these studies, which he could do from his NSC seat. Was he doing it strictly out of objectivity, as an old China NIO simply seeking to help policymakers deal with a difficult issue? Was he doing it to torpedo an FX sale? In retrospect, maybe it was John's idea. In any case, from my perspective he was ordering up something that any good intelligence officer could foresee would produce a result not pleasing to Lilley's boss, Richard Allen. Later, after being appointed head of AIT Taiwan, Jim became an aggressive proponent of Taiwan arms sales and resented the FX decision we ultimately made. Ironically, though, the two studies he commissioned contributed directly to that outcome.

Q: Okay. So Lilley commissioned those studies. What else was going on?

ROPE: After the Liu Huaqing visit was all but canceled, things were quiet for a time. It was Washington vacation time. For my part, at the end of August, my family and I went down to Ocracoke, on the Outer Banks.

I mention this because I remember finding out something unsettling when I came back. Scott Hallford had learned that someone, I think up in PM, was proposing a supposed substitute for the F-5G. It would be a single engine plane built by Northrop, identical to what it had developing as the F-5G, but would carry a different name. The new name would be "F5-E 404." The "404" designation referred to the GE engine the F-5G was designed to use. This would be a sham -- a transparent effort to create a disguised FX that wouldn't fool Beijing for a minute.

It worried me, though, and I spoke with John Holdridge about it, saying he needed to talk with the Secretary to make sure Haig wasn't thinking of this idea. John emphatically refused. He told me Haig knew more about aircraft than I did. Based on my dealing with John for 8 years by then, I knew there was no way to fight him on it.

I did, however, step up lobbying with people like Woody Goldberg and others, including Lilley, against any form of FX sale. I would go through all the reasons why Taiwan didn't need the FX and what Beijing was likely to do if we sold it, including citing what Deng had said to Haig, and how we could save Taiwan's face and meet its needs by selling additional numbers of a slightly upgraded, F-5E. In so doing, I made clear I was talking about a real F-5E, not an F5-G with a new phony name. When I found interlocutors agreeing with me, I would say, "Okay. We've made the decision. We're not going to sell the FX. Now, as soon as we do this, Northrop loses \$100 million. Are you still with me?"

I specifically remember what Woody said in response to that: "Yes. We can't let the military industrial complex dictate to us."

That was not, it turned out, where his boss stood. While not a lot more transpired on the issue during September, at the end of the month, when it was UN Bilaterals time in New York, Haig had the meeting with Zhang Wenjin that I mentioned. John and I went up for

it, and I took the notes.

Q: Wasn't there something else going on, in Science and Technology?

ROPE: Yes. As I mentioned, in September we had a visit by Fang Yi, China's top S&T official, head of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and reportedly close to Deng. His counterpart was the President's Science Advisor. Fang saw Haig, but the Chinese were unhappy that we couldn't arrange for Fang to see the President. Han Xu, MFA representative on the trip, was extremely offensive over this issue. Whatever the issues or disagreements, I don't remember ever being so personally and rudely berated by a Chinese official as I was by Han Xu during that visit. I don't care what others in Washington thought of Han Xu, I didn't like him. I also thought his sympathies lay with the Chinese left.

Q: What happened at the Haig-Zhang Wenjin bilateral?

ROPE: Haig wasn't at his best. He had been up the night before with his old regiment in Connecticut, and he was all over the lot, talking off the top of his head. When Zhang brought up the issue of Taiwan arms and advanced aircraft, Haig told him there was no such thing as an FX. "It's a drawing board concept," he said, and he told Zhang, "Don't take your messages from the far lights on the periphery. Take your message from the sun," meaning "get your word from me, not from what you hear from others." To the best of my knowledge, Haig was not a descendant of Louis Quatorze; but that's what he said. The whole response was evasive and strange. It couldn't have been reassuring to Zhang.

I'm sure my memcon of that meeting's in the archives.

After the meeting, Zhang went to the theater with Dick Holbrooke. We learned this directly from Dick, who was up in New York working for Lehman Brothers but was often on the phone with Scott Hallford. As Dick related it to Scott, when he asked Zhang how the Haig meeting went, Zhang said he thought the US was getting ready to sell the F-5G to Taiwan, and he was very worried. I don't know whatever else may have passed between Zhang and Holbrooke, but Dick told Scott he'd recommended that Zhang go to Washington and see Judge Clark, Haig's deputy who was close to Reagan. Shortly thereafter we received a Chinese request for such a meeting.

Q: Did it take place?

ROPE: Yes. Zhang called on Clark on the morning of Saturday October 3, when Haig was away and Clark was Acting Secretary.

Q: What happened?

ROPE: It was a small meeting. John Holdridge wasn't there. Ji Chaozhu, from the PRC Embassy, accompanied Zhang, and I think Tom Shoesmith, who had replaced Mike Armacost by that time, sat in. I took the notes. Zhang was a pleasant, unfailingly

courteous and soft-spoken man, not at all like Huang Hua. He'd been educated in English at St. Johns school in Shanghai in the 1920s and had been involved in US-China rapprochement from the outset. He'd served as Ambassador to Canada in the late 1970s. Of all the Chinese diplomats I knew, he was my -- and I think John Holdridge's -- favorite, a man who seemed genuinely committed to preserving and advancing US-China relations. I met his son 15 years later, in Nanjing. The son gave me the same impression. At that time, the son was a senior researcher in the Communist Party archives.

So it was not a contentious meeting. Zhang calmly and politely spoke with the Judge about China's interest in advancing relations with the US. His centerpiece was a 9-point proposal for peaceful reunification of Taiwan and the Mainland that had just been put forward by Marshall Ye Jianying, in Beijing on September 30, the eve of China's national day. Zhang said this was a very important statement and stressed that it signified Beijing's intent to pursue reunification by peaceful means. "This is our fundamental policy," he said, "that will not change."

Turning to US arms sales to Taiwan, he said they represented a sensitive and difficult issue for the PRC leadership. On the subject of advanced aircraft, he said, "I don't know what can be done with the F-5E; but if you sell the F5-G I know it will be very bad." It was a very earnest presentation; and he made this last point very clearly and believably. Judge Clark responded in an equally calm and friendly way. He gave Zhang no specific response but assured him President Reagan was "a very reasonable man."

As a side note before we go further, I put Zhang's precise wording about China's "fundamental policy that will not change" into our initial draft of the Chinese portion of the August 17, 1982 communiqué; and while the Chinese kept knocking it out, I kept reinserting it almost throughout the negotiations on the Communiqué, giving it up only after Chas, speaking obliquely with me by phone from Beijing late in the game, insisted that I would never get that wording. I suspected Chas of having already undercut it in private luncheon discussions he was having in Beijing with a counterpart, Zhang Zai.

I attached great importance to what Zhang had said and didn't like dropping it, since not using it called into question an assurance that I considered official, from Zhang to Clark that day. Still, we were able to use Ye Jianying's "Nine Point Proposal" as the basis for conditioning all of our undertakings in the Communiqué on China's pursuit of a peaceful policy toward Taiwan, and we did salvage the words characterizing Ye's proposal as China's "fundamental" policy.

To come back to the October 3 meeting, I thought Zhang spelled things out as clearly as he possibly could, and it was consistent with Deng's comments in June to Secretary Haig. He wasn't saying no to an F-5E sale; but he was saying as clearly as he could that if we sold the FX we'd have real trouble. This from a man dedicated to advancing US-China ties.

Two or three months later, I saw one piece of reporting from a highly reliable source indicating that, based on Zhang's reporting from New York, presumably before he met

with Judge Clark, Beijing concluded that the US was going to proceed with an FX sale to Taiwan. The account said China would give its response to the US when President Reagan met with Premier Zhao Ziyang at a UN North-South summit in Cancun. That meeting was scheduled for the last week in October. By the time I saw this report, and I never saw another one like it, the meeting at Cancun had already happened, and things had grown far more serious; but it confirmed my analysis of the situation that led China to demand, at Cancun, that we stop all arms sales to Taiwan.

For the moment, Zhang's presentation to Clark and one other piece of information I had, gave me everything I needed to draft a memo from John to the Secretary that I'd had in mind for a month. I'd initially drafted it on a cocktail napkin after making its basic arguments to Jim Lilley at lunch at a restaurant on F Street. On the afternoon of October 3, after writing my report of the Zhang-Clark meeting, I took out the napkin and drafted a memo for John to send to Haig.

Q. What did your memo say?

ROPE: Before I go into it, I need to mention the other piece of information I had. The first draft of the intelligence community's NIE on whether Taiwan needed the FX had just been circulated; and the answer was exactly what I expected: Taiwan did not need the airplane. The analysis was similar to the personal thinking I've outlined to you -- about the essential question being deterrence, which would not be demonstrably enhanced if we sold Taiwan the FX. DIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, had done this initial draft; and since DIA was the most conservative of the intelligence agencies regarding the PRC, there was no reason to believe the CIA or any other agency would come to a different conclusion. INR analysts already took a similar view.

In the memo I wrote for John to send to the Secretary, I said Zhang Wenjin's comments to Judge Clark set the stage for a final resolution of the FX issue. It was clear, I wrote, that Beijing would tolerate an F-5E sale, but not the FX. At the same time, I wrote, DIA's initial draft NIE made clear that Taiwan did not need the FX, and this was virtually certain to be the NIE's final conclusion. What we needed to do, I wrote, was to speed up the NIE process so that the completed report would be ready before the President met with Premier Zhao at Cancun. Based on the IC's finding, the President could decide not to sell the FX to Taiwan and to sell F-5Es instead. He could inform Zhao of his decision at Cancun and put the FX issue to rest. John signed the memo sometime that weekend, and it went to Secretary Haig. I think it may have been in his office as early as Monday October 5.

I consciously put one set of parenthetical remarks into the memo designed to make clear that it ruled out any kind of disguised F-5G sale to Taiwan. The specific wording was that the F-5Es we would sell would be "the twin-engine F-5E", with minor upgrading such as heads-up display and other improvements that would save Taiwan's face, "but not the single-engine version, which would immediately be recognized as an F-5G." This is close to the exact wording, if not the exact wording, which is in the archives.

I don't know if John focused on those words in parentheses. I think not; but the Secretary didn't miss them, and he was outraged.

Q. Why?

ROPE: Because, we soon learned, selling a disguised F-5G was indeed what he had in mind; and he let us know in no uncertain terms.

Q. When? What did the Secretary say?

ROPE: If that memo went to him on a Monday, then it may have been on Tuesday afternoon, October 6 that Haig called John and me to his office for a meeting. With him were Walter Stoessel, then Under Secretary for Political Affairs, and James Buckley, Bill Buckley's brother, who was Counselor to the Department. Jerry Bremer may have been there; he often was at meetings of that nature, but I don't recall whether he was present that day. I was clearly being called in as the drafter of the memo.

As soon as we entered, Haig went ballistic, lighting into us with something like, "What the hell do you think I've been trying to do?" It quickly became clear it was precisely those words in parentheses that had fired him up. His idea was to sell Taiwan exactly the aircraft described in that paper I'd seen on returning from vacation, except for the fact that Haig's name for the plane would be the "F-5E(T)," the "T" standing for Taiwan. It was an even worse name than "F-5E 404," in my view; but that was academic. As far as I was concerned -- if I may use a pun -- the whole idea would never fly. The Chinese would see through it, and then we'd not only have a major problem on our hands but would look foolish for having tried and failed to pull a fast one.

In the early part of his tirade, Haig let on that he'd been having discussions with Northrop. He didn't elaborate but said something like "what do you think I've been talking about with them?" He was also angry that Zhang Wenjin had "sneaked in" to see Judge Clark while he was out of town.

Throughout this rant, John said nothing. He had gone to West Point with Haig and worked with him at the NSC when Haig was Kissinger's deputy and John was the NSC China person. Great leader that he was once we got into a real crisis over Taiwan arms -- particularly up on Capitol Hill -- John wasn't questioning the Secretary that day.

I felt I had to. It was too important. I told Haig, "Mr. Secretary, you are ratcheting this up just as tight as you can get it; and with every turn of the ratchet you are increasing the prospects for failure." That started an extended argument, with Haig defending his idea and me telling him it would not work. One thing that I came to love about Haig was that you really could go at it with him. As he continued to argue for the "F-5E(T)," I said "You will be caught in a ludicrous charade, Mr. Secretary. It will be a fiasco. The Chinese will see through it." "No they won't," he countered, to which I said "Yes they will; and if they don't they've got friends who'll make them see through it," to which he said "Who?" I said, "Holbrooke," at which point he grimaced, or grunted disapproval, but said

nothing.

At some point he said something to the effect that he'd already told Zhang Wenjin in their New York meeting what he had planned to do and Zhang had agreed. I said "No sir, you didn't." "Yes he did," said Haig. "No he didn't," I replied. "I was there. I took the notes!"

That was the way it went, with no one else saying anything. At one point Haig went out of the meeting to a private office off his formal one and took a call from France's foreign minister. As I heard him call out, "Claude...", I turned to Stoessel and the others and said, "If we have to sell the F-5G somewhere, let's force the Koreans to take it. Gleysteen says they're not going to buy F-16s." Bill had reported that in the early days of the administration when I was still in RA and he was still our ambassador in Seoul. I don't remember if anyone responded. I do know that Stoessel later nominated me for a Superior honor award for my work on the Taiwan arms issue, and I was the only State office director invited to his retirement ceremony, at which Reagan spoke. Buckley may have said something, but the entire meeting ended up being Haig versus me.

Anyway, Haig returned, and in the end I lost. The meeting had gone on for at least 45 minutes. We left with the Secretary's view unchanged, on course to sell the FX to Taiwan in his crazily disguised way. I tried to get John to ask for another meeting so we could try again to dissuade the Secretary from pursuing this course; but John refused, saying the decision had been made.

We did, however, get a second hearing. I had relayed what had happened to colleagues in PM, and I think that included talking with Rick Burt, who had not been present at the first meeting. In any case, Rick agreed with me that what the Secretary had in mind wouldn't work and that we had to talk him out of it. Looking back, I find it curious that whoever was first floating this F5-E 404, or F-5E(T) idea was up in PM; but Burt opposed it and, without my doing anything to put him up to it, he asked for a meeting with the Secretary to discuss the matter.

Also curious, looking back, is that I've always suspected Burt of being behind the idea of selling China arms to gain PRC acquiescence in an FX sale to Taiwan. Whether or not that was true, in early October, he was opposed to an FX sale. Perhaps I was wrong about his earlier position, or maybe the events of the summer convinced him the strategy wouldn't work.

So, about a week after the first meeting, John, I, Burt and the Secretary met again. I'm not sure who else, if anyone, was there; Jerry Bremer maybe. Burt led off and did much of the talking, with me supporting. In the course of it, he focused on Northrop's problem and brought up ideas for helping Northrop get other business to offset its loss. One was to try to get DOD to buy F-5Gs for the Air Force's "aggressor squadron" at Nellis Air Force Base, where US pilots flew training missions against other Air Force pilots, mimicking Soviet tactics. Burt also mentioned the likelihood that DOD would make a big buy of Northrop's F-18 fighter, then being thought of for both the Navy and Air Force, as well as the possibility that Northrop would get the contract for the B-2 bomber, which it later did.

Nevertheless, Haig was unmoved. Finally, Burt said to him, “Mr. Secretary, we’ve given you all of our reasons why we think you shouldn’t do this. Can you tell us your reasons for why we should?” Haig looked like a trapped animal. He had a way of peering down at you over his glasses with his face screwed up, and he was doing that. “You know,” he said to Burt, “You know.” “No, Mr. Secretary,” said Burt, “We don’t know. Tell us.” The Secretary looked around the room, even at the windows and curtains, making me think he was flashing back to White House days and somehow feared the office might be bugged. Then, without saying a word, he held out his right hand, palm up, and rubbed his thumb against his fingers in that gesture that means “money.” So there it was. It all came down money. Once again we lost, and I was tasked with writing talking points for Haig to use at Cancun.

Going out the door Burt said to the Secretary, “You know, Mr. Secretary, we have to give you our views. We have to give you our best judgments.” Haig said, “I know; and that young man,” he said, pointing to me, “gave it to me pretty good last time.” So we had our marching instructions, and I went off to draft the Secretary’s talking points for Cancun. After these meetings, to the best of my knowledge there was never a State Department meeting with Haig on China at which I was not present.

Q. So you felt you’d lost out to what some call “The Military-Industrial Complex.”

ROPE: More or less, but I’d like to make a couple of things clear. First, particularly in view of my several years supporting US business efforts in China, and given my military and political-military experience, I had nothing against Northrop and was sympathetic to their position. Unfortunately, in this case it was just not possible to meet their needs if we were to avoid a downgrading of US-China relations. If the President hadn’t decided to sell F-16s to Venezuela, we might never have gotten into this bind; but there it was.

Second, I never really faulted Secretary Haig for the position he was taking. To me, he was in a very difficult spot, seeing the risks with the Chinese but seeing also the pressures at home and trying his very best to get what his President wanted. His effort to “buy off” the Chinese with weapons sales, assuming as I do that this was his gambit, hadn’t worked; and now he was still trying to pull a rabbit out of the hat with the F-5E(T). I just didn’t see how it could possibly work, and it was my job, as a loyal subordinate, to tell him so, just as Rick Burt did and said in reference to both of us.

Q. What did you write for his talking points in Cancun?

ROPE: Pure sophistry. They were points that most probably would be used with Huang Hua, who would be with Zhao Ziyang at Cancun. In essence, they said we had decided not to sell the FX to Taiwan. Of course, the points said, all aircraft change over time, as they go through improvements and upgrades. “In time, for example, the twin-engine F-5E will become a thing of the past, as the aircraft became a single-engine plane.” Something like that. I worded the points as smoothly as I could. They should be in the record somewhere.

Q. When was Cancun and what was the result?

ROPE: The Cancun Summit was held on Thursday and Friday, October 22 and 23, and in the course of it President Reagan and Zhao met over lunch. John wasn't there. Tony Wayne was and gave me a read-out afterward. If I recall correctly, Zhao tended to filibuster -- I suppose about North-South issues -- and didn't make a good impression on the President. In retrospect, this rings true, because I watched Zhao with Shultz in 1983 and my feeling was he didn't know how to deal with foreigners at all. He was a domestic guy. He wore dark glasses with Shultz and didn't look him in the eye. Maybe he had an eye problem; I don't know. He tended to look off into the space as he spoke and had a patronizing air. It wasn't much of a dialog.

With Reagan, he did not address the Taiwan arms issue until the very end. At that point, Tony told me, he mumbled something about Taiwan arms and said Huang Hua would give Haig a paper presenting China's position.

I think Haig came directly home after the Summit, because my memory is that he called John and me up to his office on a Saturday morning, which would have been October 24. When we got there, he said, "Those were great talking points, guys, but I never got to use them. Now what do we do about this?" Or maybe it was, "Now what do we do about this disaster?" In any case, he handed over the paper he'd been given by Huang Hua. It, too, will be in the record somewhere.

Q. What did it say?

ROPE: I don't recall the full text, only the key points. It demanded that the United States set a date certain on which all US arms sales to Taiwan must end. It did not say when that date should be but added that, between the present, i.e., 1981 or whenever the two sides agreed, and that ending date, arms sales must gradually decline, coming to a final termination on the specified date. This, the paper said, represented the "maximum extent of Chinese tolerance."

Q. What was your reaction?

ROPE: It was no surprise to me that Beijing would at some point draw a line in the sand over the F-X and do so in a way the Administration could not ignore; but I never anticipated anything like the form in which they did it. It was unlike the Chinese to do anything other than demand that arms sales cease immediately. Maybe Deng or his people had added the softener about a gradual decline. In any case, the FX issue had reached the point I had worried about since June; and Haig recognized that. Huang Hua was coming to Washington in about a week, after a few stops in Latin America, and we would then have to respond.

Q: Today is 13 April and we are returning to our conversation with Bill Rope. Bill, last time I think we broke off as the Chinese were indicating strong opinions at Cancun on the

whole issue of arms sales to Taiwan. What happened after that.

ROPE: I'm going to tell you what I remember happening, and then I'll tell you why it's hard for me to believe it took place quite that way.

My memory is that, in that first Saturday meeting, after Haig returned from Cancun, after he said "what are we going to do about this?" I said, "This is what we can do. Next February 28 will be the tenth anniversary of the Shanghai Communiqué; and we can agree to issue a Tenth Anniversary US-China communiqué on that date. In it, we can rehearse all the good things the US and China agree on, including opposition to the Soviets and common positions on global issues. Then, within it, we can include a small portion dealing with Taiwan arms sales; and while we cannot agree to end them, we can agree to gradually reduce them, over time." My reasoning took account of the high volume of arms sold by the US to Taiwan in that second year after Normalization, which would give us a very high ceiling from which to make gradual reductions. Our concession on this point would include a critically important proviso, linking our statement of intent to a continuation of China's peaceful policy toward Taiwan, as articulated on September 30, 1981 by Ye Jianying. My memory is that I proposed this and the Secretary accepted it on the spot.

That's my memory. Looking back, I don't know how I could have reacted so quickly with all of that. I think that, over the years, I must have compressed memories of two or more meetings into one. What I can say for sure is that it was I alone who suggested the idea of a tenth anniversary communiqué, and my intent was that it be a significant, celebratory joint statement into which we could insert something dealing with the Taiwan arms issue. We would do it in a way that would be mutually acceptable but would not compromise our ability to carry out the TRA.

The idea of an anniversary communiqué itself was not uniquely mine. Chas had included it on a list of possible initiatives for the coming year that he gave me when he turned the China Desk over to me. I had kept it in mind but never proposed it, given the more immediate task of persuading people, including the Secretary, not to sell the FX. I saw, however, that such a communiqué could be a vehicle for trying to bury, as much as possible, some kind of US statement that would bow in Beijing's direction on Taiwan arms sales while not promising anything incompatible with the TRA.

Again, I had in mind that our arms sales to Taiwan in the year following the end of our treaty with the ROC had been so high that we would have no need to provide arms at that level to Taiwan every year. That, in turn, would give us room to drift down gradually, assuming we were to adopt something like the approach Huang's paper demanded. I know I pointed this out early on. Another thought already in my mind was that we could reduce pressures from Beijing on Taiwan arms sales by helping Taipei gain the capacity to manufacture its own defense equipment, including aircraft. Technology transfer would be one means, and there were other possible things we could do.

In the summer of 1981, for example, we approved a non-military sale of Garrett aircraft

engines to Taiwan, for use in trainer aircraft, with the precise idea -- at least in my mind, and I think Scott Hallford and I discussed it -- that these might ultimately form a basis for producing engines for indigenously-manufactured military aircraft, perhaps along the lines of Israel's Kfir. Taiwan did develop an indigenous fighter program in the 1980s that could have been a success. Unfortunately, DOD, in the first Bush administration, encouraged Taiwan to kill it, and Taiwan was more than happy to do so, knowing it would continue to receive aircraft from us.

We can discuss that at some point; it happened when I was PDAS in PM, and I disagreed with my DOD interlocutors, feeling they were mainly interested in selling US aircraft to Taiwan and not sympathetic to the goal of helping make Taiwan self-sufficient.

To come back to 1981, I also thought promoting Israeli-Taiwan cooperation in arms technology could be a means of reducing the need for high levels of US sales. And to return to the Garrett engine sale, serendipitously, Garrett was an Arizona company and Senator Goldwater was pushing it. It didn't hurt to be forthcoming on an approval he wanted, though this was not the main reason for letting it go through. The main reason was as I've stated it.

In any case, it was I, without having discussed it with John, who proposed to the Secretary the idea of a US-China communiqué that ultimately led to our August 17, 1982 document. I did so in John's presence in a meeting with Haig, and Haig accepted it. The essence of the idea was incorporated into talking points I wrote for Haig to use when Huang came to Washington, and the points included a statement clearly signaling that we did not intend to sell the FX to Taiwan. Those points should be in the archives, along with a memo I drafted with Scott Hallford on Thanksgiving morning from the Secretary to the President, putting forward most if not all of the elements that ultimately became the August 17 Communiqué. Alone in our office that morning, using our secure Wang computers, Scott and I laid out the entire strategy, without clerical help. We had it taken to John's house for approval and forwarding to Haig, and we were home in time for dinner with our families.

Q: Today is 13 April and we are returning to our conversation with Bill Rope. Bill, last time I think we broke off with the aftermath of Cancun. You had proposed a strategy for dealing with China's demands and you mentioned a memo you later drafted for the Secretary and the President, with Scott Hallford on Thanksgiving Day. Before Thanksgiving, however, Huang Hua was coming to Washington. How did things unfold then?

ROPE: Yes. I jumped ahead to the memo written for the President, that became our basic approach for the next ten months and led to the issuance of the August 17, 1982 Communiqué dealing with US arms sales to Taiwan.

We had to decide what to tell Huang, and I had to write talking points for it. Those are in the record. The key points were that we had considered what Huang's paper said and could not agree to set a date certain for ending arms sales to Taiwan. No US

administration could do that, Haig said. We could, however, tell Huang that we did not intend to increase, “in qualitative or quantitative terms,” our sales of arms to Taiwan beyond the levels of recent years. To that we added that so long as China pursued its peaceful policy toward Taiwan we expected the need for these sales to diminish, gradually, over time; and we made one highly significant statement: “The FX issue can be dealt with within this context.” Taken together, this amounted to a statement that we would not sell the FX to Taiwan, since it was qualitatively superior to anything we had ever sold before.

I don’t recall if these points were approved anywhere outside the State Department or whether the Secretary cleared them with the President. The words, “in qualitative or quantitative terms” came directly from Haig. My initial draft of the points said simply that, in calculating the levels of our sales, “...of course inflation must be taken into account.” Haig didn’t like the idea of mentioning inflation directly. When I argued that we had to have something in the points to cover price increases over time, he said, “All right: ‘We do not expect to exceed, in qualitative or quantitative terms, the levels of recent years.’” I took that down and it went straight into the points. That’s what the Secretary said to Huang Hua, and that’s how those words, ended up in our statement of intent in the August 17 Communiqué. As for the statement that the FX issue could be dealt with in that context, I know that I, John and the Secretary all agreed on this, but I am not sure it was cleared anywhere else -- maybe in PM, with whom we had to clear a great deal of what we did. I think, but am not 100 percent positive, that in our Thanksgiving memo for Haig to send to the President we included a statement to that effect. Again, that memo should be in the archives.

Q. What was Huang’s reaction when Haig delivered those points?

ROPE: Not much, immediately, because right after the Secretary’s presentation the two men had to leave for the White House, where Huang was to call on the President. The Secretary, Huang, and Ambassador to China Art Hummel, back from Beijing for the meeting, headed to the White House. I assume John went, too, though I don’t recall. There would be a second Haig-Huang meeting in the afternoon.

Then things got tense. Hummel came back from the meeting with the President quite shaken and reported to Scott and me that, in the meeting, Huang had made an additional demand. He had told the President that he and Haig could discuss China’s demand for a date certain for a total cessation of US arms sales to Taiwan; but in the meantime, if the US were to sell anything to Taiwan before reaching agreement on China’s demand, “there will be serious consequences, and you will be responsible” -- words to that effect. In short, Huang added to China’s demands an ultimatum threatening the President with the implicit possibility of a downgrading of US-China relations, ala the Dutch model, if we were to sell as much as a nut or a bolt to Taiwan before working something out with Beijing.

Q: That sounds serious.

ROPE: It was, and it infuriated us all. Once Haig was back in the building, John and I were called to his office to discuss what to do next. We were very angry, especially given what the Secretary had conceded that morning, that Huang had upped the ante and threatened the President. It was reckless and could have ignited a full-fledged US-China confrontation right there if Reagan, who didn't like threats, had reacted strongly or decided to sell the FX to Taiwan then and there. We were all the more furious that Huang had held back this further demand until he saw the President, without saying a word to the Secretary in advance. We thought it called for a strong riposte in the afternoon. We agreed, however, that we should tell Huang we were willing to hold further discussions on the Taiwan arms issue. I was tasked to draft tough points for the second meeting, and I did.

Q: What did the points say?

ROPE: They questioned Huang's, and therefore the Chinese government's, good faith, in just those words. "Up until now," Haig said as he delivered them, "we thought you wanted to find a solution for this problem; but now you've made us wonder if you really do.... We don't know what your intentions are... You have caused us to question your good faith, your sincerity." That's close to the way the presentation opened up, and the Secretary delivered the points, word for word, in as tough and angry a manner as we intended. It was the only time I ever saw Huang Hua shaken. His hands were trembling, and he faltered a bit in his reply. He denied that China did not want to find a solution and must have said something good about wanting to preserve US-China relations, though I don't recall. In any case, Haig told him we would agree to hold further talks on the issue, and Huang agreed. I think we also agreed the talks could be held in Beijing, with Art Hummel representing our side.

It was a very tough session. In closing, we discussed what we would say to the press after the meeting and agreed on something like "full and frank exchange of views," etc. I remember Huang wanted to add something I didn't like, but Haig said in an aside, "He's got his domestic audience, too," and did not object.

That led, in December, to initial discussions in Beijing.

Q: What was the broader reaction in Washington to all this? What were your next steps bureaucratically? At some point you had to bring others, and certainly the President, on board with your thinking.

ROPE: I think most people, whatever they thought before, understood that we were now into a serious confrontation with Beijing and had to take seriously what the Chinese were demanding. There was, however, universal agreement that we could not agree to a date certain for ending arms sales, if for no reason other than its incompatibility with the Taiwan Relations Act. I think there was also an unspoken consensus among political appointees in national security circles that the President couldn't afford to lose, or be seen to have seriously jeopardized, what another Republican president, Richard Nixon, had gained. Some said that to me quite directly. By the way, I'm pretty sure Jim Lilley, and

perhaps also Rich Armitage, sat in on Haig's talks with Huang.

I cannot recall more than I've said about how we got to the basic outlines of what we would propose to the Chinese in January, that ultimately became the August 17 Communiqué. I know, as I said, that I proposed a communiqué along the lines I've mentioned, and that the understanding was that, due to the high level of arms sales in 1980 we would have a high ceiling within which we could fit more than enough arms sales to meet Taiwan's legitimate needs while gradually drifting downward over time, all linked to Ye Jianying's Nine-point proposal, and all to be embodied in a broader, more positive US-China communiqué. Although we didn't discuss it after that early exchange in Haig's office, leading to "qualitative and quantitative terms," I always intended that dollar amounts would be adjusted for inflation, and we did that in announcing our first sales after the Communiqué was issued.

And we had enough consensus that, by Thanksgiving morning, Scott and I put those ideas together in the memo I've mentioned. Quite a bit of that memo was leaked in January 1982, by the way, in an article in the Los Angeles Times.

Q: Did the President agree to all that the Secretary sent him?

ROPE: So far as I know, he did. Still hanging out there, though, was exactly how and when to decide the FX issue. Northrop was still lobbying hard for it; and the pressures from people like Senator Glen and others in Congress remained strong. Taiwan was also lobbying hard. Sometime that fall, Fred Chien, Vice Foreign Minister in Taipei, came to Washington. He was a slick guy, with excellent English. He'd gone to Yale, and I always liked to remind him that we were "qian hou tongxue," classmates who'd gone to the same institution at different times. He brought with him an MFA colleague named John Yang or Wang or Chang -- I forget his last name -- who was said to be Chiang Ching-Kuo's illegitimate son. We had an exchange at Don Ferguson's house one evening that set Fred off.

Q: Who was Don Ferguson?

ROPE: He was the head of the Taiwan Desk, which you'll remember was nominally under EA/RA. I believe it was called the "Taiwan Coordination Staff." Fred was in town making the rounds on Capitol Hill and elsewhere, and Don organized an informal dinner with him, John, and a few others from EA, at Don's home one evening.

During that evening, Fred told me rather patronizingly, "We don't have to have the FX. You just need to make up your minds about it." I said it was going to be a hard decision because if we sold the FX to Taiwan we'd likely have major problems with Beijing. Fred disagreed. The Chinese didn't really care about the FX, he said. They were just bluffing.

I told Fred, that might be true but added, "Suppose for the sake of argument they're not, and we sell the FX, and they downgrade relations with us and kick out our ambassador like they did with the Dutch over the submarine sale. Suppose they do that. Then, when

that happens, a Republican president will have lost or seriously damaged what another Republican president gained, that was considered one of his greatest achievements. Then there will be all kinds of pressures on us to undo the damage. At that point, Beijing's price will likely be stiffer than just the FX. It could well demand that we stop selling arms to you altogether, and we'd have a much larger problem. I don't know where it would lead, but I don't think it would be to Taiwan's benefit."

That got Fred really agitated. As he responded, he first called me "Bill," then "Rope," then "Ropp!"

Q: What else was going on?

ROPE: At some point after Huang Hua's visit, I think in November, the Joint Chiefs of Staff came down against selling the FX to Taiwan and said so in a memo to Weinberger. Their reasoning was that Taiwan didn't need the FX and the potential damage to US-China relations of a sale was too great to justify the risk. Copies reached EA and PM, and our two bureaus agreed to put the FX question on a list of proposed topics PM would send to the Secretary for his weekly breakfast with Weinberger. PM sent the standard memo, which included talking points I did on the FX. They called for Haig to propose that, in view of the Chiefs' recommendation, and what we knew would be the outcome of the NIE process, he and Weinberger should go jointly to the President with a recommendation not to sell the plane.

This produced another explosion from Haig. Burt, I and I'm not sure who else were called to his office -- I think John may have been away. The Secretary led off by saying "I don't think you guys work in the same building as me!" It turned out he was angry at "Cap" over something Weinberger had just done during a trip to Morocco; and who knows what else may have been going on. In any case, Haig fulminated and absolutely refused to entertain our suggestion that he make that proposal to SecDef. At one point I said, "Mr. Secretary, this is a very tough issue, and we've been working so hard on it for so long. Just when the consensus we want is coming together, I don't think this is the time to make enemies." Haig looked at me and said, "Don't you tell me how to suck eggs!" Debriefing his staff, afterwards, Burt said, "The Secretary was indulging his more self-destructive side." Anyway, the JCS memo was another nail in the FX coffin.

By December in EA, we were increasingly confident the President would decide against the FX. That sense was boosted by the problems Richard Allen was having -- over a wristwatch he'd accepted and \$10,000 found in his safe that he couldn't satisfactorily explain -- problems that ultimately led to his resignation. Nevertheless, with the FX question still not settled, we had little more to say to the Chinese when Art Hummel and Zhang Wenjin held their first formal discussions on the Taiwan arms issue in early December in Beijing. Meanwhile, another matter had to be addressed. It involved a large package of military spare parts for Taiwan that had been held up and had steadily increased in value over the course of a year.

Q: What was that about?

ROPE: At some point in early 1981, as he managed various Taiwan-related issues, and worried that Taiwan arms sales could negatively affect US-China relations before the Reagan administration could get its legs on the ground with the PRC, John put a hold on all arms sales to Taiwan. I was in RA then. He kept the hold in place through the year, as Beijing's focus on the arms sales issue intensified. The hold included spare parts Taiwan badly needed, and by December the price tag for the value of the spare parts package was nearing \$100 million. John was feeling pressure to lift his hold, and I saw it as a means of killing two birds with one stone.

Q: What do you mean?

ROPE: First, we needed to show the Chinese that we wouldn't be pushed around and there were limits to our willingness to compromise on Taiwan arms sales. Their demand for a date certain for cessation of all sales was tough enough; but Huang Hua's additional threat to the President, demanding that we not sell anything to Taiwan until the matter was resolved, was beyond the pale. So, as a matter of principle, and certainly as a negotiating tactic, we needed to show Beijing we wouldn't be cowed. Approving a \$100 million sale of spare parts would do that, without giving hard liners in Beijing enough to justify downgrading US-China relations. As I said with some enjoyment at the time, "They'll never dare downgrade over spare parts!"

Second, making the sale would please a lot of people on the Hill. It would also show the Rich Armitages of the world and skeptics in the Department, on Paul Wolfowitz's Policy Planning staff and elsewhere, that we didn't just knuckle under whenever the Chinese demanded something. The higher the value of the package went, the better I liked it.

John and I must have had conversations to this effect, though I don't now recall. He might not have viewed things quite as aggressively as I did tactically; but he certainly felt that, given the requirements of the TRA and the domestic political environment, he had little choice but to agree to the spare parts sale. I don't recall the exact decision process we followed, but the Secretary must have been involved and the President would have been informed. So, in December, not long after Hummel and Zhang had their first meeting, we sent to the Hill the informal notification that routinely precedes, by sixty days, a formal notification of any arms sale exceeding \$25 million. This became a matter of public record, and it incensed Beijing.

I think Hummel had one more session with Zhang before Christmas at which Zhang strongly protested the spare parts sale; but one way or another the Chinese let us know loud and clear how angry they were that we'd ignored their demand not to sell anything before reaching agreement with them. No doubt Huang Hua was personally affronted and lost some face. Maybe higher ups also lost face. Some might say our move was counterproductive, because making Chinese lose face makes it harder to get what you want from them; but what they had done to us was unacceptable, leaving us no leeway and putting us in a position where we, in effect, would lose face if we acquiesced.

So that is what happened; and, as anticipated, the Chinese did not go beyond making a protest. People like Rich Armitage applauded what we'd done.

One other thing was going on. In December I began working up a set of principles governing our intentions with regard to Taiwan and Taiwan arms sales. These were principles we could give Beijing and include in a US-China communiqué. I did this on my own initiative, though I must have mentioned it to John. Since we were planning to propose a 10th anniversary communiqué, with a portion dealing with Taiwan arms sales, it would be natural to start preparing for it.

The principles included points we had made to Huang as well as other positions we could include in a communiqué, such as having no intention of infringing on China's sovereignty or interfering in China's internal affairs, or pursuing a policy of "two Chinas" or "one China one Taiwan." All of those were consistent, more or less, with what we had been saying since the Shanghai Communiqué. Aside from Scott, there were few people whom I could consult about this, but I had one important friend and colleague whose judgment I especially valued. He was Al Romberg, then State Department Spokesman. From my first days studying Chinese, through the brief time we were together when I was first in the China Mainland Section in Hong Kong, and through the days when I was in INR and he was in S/P, I'd always liked, respected and looked up to Al. That remains true today.

We were on the same basic wavelength about how to deal with -- and what to say to -- the Chinese; but Al was more experienced than I and a bit more conservative. He also knew well the catechism of formulations regarding Taiwan that the US had used in the past. This made him a valuable source of counsel and a check on me as I tried to put together new formulations aimed at alleviating Beijing's concerns without compromising past positions. Of course, we were in new territory, since the US and China had not settled the matter of arms sales to Taiwan at the time of Normalization and we were now attempting to do so.

So I shared my draft principles with Al and incorporated many of his suggestions. I continued to do that throughout our negotiations over the Communiqué. I may also have shared the draft principles with Charlie Neuhauser, who, as I've mentioned, became another valued and loyal source of counsel.

After the FX decision was made in January, these principles went into instructions for meetings John held with Zhang Wenjin in Beijing following the decision. Although it's jumping ahead, I was very pleased, when I went to the Embassy on our first morning in Beijing to pick up the final version of those instructions, cabled from Washington, and found that President Reagan wanted us to make two changes to the principles before we gave them to the Chinese. I wished he hadn't asked for one, which we of course made, but I was elated to see -- in writing for the first time -- concrete evidence that the President had personally gone over and approved what we'd be presenting.

Q: So when did the FX decision get made, and how was it arrived at?

ROPE: First things first. Christmas week came. When that happens, all Washington stops for holiday parties; and State was no exception. Haig came to EA's party, the first time I'd seen a Secretary come to such an affair. When he saw me dancing with one of our secretaries, he cried out, "No wonder China relations are going to hell!" That was the kind of a guy he was. One time on a spring Saturday morning when John and I walked into his office for a meeting, he greeted us in his tennis togs and burst into song: "Chinatown, my Chinatown, when the lights are low...."

I can't speak to exactly how the decision not to sell the FX crystalized in late December, because I wasn't there and don't remember what details I may have learned afterward. My family and I were in the British Virgin Islands. When I got back, Scott told me things were moving toward a decision. I assume he'd learned this from John, who would have got it from the Secretary. Perhaps the Secretary worked it out with the President privately. One thing is certain. It did come up in high-level discussions on the crisis looming in Poland, and the Polish crisis was our justification for not selling Taiwan the FX. At a time when we might be heading into a confrontation with Moscow, the argument ran, we could not afford a breakdown with Beijing.

The decision was by then inevitable. The final version of the NIE had come out, saying Taiwan did not need the FX. That would square the decision with the TRA. The second NIE that Jim Lilly commissioned, dealing with the effect of an FX sale on Deng Xiaoping's position, was also done. It said an FX sale would be damaging to Deng, seriously weakening his ability to carry out his reform program. Since there was widespread, if not unanimous, agreement within the USG that Deng's survival and his ability to carry out his opening to the West were important to US interests, this strengthened the rationale for not selling the plane.

Sometime in the first week of January, either a Wednesday or a Thursday, January 6 or 7, Haig summoned John and me and probably Burt or his deputy Bob Blackwill to his office. I don't remember the details of the meeting, but I think we all knew what was coming and Haig was just giving out marching orders. I was tasked to do a Presidential decision memorandum presenting choices for additional fighter aircraft that would meet Taiwan's needs. It was understood that the President would approve a sale of additional F-5Es instead of the F-5G; but we needed to give him an options paper for the formal decision.

I had no idea what a presidential decision memo should look like. That was the NSC's department. State had no format for it. Al Adams, one of Bremer's deputies with whom I coordinated often and who was an expert on paper-flow and formats, didn't know. So I went down to my office after 6 p.m., made up my own format and wrote what I remember as a 1 ½ page memo. It gave the President three options. One was to sell the FX, i.e. Northrop's F-5G. That would meet Taiwan's defense needs as called for in the TRA, but it would risk a downgrading of US-China relations. The second was to sell additional, slightly upgraded F-5Es, with a heads up display and some other little things that could be done. This, too, would meet Taiwan's needs but would not risk a US-China

downgrading. The third was to provide Taiwan with used F-104Gs, which Germany had declared excess and which we could procure and resell to Taiwan. That would also avert a downgrading but was basically a throw-away. It was clear the President would decide between the first two; and since the F-5E would meet Taiwan's needs without risking a break with Beijing, it was the obvious choice. If there was a recommendation in the memo, and I think there was, that was the recommended option.

I wrote the memo, John approved it, and we sent it up to S/S for the Secretary that evening. I've always assumed it went to the President intact.

Q: What did the President decide?

ROPE: I'll tell you in a minute, but first a brief digression. The next day, Carl Ford, whom I've mentioned when he was in S/P and who was by then back on the Hill working for John Glenn, called on me to make another pitch for the FX. I knew we were about to decide against the sale but couldn't tell Carl. I told him I wished very much the decision could come out the way wanted but was afraid it wouldn't. Then I said to him, "Why don't you join Freeman and me? We're the true conservatives, because we want to preserve as much as we possibly can for Taiwan. We don't want to harm Taiwan. Our old teachers are in Taiwan. We want Taiwan to be safe. The problem is, we believe the best way to do that is to keep Taiwan from becoming an issue in US-PRC relations; because when that happens, Taiwan inevitably loses." It's funny -- many years later, when Baker named me to be head of AIT in Taiwan, I would have gone there and tried to do the best I could for Taiwan within the framework of US-China relations. Unfortunately, sometimes when you're working within that framework you're attacked for being pro-PRC, as I clearly was when Senator Helms intervened to undo my AIT appointment.

In any case, later that day, I think it was a Friday but it might have been a Thursday, Haig went to the White House to meet with the President. On returning, he called John and me, and I think Rick Burt or Bob Blackwill, to his office. Jerry Bremer was also there. I expected Haig to tell us the President had made his decision; but what he conveyed was cleverer.

Q: What was that?

ROPE: He said the President had not made a decision -- though he clearly had -- and would instead take the memorandum to Camp David and make his decision over the weekend. The unspoken assumption was that Reagan would decide as we had recommended.

In the meantime, we were to prepare to go into action as soon as the decision was made. John was to leave immediately for Beijing, where he would inform the Chinese. Instructions were to go to Jim Lilley -- who had left the NSC and was about to arrive in Taipei to head AIT Taiwan -- to inform the Taiwan government, practically on his arrival. Congressional leaders were to be briefed, and an announcement was to be prepared for Al Romberg to make once these first three things had been accomplished. The reason I'm

not sure of whether this meeting was on a Thursday or a Friday is that it required production of a lot of written documents; and this was such a close-hold matter, as was most of the work I've been describing, that I was inevitably the principal drafter, with an approval process of John and the Secretary, at a minimum, above me. There were also, by this time, clearances to be obtained from PM; and maybe the Congressional Relations Bureau, where we had a very good ally in DAS Jim Montgomery.

Q: What specifically did you have to get done?

ROPE: One was an instruction cable telling John what to do in Beijing and giving him specific talking points for use with the Chinese. That would have to be cleared, at least within the State Department, and approved at the White House. He would be authorized to tell his Chinese interlocutors that the President had decided not to sell the FX to Taiwan and to present to them the principles I've mentioned. He was also to tell them we were prepared to embody those principles in a formal US-China communiqué as part of a larger communiqué he would propose, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Shanghai Communiqué.

That cable had to be drafted by me and approved by John; and it would have been very much an iterative process. Though we were almost always on the same wavelength, and a lot of times John would just sign off on what I sent to him, or do so with very few edits, when it came to this kind of document he was very much involved. He might have liked what I gave him on sight, but more likely he called me to his office to work on precise wording and add his own personal touch. In our discussions, I've talked a lot about myself and what I said and did, and I will take credit for the basic concepts and most of the ideas I've been discussing, as well as the key exchanges with the Secretary; but John was an experienced Washington operator with years of experience dealing with the Chinese. He was very much engaged in working out all our positions and how we would articulate them. We were very different people, but we had a close relationship going back to USLO days, and I always thought we were an excellent team. I loved John Holdridge to the day he died.

Having said this, I have to acknowledge that my account of the events leading up to the FX decision and of John's mission to Beijing, as well as subsequent events, has deviated, and may frequently deviate, from that of John's in his book Crossing the Divide, relevant pages of which I reviewed this morning. While I do not wish, out of loyalty, to contradict anything John wrote, there are many points on which our memories differ significantly. One simple example is that John said he was surprised when Haig told Huang Hua, in their first session in Washington in October, that we would not increase the quality or quantity of our arms sales to Taiwan, to which John added that Haig had never discussed this with him or any of his associates. As I've said, that statement to Huang had been thoroughly discussed among the three of us before Huang came to Washington. John was present when Haig dictated to me the words "in qualitative or quantitative terms." I can only remember one minor instance, in February or March of 1982, when I was called to Haig's office, for a brief exchange, without John being there.

Q: Memories do differ. Sometimes you wonder if you were in the same meeting.

ROPE: Memories are fallible. I'm speaking to you 34 years later. I'm trying as hard as I can to be as accurate as I can and to be clear when I cannot remember things precisely. I should add that as I've prepared for these discussions I've normally avoided reading any other participants' accounts, in order to ensure that I'm speaking to you purely from my own memory. I did remember, however, that when John's book came out he said a number of things that I did not remember as being accurate -- in fact I had gone over his manuscript in advance, at his request, and pointed out those points at which his account and my memory significantly diverged. He did not, however, change his account.

One more thing I might add. Over the years, as I paid a price during my career and endured criticism from some quarters for my role in all of this, I've thought with pride of the many documents I drafted that are in the archives. So are records of meetings with the Chinese -- who was present, when they occurred, what was said, etc. The many things written in the US and Chinese press at the time are also on the public record. I'm proud of what I was able to do in those days, and I believe any historian looking at the documents will be able to see it. In the end -- and I'm jumping ahead here -- Jesse Helms and others of his ilk were able, effectively, to end my career because of my work during this period. But I've always remained proud and unbowed. To me it's the ultimate compliment to even suggest that I was so effective that I could manipulate the likes of Alexander Haig, Ronald Reagan, and George Shultz into doing my bidding.

Q: I guess you were a Svengali!

ROPE: Let me digress to one more thing here, indicative of the climate of the times and that gives some insight into the level of honesty of two columnists whose work appeared regularly in the Washington Post.

Q: Tell me.

ROPE: Lots of so-called conservatives on the Hill, like Helms and Goldwater, didn't like the FX decision. Neither did columnists on the right. George Will said it was the work of "Carterite holdovers" in the State Department. So did Richard Viguerie's Human Events, a right-wing publication that was paid considerable attention in those days. It might have been after the FX decision, but I think more likely after we issued the August 17 Communiqué that an article in Human Events listed the "Gang of Five" whom it portrayed as the bad guys behind it all. They were Holdridge, Hummel, Shoesmith, Freeman, and me, and there were pictures of all but me. I used to tell people I didn't mind the attack but resented being presented as a "faceless bureaucrat." Shoesmith, by the way didn't belong in the "gang."

But to go back to what I was going to raise about dishonest columnists, I came back from lunch sometime after the FX decision -- after John and I had returned from Beijing -- and heard my secretary, Marian Robinson, talking to someone on the phone to whom she was giving out the names of people who worked on the China desk. I asked her what that was

about. She said, "It was somebody named Roland Evans," the columnist who, with Robert Novak, put out the Evans and Novak column. The column occasionally attacked FSOs by name, blaming them for policies Evans and Novak didn't like, even though those policies had to be approved by political leaders. In this case, Evans and Novak had decided to name the "Carterite holdovers" who had subverted "Reaganaut" policy by getting the President to veto the FX. By definition, these people couldn't be Reagan appointed people, like John or Haig. They had to have worked on China during the Carter presidency.

After getting the name list from Marian, Evans or Novak contacted Dick Holbrooke and asked him to identify those who had worked under him. When my name came up, Holbrooke told Scott later, he had said of me, "He's one of them, but he never worked for me." That was true. I'd been in the Operations Center and then in PM. So, unable to pin the Carterite holdover label on me, Evans and Novak wrote a completely false column to explain how the Carterite holdovers did their subversive work.

It said Chas Freeman, head of the China Desk under Carter, had been transferred to Beijing. From there, it continued, he sent back his subversive instructions to his former deputy Hallford, who carried them out. It was utter fabrication, of course, without an iota of truth to it. I don't have a copy of it, but Scott still does, I hope; because when he was leaving the Desk in July of '82, I had that column framed, with a brass plate underneath labeling it the "Alexander Haig Memorial Carterite Holdover Award, presented to Scott Hallford for subverting Reaganaut policy." Everyone on the Desk signed it on the matte and we gave it to Scott as a farewell gift. He went from the Desk to Manila, by the way, and from there to AIT Taiwan where he was AIT's Deputy Director for 4 years. He was very popular in Taiwan. So he emerged from his "subversive" work -- in which he was intimately involved throughout -- completely unscathed.

Q: Interesting.

ROPE: To come back to January 1982 and the instruction cable I drafted for John's meeting with the Chinese, it would have had a cover memo to the Secretary for approval, recommending that he forward the cable to the White House for the President's okay. Talking points for use with Congressional leaders also had to be prepared, and John would have approved them, too. I remember vividly an exchange with Jerry Bremer over those points. It may be that, given the close hold nature of the entire matter, we did not go through a normal intra-departmental clearance process in preparing them; because I remember taking the points up to Jerry for his approval. As he looked at them, Jerry inserted things that we could not say, either because they were untrue or would make commitments to Congress we could not keep. When I said we could not say those things, he brushed me off. When I continued to press the matter, he said "You've made your case. The decision's made," or words to that effect.

Anyone who knew or knows Jerry knows he was used to giving orders and didn't like to be questioned; but on this occasion, whatever it was he wanted was so wrong I had to face him down. I told him I'd come too far, and fought too hard, on the FX issue to let

him get in my way. He told me to get out of his office, the matter was settled. I headed out but said I was going to call Rick Burt, who I knew would side with me. Jerry called me back in and relented.

In any case, the work got done, and by Saturday morning John, I, and a delegation he was taking with him were at National Airport ready to fly to Beijing, via JFK. The other members of the group included Rich Armitage from DOD and Bob Blackwill from PM. Also with us was John Davies, head of the European Bureau desk dealing with Eastern European affairs. His role would be to brief the Chinese on events in Poland. That was window dressing -- an extension of the domestic argument linking our decision not to sell the FX to our need for good relations with China as we dealt with the Polish crisis.

I don't know if we had an NSC representative with us. Jim Lilley was gone, and I don't think his replacement, Gaston Sigur, was yet on board. If he was, he probably went along. John's special assistant, David E. Brown, was also in our group.

Q: So you and John arrive in Beijing January 10. How did that go?

ROPE: It was a Sunday night and we were tired. John and I went to Ambassador Hummel's residence to spend the night. The others went to a hotel.

The next morning I went to the Embassy to get John's instruction cable and was elated, as I've said, to see that the President had gone over it closely enough to dictate changes. That made it his document. I later learned from Scott Hallford that he had been called to Judge Clark's office to go over the cable before it was sent. It was then that Clark relayed the President's desired changes. I don't know where Haig was; perhaps Clark was Acting Secretary. He hadn't yet moved to the NSC to replace Richard Allen. The Judge had either been with the President when he approved the cable or had discussed it with him by phone.

As Clark went over the cable with Scott, Scott pointed to one of the most potentially controversial of the ten "principles." I think it dealt with a statement that we did not seek to pursue a two-China policy or a policy of one China, one Taiwan, though I'm not sure. Scott specifically asked if the President approved it. Clark responded affirmatively, saying, "Yes. He's comfortable with that." So anyone who thinks we were pulling the wool over Ronald Reagan's eyes is wrong. The president authorized the basic strategy back in November; he made the decision not to sell the FX; and he approved the points John tabled in Beijing that we ultimately incorporated in the August 17 Communiqué.

After reading through the cable, I brought it to Hummel's residence where we discussed it, probably over breakfast. Chas, Art's DCM, would likely have joined us, though I can't say for sure. John's initial meeting would be that afternoon, and Zhang Wenjin would be his interlocutor.

At the meeting, John went through his points, informing Zhang of the President's FX decision and presenting our ten "principles," saying we were prepared to state them

publicly, and proposing that we do so within a broader communiqué commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Shanghai Communiqué. Zhang's response was quite discouraging. We didn't expect the Chinese to fall all over themselves thanking us for not selling Taiwan the FX; but we did hope for something more positive than what we got. Though he was too much a gentleman to engage in long harangues as did Huang Hua, Zhang's response focused exclusively on our spare parts sale and blamed us for having poisoned the atmosphere by announcing it. He concluded by saying it would improve the atmosphere if we would state publicly three things: 1) that the spare parts sale involved no actual weapons; 2) that it had been agreed to before President Reagan and Premier Zhao met at Cancun; and 3) that we would not make further arms sales to Taiwan so long as our talks were underway.

This was very hard to take. How were we supposed to do that? The third demand was especially hard to accept. The whole point of the spare parts sale had been to make clear we couldn't be dictated to. How could we now give in on that? In retrospect, it seems clear that someone high up in the Chinese leadership had been behind the demand Huang made of the President in October and had lost face when we refused to acquiesce to it. The reference to Zhao's meeting with Reagan suggests it may have been Zhao, which in turn opens up the possibility that it originated with his patron, Deng Xiaoping.

In any case, that's what Zhang asked of us. At the end, he did acknowledge that we had made some constructive proposals and said the Chinese side would consider them; and at a welcoming dinner that night, the mood on both sides seemed better. The Chinese were clearly pleased with the FX decision, at least I got that impression from my dinner partner Ji Chaozhu. However, in the course of talking with Ji and telling him what a tough fight it had been in Washington to get that decision, I said something that set off a flap at the Residence afterward.

Q: What was that?

ROPE: I let Ji understand that the President had decided we would sell additional F5-Es instead of the F5-G. After dinner, when he reported this conversation to his higher-ups, it set off a firestorm. The problem, as the Chinese construed it, was that by making the decision that way the President had again ignored Huang's demand that we not sell anything until we had reached agreement on the Taiwan arms issue. We learned this as we were turning in at the Hummel residence. Chas was called by an MFA counterpart and told that I had told Ji we were going to sell F-5Es; and this -- coming on top of the spare parts sale -- would be very harmful to our ability to settle the Taiwan arms issue, or something to that effect. When Chas reported the call to Art Hummel, it put us into a flap. I got implied criticism from Chas for talking too much; but I think it was better to have let the Chinese know what we were about to announce than to have to deal with their reaction after the fact. As it unfolded, we were able to find a way to get around the problem.

Q: How?

ROPE: When I was summoned from my bedroom, John was already on the phone, in the Hummel bedroom, to Tom Shoesmith. He wanted Tom to have a change made in the FX announcement, scheduled for the noon briefing that day. Rather than say, as planned, that we would sell F-5Es instead of the FX, John wanted the announcement worded to say that we had decided not to sell the FX and had determined that Taiwan's needs could be satisfied through the provision of additional F-5Es, without saying we had actually decided to sell the F5-Es. I don't recall the precise formulation, but it's in the record. Al Romberg made it at the noon briefing that Monday, January 11.

12 hours ahead of DC time, late in the evening Monday night, we were literally on the brink of Alan's noon briefing; and Tom was resisting what John wanted Al to say. He had trouble seeing the need for a change, thought it wouldn't be right to say what John was asking for, and felt, in any case, that it was too late to get it to Romberg. So I got on another phone, in the Residence den, and called Alan directly, catching him just as he was preparing to leave for the podium. I got the problem across to him, and he adjusted his points accordingly. It went over fine with the press and everyone else; and it averted a crisis for us in Beijing.

Q: This shows the value of personal relationships in the way things get done.

ROPE: It absolutely does, along with the value of knowing how to move quickly outside of channels when others are obstructing. We were very fortunate to have Alan in that post at that particular time. It came in handy again two months later, when we announced the formal notification to Congress of the spare parts sale. I think I've also mentioned, in a different context, the importance of my relationship with Tony Wayne.

Q: So where did things go from there.

ROPE: I woke up in the morning thinking about Zhang's three requests and realized there might be a way for us to accommodate them without doing great harm to our position. We had already demonstrated to domestic skeptics, with our large spare parts sale, that we wouldn't cave to Beijing under pressure and had shown Beijing the dangers of pushing us too hard. Having made that point, we actually had no plans for further sales, including proceeding on the F-5Es, until we had resolved the Taiwan arms issue with Beijing. That fact was reflected in our effort the previous evening to adjust the FX announcement as we did.

It was also true that the spare parts package had its origins well before the Reagan-Zhao meeting in October at Cancun. It had grown over the year, as John held it back, but it could still be said to have been in the works before Cancun; and it was true the package contained no weapons.

So if we were to make, in some way, the three points Zhang wanted from us, we would not be straying from reality or the truth. The question was how to do it in a way that would not create problems for us at home or compromise us with Beijing. My feeling was we could manage it by having Romberg, in a low-key way, make a few comments

responsive to Zhang's request in the course of announcing our formal notification of the spare parts sale to the Congress, then due in February or March. We would have to announce the notification, and if we quietly added a few words along the lines Zhang asked for, that would be the focus of Chinese attention and rather than the announcement itself.

I put this idea forward at breakfast with John and Art Hummel, first I think with Art and then with John when he came down. I think Rich Armitage also joined us, along with Chas. We agreed on it, and I proposed to go to the Foreign Ministry that morning to tell Zhang Zai, the equivalent of a DAS under Zhang Wenjin, that we could find a way to meet Zhang Wenjin's request if that would enable the Chinese to move on and accept the proposals John was putting forward. Hummel agreed to this, too, providing Chas went with me, to preserve the Embassy's role in dealing with the Chinese in Beijing.

So I went with Chas to the MFA, laid all this out, and proposed the PRC accept our communiqué proposal, stressing that we had done a great deal to meet Chinese concerns and that we needed to work together for a mutually agreeable outcome. I presented it to Zhang Zai, with my counterpart, Zhang Wenpu, also in the room, I think. I'm not 100 percent sure of this so many years later; but what transpired was pretty much as I've described.

Q: What was the response? What happened then?

ROPE: It was positive, though I don't remember the details, and set the stage for John's second meeting with Zhang Wenjin, that afternoon.

Q: In which Zhang agreed to start negotiations on the communiqué? How did that go?

ROPE: He agreed. There was a good bit of back and forth before that, but that's where it came out. The FX announcement had been made in Washington using the changed wording we'd conveyed to Al Romberg, and Zhang still dwelt at length on spare parts and the Chinese concern that we had made a decision to sell F-5Es to Taiwan. I'm sure the meeting was well-documented in Embassy reporting.

I remember today, as clearly as if it were yesterday, the critical moment when John responded to Zhang's comments about selling F-5Es. Referring to the FX decision, John said to Zhang, "You have to understand. This is not a decision to sell. It is a decision not to sell." At that point, Bob Blackwill, sitting beside me, looked at me with alarm. I passed him a note saying, "It's okay. Tense moment, but we'll get through it." At that point, Zhang looked back at John and said, "Coming from you, Ambassador Holdridge, we accept that." John then told Zhang we could meet his three requests from the previous day, and Zhang expressed appreciation. John added, "You'll have to let me do it in my own way," and Zhang accepted that too. Then he told John the Chinese side was agreeable to doing a joint communiqué and proposed that it draft the portion dealing with John agreed, and we were on our way to what ultimately became the August 17 Communiqué.

That night, at Hummel's residence, I told John that watching him and Zhang that afternoon reminded me of the time I saw Pancho Gonzales and Frank Sedgman play an exhibition match. "They were two old pros. Both knew where all the shots were going, and neither wanted to knock the other off the court." John choked up a bit and responded, "You stick around 40 years, you learn a thing or two."

Q: So what was your next step?

ROPE: First we had one more meeting in Beijing. John was invited to call on Ji Pengfei the following afternoon. Ji had been foreign minister at the end of the Cultural Revolution and had survived the fall of the "Gang of Four." He had been promoted to the rank of State Counselor for Foreign Affairs, and perhaps his meeting with John was designed to commit higher level PRC leadership to the decision to negotiate a communiqué. Ji was a rather loathsome figure, and it wasn't a great meeting, but it probably served its purpose. That morning John Davies briefed interested Foreign Ministry personnel on the situation in Poland. John and I had no need to be there, and John asked if we could see Beijing's Lama Temple, which had been closed all the time we were at USLO. It was still closed but was going to re-open soon. The Chinese agreed, and Ji Chaozhu escorted us there.

The next day the other members of the delegation flew home, and John, David E. Brown, and I flew to Tokyo for a meeting with Japanese MFA officials. John briefed the equivalent of an under secretary, after which he lunched with his counterparts and I lunched with mine. I already had a relationship with my counterpart, Tadashi Ikeda, going back to Beijing USLO days. Throughout our negotiations with the Chinese I kept him or an officer from the Japanese embassy in Washington named Takeuchi, fully informed of what we were doing. I did so on my own, out of my belief that our relationship with Japan was the single most important US relationship in East Asia and my conviction, stemming from that, that, in the event we did have a downgrading with Beijing it would be important that the Japanese know we did all we could to avert it. This may have paid off a bit in a concrete way when Japan's Prime Minister Suzuki and Zhao Ziyang met that spring. Takeuchi proudly told me that when Zhao told Suzuki that a downgrading of US-China relations would not affect relations between China and Japan, Suzuki replied that it could not help but have a negative effect on Japan-China relations.

Q: You have got to keep your allies informed. We have talked about journalists; we have talked about briefing Congress. All these things are part of your job.

ROPE: Yes, and I did a lot of it, though on the Congressional side, while I was a participant, John was the leader. Besides accompanying him whenever he went to the Hill, I did see staffers fairly often, and I was also in regular touch with Taiwan representatives in Washington. They couldn't come to the department, and I couldn't go to their offices, but we would meet for lunch. The contact I inherited from Chas was Steve Hsu. He may have been an intelligence officer, but he was nominally a political officer at the CCNAA. I met with him at least once a month and told him all I possibly

could tell him without letting him know the precise details of what we were doing. Towards the end, he brought along another colleague whose name escapes me, and I sometimes thought they were recording our conversations. Once at the China Garden restaurant in Rosslyn they kept pushing the artificial flowers on the table towards me. Another time, they took me to lunch at a restaurant that was closed that day. It was just us having lunch, sitting in a room directly under a dome, good for reception if there was a parabolic mike up there.

When I had lunch with them after the August 17 Communiqué came out, I gave them my view that the lesson of it all was that when Taiwan pushes us for things that make it an issue between the US and PRC, Taiwan ultimately loses. When push came to shove, I said, no administration, even a Reagan administration, would give up its relationship with Big China for little Taiwan -- this said a bit more diplomatically and certainly sympathetically. The point, I said, was not to get into situations where the US had to make that choice.

Q: So you do your briefings in Japan. What then?

ROPE: On Friday night Japan time, we flew home, arriving in DC late in the day on Friday January 15. For the first few hours of the flight, John and I talked about what we needed to do next. Then he went to sleep and I spent most of the flight writing a memo to the Secretary laying it all out. When he woke up, John read and approved my draft, and I delivered it, on getting off the plane, to one of our Desk people -- I think Neil Silver -- who had it put in final and sent, after John signed off at home, to the Secretary. It was in Haig's office by Monday morning.

This caused some unpleasantness with PM. Bob Blackwill was incensed that we hadn't cleared it with PM, and he let me know in no uncertain terms. I wasn't having it, telling him that while we'd cleared similar memos with PM those memos had involved, at least tangentially, military matters involving the FX. In this case, no military issues were involved and we did not need to. Bob accused me of being arrogant. At one point, though, he said he had "the highest standards of anyone in the Department." I said, "You say that, and you accuse me of being arrogant?"

Q: But if he'd been on the trip with John, didn't he have a case?

ROPE: Yes; but to be frank we didn't want PM meddling in it, and this wasn't the first time we hadn't had a PM clearance. We didn't clear with them, for example, on the memo Scott and I did on Thanksgiving, which was among the most important documents throughout this whole affair; and as a former S/S-S line officer you know the Secretariat could have insisted on a PM clearance if it felt it necessary. Notwithstanding Rick Burt's critical role at times as an ally in dealing with the Secretary, by this time we didn't need him; and while there was a very reasonable working-level PM officer named Rick Davis who would work with us, he invariably had to get Blackwill's or Burt's concurrence before he could clear any of our memos or cables. That led to long delays, often costing us days or keeping me in the building until 9 or 10 p.m. PM made frequent, nit-picking,

pedantic demands for changes that we hated. On at least one occasion Blackwill told me the President was stupid, or words to that effect; he wanted us to write things that oversimplified matters and verged on being dishonest.

Q: Bureaucratic infighting.

ROPE: Yes. But I've only skimmed the surface with you of what was an incredibly tough first year for me in PRC/M. The fight over the FX was the toughest policy fight I was privy to, after the struggle I observed from my Ops Center vantage point between Marshall Shulman and Brzezinski, over arms control. I might add that things didn't get much easier after the Communiqué was done, when Paul Wolfowitz replaced John in the fall of '82.

You have to remember that I had spent time in PM and knew the Bureau's modus operandi -- horning in on other bureau's turfs whenever possible. I've mentioned an exchange I once had with Tom Shoesmith about that.

Q: So Blackwill wasn't happy; where did you go from there?

ROPE: First thing was to brief the Congress, and here was where John absolutely excelled. He was a great briefer, with a booming voice and an ability to articulate with real authority our past history with China and our relationship and policies since Kissinger's secret visit to Beijing in 1971. He had started doing so after the Haig visit, as I've noted, and this continued throughout the fall of '81 and regularly through the first eight months of 1982.

Q: Whom did he brief? Who were his key targets.

ROPE: First and foremost the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and also the House Foreign Affairs Committee; but he also paid calls on individual Senators and members, including, frequently, Percy, Hayakawa, and on the House side Solarz and Zablocki. John would go anywhere Will Itoh or Jim Montgomery in H suggested. If there was anyone they or John thought we could influence positively, John went, and I accompanied him. I can't remember whether it was before or after the FX decision, but at one point Will Itoh said we might be able to gain the support of John Tower, not on the SFRC but a powerful Senator strong on defense. After John briefed him, Tower looked at John and said, "You just make sure that Deng Xiaoping stays in power." That was a typical example. On the staff side, I kept in regular touch with people like Mary Locke and Broadus Bailey on Percy's staff and Eddie Freeman on the HFAC East Asia Committee staff; and I sometimes did briefings for groups of staffers. Once we got into the Communiqué negotiations, the SFRC was the most frequent target of our attention, and most of John's briefings for them were behind closed doors. Not until the end, on August 17, did the Senators require that John brief them in open session.

Q: What else was there to do?

ROPE: Once the Secretary had approved our course, we had to draft, as quickly as we could, the US portion of the proposed communiqué, dealing with global issues. For the first time since all this started, I could delegate that to Dennis Harter, our political section chief, and he and his people put together a draft which I think was cleared not only with PM but with Mark Minton in S/P, Wolfowitz's shop. Once we had it pulled together, it went into an instruction cable for Hummel to table with the Chinese when he and Zhang Wenjin next met. The cable had to go through a full-scale approval process, involving not just the Secretary but the White House, and that all took time. We needed to get going. February 28, the tenth anniversary of the Shanghai Communiqué was not that far away.

Q: What did you put in that draft?

ROPE: I don't want to say "boilerplate," but in addition to speaking of the importance of the US-China relationship brought about by President Nixon's trip and his meetings with Mao and Zhou, it was a recitation of past common positions on key world issues, whether specific or general -- general, for example, in the case of the Middle East, where we could agree only on broad principles. Most importantly, it included opposition to "hegemonism," the code word for Soviet imperialism and aggression. Whatever we drafted and Hummel presented, it's in the archives.

Q: And what was the Chinese reaction?

ROPE: Nothing at that time. They took it under consideration and gave us, in exchange, their draft of what the communiqué should say about Taiwan Arms Sales.

Q: How was that?

ROPE: Terrible. Essentially it consisted of their position, to which their draft had us agreeing, stating that the US would set a date certain and gradually reduce arms sales to Taiwan until they ended on that date. It used little or nothing of what John had given Zhang and was at least initially discouraging. The obvious course of action, however, was to rewrite it the way we wanted, in conformity with the principles we'd given the Chinese, and send it back. It wasn't hard to do that, but we had to get what we'd drafted cleared and sent to the Secretary, who had to send it on to the President for approval. As was to be the case throughout the next six months, it was a slow process, and that's where a lot of contention with PM crept in.

Q: What went into your rewrite?

ROPE: If you look at the August 17 Communiqué, a fair amount of the first 3 paragraphs was in the original Chinese draft, and we simply rephrased some of it, inserting points of our own to make it less one-sided. For example, I think we included, when referring to the normalization of US-China relations, words beginning "Within that context..." reiterating our agreement with the Chinese that we would maintain "cultural, commercial and other unofficial relations" with Taiwan. I cannot remember the exact evolution of these preambular portions, but they'd be in the official records. One thing I remember

most clearly was that we inserted from the outset, at the end of what ended up as paragraph 4, that the policy enunciated by Ye Jianying on September 30, 1981 was China's "fundamental policy that will not change." That came from the Zhang-Clark meeting of October 3, and I pushed long and hard for it, though, as I've mentioned, we didn't get it all in the end.

Of course, we knocked out all references to setting a date certain for an end to Taiwan arms sales and the Chinese wording regarding a decline in arms sales, including a portion that had us agreeing to consult with Beijing on any arms sales to Taiwan. In their place we put in our own wording, much along the lines of what the Secretary had told Huang Hua in October regarding our intention not to exceed, in qualitative or quantitative terms the "levels of recent years," coupled with our expectation that arms sales to Taiwan would be gradually reduced, as China pursued its peaceful policy toward Taiwan. And we had wording that clearly linked that expectation to Ye Jianying's nine-point proposal of September 30, 1981, promulgating a peaceful PRC policy toward Taiwan, making clear that any undertakings of ours would be contingent on continuation of that approach.

I don't want to get too much farther into the precise evolution of Communiqué wording, because it evolved gradually over the course of our negotiations, and the historical record will show what we proposed at different times better than my memory will, along with what we got back from the Chinese. The key sticking points throughout the negotiation were our requirement for firm linkage between our undertakings and China's peaceful policy, which China consistently opposed, and our refusal to agree to China's demand that we agree to set a date certain for ending all US arms sales to Taiwan.

Q: What happened between January and August, when China finally agreed to the Communiqué?

ROPE: A lot; but before we go there I need to correct you on one point. The Chinese may not have finally agreed until mid-August, but the negotiations were virtually over in mid-July, after President Reagan made his final offer to Deng Xiaoping and Deng agreed to accept it, effectively conceding that Beijing would not get a US commitment to end Taiwan arms sales. While negotiating sessions continued after that, with the Chinese trying to nickel and dime us in various ways, we stonewalled almost everything they asked for. From that point on, the Communiqué was virtually a done deal.

In January-March, however, things weren't good. The Chinese responses weren't just unrelenting in their demand that we agree to set a date certain, they verged on being downright hostile.

In my Current Documents book for 1982, I noted today a February 5 statement by Haig in an interview, speaking about "extremely sensitive discussions" and adding that "things are at a delicate stage, but speaking candidly some difficult issues are involved. We are now making a major effort to bridge these differences. I will be just as frank when I tell you I am not in a position to predict the outcome." I don't think he was talking from talking points we gave him, but in any case the fact that he would say these things, along

with other things about valuing our relationship with China, etc., is reflective of the atmosphere at this particular time.

We did for a time hope that we'd be able to complete the talks on the timetable we'd proposed, i.e., by the February 28 anniversary; but as Chinese intransigence continued and even worsened, that looked increasingly doubtful. I have racked my brain trying to think of which major Chinese leader -- below Deng's level but above the MFA level -- said something in mid-February that was so bad it made John and me wonder if we had any prospect of success. Unfortunately, I just can't get the details back. The most I can say is that I think there was a session around then in which Zhang Wenjin was not Hummel's interlocutor and someone considerably more senior, with a much haughtier and belligerent attitude, replaced Zhang. That's when things looked so bleak John asked me to arrange an informal meeting with Ji Chaozhu, who had been transferred to Washington as Political Counselor.

Q: That sounds somewhat unusual.

ROPE: It was, and of course we knew that whatever we said to Ji would get back to Beijing. As I've noted, Ji grew up in the US and went to Harvard, where he roomed with Herb Levin, another FSO and Chinese language officer who had worked with John at the NSC. Ji had a long association with US-China relations, dating back to service as a translator at Panmunjom, and we knew him fairly well. We hoped that if he would come to my house for drinks, we might glean some insight into what was happening and what the Chinese were thinking.

Ji accepted the invitation, and we chatted for an hour or so over cocktails. John told him that what we were getting back from the Chinese side in Beijing was so hostile as to make us wonder whether there was any point at all in pursuing the negotiations. Ji said there were lots of problems being faced by leaders in Beijing, but we should not give up hope. His reference to internal difficulties squared with my own analysis. This was a time when Zhao Ziyang was pushing through a cadre reform program involving major personnel changes in which cadres who owed their positions to the Cultural Revolution were being rooted out and replaced by cadres supportive of Deng's modernization program. We could only glimpse this from the outside, but it had to be a very tough internal struggle; and Taiwan was one area where Deng, and by extension his protégés, Zhao and Communist Party Secretary Hu Yaobang, were vulnerable.

Q: All of which points out internal foreign policy is often hostage to some sort of internal policy dispute.

ROPE: Yes and I am quite convinced, as I was throughout this period that the two were inextricably intertwined. If you were one of Deng's opponents, perhaps on the losing end after the Cultural Revolution, or someone like Chen Yun who favored a centralized economy along Soviet lines, or a conservative general and semi-warlord who didn't like Deng's reforms, how could you fight back? Where was he weak? One place for sure was Taiwan. You could argue that he'd made a bad deal at Normalization, allowing the US to

continue selling Taiwan arms, leading to the Taiwan Relations Act, etc. I have no doubt -- and we had intelligence to support the view -- that these kinds of arguments were made in Beijing.

At one point during the difficult times of mid-February into March, I got a call from Jerry Bremer telling me to put together something very quickly. The Secretary was going to see the President and I needed to tell the Secretary what to tell Reagan. That totally flummoxed me. I had never interacted with the President, nor been briefed on Haig's conversations with him, and I had no idea what the meeting would be about. Bremmer just wanted something -- anything.

That day I had seen a wire service report that China was resuming the study of Russian in its public schools. If you go back far enough, around the time of the Nixon visit, or Kissinger's visit in July 1971, you can find a similar announcement about how they were starting the study of English. I took that wire service piece and rushed up to the Secretary's office. John was out of the building and unavailable. I went in to see the Secretary and handed it to him, saying, "You can tell him this. The Chinese are starting to study Russian again." While the announcement could have been aimed at us, I think it related to internal dynamics in Beijing; but in any case I saw it as one way to try to persuade a very anti-Soviet President that we needed to resolve the Taiwan arms issue and keep the Chinese on our side.

I don't want to get into assessments of Reagan. What do I know? I think, though, that he was a complex as well as astute and competent president. I did not agree with people like Blackwill who cast aspersions on his intellect. But, in the absence of any idea of what he'd be discussing with Haig, I thought if one wanted to show him that things could be slipping away with the PRC, that report might help.

Q: Interesting point.

ROPE: In any case, though discouraged, we persevered. As it became evident that we would not make the Shanghai Communiqué anniversary deadline, I proposed and drafted a presidential letter, to be sent by President Reagan to Premier Zhao commemorating the anniversary. It extolled the virtues and extent of US-China ties and their role in promoting Asian peace and stability; reaffirmed the positions taken by Presidents Nixon and Carter in the Shanghai and Normalization Communiqués; and expressed our desire to resolve our current differences. It was important, I felt, to get President Reagan, who had aroused so many Chinese suspicions during the 1980 campaign and the months preceding the FX decision, on the record in this way. My superiors agreed, and, happily, the President signed the letter. Ambassador Hummel delivered it in Beijing. In response Zhao sent a letter mirroring it. It wasn't what we'd hoped for, but it was something.

I'm going to digress, if I may, for just one moment to mention a meeting we had with the British around this time; because it bore on their planning for talks with China on the future of Hong Kong.

Q. Go ahead.

ROPE: It's just a quick anecdote. Alan Donald, an old friend of John's who later served as UK ambassador in Beijing called on John, accompanied by a Foreign Office colleague whom I believe was Donald's senior, perhaps an undersecretary. Their purpose was to let us know that the UK was planning to initiate negotiations with China over the future of Hong Kong after the New Territories lease expired in 1997. I participated and wrote a memcon. In the meeting I said I thought their timing was unfortunate. We were having a great deal of difficulty with the Chinese over Taiwan arms, and Beijing was in a particularly nationalistic mood which would make it hard for them to compromise on anything involving Chinese sovereignty. The British might be better off, I thought, if they were to wait a bit, at least until our matter was settled, to begin the talks. The answer was that Mrs. Thatcher was keen to get on with it and there were legal reasons why, 15 years in advance of the lease's expiration date, they had to proceed.

That's my digression.

Q. So back to the Communiqué negotiations.

ROPE: The atmosphere in early March was very bad. In our negotiations, we had been making small concessions on wording, approved at every step by the President, with nothing in return and little if any positive acknowledgment from the Chinese. As the negotiations continued to go nowhere, and with the possibility of a downgrading looming, I thought we needed to be sure we had done all we could to avert it. My idea was another presidential letter, this time to Deng Xiaoping. I proposed it to John and did a draft which the Secretary endorsed. It went to the White House and sat at the White House for a couple of weeks.

Then one afternoon Haig came back from the White House and called John and me to his office. He had my draft letter, and he was angry. He denounced the draft as not "presidential" and too bureaucratic -- he'd previously approved it, of course. While he didn't say so, it seemed clear he was reflecting the President's reaction, or perhaps that of an aide like Jim Baker. The main problem seemed to lie in the wording of our position regarding Taiwan, and our unofficial relations with it, in one paragraph of the letter. While it was true that the words were boilerplate, they were tried and true formulations the US had used in the past -- the kind Al Romberg loved. Among other things, they had long been accepted, or at least acquiesced in, by Taiwan.

Still, the letter had been rejected, and Haig was mad. He directed that I and his speechwriter, Harvey Sicherman, get together immediately to draft a more "presidential" version of the letter. So I moved to the Secretary's conference room, where Harvey arrived, armed with a cigar, a shot glass, and a bottle of whiskey. Al Adams, Deputy Executive Secretary, sat in.

Harvey's first move after lighting his cigar was to pour himself a shot of whiskey. "I told Haig when I took this job," he said, "that I'm never dry after five." We then proceeded to

go through the draft. Looking at the final product today, I don't see much that was especially creative or different from what I had originally written. What I remember though, besides Harvey's eccentricities, was the portion dealing with Taiwan.

When we came to that, Harvey looked up into the air and said, "There is only one China..." and I finished his sentence saying, "We will not permit the unofficial relations between the American people and the people of Taiwan to weaken our commitment to this fundamental principle." Harvey liked this, but deleted the word "fundamental." Al Adams immediately asked me if we'd said anything like that before. I said "no, but it's not inconsistent with past formulations." So it went in. We finished up the draft and it was sent back to Haig, who sent it on to the White House. When this letter became public six or so weeks later, Taipei was not happy with it those words I've just mentioned. The irony was that they were only written after a President friendly to them had rejected our standard formulations.

The letter contained even more important statements than that one Harvey and I came up with. As I've said, my aim in proposing the letter was to make sure we did everything possible to stave off a downgrading of US-China relations; and the key was to put President Reagan personally and squarely on the record with the Chinese -- at the highest level -- as fully behind our negotiations over Taiwan arms sales. The letter was a clear and unmistakable change from the way the President had spoken on the campaign trail and in the earlier days of his presidency.

When he said, "I fully understand and respect the position of your government with regard to the question of arms sales to Taiwan," the President was bowing in Beijing's direction. At the same time, by stating that "our position on this matter was stated in the process of normalization..." and reiterating our "abiding interest in a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan question," he was underscoring our rationale for Taiwan arms sales and implicitly rejecting Beijing's demand that we agree to stop them. Then, he went on record in support of both our decision not to sell the FX and -- importantly -- the "principles" we had given the Chinese, saying they were conveyed "on my instructions...on January 11, 1982." Finally, he linked them to a peaceful approach by the Chinese, saying "We fully recognize the significance of the nine-point proposal of September 30, 1979," meaning Ye Jianying's proposal of September 30, 1981, and adding that the FX decision and "principles" reflected "our appreciation of the new situation created by these developments. All of this wording is very similar to what finally emerged in the August 17 Communiqué.

At this point, I have to express chagrin about something.

Q: About what?

ROPE: If my copy of Current Documents 1982, of the American Foreign Policy series published by the State Department is correct, there was an error in the letter delivered to Deng. I find it hard to believe that it would have made it all the way to delivery without being caught, since the Embassy would have read it over and should have caught the

mistake if it existed in the original text. Still, in Current Documents 1982 it is there. The text of the letter refers to Ye Jianying's 9-Point Proposal of January 30, 1979, which was just totally wrong. There was an early 1979 statement by Deng that foreshadowed Ye's September 30, 1981 proposal; and if I made the error perhaps I had that year in mind as I drafted the letter. I can't believe, however, that if I did make that mistake it went through John Holdridge, the Secretariat, the White House, and the Embassy without being discovered.

Maybe the mistake came out of Harvey's and my re-write. In any case, Current Documents added an explanatory footnote saying it referred to Ye's proposal of September 30, 1981. Ironically, in another footnote to the same letter, Current Documents is in error. In that other footnote it says the President's reference to the decisions and principles conveyed to the Chinese on January 11, 1982 referred to Al Romberg's FX announcement of that date. That is incorrect. The President was referring to what John conveyed to Zhang Wenjin in Beijing on September 11, 1982.

Maybe CFR got the text of the Reagan-Deng letter wrong; though the fact that they footnoted the stated date of Ye's proposal suggests they must have done some checking before they published it that way.

Q: Curious.

ROPE: In any case, after it left Harvey and me the letter was sent back to the White House. Not long thereafter Haig called John and me to his office again. This time he had the President's approval of the draft letter, but something very significant, and ultimately very valuable, had been added. In the final paragraph, Reagan mentioned that Vice President Bush, "who knows and admires you," would be traveling in East Asia in April. If it would be helpful, the President said, "I would be delighted" to send him to Beijing for face-to-face talks.

This was an utter, and to me very welcome, surprise. Since Reagan's inauguration there had been nothing so high-level as a Vice Presidential mission. Haig didn't totally welcome it and made sarcastic remarks like "Let George do it." No doubt he would have much preferred the President send him, and perhaps he had pushed for that without success. In any case, he was jealous, but it was a *fait accompli*. As for the wording added to that last paragraph, it was just the kind of thing George Bush or someone working for him like Don Gregg, would have written. Bush no doubt welcomed the opportunity to go back to China and see if he could get things back on track.

Q: He already had a track record with these guys having been the head of USLO.

ROPE: Yes. The Chinese really do put stock in so-called "old friends" of China. For instance, going forward, when we sold F-16s to Taiwan in 1992, which they certainly considered to be a violation of the August 17 Communiqué, the Chinese complained but did nothing. Some Americans who opposed what we were doing in 1982 might say that just proves we didn't need to compromise then; but the times had very much changed,

and in 1992 the Chinese were afraid their friend Bush was going to lose the election. They trusted Bush, and he had taken considerable flak for reaching out to them after Tiananmen. He did that in a mistaken way, I think, trying to send Scowcroft and Eagleburger on a secret mission that quickly leaked; but the point is, the Chinese saw Bush as a friend.

Where were we?

Q: President Reagan's letter to Deng Xiaoping proposing to send Bush to Beijing.

ROPE: Okay. Before moving to what happened next, I want to point out some things about the letters the President sent to Chinese leaders around this time. Deng was China's de facto leader. He was nominally only the Vice Chairman of a party, not the head of government, and he was not Reagan's nominal counterpart. So at some point we decided it would be politic to accompany his letter to Deng with another to Premier Zhao. Accordingly, I prepared a draft of that letter, making it more direct and less "bureaucratic;" and it, too, was approved and dated April 5 -- Kate Rope's birthday. Hummel delivered the letters, and within a relatively short period of time the Chinese agreed to the visit, which was to take place in early May, after Bush visited Australia and other East Asian countries.

This sent us, for the first time since I'd taken over the China desk, into the work you know well from your days on the Line -- a full-fledged briefing book for a high-level visit. That was Dennis Harter's forte. He'd worked as a staff assistant, and he and his section put together a large book with all the necessary background materials and issue papers. I don't recall whether he and his subordinates put together Bush's talking points, or if I did -- I know I wrote Bush's toast -- but I suspect they did the global issues points while I, or Scott and I, did the ones dealing with Taiwan arms, stressing our desire to resolve the issue based on our latest proposals.

At the same time, we moved ahead with formal Congressional notification of the spare parts sale to Taiwan. This would normally be sent up a month after the informal notification; but John had held it up in advance of the February 28 anniversary to avoid any new flare-up in Beijing; and he had held it up again in March because of the tenuous state of our negotiations. By April, it was becoming impossible to delay further. Taiwan needed the parts, and pressures were building in DOD, on the Hill, and elsewhere for the notification.

It was sent to the Hill on or before April 7. I went to John's office that day to listen to the noon briefing, which could be piped in on a speaker. We knew a question would be raised about the notification, and we had given Al Romberg points for answering that were responsive to Zhang Wenjin's three-fold request of John in January. After saying he had no comment when asked if the Chinese had agreed not to downgrade relations over the spare parts, Alan added a low-key afterthought covering the three points Zhang had asked for. There was practically no follow-up, and we delivered on John's promise to Zhang, in just the low-key way we intended.

Q: So the next big event was Bush's visit?

ROPE: Yes. Before he arrived, we gained approval from the White House for a new communiqué proposal, involving changes of wording on US intentions regarding arms sales and dropping some things we had wanted on the Chinese side. In total, this represented significant concessions on our part. As always, it took a lot of work to get the changes cleared and approved in Washington, but we did it; and Art Hummel delivered the new proposal a few days before Bush's arrival. It may well have been at this time that we dropped our efforts to include the words of Zhang Wenjin, spoken to Judge Clark in October, that China's peaceful approach to Taiwan was a "fundamental policy that will not change." We did get the Chinese to keep the word "fundamental" in describing their policy.

Q: So tell us about the Vice President's visit. Did you go along?

ROPE: I did. John, as EA Assistant Secretary, was with Bush on stops in Australia and elsewhere before getting to China. I went directly to China on my own. I may have flown into Beijing for consultations first, but in any case I joined Art Hummel in Hangzhou, where the Vice President was due to fly in for a rest stop. Art, his wife Betty Lou, if I recall correctly, and perhaps a few others -- I think including Don Anderson, who was by then Consul General in Shanghai and whose district included Hangzhou -- had a nice afternoon visit to a temple overlooking Hangzhou before meeting the Vice President's plane that evening.

Bush came in, made a few remarks to the press about hoping to advance US-China relations, and went off to a guest house where we were all staying in Hangzhou. We had a brief meeting that night, with I think just Bush, John, Hummel and me, before turning in. Mrs. Bush was along, and I think the Bushes had breakfast with Don Anderson and his wife Blanche, whom they'd known and liked in USLO days.

I'm fairly sure we had a strategy meeting in Hangzhou before going on to Beijing, using various devices to defeat any bugging of the room. At that and any other meetings, we were joined by Don Gregg, then the Vice President's foreign policy advisor, and Pete Teeley, his press secretary. I think Gaston Sigur, the East Asia chief at the NSC, who by then was a regular player on China, was along.

It was good to be back with Mr. Bush again. As always, he was relaxed and good humored but ready to go to work and quick to absorb his brief.

Flying on to Beijing, we stayed at the Diaoyutai guest house. The official welcoming ceremony for the Vice President was on the steps of the Great Hall of the People, and Vice Premier Wan Li was his host. Wan was a courteous, elderly gentleman who'd gone down in the Cultural Revolution but was brought back at almost the same time as Deng in 1973. He was considered a moderate and an associate of Deng's. He was very helpful, incidentally, to the Johns Hopkins University and Nanjing University in their effort to

gain Beijing's approval for the Hopkins-Nanjing Center in Nanjing, where I later served as American Co-Director.

The Bush visit did little to resolve our immediate negotiating differences over Taiwan arms sales, but it was a public relations success and, I think, a key factor in our ultimately successful effort to get Deng and others in the leadership to drop China's demand for a promise to end all US arms sales to Taiwan and agreement to a date certain for doing so. It gave us a chance, using a man the Chinese could trust, to convey a message of sincerity on behalf of a president they weren't sure they could trust; and it enabled us to convey that message publicly through Bush's banquet toast and a decision, approved by the White House, to release President Reagan's letters to China's top three leaders.

Q: Letters to all three? I only remember two. What was the third?

ROPE: It was a letter from the President to Deng's protégé and nominal boss, Communist Party Chairman Hu Yaobang. When the Chinese agreed to the Vice President's visit, we decided Hu was one last base to touch with a presidential letter. I drafted it, to be delivered by Bush when he visited Beijing. It noted the importance of US-China relations, both for world peace and for dealing with the challenge to both countries posed by the Soviet Union; and it sought to alleviate doubts regarding the President's policy toward China and Taiwan by reiterating US adherence to the "one China" principle. In particular, it repeated verbatim the words about not letting our unofficial relations with Taiwan diminish our commitment to this principle that Harvey Sicherman and I put into the President's letter to Deng in early April.

After the welcoming ceremony on the front steps of the Great Hall of the People, Bush and party went into a room in the Great Hall where he and Wan Li had an opening photo op before his first formal meeting in Beijing. That meeting, with Wan, was little more than pleasantries and expressions of good will; but something happened during the photo op that was fortuitous and, to the best of my knowledge, unplanned. Returning Wan Li's initial greeting, with camera flashes popping, the Vice President said -- in full hearing of the press -- "I have a letter to give you for Chairman Hu Yaobang."

US press members present were quick to pick up on that and immediately asked what the letter was about. When Pete Teeley looked at it and saw the other letters Reagan had sent to Deng and Zhao on April 5, he thought they were great PR material and proposed that we release all of them to the press. Bush and those of us with him, including Hummel and Freeman, liked the idea. We cabled Washington to seek White House agreement, which was granted by the second or third day of the visit.

After Wan Li, Bush met with Huang Hua and Premier Zhao Ziyang. The meeting with Huang was as disagreeable as ever, notwithstanding the fact that he and Bush had known each other since Bush's UN days. Within minutes, Huang denounced the proposals Hummel had delivered in advance of Bush's arrival as "nothing!" "You have done nothing," he said, "since I visited Washington in October." This after the US had made the FX decision, presented forthcoming "principles" regarding its policy toward Taiwan,

entered into negotiations for a communiqué in which it would virtually commit to gradually reducing arms sales to Taiwan, and three substantive and consequential letters from the President to Chinese leaders. At one point, after Huang had droned on for some time, I passed a note up the line to Bush proposing that he change the subject to global issues. He tried to do so, but Huang went right back to Taiwan arms, hammering away at US “interference in China’s internal affairs.”

That was Huang; but we could hope the meeting with Deng would be better. After the Foreign Minister, Bush had a relatively short meeting with Zhao Ziyang. I think it was get together in the Great Hall just before Zhao’s welcoming dinner for Bush, and little of import transpired. At the dinner, though, Bush did a great job with his toast, and it seemed to go over well. It combined several useful things: personal recollections of days in Beijing; a quote from Zhou Enlai at his welcoming banquet for Nixon; an emphasis on the President’s commitment to US-China relations; and stress on US good faith in seeking to resolve the Taiwan arms issue. He closed with the hope of building a stronger relationship lasting beyond the 20th Century. The toast, and Bush’s meetings, got positive play in the Chinese press, for which he expressed appreciation in his press conference before leaving Beijing.

Q: What happened with Deng?

ROPE: I don’t know. I wasn’t there. It was positive, I know, based on what Art Hummel told me, but I know none of the details, and it didn’t settle anything. Much to John Holdridge’s consternation -- John was greatly and rightly upset -- only Art accompanied Bush to the meeting. John and the rest of us stayed in a large reception room outside. When they re-emerged, Bush, and I guess Art, visited the restroom. Deng was left alone, with a great circle of Chinese officials around him, standing back at considerable distance. Chas and I took the opportunity to go up and greet Deng. As a Chinese language person you’ll appreciate what he said to us.

Q: What was that?

ROPE: After we addressed him politely, he responded as almost all Chinese do when you speak to them in their language: “Oh! You speak good Chinese!” He had a loud, husky voice and seemed like a great mahogany dwarf. I think he was five feet tall, but not by much. In USLO days, people would affectionately call him by a nick-name, playing on an alternate meaning of his name: “small bottle.” It was my one encounter with one of the great men of the 20th Century.

Q: What else happened?

ROPE: Deng hosted a small lunch for Bush afterward, but I sat at the second of the two tables and didn’t observe the two men’s conversation; I think it was primarily good will.

On the final day, the Chinese, in the person of Han Xu, came to Diaoyutai and gave us a counterproposal responding to the one Art had presented on the eve of the Bush visit. It

moved a little bit in our direction but still included the Chinese demand for a date certain. To me it was a positive sign, and I wanted to respond quickly. I knew how slowly things moved in Washington and how hard it was to get consensus on anything, particularly any new formulation we might put forward in the negotiations. Operating from the field, with the Vice President behind us, we'd have a good chance of getting White House approval for a quick response to the Chinese; and with the time difference, we could hope to do so before Bush's departure time. When I proposed that we try, Chas shot it down in front of Holdridge and Hummel, and maybe Bush. John and Art backed him, saying we'd done enough for one visit; but I was angry. I told Chas he'd just cost me a month's delay, and I wasn't wrong.

Q: Is it a good characterization to say this was a slow rolling negotiation. That is to say it wasn't a cable out in the morning and you got your answer in the evening. And then you went out in the morning. It was a much more deliberate exchange of proposals between the two parties.

ROPE: Only in the last month, when Deng had given in on the issue of a date certain and an end to arms sales, did it speed up. My frustration that last day of the Bush visit was fully justified. It wasn't until after Haig resigned at the end of June that we were able to send anything more to the Chinese.

Q: So where did the Bush visit leave you?

ROPE: There had been that positive movement on the Chinese side at the very end, perhaps reflecting Bush's meeting with Deng; but it still wasn't enough, and we had more work to do. Bush and his party flew off, either to make another stop in East Asia or to fly home. I may have stayed another day in Beijing or may have gone to Shanghai for a day before flying home to Washington. I'm not sure. In any case, the next steps were to review where we were and come up with our next step with the Chinese, which I didn't expect to be easy.

Once back in Washington, the first order of business was for John to brief the SFRC and maybe the HFAC on the trip and where things stood in our negotiations. In none of his briefings to that time, including those in June, did we say we would agree to gradually reduce arms sales to Taiwan. We said we were working on finding a mutually acceptable outcome. Still, as John laid out the competing demands of our side and Beijing's, and Beijing's continued refusal to come off its demand for an end to all arms sales by a future date certain, a sharp observer could read between the lines and see that we were heading for some kind of compromise. John was slowly laying the groundwork for acknowledging what would ultimately come out in the Communiqué. He finally all but did that in a briefing about two weeks before August 17.

I was in touch with staffers, most particularly Broadus Bailey and Mary Locke of Percy's staff. In my first meeting with them after returning from Beijing, I told them I thought we wouldn't be able to get out of the Taiwan arms problem without some kind of formulation that wouldn't actually give in to Beijing's demand for an end to all US arms sales to

Taiwan but somehow bowed in that direction. I wouldn't have mentioned it to them, but the wording I had in mind would follow our expression of intent to reduce gradually our arms sales to Taiwan, linked to China's "fundamental" policy of a peaceful approach to Taiwan. It was something like, "looking toward the day when arms sales can end." I didn't like it, but it would still express an indefinite ideal, something we could defend as a utopian thought contingent on a completely peaceful future resolution of the Taiwan issue that could obviate the need for weapons sales. I thought if we did that we could get a communiqué.

Q: If I recall, correctly, Walter Stoessel also made a big China speech around this time.

ROPE: Yes. He did, on June 1 before the National Council for US-China Trade, today known as the US-China Business Council. I reviewed that speech in preparation for this interview, and it was a good reminder of how much was going on in the relationship -- keeping everyone in our 17-person office busy -- outside of Taiwan arms. To be sure, most of what he mentioned involved the people-to-people aspects of the US-China relationship: trade, cultural exchange, tourism, offices being established by US firms in Beijing, and more; but all it involved our government in one way or another. Export control work was one example that kept Richard Mueller and Richard Boucher busy fighting troglodytes like Steve Brien, Perle's export control deputy at DOD, who would fight hard to block even the least consequential sales to the PRC. He tried, for example, to stop the sale of 64-K RAM chips to China, when you could go to Radio Shack and load up on computers with those chips that were being sold all over the world.

To come back to Stoessel's speech, we had wanted for a year to have a comprehensive public statement of US policy toward China; but it had been impossible up until the time the National Council extended its invitation to the Deputy Secretary. We hadn't achieved even an internal USG document doing that. There had been all the uncertainty in the early months of the Reagan administration over whether we might upgrade relations with Taiwan, and then, over the summer and fall, we had the fight over the FX. Richard Allen was at the NSC until January 1982, albeit weakened by scandal by the end of 1981, and since January we'd been bogged down in the Taiwan arms negotiations. There were plenty of people in high positions who were suspicious of the PRC and skeptical of the value of good relations with China, including, at State, Wolfowitz in Policy Planning, Richard McCormack, Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs, and Bill Schneider, Under Secretary for Security Assistance and Technology, to name a few.

The opportunity finally arose, though, when the National Council sought a high-level speaker and we were able to arrange for Stoessel to accept. Stoessel had been involved in US-China relations in the days before the Nixon Visit when, as Ambassador to Poland, he was chief US negotiator at the Warsaw Talks -- where Don Anderson was the interpreter - - and he was supportive of our efforts with China. He was very kind to me, nominating me for a Superior Honor Award, as I've mentioned, and inviting me to his retirement ceremony, presided over by the President. Bob Perito, incidentally, was his East Asia guy.

PRC/M wrote a very good speech, and Stoessel delivered it well. It was equally well

received.

Q: So where did your negotiations go next?

ROPE: I wish I could remember what all went on that June, but part of the reason may be that little happened. Before we could go further, we needed to meet with Haig, and he wasn't available. I should say that throughout the previous few months, whenever I've said "we decided" to do anything significant, that decision was the Secretary's, and it came out of meetings with him. I may have done the proposing, and John would have had his comments, but the decisions were Haig's. As you know, Haig was having big problems that month, leading to his resignation on June 25.

That was a very bad day for me. Up until then, however bitter the fights over negotiating positions or other China matters within State, I could always say, "the Secretary has decided..." or "the Secretary wants..." or "if you don't like it, take it to the Secretary," because I knew what Haig wanted and knew he would back me up -- meaning me, John and EA. That disappeared overnight. We were in a whole new ballgame.

Q: With George Shultz?

ROPE: Yes. But, as it turned out, we made what was essentially our final offer to Beijing before Shultz took office.

Q: How so?

Though he had resigned, Haig called John and me to his office for a meeting on China on the Saturday following his resignation. He wanted to send the President his last recommendation on the Taiwan arms negotiations and a final negotiating proposal to be given to the Chinese if Reagan approved. In that meeting I put forward the formulation I've just mentioned that I had alluded to with Broadus and Mary, or something close to it. I also proposed a final letter from the President to Deng saying, in effect, that we'd reached our bottom line and urging Deng to accept and move on.

Q: And what did Haig decide to do?

ROPE: He accepted my recommendation, with its proposed wording, "looking toward the day when arms sales can end," and said we should put it forth as one of two options. The second option, he said, would be to stand pat. He then dictated to me a line to be added to this second option stating his belief, expressed in the first person, that it would lead to a downgrading of US-China relations.

Q: And what did you do?

ROPE: I went to my office and wrote the memo, including his words at the end of the second option. I believe I also sent back up, through John, a draft letter for the President to send to Deng. It is possible the letter was done a few days later, because it referred to

“Secretary Shultz.” In any case, Haig sent his recommendation to the President in what I think was his last official act as Secretary of State.

Q: Did the President accept the recommendation?

ROPE: He did not; and I’ve heard it said over the years that he was incensed that Haig sent it to him with a note saying that if he didn’t accept Haig’s recommendation, i.e., Option One, and China downgraded relations with the US, he, Reagan would be responsible. I don’t know if this story is accurate. It’s not impossible that Haig would pen something like that on top of what I drafted; but if there’s any truth to the story I think it’s more likely the President’s ire was directed at those words Haig dictated to me, in the recommendations portion of the memo. In any case, I heard back, relatively quickly and from an unlikely source, the CIA’s David Griesse, that the President was unhappy with the options he’d been given.

Q: How was Griesse involved?

ROPE: Don Gregg had called him. After the Vice President’s visit, Gregg moved to the NSC and took over the China portfolio -- though he was always quick to point out that his expertise was on Japan and Korea, not China. Don was a career CIA officer who’d been seconded to Bush’s office and then the NSC. He knew Griesse as a CIA colleague. As Dave related it to me, the President chose the second of Haig’s two options, i.e., stand pat, and Don was very worried by that. He thought there must be some formulation other than the one I’d come up with that could work, and he asked Dave what he thought. Dave did have another idea and called me to get my reaction.

Q: What was his idea?

ROPE: Dave felt it is always the “principle” that Chinese care most about. If they can have that, they can be pragmatic, or even not care very much, about what happens in practice. In many ways that is absolutely true, witness our ability to maintain relations with Taiwan after Normalization. So Dave thought that instead of my formulation, “looking toward the day when arms sales can end,” we could follow our statement of intent to reduce arms sales with something like, “In so saying, the United States recognizes China’s consistent principle” regarding Taiwan arms sales. I don’t remember his exact wording, but recognition of their “principle” was definitely in it. Ironically, when the Chinese saw it, they dropped it and counter-proposed something we liked a lot better.

If I agreed, Dave wanted to go back to Don with his formulation as a substitute for mine. I did agree, both on his rationale for his proposal and the wording itself. It was better than mine, and I credit him with having saved the day. My own wording, -- however utopian I might have wanted it to be -- came perilously close to agreeing that arms sales would one day end. I worked so hard for that communiqué, and I wish I’d been cleverer there at the very end. I’ve always been thankful for Dave’s contribution, and I’ve credited him for it ever since.

I don't remember getting John's permission about Dave's proposed change. I think it was just one phone call between David and me -- and I think it took place on a weekend, maybe the Saturday of 4th of July weekend. I know I was in my office, and I think no one else was around.

Q: What happened next?

ROPE: Don revised Haig's memo with the change Griesse had given him, and got it to the President, who approved. Hummel presented our final proposal, with Dave's wording, to his Chinese negotiating partner, who I think by that time was Han Xu. With it was a letter from the President to Deng that I call Reagan's "bottom line" letter. I don't recall for sure whether Hummel delivered it to Deng in person or not; I think he did.

Q: What did the letter say?

ROPE: Though I drafted it, I don't recall much of the specific wording. The aim wasn't to repeat more of what the President had said in previous letters, though there undoubtedly was some of that. The purpose was to say that we'd made a strong effort to respond to China's position and to make clear that we had gone as far as we could go, i.e., the US would not agree to set a date certain for ending Taiwan arms sales. It concluded by proposing that Deng accept the latest US proposal and join Reagan in building a strong US-China relationship. To that end, it proposed that Secretary Shultz visit Beijing at an early date and that Premier Zhao accept the President's invitation -- delivered by Haig in June 1981 -- to visit Washington.

Here I have a slight memory problem. I remember quite clearly that the letter to Deng was delivered simultaneously with the delivery of our final proposal. I'm also certain beyond a shadow of a doubt that it contained the proposal that Shultz visit Beijing at an early date and that Zhao accept the invitation to Washington. I know, too, that Shultz did not have a hand in this final communication. Still, we were in an interregnum, and Shultz -- though certain to receive Senate Confirmation -- was not yet Secretary of State. So how could Reagan have referred to Shultz as the Secretary when he wasn't yet in office? Maybe I have the chronology wrong. Still, I know this last Reagan letter to Deng was delivered in conjunction with our final proposal and that it did propose an early Shultz visit and acceptance of the invitation to Zhao. The aim was to get the Communiqué done and get US-China relations back on track.

It's all in the archives.

There's one more thing I can add. During the interregnum, Tom Shoesmith and I were called up to the Seventh Floor to brief Secretary-designate Shultz on the Communiqué negotiations. Tom was Acting Assistant Secretary. John must have been away. After we went over it all, Shultz said something like, "So you think if we don't sell arms to Taiwan, the Mainland will leave them alone." It may not have been quite that, but it was a somewhat skeptical summing up of what we'd been saying; and while I think we politely

disagreed with that summarization, there was no mistaking that Shultz had doubts. He did, however, come around to supporting what we were doing and signed off a few weeks later on a very strong cable instructing Hummel to convey a message from him to the Chinese in the course of pushing for final agreement on the communiqué.

Q: So where did things go from there?

ROPE: Around mid-July, Art and Chas were called to see Deng, and Deng accepted the President's proposal. I don't recall his precise words, or whether he wrote a letter answering Reagan, but it was clear he accepted our final position, including the absence of any US promise to set a date certain for ending arms sales to Taiwan. Equally clear was that China would accept the essential linkage between what we would say in our portion of the Communiqué and China's pursuit of a peaceful policy. About the same time, Beijing's negotiators responded to the proposal Hummel had given them. It reflected Deng's acceptance of no "date certain," but it continued to knock out language linking our intentions to China's peaceful policy.

Q: So the matter still wasn't yet settled, since that linkage was critically important.

ROPE: Theoretically, yes; but in our minds, given where Deng had come down, the Communiqué was a done deal. As I've mentioned before, Hummel's Chinese interlocutors kept trying to get more out of us -- I think I said "nickel and diming us" -- but we knew Deng had given in, and it was time to get tough. That's where a message from Shultz came in.

Q: How so?

ROPE: We wanted to put the new Secretary squarely on the record with the Chinese in support of the US position; and we didn't want to fool around anymore, certainly not on the linkage issue. So, with a bit of a committee looking over my shoulders on a Saturday morning, I drafted a bluntly worded first-person cable from Shultz to Art Hummel saying -- in a preamble meant for Art's ears only, to show that Shultz was firmly on board -- that, whether the Chinese liked it or not, there would be no communiqué without linkage and the Chinese must understand that. Following that were strong talking points for making this point. I say "committee looking over my shoulders" because I remember John, Gaston Sigur, maybe Armitage, and others there in my office as I sat at the Wang and drafted. This happened more than once in that final month, before we issued the Communiqué.

Q: So it still wasn't over?

ROPE: Not quite. Word came back to us that the Chinese were somewhat miffed by the bluntness of the Secretary's message, particularly coming as the first words they received from our new leader. I subsequently learned, from Chas, I think, that Art had read the Secretary's blunt private words to him out loud, as part of the presentation. That was not at all what we intended.

Q: I understand. Tell us what the significance of a first-person cable is.

ROPE: All cables are signed by the Secretary; but when you give an Ambassador a first person cable about something, you are telling the Ambassador the message is coming straight from the Secretary himself. Similarly, when an Ambassador sends a first-person cable to Washington, as Billy Sullivan often did as the Shah was falling, that says the cable contains the Ambassador's personal views or recommendations.

So in the case of this instruction cable to Ambassador Hummel, the aim was to let him know the new Secretary was squarely behind our efforts and the message to be delivered. The talking points were all that the Ambassador was to use with the Chinese, though they was also worded to let the Chinese Shultz was on board. Still, the job got done. The Chinese finally acquiesced in our demand for linkage, and it was only a matter of negotiating a few final words expressing that. It ended up as, "Having in mind the foregoing statements of both sides,..." Anyone who looks at the Communiqué knows those words link the intentions we expressed to China's "fundamental policy," embodied in Ye Jianying's Nine-Point proposal. It enabled John to go out strongly on the Hill to state that everything we said was predicated on a peaceful Chinese approach. If that policy changed, we could change ours; and John said exactly that.

It took, however, several more sessions to get us to the final document. One thing important to note is that the Chinese tried a new wrinkle late in the game, proposing that we substitute "progressively decline" for "gradually decline" when stating our intentions on future Taiwan arms sales. We flatly rejected that. When they subsequently asked, on the margins of the negotiations, how they would know arms sales were declining, we instructed the Embassy to tell them they would "see the trend over time."

Q: What finally brought you to the end?

ROPE: As I've said, we essentially stonewalled everything in that last month, but Beijing's negotiators kept trying for more. Finally, John let the Chinese know, informally, that we couldn't continue much longer. By the beginning of September, we would have to send a notification to Congress for the F-5E sale the President had approved in principle in January. What that meant was that if Beijing didn't come to terms soon, we would have to ignore once more Huang's demand that we sell nothing until the negotiations were done, as we had in December when we announced the sale of spare parts. I don't recall how John communicated this. He may have used Ji Chaozhu; but he did it, and within days we got results. On August 14, the Chinese gave Hummel their agreement on the final text of the Communiqué.

We received the Embassy cable telling us this on a Saturday morning, and our small committee convened while I drafted a memo to the Secretary, with a memo for him to send to the President, providing the final version of the Communiqué and recommending that the President approve it. We sent the memo up pretty quickly, and later in the morning Shultz called John and me to his office. Sitting at the desk in his small, working

office just off the large formal office of the Secretary of State -- Haig generally used the big one -- Shultz told us, "I think this is the best we can get. You're going to take a lot of heat for this, but it's the right thing to do;" and he signed the memo to the President. Years later, when Richard Mueller was reading Shultz's memoir, I asked him what it said about the Communiqué. Richard said Shultz said it was the best we could get, to which I replied, "Yeah; but did he say the part about 'it's the right thing to do?'" Apparently Shultz left that out. He said it that day, though, and I've never forgotten.

Q: So is that it? The President agreed, and you issued the August 17 Communiqué?

ROPE: Not quite. Once again, the White House had a smarter approach in mind. It instructed John to share the contents of the Communiqué with the SFRC the following Monday, August 16. He was to say that, before the President approved the document, he wanted to have the Committee's advice. This John did, in closed session, with Senators Goldwater and Helms present. They hadn't been in many of those meetings before.

Q: How did it go?

ROPE: It was hardly an easy session. John did very well, as he always did, and the Senators agreed we should issue the Communiqué; but some of them were pretty angry. They were boxed in. If they said no to the President and the result was a downgrading of relations, they'd get the blame. If they didn't, they would share ownership of the Communiqué with him. They didn't like that, especially Goldwater, Helms, and Glenn. I should add that John had gone very far in foreshadowing the Communiqué in a session with the SFRC two weeks earlier, in which he'd said clearly we could agree gradually to reduce sales to Taiwan, and no one had made trouble then; but that was not the same as being confronted with the actual document. In exchange for their agreement, the Senators demanded that John come up the next day and defend it in open session. Then, having privately assented to it, they could publicly decry it.

Q: So finally you issue it.

ROPE: Yes. I want to say one more thing, though. That Monday I called Takeuchi at the Japanese Embassy, whom I had briefed at every step of the Communiqué negotiations as I've said; and I told him it would be issued the next day. I did this on my own initiative and informed no one about it. It was my strong belief Tokyo must never be surprised, as the Japanese had been when we announced Kissinger's first visit to Beijing and the planned Nixon visit. So I did it. Whether anyone else, like John, did the same thing, I do not know.

I suppose I should add that quite a few diplomats had called on me over the course of the previous year, and I'd always been as forthcoming as I could, particularly with NATO allies; but Takeuchi was the only one in whom I confided exactly where things stood at every stage. I took account, of course, that such conversations could get back to the Chinese, and I didn't discuss our internal deliberations; but I kept Takeuchi -- and Ikeda whenever we went through Tokyo or he visited Washington -- abreast of the state of play.

I believe I've mentioned that when Zhao Ziyang told his Japanese counterpart that if there were a downgrading of US-China relations it would not affect Sino-Japanese relations, Prime Minister Suzuki responded that, quite the contrary, it would have a big impact on the relationship. At least that is what Takeuchi told me, and he took credit for it. He had previewed the exchange for me beforehand and was very happy to tell me it happened.

To come back to the Communiqué, I went to my office around 7 a.m. the next morning, and, alone, listened to the news at 8 announcing the Communiqué. I felt terrific. There hasn't been time in this interview, and my memory is no longer precise enough, for me to convey how tough and complicated the bureaucratic fighting had been -- in State and beyond -- to get to that moment. I know I've said at one point in these interviews that there were very few people in the bureaucracy with China experience or expertise; and there were a lot of political appointees, in the Department, as well as in other agencies, who were either very suspicious of China or flatly hostile to it. There was a lot of politicking and persuasion required to bring those people around or at least neutralize them; and at times it took sharp elbows on my part, along with unavoidable ego clashes, such as the one with Bob Blackwill.

I knew there was a price to be paid, though I didn't foresee how great it would be for me personally; but I was elated. I felt that if I'd been listened to the previous summer, when I was trying to head off an FX sale and trying to get people to focus on what Deng had told Haig, we never would have gotten into the mess we were presented with after Cancun. Given what had happened, though, I considered the Communiqué the accomplishment of my career. Of course, John was the leader and others contributed. Haig championed it and suffered for that, while the President approved it. Still, it was in many ways my Communiqué, and I was proud. When I said it was the accomplishment of my career to a friend, he said, "to date;" to which I replied, "Yeah, but I don't know how I'll ever be able to repeat it."

I'm also proud of another document I drafted that was released on August 17. It was a statement by President Reagan, speaking about the Communiqué, that -- besides containing strong points about the US-China relationship and its importance to stability in East Asia -- stated unambiguously that our unofficial relations with Taiwan would continue and we would not abandon, or put pressure on, our "old friends" on Taiwan.

Q: Hadn't we given Taiwan some Presidential Assurances about before?

ROPE: We had, though I wasn't consulted or involved in drafting them. Jim Lilley had been back on consultations several weeks earlier, and he and David Dean, head of AIT, had worked out Presidential assurances Jim could take back when he returned to Taiwan. At the time they were secret, and I never saw them in writing; but the key ones were that we would not consult with the PRC on arms sales to Taiwan and we would never pressure Taiwan to negotiate with the PRC.

I want to say one more thing, because I was accused by some of being anti-Taiwan and,

ultimately, my career ended prematurely largely because of the Communiqué. The statement I drafted for the President to make that day was not just his; it was mine. It represented all I believed, expressed in just the way I would express it; and it went from my desk, all the way through the approval process to issuance by the White House, virtually unchanged.

Q: I think you made the point earlier that your Laoshis, your old teachers, were on Taiwan.

ROPE: It was more than that. As I say, I believed every word of that statement. It wasn't something sent up just to make the President happy or cover ourselves with the Right Wing. It was aimed squarely at the people of Taiwan.

The Chinese didn't like that statement, and they issued their own statement about the Communiqué; but we didn't care. That was for domestic purposes. The Communiqué was done.

Priscilla and Kate were out of town, so I had nothing to do that evening. At some point during the day Emily MacFarquhar, wife of Rod MacFarquhar who I believe then edited the China Quarterly, called me and invited me for a drink after work. She and I had martinis and watched the evening news together, including seeing that Reagan called in to complain when Rather, I think, said that the Communiqué promised to end US arms sales to Taiwan. In any case, I was on top of the world, and it wasn't due to the Martini. I went home and got a good rest.

Q: So the Communiqué was out. What next?

ROPE: We had more work to do. John had to be up on the Hill defending the Communiqué that afternoon. Dennis Harter drafted an adequate statement for that, which I approved and sent to John; but when it reached him he totally rewrote it -- something he hadn't done with anything I'd sent him before; and what he wrote was terrific. It was the best single statement of what John Holdridge and I were thinking throughout this whole period -- the views that kept us together, really from the time we were in Beijing to all of our days working together in EA.

He delivered it to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on August 17, 1982, and he reprised it a day or two later for the House Foreign Affairs Committee. It didn't just explain why good US-China relations were important in 1982. It rehearsed the history of confrontation between the US and China from 1950 to the Nixon visit -- we fought them in Korea; we fought them by proxy in Vietnam; then one president changed all that; etc. It was eloquent and compelling. He called me and Jim Montgomery, whom I've mentioned from the H Bureau, to help him fine tune it, but it was pure John Holdridge; and he delivered it superbly.

John was a wonderful briefer who really cared about our relations with Congress. He believed in keeping the Congress as informed as possible, and would go anywhere on the

Hill where he thought we could gain support for our policies or win somebody over. He loved the back staircases of the Capitol and joked about having Will Itoh along as his “native guide.” He never stopped asking “Who should I see? Where can I go? What do I need to do?” There were days on the Hill when I thought I’d follow John anywhere. He was a real leader; and he didn’t do this just to help us get what we want. He was a patriot who believed in separation of powers, believed in the role of the Congress, and was dedicated to working with the Hill to advance American interests.

Q: What was the Congressional response?

ROPE: As I’ve implied, classically political. Senators who had acquiesced in the issuance of the Communiqué in private session sharply attacked us publicly that afternoon. We understood what was happening, and once he had delivered his own statement John didn’t rise to the bait. He let the critics say their pieces without engaging in fruitless or provocative arguments. It’s all on the record. For the first time, by the way, John brought Don Ferguson with him, saying that with Ferguson on one side and me on the other he was sitting, “in the middle of the Taiwan Strait.”

I want to say one thing more. In his statement opening the hearing, Chairman Percy praised, John, Secretary Haig and Secretary Shultz for their “forthright and candid approach” to consultations with the Congress on the Taiwan Arms issue. He called it “a model of the consultative process” between Executive and Legislative branches. Again, John deserved the lion’s share of the credit for that. He was respected. When it was all over, even Senator Helms, who’d castigated us for what we’d done, came by the witness table and patted John on the back, saying “good job.” Ten years later, he wasn’t so kind to me, whom he really did not know. Of course, you’ll recall that it was the White House that called for some of our most critical consultations on the Hill, including that last closed-door session when the SFRC agreed to the Communiqué’s issuance.

Q: You paid a price?

ROPE: We can talk about that later. What I had in mind at the time was that, in my second year on the Desk, we, and particularly I, would have to be a lot less aggressive and more consensus oriented as we worked to move US-China relations ahead. I did find it slightly worrisome when Carl Ford told me people had agreed on the Hill that there should be no reprisals against those of us involved in the Communiqué. The possibility of such reprisals hadn’t occurred to me. President Reagan acted to protect us in a way, according to one of my friends on the Hill. Not long after the Communiqué was issued, the President called a group of right-wing Senators and Congressmen to the White House and told them that Communiqué was “my Communiqué. I dotted the i’s and crossed the t’s.” Whether or not he said that exactly as it was related to me, it was his indeed Communiqué, and it had been as early as January when he approved the “principles” John delivered to Zhang Wenjin in Beijing.

Q: So the Communiqué was done. Anything more to add?

ROPE: Yes. I got to go on vacation, again to Ocracoke Island on the Outer Banks. I love to surf-fish and mentioned that in a post-card to Haig from the island. It was the first chance I'd had time to communicate with him since he resigned. I told him he was a great Secretary and that the Communiqué was his Communiqué. In reply, he commented on my fishing, saying, "We've got to keep our priorities right!"

I also want to note that -- whatever its critics had to say -- the Communiqué stanchd the hemorrhaging in US-China relations and set the stage for steady improvement in US-China relations to this day. We've had ups and downs, and Taiwan arms sales have been an irritant on occasion, but we've never been in danger of a serious breakdown since. The closest thing would be after Tiananmen, but that was due to our reaction to Chinese actions and we were joined by the entire West in that. Overall, the trend has been upward, and there has been a tremendous expansion in US-China ties, especially on the non-governmental side. China, and the US-China relationship, are nothing like what they were in 1981-82.

There was also an important and much overlooked positive aspect of the August 17 Communiqué. It codified our right, for want of a better word, to sell arms to Taiwan. Beijing had always denied it; but the Communiqué legitimized it through Beijing's acquiescence in continued US arms sales. True, we, in effect, agreed to limit those sales; but as I've pointed out from the beginning we had a very high ceiling from which to drift down -- \$830 million in 1982 dollars; and we had rejected the word "progressive" when expressing our future intentions. There was also great room for interpretation of the words "qualitative terms." What they really meant was that we would keep the relative balance between Taiwan and the Mainland about where it was, without providing the very latest equipment or items that could be perceived as threatening to the PRC.

I also haven't mentioned my view that, over the years in which we'd be implementing the Communiqué, which could be decades or more, it was likely there would be movement between Beijing and Taipei to reconcile their differences; and that was 100 percent right. They've hardly reunified, and Taipei's relationship with Beijing, like ours, has had its ups and downs, but today we speak of "Cross-Strait Relations," a term that didn't exist in 1982. Today there is a huge amount of Taiwan investment in the Mainland; direct travel between the two sides takes place. Thousands of visitors no go back and forth between the two each year, and I think hundreds of thousands of Taiwan citizens now live and work in the Mainland.

This said, I want to emphasize that we did not do the Communiqué to "buy time" for PRC-Taiwan reconciliation. I saw a memo written in EA some years later, by people who had nothing to do with negotiating the Communiqué, attributing the "buy time" rationale to our motivation for negotiating it. That was totally wrong. Our motivation was strictly to maintain our relationship with China, at a time when it was in danger of retrogressing, in a Cold War environment, and to avoid ever again falling into a hostile relationship with a former adversary in war.

I'm proud of the way our statements were worded, going back to that earliest list of

principles I drafted. When we said we had “no intention infringing on Chinese sovereignty...,” who could take exception to that? That’s called for in the UN Charter. We did not say we would not pursue a long-term policy of arms sales to Taiwan, we said we did not “seek” to pursue such a policy, leaving open the possibility that if circumstances required we might pursue exactly such a policy. There was flexibility and more “wriggle room” in the Communiqué than met the eye.

One critic, Jim Mann, claimed in a book that even experienced China hands were critical of the Communiqué. I don’t know who he could have been referring to, though I know Jim Lilley said extremely unkind things about me behind my back, apparently blaming me for spoiling his arrival in Taipei when he had to convey to Chiang Ching-Kuo the President’s FX decision. Throughout the time of the Communiqué negotiations, I met monthly with some of the top China experts of the day, including Doak Barnett, Bill Gleysteen, Harry Harding, Mike Oksenberg, when he was in town, Al Romberg, Charlie Neuhauser, Ralph Clough, and others. Some of them wondered how long the “peace” we’d bought with it would last, but to the best of my knowledge all of them supported it.

Q. And those are all fine people.

ROPE: Finally, if you look at how much we’ve sold to Taiwan since the Communiqué, factoring in inflation, you’ll find that our sales have in fact declined in real-dollar terms, even as we met Taiwan’s needs under the TRA. For 1983, we approved an \$800 million dollar arms package for arms sales to Taiwan. I’m jumping ahead, but the previous high, in the Carter Administration, adjusted for inflation, was \$830 million. We’ll discuss that.

This morning I went online and tried to find a DOD source for total US arms sales to Taiwan since the Communiqué. I couldn’t find one, but I did find an Arms Control Association table on US government and commercial arms sales to Taiwan. It showed that between 1982 and 2012 the average level was \$943 million per year. To that I applied the average civilian inflation rate for those 30 years to our \$800 million for 1983 and found that, in today’s dollars, the 1983 figure would be \$1.9 billion, double the average dollar figure for sales in that table. The DOD inflation indicator would no doubt be higher. So in Quantitative terms we have met Taiwan’s needs at levels only about half those of the “high ceiling” I spoke of when we first discussed doing the Communiqué. Qualitatively, one could argue we’ve also lived up to the spirit of the Communiqué. Even when we sold F-16s in 1992, we were selling old F-16s which by then would be a reasonable approximation of “the levels of recent years.” That’s all I want to say.

Q: Today is April 18. I hope everybody has finished their taxes. We are returning to our conversation with Bill Rope. Bill, you said that after the August 17 Communiqué was done, you went on vacation. When you came back, what next?

ROPE: First something disappointing, though not entirely surprising: The Chinese Communist Party’s 12th Party Congress, at which the Chinese adopted a foreign policy of “equidistance” from the two superpowers, the US and the USSR.

Q: That was a setback?

ROPE: Of course. The fact that the Chinese had compromised on the Taiwan Arms issue showed they were willing to move ahead with the relationship, but it was a far cry from where we'd been at the end of the Carter Administration.

I haven't mentioned one thing, though it may be obvious. We never got the communiqué I envisioned when first proposing it. You'll recall the idea was to put the Taiwan arms statement into a much larger joint statement celebrating ten years of US-China rapprochement, with expressions of common positions, opposition to "hegemonism," i.e. the USSR, and other positive things. We had given the Chinese a draft of the non-arms sales portions of the Communiqué in January, as I said, following the division of labor Zhang Wenjin proposed to John.

But the Shanghai Communiqué anniversary came and went, in an atmosphere so bad it caused us to ask Ji Chaozhu whether there was any point in continuing. Then we had months of protracted negotiations focused solely on the Taiwan arms portion of the Communiqué. When, in August, it finally came time to turn to the other parts, the Chinese were no longer interested in what we had proposed. Instead they gave us a very truncated, minimalist version of what we'd provided, embodied in the final paragraph of the Communiqué.

To me, it all shows how much good will was eroded in the fight over Taiwan Arms; and by extension I think we might speculate that it showed Deng's position had been weakened by all that had happened. Certainly it didn't help us domestically that after the sacrifices we'd made in the Communiqué the Chinese publicly distanced themselves from us.

Still, there was work to be done. We needed to get moving. The first item of business was to be a visit by Secretary Shultz; but there, too, events were disappointing.

Q: How so?

ROPE: It became quickly apparent that the Secretary was not in a hurry to go to China. I don't recall how we learned that, but we did. Perhaps John got it straight from the Secretary. I know I began lobbying people who might influence him just as I'd lobbied against the FX a year earlier, telling people, "We've made a sacrifice. None of us wanted to do it, but we had to. Now let's collect the reward!" It was time to move out and rebuild the relationship.

Shultz was reluctant, however, and he may have been influenced by a memo Wolfowitz sent him. Paul had opposed the Communiqué from the outset, occasionally sending poorly worded, feckless memos to Haig saying so. Haig ignored them. After the Communiqué was issued, Paul sent a similar memo to Shultz saying we had "chased after" the Chinese, and now it was time to play hard to get -- to let the Chinese chase after us. It was poorly written and illogical, and I thought the Secretary would ignore it just as

Haig had; but maybe he didn't. In any case, he was resisting visiting Beijing.

Ray Seitz, the Secretary's top aide and my former boss at the end of my time in S/S-O, told me Shultz was "afraid" of two things: arms control and China. He was wary of arms control because it was new to him, highly technical and too important to screw up. He was wary of China because it was politically charged. I'm relaying what Ray told me at the time. Remember that while Shultz, through previous positions in government and his work with Bechtel, had a lot of experience with East Asia around the China periphery, including in Taiwan, he'd had little contact with China itself.

John was concerned about the Secretary's reluctance, and I suggested one way to overcome it. Nixon had recently visited China, and John had gone to New York to brief him before the trip. I said to John, "Let's go de-brief Nixon. He'll tell Shultz to go to China." John agreed, and a short time later we went to New York to do it. The annual UNGA Bilaterals were underway, and the Secretary was in New York, staying at the UN Plaza. John may have gone ahead of me to participate in Shultz's meetings with Asian counterparts, but, in any case, I went to the hotel, and from there John and I took a taxi downtown to a federal office building where Nixon had his office. We went to the one of the lower floors and down a dimly lit hall -- kind of like the Department of Commerce or the Interior in those days, with no décor -- passing stacks of boxes and equipment unconnected to Nixon. We came to a door with no identifying sign -- just a number, a cypher lock, a doorbell, and a peep-hole. John rang the bell, and out came a man he knew from NSC days -- Ray Price, Nixon's long-time speech-writer. Ray ushered us in.

Inside, the office was resplendent, furnished just as the President's and Vice President's offices in the White House were. On the wall were large photographs of Nixon with Sadat and Brezhnev, much like those one finds in the West Wing around the Situation Room. I realized they were the last two foreign leaders Nixon had met with before resigning, and the photos must have been taken off the White House walls when he left.

After a short wait, we were sent in to see the former President. He greeted John, who introduced me, and the three of us had a conversation lasting 45 minutes to an hour. At the outset, Nixon said, "Shultz better get his ass to China," which, in modified form, became the lead for the memo I drafted for John to send the Secretary when we returned to the UN Plaza.

Q: What was your modification?

ROPE: "President Nixon urges you to visit China at an early date," or something close to that.

Nixon thought it important for the same reasons we did -- to get the relationship back on a positive track before any new problems cropped up. He recounted his visit and his impressions of Deng and other leaders he met, including Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang. As one who had never voted for the man, I came away impressed. He may have been vulgar, but he was very sharp, with a thorough grasp not just of the broad strategic

rationale for US-China relations but of the details. The same went for any East Asia topic. On the way home, I kept thinking, “Priscilla’s not going to like hearing this, but...” She was a confirmed Nixon hater.

We went back to the UN Plaza, and I wrote up the conversation in a memo from John to the Secretary. It’s easier to get paper to the Secretary when he’s traveling, because you don’t have to worry about clearances, and S/S procedures are much simpler. After John signed off, I got the memo into the hands of Tony Wayne or Mike Klosson -- I think it was Mike -- who promised to get it quickly to the Secretary. Not long afterward, Shultz agreed to visit Beijing.

He wouldn’t do so, however, until February, by which time new problems had arisen in US-China relations. Before going further, though, I want to digress.

Q: To what?

ROPE: Since this is my personal history, I want to mention a meeting with another former President I had about a year earlier.

Q: Who was that?

ROPE: Jimmy Carter. He visited China and Japan in the summer of 1981 and requested a State Department briefing in advance. He wouldn’t come to Washington, and the Department or White House decided that, in that case, the highest level officials he would get were office directors. So Al Seligman, the Japan Country Director, and I flew to Dothan, Alabama and traveled by car to Plains to brief the former president. I told Priscilla, “Some people got to go to Plains in 1976. My fate is to go in 1981.”

I sent briefing materials to the President in advance and brought with me a classified CIA tape. We first went to lunch with Mrs. Carter, Eugene Patterson, former editor of the Atlanta Constitution, and Phil Wise, Carter’s former Appointments Secretary and personal aide in retirement. We lunched at the KKK Café, Plains’ only restaurant. The letters stood for “Kozy Kitchen Kupboard.” It was a pretty average local eatery, with a slightly separated portion of the main dining room designated the “President’s Room,” where we ate. Mrs. Carter was quiet throughout lunch but did insist that I have peanut butter pie for desert. Patterson was the most interesting.

I’ve never forgotten our first exchange. Carter looked at me with his big and rather strange blue eyes and asked, “Is it true they don’t have as much democracy over there in China as they used to have?” I said, “Mr. President, they’ve never actually had democracy in China. You may be thinking of ‘Democracy Wall’ which was a vehicle for bringing back Deng Xiaoping. But Deng is actually quite Stalinist. As soon as the wall served its purpose he shut it down.” And we went from there. After lunch President Carter, Al and I repaired with Phil Wise to the President’s office for a more formal briefing. Perhaps Carter was still shell-shocked from his 1980 loss. He seemed naïve and distracted, losing his train of thought a lot. When I gave him the CIA tape, he and Wise

talked about where he could get a video recorder to watch it on. "If we don't have one," he said to Wise, "you can buy one. I'd want to have one of those things if I was a bachelor." Wise later paid me a compliment: "The President liked the briefing," he said. "You could tell because he paid for lunch." There was just no comparison between Carter and Nixon. Nixon may be a crook, but in the China field he's our crook!

Q: Okay, back to 1982.

ROPE: For me there were two significant items that fall. I don't know which came first, but the one that had most impact on my professional and personal life was when John was appointed Ambassador to Indonesia and Paul Wolfowitz was named his successor. As I mentioned, Paul had consistently opposed the Taiwan Arms Communiqué, and he'd recommended that Shultz hang back and not "chase after" the Chinese when the Communiqué was done. He had little experience with East Asia. I heard from Seventh Floor friends that he'd become inconvenient for Shultz in his post as Policy Planning Chief because he opposed Shultz's Middle East initiative, which included an effort to bring Syria into the diplomacy. It was said that Ken Dam, who had replaced Stoessel as Deputy Secretary, suggested that by moving Wolfowitz to East Asia Shultz could kill two birds with one stone: please the Republican Right, unhappy over our Communiqué, and keep Paul out of Middle East matters.

The Secretary must have realized Paul wouldn't be a popular choice, because he and Dam came down to the East Asia conference room on the 6th Floor to introduce Paul to us. I had been hoping Dick Solomon would get the job. He'd accompanied Nixon on his recent China trip, and wanted the job; but instead I had to congratulate Paul and tell my staff that, while he might not be the person we'd hoped for, things would be all right. Then I went for a previously scheduled State Department physical. When the Dr. found my blood pressure very high, which was unusual, I told her it was "the worst day for me since Haig resigned." When I told her why, she said, "Oh. This could explain some of the symptoms I've been observing."

I asked John if I could go with him to Indonesia as DCM, but he had already picked John Monjo. So that was that.

While he awaited Senate Confirmation, Wolfowitz stayed in S/P, though he was focused on reading in for EA. Dick Solomon was named to replace him as Policy Planning chief; kind of a consolation prize.

As he read in, Paul interviewed his future office directors. In my interview he raised what he said was "an odd question to ask the China director: how can we increase our emphasis on Japan." I said I didn't think the question odd, because I considered Japan the most important country to us in East Asia. Japan was the only Asian country ever to attack us, and it was the one country that -- if it were ever hostile to us -- would have the technology to gear up quickly to do us serious damage. Of course, China had ICBMs, albeit liquid fueled; but Japan was way more advanced, and we needed to keep them close. I told Paul I believed we should strive to have the same kind of special relationship

in Asia with Japan as we had with the British in Europe. “The only point I would make,” I said, “is that we don’t have to de-emphasize one in order to strengthen emphasis on the other.” Japan and China were equally important to our vital interests, I said, and we should give them equal attention.

I suggested a number of things he could do, starting with beefing up the Japan Desk. It was much smaller than PRC/M and not staffed well enough to hold its own in interagency competition. I don’t think Paul took the advice.

Q: You said there were two developments. What was the second?

ROPE: We had to put together a large arms package for Taiwan. Within two weeks of the Communiqué’s issuance, we sent Congress an informal notification for the extension of the F-5E co-production line in Taiwan, to carry out the President’s January decision. After that, a delegation came from Taiwan for consultations with DSAA, the arms transfer branch of DOD. It was the first such visit in the Reagan Administration, and the delegation had a long shopping list. Once it left, there was a clear expectation coming straight from the White House that we’d move out smartly to consider the list and make decisions.

Normally, DOD would propose sales to State, and the State regional bureau would consider them and give or withhold concurrence. In this case, an interagency committee had to be formed; but the topic was so controversial we ended up in a little group with no formal chair. Physically, it was hosted by two colonels in DOD/ISA, Armitage’s shop. One was named Jerry, but though we had a close working relationship, 34 years later I can’t remember his last name. I represented State. There was a bright young Air Force officer, Major Chris Johnson, who represented JCS; and there was an individual from the White House whom I’d never seen before and never saw afterward. I guess he was from the PM side of the NSC. He knew very little about China, Taiwan or the history of the Communiqué negotiations. All he knew was that our job was to approve, approve, approve! I thought of him as a White House watchdog.

Q: What did Taiwan want?

ROPE: Lots of things. M60 tanks, C-130 transports, and ASW helicopters were the big ticket items. If we were to sell all of it, the total would be \$1.3 billion, way above the highest level of Taiwan arms sales ever. In the last year of the Carter Administration that had been around \$550 million. Using DOD’s arms inflation indicator to convert that to 1983 dollars, the level could be adjusted to \$830 million. It was clear we were going to sell a lot, but we couldn’t sell Taiwan all it wanted in one year. My job was to make sure that what we recommended would meet Taiwan’s legitimate needs while also fitting it into the \$830 million ceiling and without exceeding, in quality terms, what we had previously sold.

This led to system-by-system discussions, and we found solutions that would meet Taiwan’s needs without violating our stated intentions of August 17. There were three

kinds of ASW helicopters, for example, two of which would meet Taiwan's needs and fall within the parameters of the Communiqué. The third was too advanced. Also, if we just sold the "ASW suites" that would go aboard those helicopters, Taiwan could buy commercially available aircraft that could be retrofitted with the suites. Though I'm not sure we recommended that, it was an example of options we discussed. I should mention that the third, advanced, helicopter was made by Sikorski; and Haig, back at United Aircraft which owned Sikorski, lobbied for it, arguing with no factual basis that it would not violate the Communiqué. I wish he hadn't done that; but he'd done his service.

With regard to C-130s, Taiwan didn't need them for paratroop operations, which would make them offensive vis-à-vis the Mainland. Its stated reason was for troop transports to replace aging aircraft like flying boxcars. Arguably, we could justify selling C-130s, because there was no military alternative available and C-130s had been in service for many years; but their cost would "break the bank" in terms of our \$830 million ceiling. So we recommended that Taiwan could purchase the L-100 commercial version of the plane. As for M-60 tanks, we'd never sold those to Taiwan before. Chris Johnson pointed out that the latest version of the M-48, the M-48 MK 5, was the equal of the M-60 and was a tank that -- in older versions -- was already in Taiwan's inventory. We recommended the M-48 MK 5. And so it went.

Our final package totaled \$800 million, but when it came to State for formal consideration, in late November or December, I think, Wolfowitz had been confirmed as Assistant Secretary. He wanted us to approve Taiwan's original request at \$1.3 billion. I explained why we could not do that and stay within the parameters of the Communiqué, but Paul insisted on his position; and since he was Assistant Secretary, and I lost. EA's recommendation was that we approve a package half a billion dollars higher than the one our group had come up with.

But Paul was not the final decision-maker. Sometime after the Communiqué was done, the Secretary held a meeting in his smaller office to discuss China. Larry Eagleburger, Under Secretary for Policy, John, and I attended. When the question of approving arms sales to Taiwan came up, Eagleburger said "Mr. Secretary, you need someone to take this off your plate." The implication was that it was too political and would be better left to a career officer. The Secretary agreed, and Eagleburger took it on. The job stayed with P even after Larry was no longer Under Secretary.

So the "Eagle" as we called him, was State's top decision-maker on Taiwan arms. When he called a meeting on the package, possibly not until January, Wolfowitz advocated proceeding with a \$1.3 billion sale. Larry heard Paul out and then then turned to me and Darryl Johnson, by then his aide on East Asia issues and my long-term friend as well as Dennis Harter's predecessor on the China desk. "What do the China twins think?" he asked. I had to give my view, favoring the \$800 million package, and Darryl did the same. Eagle sided with us and overruled Paul. I'm sure Paul thought we'd rigged the meeting against him -- he wasn't a trusting boss -- but we hadn't. His position called for breaking our word when the ink on the Communiqué was hardly dry. That was patently absurd. Regardless of what Darryl and I thought, Eagle never would have approved it.

After I left PRC/M in 1983, one of my EA friends told me Paul had said in his presence that the Communiqué was a bad document, badly negotiated, and he would undermine it every chance he got. This said, notwithstanding our differences and Paul's decisions at times to cut me out of decision-making in which I'd normally be involved -- e.g., whether Taiwan could enter the Asian Development Bank and on what terms -- I had a cordial working relationship with him. We did not fight; but he also didn't have a job for me in EA at the end of my tour.

Q: So what next? Shultz has to go to China.

ROPE: Before we get to that, I want to add one more thing about the \$800 million arms package. When it became public -- possibly when DOD issued its annual Congressional Presentation Document covering all planned US arms sales for the coming year -- the Chinese protested the \$800 million. Ji Chaozhu came to me to deliver it. We were prepared. I had arranged to have a table put in the CPD, as an annex, giving the DOD arms inflation indicators for a number of years, including the one to be used for 1983. That enabled me to say, when Ji came, that if he would look on page X of the CPD's appendix, and apply the inflation indicator it provided to our previous highest level of sales, he would find that we had not exceeded that level and in fact were below it.

Q: That was clever.

ROPE: You'll remember I was already thinking of inflation when John and I had that discussion with Secretary Haig, when the Secretary came up with the words "in qualitative or quantitative terms."

Q: So. You had to prepare for a Secretarial visit to Beijing.

ROPE: Yes; but one more thing first. In what I think was the first high-level US-China meeting not related to Taiwan Arms in a year, we had another annual session of the US-China Joint Economic Committee in December, in Washington. It wasn't exceptional, but it went smoothly, notwithstanding export control issues that were a problem for Secretary Shultz in February. That was mainly because the Joint Committee focused on financial and tax-related matters, at least at that time. Richard Mueller was our point man on it, though I remember attending the final session, at which Treasury Secretary Regan announced a decision by the Fed to change the US interest rate.

Q: Okay. So next was the Secretary's visit to Beijing.

ROPE: Yes. The date had been set for the beginning of February, and we would have to produce a full set of briefing papers for the trip, something we'd normally do after New Year. Several weeks before Christmas, however, Paul decided he wanted to give the Secretary his briefing book before the holidays so he could take it with him to read on his winter vacation. My staff was upset, because we had to go into overdrive to get them done in time. I told them to look at the bright side. We'd get it done and go off without

having to worry about all that work ahead of us when we returned. Barbara Schrage, who'd been in S/S-S and was an outstanding officer, had replaced Dennis. She and her team produced an excellent briefing book, with talking points on virtually every subject, cleared as necessary within the Department. They got it done in a week, and we sent it to Wolfowitz. Then two things happened.

Q: What were they?

ROPE: First, Paul, didn't read it. He was always way behind on his in-box. To the alarm of Barbara and others, the briefing book sat in his office without his so much as taking a look at it. I told them, "Don't you realize? Paul isn't going to read it? He doesn't write what the Secretary says in Beijing. We do!" And that was true. While it was true that papers we drafted usually went forward through John Holdridge's office pretty much unscathed, John read it all and was actively involved. He did edit some things and would regularly discuss changes he thought should be made with me. The second thing that happened was that, when Paul mentioned his idea about Shultz taking the briefing book on vacation to Charlie Hill, who had replaced Ray Seitz as Shultz's number one aide, Charlie said the Secretary didn't want to take work on vacation. So that was that.

My staff was pretty annoyed to have been put through a major rush job for nothing. It wasn't for nothing, though. We'd done the work, and while we might have to update a paper or two in January, the book was effectively finished.

Q: So the next big thing was the actual trip to China.

ROPE: The Secretary went first to Japan. There wasn't room for me on the plane, and I wasn't part of his official party in Tokyo, so I flew there separately and rendezvoused with the party at the Okura Hotel. There we had a briefing session for the Secretary to prepare him for his visit to Beijing.

Q: How was that? What were your plans for the visit? What initiatives did you plan to take and what issues did you expect to arise?

ROPE: Unless I'm grossly forgetting, we had few new initiatives. The Secretary could cite progress made in carrying out steps Haig had laid out -- including further liberalizing our export control regulations; making China eligible for arms transfers; and revising various rules and regulations treating China as an adversary nation. But the visit was primarily aimed at resuming high-level dialogue and reaffirming our interest in building a strong US-China relationship. It would be the first time the Chinese saw the Secretary, and they do put stock in personal relationships; it was also his first visit to the PRC. Fortunately, China had a new Foreign Minister, Wu Xueqian, who was pleasant, sharp and agreeable -- a far cry from the dour Huang Hua. He and Secretary Shultz got on very well.

There were unpleasant issues to be anticipated. One was export control. We had come a considerable way in relaxing controls since the days before the Nixon visit; but there was

still a long list of items the Chinese could not procure from the United States, and China was still lumped with the USSR and its satellites in our “Excon” regulations. Moreover, regardless of what we’d promised and done since the Haig visit, export control was a continuing obstacle to US trade with China. We remained in a conservative Republican Administration with many people, especially in the export control community who were highly suspicious of China. Getting things approved by the bureaucracy, at times even including Commerce where there was a positive interest in promoting exports, was like pulling teeth. I’ve mentioned Steve Brien in Perle’s shop. He could be impossible; there was also an interagency committee, TTIC, dominated by the intelligence community, particularly the DOD side of it, which would object to all manner of sales to China, however anodyne.

I knew something about export control from my first tour in Hong Kong where I handled that in the Hong Kong/Macau Section, and I cut my teeth in the China field working on, and promoting, trade. I knew how poor China was and felt it important for strategic reasons that we support its -- and specifically Deng’s -- modernization efforts. I didn’t want to “give away the store,” on dual-use technology, i.e., items that could be used for military as well as economic purposes, but I thought we needed to use common sense and not try to hold back everything. There were many things China could get from alternative sources. I didn’t want US companies to lose business to foreign competitors. I also believed US business people were “big boys” -- today one might say “big boys and girls” -- who knew how to protect their most valuable technology; at least it was their business to do so. Finally, trade was an important tool for bringing China back into the world community, building a long-term web of ties between the US and China and between China and the world, thereby promoting global stability. Richard Mueller and our bright young star, Richard Boucher, agreed with me, and they were very good at working the bureaucracy; still progress was slow.

On the Chinese side, Deng’s entire domestic and foreign policies rested on modernizing China by opening to the West and gaining access to Western technology. Deng, personally, was greatly frustrated by the obstacles posed by our policies; and he made that more than clear during Shultz’s visit.

Another irritant that had cropped up was the Hukuang Railway Bonds case. Sometime in 1962, a judge in Alabama had awarded a multimillion dollar default judgment -- I think \$23 million though I could be wrong -- against China, to a plaintiff who’d bought a large number of old Qing Dynasty bonds. Successor governments to the Qing had long ago defaulted on them, and they were worthless. However, when the man sued the Chinese Communist government demanding payment, the Chinese refused -- as they had when told to go to court if they wished to gain possession of Twin Oaks at the time of Normalization -- to defend themselves in court. They cleaved to a doctrine of absolute sovereign immunity, when under US law governments can be sued in commercial matters. If the PRC had been willing to have a lawyer represent it, the judge would have dismissed the case out of hand, because the statute of limitations had run out. In the absence of a Chinese respondent, however, the judge granted the default judgment. Once that happened, the plaintiff could use it to put a lien on Chinese-owned property, such as

airliners and cause lots of trouble. Beijing was very angry about it, and Deng raised that with Shultz, too.

Thirdly, there was the problem of a Chinese tennis player, Hu Na, who had defected from her national team on a trip to California in the summer of 1982 and applied for political asylum. As soon as she did, supported by pro-Taiwan elements in the US, her case became a cause célèbre.

Within a week of her defection, a resolution was introduced in the House calling on the administration to grant Hu Na immediate asylum. Holdridge was concerned this would create a new problem with the PRC just as we were concluding the Taiwan Arms negotiations, and he went to see Steve Solarz, Chairman of HFAC's Asia-Pacific Subcommittee, and asked him to quash it. I went along. Besides our desire to avoid a new bilateral problem at a key moment, we wanted to preserve Executive Branch prerogatives in the matter and not have Congress trying to foreclose our options in an area within the Executive's purview.

John promised Steve one thing on the spot, and that's important to note. He promised that, regardless of the ultimate decision on Hu Na's asylum request, we would ensure that she could stay in the US and never be compelled to return to China. Steve -- who later offered me a job, another story -- agreed to block the resolution. He promised to do so on one condition, however; he wanted to play tennis with Hu Na. Although we laughed at this, he actually did it a year or two later, playing doubles, with Brzezinski as his partner.

The death of the resolution wasn't the end of it, though. Had the INS agent interviewing Hu Na found that she had "a well-founded fear of political persecution" he would have recommended that she be given political asylum; and although the case would have taken time to reach my office, we would have agreed. However, the INS agent wrote that, based on his interview, he could find no indication that she had defected out of "a well-founded fear of persecution." So far as he could see, she simply wanted to play tennis in the US, for economic reasons. This caused the case to drag on, and we can discuss it further later. For the moment, as we prepared for the Shultz visit, we knew there would be complaints about it, and the answer would be that no decision had been made.

Q: So you briefed Shultz in Tokyo?

ROPE: Yes. In his suite in the Okura, and we gave him a very thorough briefing. I remember several things about it. One, the Secretary showed signs of nervousness and information overload after a while, and he brought it to a rather abrupt end. Two, although Wolfowitz was not a very active participant, he refused to go when an Embassy officer told him it was time to leave for a call on a Japanese Foreign Ministry official. As a result, Paul, in Japan for the first time since becoming Assistant Secretary, missed his appointment with the highest ranking official he was scheduled to see. The Embassy was mortified.

A third was that, as we broke up, the Secretary sat down at a desk in an office off the

room where we'd met. I had to walk behind him to exit his suite. As I did so, I accidentally dropped two heavy briefing books on his shoulder. Stooping down to pick them up from the floor, I apologized and said, "Mr. Secretary, you'll do just fine." He looked at me and said, "Well, I'm just going to be myself. They can either like me, or not like me." That was vintage Shultz.

Q: So you went on to China.

ROPE: Yes; but there's more thing to relate before getting to the visit.

Q: Oh?

ROPE: Although so far as I can recall, the meeting with Eagleburger on the Taiwan arms package had settled the issue, somehow Paul was still pushing for the higher level of sales he'd advocated. I don't remember the details, but I remember well an exchange on the plane flying into Beijing. I had told Art Hummel what Wolfowitz was trying to do, and Art raised it with the Secretary in a tête-à-tête during the flight, before Shultz called his party into a little conference room on the plane. There we had Paul, Art, PM Assistant Secretary Jon Howe, Tom Shoesmith, and me. The room was small enough that I sat on the floor.

As we started the meeting, the Secretary said, in reference to the Taiwan Arms Communiqué, "I want to say one thing. That Communiqué is the word of the United States; and we're going to carry it out." To this, Wolfowitz and Howe started to respond in unison, "But..." only to be sharply cut off by the Secretary who said loudly, "NO 'BUTS!'" That was the end of that.

Q: OK, well let's break it off here. I know you're going off to China for the Hopkins-Nanjing 30th Anniversary Celebration and Tibet. Is that right?

ROPE: More or less. First Tibet, then Sichuan and a 3-Gorges Cruise, then the Huizhou villages in Hunan, and then Hopkins-Nanjing. Over a month, anyway.

Q: OK, Bill thank you very much. We'll get together when you're back.

ROPE: Take care. Bye.

Q: We are back to our conversation with Bill Rope. It's 22 July, 2016.

ROPE: It has been over two months so I have kind of forgotten where we were

Q: You had been telling us about the visit of Secretary Shultz to China. How did the visit go?

ROPE: To tell you the truth, it's kind of a blur in my mind this many years later. The Chinese did complain about all the things I've mentioned, and Deng particularly raved

about arms control and Hukuang; but it wasn't a terrible visit. Shultz liked his counterpart, Wu Xueqian, who introduced Zhang Wenjin to us as the next PRC Ambassador to the US. Shultz used Zhang very effectively, thereafter, to deflect Chinese complaints, speaking of the complexity of our government and saying that Zhang, whom he would welcome to Washington, would be learning about that and could explain to Beijing why things happened as they did.

There were good exchanges with Wu on international issues, which was a welcome change from what we'd had over the past year.

The Secretary met with all the top officials, including Zhao Ziyang, who didn't make a very good impression.

The key meeting was with Deng, who carried on at length about export control and Hukuang. On export control, he was so demanding that I later said to the Secretary that we might want to think twice before giving in to that kind of pressure. It was, after all, our technology and our dual-use goods; not China's. It was our right to decide what we sold; not China's right to have whatever it wanted.

On the Hukuang Railway Bonds Case, Deng raved -- in between hawking and spitting into a spittoon -- about the three-headed monster that was the US government, with the Congress doing one thing, the Courts doing something else, and the Executive yet another. "I don't know who to deal with," he exclaimed. Shultz deployed his answer about Zhang, and it wasn't a terrible meeting. But Deng was agitated and venting. As he complained about Hukuang Paul did a good thing. He passed a note to the Secretary asking if it would help if we sent a legal delegation to Beijing to discuss it. Deng said it would, and that ultimately led to a solution.

Again, despite that kind of unpleasantness, it was a successful visit. We were back on track, at least to a degree. I think the Secretary made a good impression, and he liked his counterparts. At a staff meeting after the visit, he told his assembled Under Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries that "the Chinese think strategically; more than any other leaders I've met in Asia."

It was a hard visit for me. I had to write up the Secretary's reports back to Washington late in the evening after the banquets, and Wolfowitz insisted on getting involved even though he had hardly slept on the plane out to Tokyo and was so exhausted by the time we reached Beijing he'd fall asleep over his typewriter. Tom Shoenberger was abusive, the result, I think, of what he consumed at banquets. I remember Chas, who observed some testy exchanges between Tom and me, saying, in effect, "cool it." I said to him, "Chas, you don't know how hard it's been." It wasn't easy before John Holdridge left; and it was even harder without him there.

After we got back, the Secretary invited Al Seligman and me to brief his staff meeting on the visits to Japan and China. In my presentation, I made those comments about export control that I've mentioned, saying I thought we might want to think long and hard about

whether we should give in to Deng's demands. This was paradoxical, given my belief that we needed to do a lot to liberalize our regulations; but I just did not like to give in to that kind of pressure. Shultz, however, was more relaxed, perhaps because he believed so much in trade himself. Besides being an experienced statesman and bureaucrat, he was an economist who had been a businessman with Bechtel. He was pretty pro-business.

In any case, he made those comments about the Chinese as strategic thinkers, said he liked them, and indicated that we needed to see what we could do about export control.

Q: Yes, sometimes these trips break the ice, break the logjam back in Washington because the principal is suddenly having to focus on something and suddenly having to see the other side's point of view; and he comes back and asks his people "why are we harassing these guys?" or something like that. That is why these trips are important and why you want your guy traveling.

ROPE: Exactly, and the biggest remaining issue during my time on the China Desk was export control. Having the Secretary in our corner was good. Richard Boucher was our point man, and while he kept me informed and I certainly backed him and gave him guidance and instructions, I wasn't involved in the same way I'd been on the Taiwan Arms front. Richard was a truly outstanding officer -- very smart and likeable, with a zest for bureaucratic operating. He did all the day-to-day work of our efforts to liberalize, and if he's done an oral history perhaps he's covered this period.

I do remember at least one meeting where conflict over an export control case went all the way to the Secretary's level and was resolved in EA/PRCM's favor. EB Assistant Secretary Dick McCormack, who'd come to State from Jesse Helms' staff I believe, was opposing us on a major case. I think he also had Dick Schneider, Under Secretary for Security Assistance and Technology Transfer -- something like that -- in his corner. Wolfowitz may have supported us or may simply have been neutral. In any case, I had to carry the water in a debate with McCormack in front of the Secretary. McCormack lost when Shultz came down on our side.

Another meeting I remember was down at Commerce, at the Under Secretary level. I forget the specifics, but I know Commerce had become totally fed up with Steve Brien, who was driving them crazy with constant obstructionism and opposition to even the most noncontroversial cases. Since Perle's shop, DOD/ISP, had responsibility for technology transfer issues, Rich Armitage, who had grown much more supportive of improving relations with China, had no role in determining DOD policy.

The key development, was when Secretary of Commerce Baldrige became engaged. Bob Perito, who had succeeded me in Hong Kong on China trade and had joined Herb Horowitz and me in Beijing a year later, had left the Deputy Secretary's office when Stoessel did and was at Commerce working on China. In that capacity, he regularly attended my weekly PRC/M staff meetings. After one of those meetings, at which export control was a very active topic, he said to me, "You could do worse than let Mac Baldrige take the lead on this."

I took that on board; and while Boucher kept working the issue for EA, I did exactly what Bob said. Baldrige was a respected member of Reagan's cabinet, and I knew how unhappy his top subordinates had become. This was also convenient, because the battle I'd had to fight over Taiwan Arms had been bruising, and I didn't need to make more bureaucratic enemies -- the contest with Dick McCormack notwithstanding. By the way, though we often disagreed, I always got on well with Dick Schneider. McCormack was a different matter. He was pompous and not terribly bright; but I didn't have to get into it with him very often.

I wish I could recall more of what transpired in the interagency community, but I truthfully don't even remember if there was a formal interagency review. There was, however, a decision-forcing event. Baldrige was invited to visit Beijing in May. He did not want to go without something positive to say on export control. So the vehicle for making changes in policy became the instruction cable for his visit. I don't know who was the drafter, whether it was Boucher or maybe someone at Commerce, though I know think it went out from State since I was involved in the final decision to send it. As the cable developed, it authorized Baldrige to convey to the Chinese the biggest change in export control policy toward China since Nixon's first steps making it possible for US businessmen to trade with the PRC in 1971.

Q: What was the change?

ROPE: We removed China from the export control category covering the Soviet Bloc and put it in the same category as the "Free World." It was a very big shift, done without DOD's agreement.

Q: Really! How did that happen?

Baldrige was actually on a plane, or about to get on one, on his way to China, when the final version of the cable circulated within the interagency community. It was a Friday, and all relevant offices and agencies had cleared off on it by the end of the day except Perle's office in DOD. Whether that was a blocking or stalling tactic or just a matter of DOD's not being able to come up with an alternative, I don't know. All I know is that I had to sit in my office waiting for that clearance, and it didn't come and didn't come. Finally, at some point, perhaps between 8 and 9 p.m., I called over to the NSC and ended up speaking to John Poindexter, number two over there. I said we needed to get the cable out because Baldrige would soon be arriving in Beijing, and DOD hadn't cleared.

Poindexter said, "Let's just go without them." Knowing exactly what this meant, I said that was fine with me but it was his decision; and he made it affirmatively. The instructions were sent to Baldrige without Perle's clearance. On Saturday morning, I was in Wolfowitz's office when Perle called to complain. I remember Paul saying, "Now Richard, now Richard, calm down." So DOD was overridden and we made a major change. That is what I can tell you about tech transfer.

Q: Okay. Now I know this was a very intense and important time in your career. By May of 1983 your time on the Desk is coming to an end. Are there other issues that spring that we need to cover before moving on? What happened with the tennis player? What about the railway bonds? Is there anything important we've left out?

ROPE: We need to discuss those two, but before we do I want to relate something that bears on your comment about the value of high-level visits that focus a principal on issues and help him or her see the other guy's point of view. It's about the way Shultz handled Zhang Wenjin's arrival in Washington as China's new ambassador.

Q: Tell me.

ROPE: Sometime in the spring, Zhang arrived in Washington to replace Chai Zemin. His first significant order of business -- after calling on Selwa Roosevelt, our Chief of Protocol -- was to make an official call on the Secretary of State. Only after that could he present credentials to the President and begin to function officially as an ambassador.

Normally, the call on the Secretary would be brief and pro forma -- pleasantries. Not long after Zhang arrived, however, someone on my staff responsible for handling China's request for the meeting, perhaps Neil Silver, reported to me that Shultz had a very different idea. He wanted to invite Zhang for cocktails in his office and invite other cabinet members and Administration officials to join them. This was a follow-up to his comments in Beijing about Zhang's being able to learn how we work and to help Beijing understand it. Shultz wanted to help Zhang hit the ground running by facilitating high level access for Zhang and by giving him a short briefing from all these people.

When I went to tell Paul about this, Tom Shoesmith was in his office, so I reported to both of them. Tom was aghast. "What will Ambassador Ogawa think?" he exclaimed. Ogawa was the Japanese ambassador, and Tom feared he'd be miffed that China's ambassador would receive treatment not accorded Ogawa when he arrived.

I told Tom that, first of all, I doubted Ambassador Ogawa would find out; but, assuming he did, I said, "don't you think the Japanese would be happy to know the Secretary is interested in promoting good relations with China?" Japan had a strong interest in seeing stability return to US-China relations. In any case, it was the Secretary's call.

When Shultz received Zhang, I attended, and I guess Paul must have. Present were Baldrige, Weinberger, Regan, Martin Feldstein, head of the President's Council of Economic Advisors, Judge Clark, and perhaps others. It was a very elite circle and a very warm, friendly gathering. Shultz introduced the American principals and invited each to say a few words about topics of interest. Zhang, as I've noted, was a pleasant and sophisticated gentleman, with modest demeanor and an excellent command of not-heavily-accented English.

I don't remember what they said except for Feldstein, who gave Zhang a succinct picture of the economy, as he saw it. Weinberger, who by then wanted to go to China, sat on the

edge of his seat leaning so far toward Zhang I thought he might slip down in front of him on his knees.

Q: Do you think this made a difference?

ROPE: It certainly didn't hurt; and to the best of my knowledge, if Ambassador Ogawa learned of it our relations with Tokyo survived.

What I do know, is that despite the irritants of a decision in April to grant asylum to Hu Na in April, and the unresolved Hukuang Railway Bonds case, US-China relations were finally trending upward by the time I left the desk in June. The biggest indicator of that was an invitation to Weinberger for a visit that fall.

Q: Did you recommend asylum for Hu Na?

ROPE: My office did not, for a very simple reason.

Q: What was that?

ROPE: We had no grounds on which to base such a recommendation. As I've said, the INS officer who interviewed Hu could find no indication that she defected out of a "well-founded fear of political persecution," the only ground, at least at that time, for granting political asylum. He'd gone over with her all the reasons why she had defected, and her principal reason seemed to be that she wanted to play tennis in the United States and make money at it. He asked her about political matters, but she gave no sign that she might be the object of political persecution or that she feared that. In fact, she had been treated well as a Chinese athlete.

We had no information that would contradict the INS officer's judgment. Sheldon Krebs, handled the case, looking into it very thoroughly, and found nothing. John, of course, had promised Steve Solarz the preceding summer that Hu would never be forced to return to China, which was our standard practice in any case. I think it's safe to say that none of us in the China field -- certainly no one I knew at that time -- would ever be party to sending someone back to the PRC against his or her will, regardless of whether the person had a well-founded fear of persecution.

Q: So that was that?

ROPE: Not exactly. Notwithstanding John's promise to Solarz and Steve's action to derail the House resolution I mentioned, there were strong pressures -- from the Hill, political commentators on the right, and within the Department -- to grant Hu Na asylum. Representatives of Taiwan had jumped in to fund her legal representation, and her lawyers would accept nothing on her behalf short of asylum. We could absolutely guarantee her a status that would give her a path to a "green card" and ultimately full US citizenship; and I was personally involved in that. I stressed this possibility in talks I had with one individual who was in touch with Hu's lawyers, Parris Chang. Parris was a

friend and first-rate academic at Penn State who ultimately became a Taiwan legislator. Hu's lawyers weren't interested.

Q: Who in the Department favored asylum?

ROPE: The main person was Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary for Human Rights. He brought nothing to the table in terms of concrete grounds on which to base an asylum recommendation, but he was so adamant about it that several years later he nixed me for a temporary job saying -- totally falsely -- that I wanted "to send that Tennis player back to China." Elliott's politics are well known, as are the circumstances under which he received a Presidential pardon. Paul stayed out of the matter and put no pressure on me, though I doubt he supported PRC/M's position. If he had, it's unlikely Tom Shoesmith, who I think was State's final decision-maker, would have taken the position he did.

Q: What was Shoesmith's position?

ROPE: He made the decision, above my head, to recommend asylum, in a way that was so contorted it failed to change the position of INS.

Q: How so?

ROPE: As I mentioned, the officer handling human rights in PRC/M, Shelly Krebs studied Hu Na's file carefully and told me he could find no basis for disagreeing with the INS interviewing officer. I looked the file over carefully, and agreed with Shelly.

When Shoesmith made it clear he wanted me to come up with a different judgment, I told him that in good conscience I could not. I told him, however, that there was good news and bad news. The bad news was that my working level officer had studied the file and found no basis for recommending that we disagree with the INS interviewing officer's decision; and I had reviewed the case and found no basis for doing so. The good news was that anyone above my level could overrule me and make a different decision.

This made Tom very uncomfortable; so he went over the file himself. After doing so, he told me he, too, could find no reason to disagree with the INS officer. So he dictated to me a terse two or three sentence statement saying that the Department of State could find no grounds on which to conclude that Hu Na had a well-founded fear of political persecution. Nevertheless, the statement said, the Department of State believed she should receive the full benefit of the doubt and be given political asylum.

I wrote that up for Tom, and he signed it, sending the case back to INS. When it reached the original interviewing officer, he said he could not change his decision. Normally, he wrote, whenever State disagreed with an INS recommendation for asylum it provided a detailed explanation justifying its position. In this case, the Department had said it found no grounds for granting Hu Na asylum but nonetheless recommended that asylum be granted. This, he concluded, was most unusual and gave him no legal basis for altering his decision.

In short, it had become a purely political case, and honest professionals could not come up with the decision political superiors wanted. The interviewing officer's judgment against asylum was upheld all the way to the top of INS and through all levels of the Justice Department to the Attorney General. There, William French Smith finally overruled subordinates and granted Hu asylum. The right wing loved it. George Will wrote that it was "gloriously insulting" to the PRC, or words close to that; and the bureaucrats who had not been willing to recommend asylum were criticized.

As for the Chinese, they didn't like it, but they lived with it; and that was that.

By the way, just around this time something very important happened in my personal life.

Q: Oh?

ROPE: Our son Robert was born. There was a big space between him and Kate, who by this time was a fourth grader at the National Cathedral School. The gap between children was due to what I like to call "Act of God." Robert was named after my uncle, Robert Weinberg, a New York architect and city planner whom I loved very much and who was a great influence on me growing up. He died in 1973 while we were on home leave from Beijing, and I was with him daily during his final days. We were very happy to have a new Robert in the family, and he has been a great source of happiness for Priscilla and me ever since, as has Kate, who's now a writer and editor specializing in maternal health issues in Atlanta. Robert's a doctor doing a fellowship in nephrology at Stanford Medical School.

My colleagues in PRC/M gave me a handsome stroller to celebrate Robert's birth.

Next question.

Q: Thanks for bringing that up. We like to hear what was going on with families, and whatever the stress of the China office that was obviously very good for you. Going back to China, what happened with the railway bonds case?

ROPE: It came out better than the Hu Na case, but only after I left the Desk was it finally resolved.

Q: How?

ROPE: As Wolfowitz proposed to the Secretary, and the Secretary proposed to Deng, we sent a delegation of "experts" to Beijing to discuss the case in late June. It took time, between February and June, to arrange the trip, and in my final week on the Desk I was part of a delegation led by State Legal Advisor Davis Robinson for several days of meetings with Chinese counterparts in Beijing. I had a hard time persuading Paul to let me go. Although the delegation had been his idea, he didn't think it had much prospect of success. He didn't want me to go, or didn't think it worth the money to send me, or had

some other reason for excluding me. As I've mentioned, we had a perfectly cordial and professional relationship, though I don't think he fully trusted me. Certainly, given where he stood with regard to the August 17 Communiqué, he didn't trust my judgment, at least when it came to dealing with the PRC.

I pushed Paul hard, though. I thought there was a real possibility the trip could succeed, and I told him I could think of no better use of my time in those final days than to accompany Davis and Assistant Legal Advisor Liz Verville -- responsible for EA legal affairs within L -- on the trip. Ultimately, Paul relented, and I along with his personal assistant, Scooter Libby, represented EA on the delegation. The final member of our group was Terry Fortune, another lawyer from L.

Liz and I had lots of discussions about the case in advance. She was a sharp lawyer and good bureaucratic operator. Chas had worked closely with her and I'd kept her involved throughout the Taiwan Arms negotiations -- to make sure all we did was consistent with US law. The two of us later worked together under Dick Clarke in PM, and we're close friends to this day. Liz thought it essential that someone who understood how to deal with the Chinese as well as Washington dynamics be along. That meant me.

Q: So you went, and how did it turn out?

ROPE: Davis was a lively, enjoyable character but very disorganized. He never really focused on the case until we were on the plane flying to China. Even then it wasn't until we had held a few sessions with Chinese legal experts and Foreign Ministry counterparts discussing China's doctrine of sovereign immunity and our version of the same -- including exceptions to it in US law -- that Davis hit on a formula he hoped might move the Chinese off their position and into a US court to get the default judgment thrown out.

He wanted to persuade the Chinese to argue in the alternative. As applied to the Hukuang case, this would amount to sending a representative to the court to, first, put forward Beijing's argument that the court had no jurisdiction over the Chinese government because it was immune from suit under China's absolute doctrine that "the sovereign cannot be sued." In doing so, the Chinese could denounce the court and even the US government in the shrillest terms they might wish -- and we stressed that -- provided they attached one small statement saying, essentially, "besides, the statute of limitations has expired." In short, the argument would be: "You have no jurisdiction over us, and even if you did it wouldn't matter because the statute of limitations has run out."

It took a combination of formal meetings and an informal lunch attended by Davis, Liz, me, and the leaders of the Chinese side to get the Chinese to at least consider this idea. If they would agree and do it, Davis said, the State Department would be willing to go to the court to give its view that their argumentation, i.e. the argument in the alternative, was correct.

Q: Did they agree?

ROPE: They agreed to consider it, and they seemed impressed and pleased with our effort. We were treated well, including dinner under the stars at the Summer Palace. It was an intense but enjoyable final few days of China work for me. I never did learn precisely how the matter was resolved because by then I was off in the Senior Seminar; but the Chinese did send someone to court and the judgment against them was vacated. The Hukuang bonds case was closed, and I was right about the use of my time.

On return, I held final meetings with my staff, made a few farewell calls, and left PRC/M. My deputy, Rick Howarth, who had replaced Scott Hallford a year earlier, was in charge. Don Anderson succeeded me sometime that summer.

Q: So you were finished. What happened next? How did you line up your next assignment -- to the Executive, or Senior, Seminar?

ROPE: I could have extended on the Desk for an additional year; but given the differences of viewpoint between me and Paul, I felt it important that he be able to choose his own person to head EA/PRCM. The key work had been done, US-China relations were finally getting back on track. Weinberger was slated to visit Beijing in the fall. Ultimately, President Reagan went.

Before discussing my next assignment, there are a few more things I'd like to say.

Q: Go ahead.

ROPE: I've mentioned my staff from time to time, but not as much as I'd have preferred. I know for sure that our office was always busy, and it would be impossible, even if I could recall accurately all the details this many years later, to cover them in what is already a very long oral history. I was lucky to have a very able group, and while so much of what I've discussed involves what I was doing with principals, they were fully occupied with all kinds of day-to-day matters.

I had been managing people for five years when I arrived in PRC/M and my efficiency reports and promotion record said I was a good manager. I knew pretty well, I think, how to strike a balance between delegating and becoming actively involved in issues. Still, whatever else I was doing on Taiwan Arms, I was fully involved in the day-to-day running of the Desk. Fortunately, in the first year, when things were toughest, I had an alter ego in Scott Hallford, my partner in crime, so to speak. I was very glad that he never suffered the consequences for his work on the Taiwan Arms Communiqué that I did.

I've mentioned some of those staff members and will add that one very bright, aggressive and ambitious young officer, Steve Young, joined us from Taipei in my second year. Rick Howarth, who succeeded Scott in July 1982, wasn't a "China hand;" but he was a supportive and capable deputy. I chose him because I'd known and respected him in Hong Kong -- we'd even shared a duplex house there -- and he had family matters that kept him in Washington at a time when he was due to go to higher positions overseas.

Q. Is there anything more you want to say about your superiors?

ROPE: I've said enough about Paul Wolfowitz. There's a little more to say about Tom Shoemith in regard to my efforts to get an assignment after the China Desk; and I might say a word or two about Haig and Shultz.

I've always thought that Haig was a misunderstood and much underrated Secretary who received a lot of undeserved criticism. It's true he was an aggressive Secretary of State, both in terms of what he said -- threatening war with Cuba at one point, for example -- and his behavior; but he was essentially a moderate, seeking to move an administration with very right wing foreign policy tendencies into mainstream internationalism. He had to fight a lot of battles to do that, not least of them the fight over the Soviet gas pipeline to Europe that ultimately brought him down; but there were also arms control and other issues, most certainly including China.

By fighting those battles and putting the blood on the floor, Haig made it possible for Shultz to come in and be successful, pursuing a moderate, if right of center, approach. Shultz was much more of a "company man." If he had come in as Secretary in 1981, things might have gone differently with China and not for the better. He might not have taken a stand against efforts to re-recognize Taipei and I think he would most probably have gone right along with an FX sale. By the time he came to office, Haig had shown there were limits to what could be done with Taiwan, and even if Shultz was initially skeptical he accepted that reality.

As I've said about Haig, while feisty, he respected, and would listen to, anyone who would stand up to him and make a good case. Shultz would, too, but his instincts were inherently hierarchical. I had influence with both, men; but I had to know my place more with Secretary Shultz.

In speaking of John Holdridge, I've at times alluded to some of his weaknesses. He was not inclined to argue with superiors. I was the more aggressive of the two of us, and when the chips were down in October 1981 I could not let Haig go ahead with what I considered a very unwise course without giving him my views as forcefully as I could.

John wasn't that kind of a fighter; but no one was more committed than he to preserving and advancing the China relationship he had helped restore. He never lost sight of that goal and was extremely good at articulating it, particularly on Capitol Hill. Within the bureaucracy, he let me have my head most of the time; but every so often he would pull me back, and he was generally right in doing so. I was a tactician, and trench fighter when necessary, and I came up with concrete ways to solve problems. But he was the leader, and he approved them. I always knew he had confidence in me, and, notwithstanding anything negative I've said or implied, I had great confidence in him. We were a very complementary team.

Q: You went from there to the Executive Seminar. I think it is now the Senior Seminar again. The name has changed back and forth. Was that your first choice? How did that

assignment come about?

ROPE: It was not my first choice, though I loved the year. It was where I ended up when no sensible alternative was available, for the first time in my career. Japan was really where I'd wanted to go.

Q: Really?

ROPE: Really. I knew my work as China Country Director was controversial; it was also exhausting. I wanted to get away from the China field again, at least for a while.

I'd long had an interest in Japan, going back to my childhood when my father was away working for the Occupation government and when, after his return, we had so many visitors from Japan. I had my Japanese "older sister" Akiko, who'd married a Japanese diplomat, and I had many contacts within the Japanese foreign ministry. I've mentioned what I told Wolfowitz in our first conversation. I thought that if one wanted to rise to top level positions working on East Asia, to which I aspired, one needed to understand well both China and Japan and have experience dealing with both.

I was 42 years old, had a high language aptitude, and had done well in Chinese. What I proposed was to go into Japanese language training -- if necessary leaving the China Desk a month or two early -- and after a year or so go on to one of three Japanese language jobs. One was political counselor in Tokyo above whom there was a political minister, below the DCM and Ambassador. Another was economic counselor in Tokyo, again working under the supervision of an economic minister. A third was consul general in Osaka. I recognized this was ambitious, both in terms of language study and mastering the jobs themselves; but my R-4 in Chinese would give me a leg up on reading the language, and I thought I could reach professional competence much faster than if I were starting from scratch. I'd succeeded in meeting stiff challenges in new areas before.

I also knew that Dick Snyder, a retired FSO who'd been ambassador to Korea and was a Japan guy, was very concerned about the absence of representation of Japanese language officers in the upper echelons of the Foreign Service. He had written to Eagleburger about it. I could help in that respect because I was already a member of the Senior Foreign Service, promoted to the rank of FSO-2, Minister Counselor, in 1980. I was young for my grade and willing to devote all the time it took to become successful in the Japan field. So I bid on the three positions I've mentioned.

Unfortunately, I was up against the "Chrysanthemum Club," of long-time Japanese language officers who regarded jobs like those I wanted as a reward and did not welcome newcomers to the field. Shoesmith was the club's unofficial leader. When I raised my idea with him, he strongly discouraged it, pointing out that the Japan group had already had to accommodate people like Nick Platt -- who had gone from Beijing to Tokyo and later headed the Japan Desk -- and Al Romberg, who headed the Japan Desk under Dick Holbrooke. Japanese language officers were limited in where they could serve, Tom argued, whereas Chinese language officers had several posts outside China -- Taiwan,

Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore.

I kept coming back to him with the idea, however, and also discussed it with Wolfowitz. Paul was sympathetic; but he wasn't about to get involved. There weren't many other openings that would be right for me in East Asia, but one morning Tom asked me if I would like to be DCM in Kuala Lumpur. I said, "Yes I would, but you know that isn't my first choice." He said "Yes Willy, I know; but you can't have it," meaning one of the Japan jobs. I said, "I can accept that if you have more qualified candidates." He said, "No, it's not that." I said, "I can accept that if you feel the Japan group is well represented in the upper echelons of the service." Again he said, "No it's not that." I said, "Well, what is it?" He said, "It's just that...well I'm the Godfather; and I just can't do it!" Those were his exact words, which have stuck with me to this day.

Q: You sound a bit bitter about that?

ROPE: How would you feel? He admitted there was no one better qualified, etc. All he had was a parochial, bureaucratic, unimaginative answer. There was occasional friction between Tom and me, to which I've alluded; and I don't think he was ever really comfortable with the work John and I did on Taiwan Arms. Still, we generally had a friendly relationship. In any case, I think his "Godfather" statement accurately summed him up, just as did his reaction to Shultz's cocktails invitation to Zhang Wenjin.

What I was seeking was hardly a career stretch. Any of those positions would have been lateral moves for me at that point; and I would say to Tom, "how many years do you want? I can give you eight straight." Without his support, though, getting any of those jobs was impossible. Still, I wasn't totally deterred. I wrote a personal letter to Bill Clark, DCM in Tokyo, whom I'd known and worked with on the Imai IAEA candidacy and other issues when I was in RA and he headed the Japan desk. I told him what I wanted to do, and why, and said I would work very hard both on the language and in Tokyo or Osaka. Still, if he, too, felt I should give up my idea, I said, reluctantly I would do so. He didn't shut the door, but I found his reply patronizing. "If you really want to try this," he said, "we could consider you for the post of Consul General in Naha." There, he said, "after a few years of learning how we do business here," you could qualify for senior positions in this embassy. That was too much. I had no interest in going to Okinawa and gave up.

Sometime before that, I had learned, not from Tom, that there had never been a prospect of me being DCM in KL. Ron Palmer, our Ambassador there, had long before chosen a longtime FSO friend for the job. Later, Tom asked me if I'd like to be Political Counselor in Seoul. I was way too high ranking for that. It was becoming clear there'd be no appropriate job for me in EA. Scooter Libby, with whom I'm friends to this day, told me Paul knew it wouldn't look good if I didn't get a good ongoing assignment, but he really didn't want me in EA.

Art Hummel knew this in Beijing and thought it was wrong. He tried to help me by writing Ron Spires, our ambassador to Pakistan, recommending me as a replacement for

Ron's DCM, Barrington King, whose tour was due to end that summer. Spires knew me when he headed INR and I ran the Ops Center. He said he'd be happy to have me but he wanted his Consul General in Karachi, Alex Rattray, to replace King. His first priority, though, was to ensure that King got a good ongoing assignment. Once that was taken care of, Rattray could move to Islamabad. Then, if I'd like to replace him as Consul General in Karachi, Speirs would be pleased to have me.

Karachi had had some appeal -- it has a fabulous residence and is a fascinating city in an interesting and important country -- but the timing would be uncertain, and after thinking about it I didn't want it.

So, facing a situation for the first time in my career in which I had no support in my "home bureau" and no job on the horizon, I discussed with Personnel the possibility of going to the Executive Seminar and Personnel was agreeable. It amused me that I received an official letter confirming the assignment and saying that "after a long and careful process," or words to that effect, it had been determined that I was one of those officers destined to rise to the most senior ranks. Therefore I was invited to join the Seminar, which would last for a year.

Then, just before it was set to start, several weeks after I'd left EA, I received a call from Dan O'Donohue, who'd succeeded Shoesmith, to tell me Wolfowitz had decided to nominate Barrington King to be Ambassador to Brunei in order to free up Karachi for me. This caught me completely by surprise and as far as I was concerned was totally boneheaded. If Paul had asked me in advance, I'd have told him I'd rather go to the Senior Seminar. And timing would be a problem because Brunei wasn't even scheduled to become independent until the following February. I did tell Dan I wouldn't mind being nominated for Brunei myself, but he said "You'd be bored out of your mind." So I stayed with the Senior Seminar option. Paul thought me ungrateful, but Barrington King got an embassy.

As Jim Mann pointed out -- in a book I very much disliked -- I never served in the East Asia bureau again, at least not in any permanent job. I had some temporary EA assignments at the very end of my career, but Mann was essentially correct.

Q: If I recall correctly, there were political considerations that prevented you from ever getting back there.

ROPE: Jumping ahead, when I was principal DAS in PM, Dick Clarke, my boss, moved to the NSC and Bob Gallucci replaced him. He brought in Mark Grossman to be his deputy, and I needed a job. The one I wanted was head of AIT Taiwan, and Eagleburger effectively got it for me, with Baker formally naming me to the position in the summer of '92. When Jesse Helms and others on the Hill got wind of that and some people from Taiwan, who seemed to be stirred up by Helms' staffers, also heard of it, they made representations to Scowcroft and Eagleburger demanding that my appointment be undone. That effectively ended my career; but we can talk about it later.

Q: There you go, and you are in good company because Helms did the same to Chas Freeman who never returned to East Asia and ended up being Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. So you were done with East Asia, and on to the Seminar.

ROPE: One last thing, going back to the Taiwan Arms issue and the Communiqué. When I was in the Senior Seminar, my successor Don Anderson came to me with a problem he said Wolfowitz was very worried about. After we sold that initial, post-Communiqué arms package of \$800 million, Taiwan's request for arms in the following year were much lower, and as a result the total level of sales was likely to decline almost by half. Paul wanted to keep that from happening and wanted to pump the level up to something like \$780 million. That could be done by converting a commercial sale of L-100 aircraft, already in the works, into a military sale of C-130s and doing a few other things.

I recommended against that. I told Don I would tell the Chinese we were going to have a relatively low level of sales in the next year; but I would recall for them that we had not been able to accept the word "progressive" in the Communiqué negotiations because we couldn't possibly manage these sales neatly, on a fiscal or a calendar year basis. Therefore, they could expect to see that in some years, like the coming one, the projected level of arms sales might drop significantly but that in others it might rise significantly, even exceeding the \$800 million level of 1983. The worst thing, I said to Don, would be to make small progressive reductions from \$800 million, to \$780 million, to \$750 million, etc. for several years in a row. Beijing would take that as an established trend line and would scream bloody murder if it ever went up again. My way would let the Chinese "follow the bouncing ball," giving us lots of flexibility to go up and down as Taiwan's needs rose and fell, while still gradually drifting down, on average, from that very high first year after Normalization.

Q: Your point was that some years it would go down, some years it would go up, depending on the type of equipment being sold. There would not be a consistent decline.

ROPE: Yes. Nevertheless, Paul did exactly what I recommended not be done and implemented several years of steady, progressive declines. By the time I got to PM as principal deputy in 1989, only six years later, Taiwan's purchasing power, in constant dollars, had been approximately halved. I found a way to deal with that, but that's for later.

Q: So we're finished with China. We can move on to the Executive Seminar and your assignments after that.

ROPE: Oh, I just remembered one last thing. Throughout my time on the China Desk, I'd kept in regular touch with Eddie Friedman and Bill Barnes, both of whom worked for Steve Solarz. Eddie was a professor on leave from the University of Wisconsin, working as Steve's China person. I think he'd roomed with Steve in college. Bill was the Solarz' Sub-Committee staff director. When they learned I didn't have an ongoing assignment, Eddie contacted me and asked if I'd like to work for Steve. We met with Barnes to discuss it. I didn't want to leave State, but there was a program -- the Pearson Fellowship

program -- under which FSOs could be detailed from the Department to staff positions on the Hill. Alan Romberg had done that, working for David Obey. Barnes wasn't sure Steve would like to have me that way, since he preferred having people who were strictly on his payroll; but he urged me to interview with Steve, if only to further my relationship with him.

Q: And what happened.

ROPE: I interviewed and it went well -- very warm and friendly. I already liked and respected Solarz, and I'd have loved to work for him. He said he'd like to have me, but he didn't want me as a detailee. To him, it was a conflict to have someone paid by the Executive on his staff. So if I could take a leave of absence and work for him, he'd love to have me. The problem was that I'd be under Bill Barnes, and the highest salary I could receive in that position was well below my salary as an FSO-2 -- now Minister Counselor. I couldn't afford that, with our daughter in private school and a second child just born, living in DC, and Steve understood. So, we agreed that it was a nice idea that just wouldn't work. Ahead of the interview, Barnes said I needed to know Taiwan was a significant contributor to Steve's campaigns. Steve is now dead -- sadly -- and this was a long time ago, so I'll say this. He had introduced legislation -- on visa numbers for Chinese living in Taiwan -- that was favorable to Taiwan. I told Bill that was no problem. I wasn't anti-Taiwan and understood politics.

Now we're finished with China!

Q: Okay. On to the Executive Seminar, next time.

Q: Hello, and we are at 29 July, returning to our conversation with Bill Rope. We left last time that you didn't quite get the assignment you were looking for, so in the summer of 1983 you entered the Executive Seminar.

ROPE: I have always called it the Senior Seminar, but it was the Executive Seminar then. As you've said, the name changed back and forth. I wonder if it still exists.

In theory, the Seminar was to prepare officers for service at senior ranks. It was domestically focused, unlike the National War College which I attended in 1977-78.

The underlying idea was to give officers who'd been specializing in foreign affairs a broader awareness of key issues facing the country at home -- that influence the environment in which foreign policy is made -- and the institutions with which we all have to work, particularly the Congress. There was a portion dealing with national security, put together by military officers in the seminar, but even that tended to focus on policy-making in Washington or visits to bases in the US rather than the kinds of debates over military strategy and tactics we got at the War College. There was one unit -- our first, I think -- on Canada; and our unit on Hispanic Americans incorporated at least a bit of focus on Mexico. For our major paper, we had to pick a topic that brought domestic and foreign affairs together. I wrote on the impact of the Latin American Debt Crisis on

Miami.

Q: How was the course set up? A certain number of lectures? How many of you were there? What was the make-up?

ROPE: There were about 25 of us, representing different agencies and services. At NWC there had been 160, three-quarters of whom were military officers and one-quarter of whom came from other agencies, including State. It was the reverse in the Seminar. FSOs were in the majority, with one representative from each of the armed services and the Coast Guard, a few from the CIA and other intelligence agencies, and some from elsewhere in the bureaucracy.

The broad outlines of the curriculum, including monthly field trips, were set by the Seminar leadership. They included units on the Congress, economic issues, social policy, regulation versus deregulation, block grants for State and local development, minorities -- particularly black and Hispanic minorities -- and more. The construction of the units and their sub-components was assigned to students. Each of us had responsibility for at least one module of the course. Mine was on issues of income re-distribution, for which I brought in a variety of speakers on Social Security, libertarianism, the "feminization of poverty," welfare programs like food stamps and Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and some other things. I brought in a Marxist historian from NYU who was disappointing, but the libertarian, John Paul Roberts, substituting at the last minute for Robert Nozick of Harvard, was good.

We spent three weeks of every month, more or less, at the Foreign Service Institute in Rosslyn, occupying a great space on FSI's top floor. If a lecture got boring you could always watch planes fly at the building before making their turns down the Potomac to National Airport. The lectures, however, were almost uniformly stimulating, featuring high-level or high-quality officials, scholars, business people and writers. Norm Ornstein would be one example. David Gergen was another. Bob Ball, whom I brought in and who knew Social Security inside and out, was another. We called on Senators and Representatives. The list of excellent or at least interesting people and useful lectures would be too long to mention, even if I could remember them all, 33 years later. Including Q&A, lectures ran from 9:30 to 11:30 and 2:30 to 4:30, almost every day when we were in DC.

We went on the road for a week once a month. Our first trip, related to the initial focus on Canada, took us to Montreal, Ottawa and Vancouver. One that made a big impression on me, and that led to my selection of a research paper topic, was linked to our unit on Hispanic Americans. It seems obvious today, but I didn't realize how much the demographics of the US were changing. I also didn't know how different US Hispanic American communities were from one another until we encountered the Cuban population in Miami; Mexican-Americans in Texas (with some cross-border exposure to maquilladores in El Paso/Juarez); old Spanish-descended families in New Mexico, including people like Bill Richardson, former congressman, governor and ambassador; and Chicanos in Southern California.

Q: Do you recall who else was with you in the class?

ROPE: One of the FSOs was Peter Thomsen. He was one of our two FSO-3s, now O-1s, and had just come from Embassy Beijing. When we all gave 20-minute talks about ourselves and careers at the outset, Peter followed me. He took time at the beginning to praise me effusively and at length for my work on the August 17 Communiqué and leadership of the China Desk. I remember this with some bitterness now because, in 1993-94, when I really needed help getting an assignment after Helms stopped me from heading AIT Taiwan and Peter was PDAS in EAP, he was no help whatsoever.

Q: Was Steve Buck in there?

ROPE: He was the other FSO-3, now FSO-1. I became friends with him and learned a lot about his views on the Middle East. Mark Dion and Sam Fry were good colleagues. Bob Martin I had known when he was on the Iran task force in the Operations Center. Few of the FSOs actually went on to high positions. Mark did well, and Peter, besides being PDAS in EAP eventually became an ambassador in Central Asia and was ambassador at large dealing with Afghanistan in Bush II.

There was a very good army Colonel who was promoted to general officer at the end of our year. He was a logistician from whom I learned a lot. In my year at the war college I was exposed to operational military officers who dealt with tactics and strategy, and there were some great arms control experts; but logisticians went to ICAF. Peter -- I forget his last name; it started with an O -- was a very thoughtful, smart officer. He may have been in my small group -- we were organized into smaller student units, kind of like home rooms.

Q: So most of the travel was domestic travel.

ROPE: Yes, except for the Canada trip and our sojourn across the border to Juarez. I remember visiting Seattle, including trips to Boeing and Weyerhaeuser. We visited GM and rode in police cars on nighttime patrols in Detroit -- and later in Washington, DC. In Minneapolis we saw the results of UDAGs, Urban Development Action Grants, and we went down to Rochester, Minnesota for a day and a night in which each of us were hosted by a different farm family. I did chores and even milked a cow, bringing back early childhood memories from Tennessee and Shreveport. We spent time in Lowell, with its renovated old mills and urban renewal -- after meeting with Mike Dukakis to hear about his "Massachusetts Miracle." In Atlanta we visited the MLK sites and visited Coca Cola. One quick anecdote from Coke was when its PR chief told us of sending a team off into the woods to come up with a new advertising slogan. They came back after a week with three words: "Coke is it."

Wherever we went, we met high level people -- mayors, governors, community leaders. We visited military bases, going to Norfolk, Fort Bragg; CENTCOM; the transport Command outside St. Louis; Missouri missile fields; SAC in Omaha; and NORAD in

Colorado. In Minot, North Dakota, we went down into Minutemen silos. We rode in M-1 tanks, saw the latest fighters, bombers, and helicopters, looked in on military exercises and learned about plastic and other forms of explosives.

In February we had to write our research paper. Initially I wanted to write on whether the US steel industry needed protective relief from European competition, for which it was lobbying. In EA I'd been exposed to textile quotas and questions of whether we should give special protections to Harley Davidson, which I believe we did. We'd pressured the Japanese into voluntary restraints on car exports -- which I believe is one reason why we have so many standard features in our cars today that we didn't have before the 80's; because when the Japanese limited the number of units they exported to us, they made lots of things that used to be optional equipment standard in order to increase the value of every unit sold.

Just as I was formulating the steel industry idea, we visited Miami, and I heard one leading businessman say "the Latin American debt crisis hasn't really hurt us much." He was talking about the large role Miami played in trade and finance with Latin American, and vice versa; but he wasn't convincing. I thought what he was really saying was "we're hurting a lot because of the debt crisis." This set off a light bulb in my head. Why would I want to go to places like Pittsburgh and Youngstown Ohio in February when I could go do research in Miami? I knew little about the Latin American debt crisis, and it was a really big deal. So I decided to research that, and its impact on Miami.

I don't think my paper, though long, was especially good; but I learned a lot about the debt crisis and about banking and real estate in Miami as well as about its Cuban community and the Cuban Diaspora all around the Caribbean. I'd always thought of Cuban Americans in stereotypical terms -- anti-Castro right-wing exiles associated with efforts like the Bay of Pigs and blocking a sensible policy approach to Cuba; but I've had tremendous respect for their dynamism and abilities ever since. Priscilla and I now visit Miami's South Beach annually, and we always spend time in Little Havana. I did find a significant economic impact on Miami -- on small import-export people, retailers, condominiums in default, etc. We all had to speak for an hour about our research, and mine seemed well received.

Q: Let me ask you in conclusion, was that year valuable? Would you have recommended it to another officer coming in?

ROPE: Absolutely. If nothing else it was a year in which to recharge and reflect, without being subject to all the pressures of work in the Department. It was a great education in different constituencies in the United States and about tax policy, immigration, and other issues on the mind of Congress. The additional, face-to-face Congressional exposure was helpful in my next assignment, working on Greece-Turkey-Cyprus, including work on a House Armenian Genocide Resolution that was highly domestically-influenced, handled not by HFAC but by the Post Office and Civil Service Committee. The military trip was extremely useful six years later when I was PDAS in PM.

Q: Then let's get started on Southern Europe. The seminar ends in the summer of '84. How did it come about that you got this assignment in the European Bureau?

ROPE: I had to find my own assignment. Wolfowitz was still Assistant Secretary in EA, and when I went to see Bill Brown, a China guy who was by then Paul's senior deputy, he would say he'd like to help but "I don't know how Paul feels." I did interview with Admiral Crowe who was then CINCPAC -- Commander in Chief of US forces in the Pacific -- for the job of CINCPAC political advisor. Crowe was recognized to be outstanding. He ultimately chaired the JCS and then was ambassador to London. I'm quite certain I could have had that job, and it might have led somewhere; but some family issues arose that ruled out moving to Hawaii, or going overseas for that matter.

With EA out, I looked around and learned that Richard Haass, whom I'd known a bit when he was working for Burt in PM, had moved with Burt to EUR, where Burt was Assistant Secretary. Richard had the title of Special Cyprus Coordinator, a Congressionally-mandated post; but while he had that responsibility he was also de-facto DAS for Greece, Turkey and Cyprus, the three countries under the purview of the Office of Southern European Affairs.

Anyone who knows Richard knows he's outspoken, very direct and at times brash; Chas Freeman called him Horse's Haass. I initially thought of him that way, too, kind of an obnoxious wild man. Over the years, though, I've come to have great respect for him, and I like him personally -- as was also true with Dick Holbrooke. Richard's a creative thinker with global perspective and a lot of guts and integrity. So when I found out Dirk Gleysteen -- one of three FSO brothers -- who headed the Southern Europe office was leaving, I got in touch with Richard. He offered me the job, and when he spoke with Rick Burt about it, Burt reportedly said I'd been "a real pain in the ass" as China Country Director, but he'd rather have me "pissing out of the tent than into it."

So I got the job. In one sense it was not a good move. By this time in my career, I felt really on top of issues with China and EA in general. I knew my stuff and was confident of my judgments. I was in my early '40s and felt I was in my prime. By being excluded from EA and forced to move laterally, I felt I was being robbed of my prime.

However, I was lucky to be joining EUR, one of the Department's premier bureaus. Work on Greece, Turkey and Cyprus was a new challenge, and Richard was very encouraging. He had personally recruited a number of people new to the office, and he wanted a strong manager to lead them.

Q: Who were some of those people?

ROPE: One was Arma Jane Karaer, recruited as the senior Turkey desk officer. She had served in Turkey, spoke Turkish, and was married to a Turk. She was capable, determined and dedicated; and a hard worker. Angel Rabasa was her number two. He was a smart, hard-charging FSO I'd known briefly in S/S. He was so aggressive I had to pull him back sometimes, but I came to rely heavily on his judgment and abilities. Like Richard

Boucher -- though very different -- he had a real zest for policy and bureaucratic maneuver; and he had a wonderful, iconoclastic, irrepressible sense of humor. Angel died, recently, which made me very sad.

On the Greek side, Richard had hired David Jones, an able officer with political-military experience. Over him were Bill Kushlis, senior Greek desk officer, who had lots of experience with Greece and Peter Collins, my deputy office director, who spoke Greek and had served as Political-Military Counselor in Athens. Haass was pretty much his own man on Cyprus, but we had Rick Sherman who knew all the players, history and immediate background.

Dirk and I agreed that I would come in about two weeks before his departure, to read-in, get to know people in the Bureau, and be introduced to key contacts; but when I called him on the Friday before the Monday we'd agreed would be my reporting date, he was horrified. He didn't want me in the office until after he departed. So I had to take leave for two additional weeks and start work with no chance to read in. There was an unfortunate reason for this behavior. Dirk died of a brain tumor within a year.

I quickly learned that never having served in either of my most important countries was an advantage. If you'd served in Greece and were a Greek speaker, the Turks would suspect you; vice-versa with the Greeks. Without that baggage, I found it easy to establish relationships with the Greek Ambassador and other Greek counterparts. It wasn't quite as easy with Ambassador Elekdag and his staff on the Turkish side, who were worried that I lacked Turkey expertise; but after the DCM, Aidan Karahan, saw me at a United Nations Association dinner talking with the guests of honor, Vice President and Mrs. Bush, that changed.

I've been told to think of my family when doing my oral history; so I'll digress enough to say that Mrs. Bush wanted to hear all about "Katy" whom she remembered as a toddler -- wanted to see pictures, learn what she was doing, etc. Bush held hands with Priscilla, and when Defense Secretary Weinberger came up to flatter him about his recent Vice Presidential debate performance, he wouldn't let Priscilla pull away. "You know the Ropes," he said, to which Weinberger replied, "Of course I do!" We were amused. Something he said to Priscilla suggested the Veep really didn't like the Secretary of Defense.

Q: Oh yes. It was a Presidential election year.

ROPE: Which meant there wasn't a lot going on. I spent the summer getting my feet wet, making introductory calls, building relationships with colleagues and subordinates, and doing my best to build a happy, functioning team. The Cyprus issue did get active fairly quickly, and there I wasn't happy initially.

Q: Oh?

ROPE: Richard was his own man on that, as I've said. He was, after all, the government's

Special Coordinator for Cyprus Affairs, and he'd been in place for a while. That was no problem, but he tended to deal directly with Rick Sherman, and Rick liked it that way, making no real effort to keep me in the loop. This changed as I grew familiar with the issues and gained full control over my office; but it was a handicap at first.

Q: What was going on with regard to Cyprus?

ROPE: The UN Secretary General, Peres De Cuellar was preparing for a new round of talks between the leaders of Greek and Turkish Cyprus. He had been UN Special Representative for Cyprus before becoming Secretary General and was strongly interested in brokering a solution to the division of the island -- partitioned since 1974, when Greek-Turkish violence led to a Turkish invasion of northern Cyprus. There was a history of -- unsuccessful -- talks between the two sides, but none had taken place since the Turkish side, led by Rauf Denktash, declared independence in 1983. His government was only recognized by Turkey, but Turkish troops still on the island assured continuation of the status quo.

Perez de Cuellar's goal was to get the two sides to form a single, reunited government, with power-sharing locked into a new constitution. If nothing else, that would eliminate or greatly reduce the need for a UN peacekeeping force in Cyprus. The nitty gritty issues involved land: how much that had been owned by Greeks, in places like Famagusta in the Turkish zone, would be returned to original owners? How much land rich in orange groves that had belonged to Turks would go back to them? How would losers be compensated? Etc. If I recall correctly, Perez de Cuellar's team had a map drawn up for this purpose, though they wouldn't show it to either party or to outsiders like the US and Britain. The UK also had an interest in Cyprus, where two British bases remained.

The real problem, as I came to see it in two years in EUR/SE was that there was just too much animosity between the two sides. While they might go through the motions of attempting to find common ground, neither side really wanted an agreement. Even if they did, their sponsors in Athens and Ankara would also have to want it; and that could not be assured, given animosity between them.

The Greek side, in Nicosia and in Athens seemed more interested in using Turkey's occupation of Cyprus as a propaganda club with which to batter the Turks internationally. Also, in my visits to Cyprus I found that though Greek Cypriots professed affection for their Turkish counterparts it seemed patronizing. They would talk of how, as children, they played with the children of their parents' Turkish servants. On the Turkish side, while my contacts were more restricted to government officials, it was hard to detect any desire to strike a deal. This was especially true of Denktash, and I think the late Dick Boehm, our Ambassador to Cyprus at the time, would have agreed.

The one Greek Cypriot leader who showed clear signs of wanting to reach an agreement was Glafcos Clerides, who had been Prime Minister before Spyros Kyprianou and was again PM in the 1990s. He and Denktash had been schoolmates. Even when Clerides returned to power in the 1990's, though, nothing happened.

Q: So back to the summer of '84. What happened?

ROPE: Perez de Cuellar had gained Kyprianou's and Denktash's agreement to come to New York in September to participate in "proximity talks," in which he would hold separate sessions with each of them over a period of days. The goal was to get them to accept a "framework;" for a settlement; and -- if he could bring them close enough to acceptance of that framework -- to have them join him, in face-to-face discussions. The map would come out sometime thereafter. This never succeeded in my two years in EUR/SE; nor, to the best of my recollection, did it happen when I was DCM in Turkey.

The US role was to support the Secretary General through representations to both sides, and their Greek and Turkish backers, aimed at encouraging them to seek a settlement. We had to do that for two reasons. One was to eliminate the danger of renewed warfare in Cyprus -- though that was limited -- and promote peaceful development of a reunified island, which would also help reduce tensions between Athens and Ankara. The second, and more important reason, given realities between the two sides, was to show Congress - - most particularly the Greek lobby -- that we were trying. Congress had called for the creation of Richard's post, and so long as there was no solution Cyprus, and Turkish troops remained there, gaining support for substantial amounts of assistance to Turkey and getting away from the "7-10 Ratio" would be difficult.

So Richard would go up to New York to call on Perez de Cuellar and meet with his subordinates, of whom the best was a very sharp and suave UN diplomat named Gianni Picco. While they couldn't share the precise details of what they were up to, the aim was to learn as much as possible about it and find out how we could be helpful in supporting their efforts. We, and again I talk first and foremost of Richard, also kept in close touch with the British.

Richard did so ahead of the Proximity Talks, and Rick Sherman and I went with him. I was just learning and don't recall much. I know I liked Picco, and even met with him on my own later, after Haass had left his position and Jim Wilkinson replaced him; but I don't remember much more. I served as note-taker when Shultz met with his Cypriot counterpart, during UNGA Bilaterals; but I'm afraid all I remember of that was a compliment the Secretary paid me in the elevator on our way to the meeting. He said he was glad to see me working on Cyprus -- "With all he's accomplished on China," Shultz said, I'm sure we'll get a solution." I told him I was working my way up to Arab-Israeli affairs.

To stay with Cyprus another minute, in October I took an orientation trip to my three capitals. I'd met Dick Boehm during the summer, and he took me to introductory calls on Kyprianou and other Greek Cypriot officials. I met the UN Peace Keeping commander and went up to the Green Line running through Nicosia, separating the two Cypruses. Even though there was no imminent danger of a recurrence of hostilities, nor had there been in some time, there was still some palpable tension there. Every so often a demonstration on the Greek side would take place, like a women's march that took place

later when I was DCM in Ankara, that would raise the danger of some kind of violence at or across the line. On the Turkish side Dick introduced me to his contacts, and in some way I met Denktash. Our relations with the Turkish side were a bit like those with Taiwan, though hardly as clearly defined. We had no official office; just a villa the Ambassador maintained there -- with a spring-fed stone pool -- which he could use for representation purposes and which embassy personnel used for recreation. So far as I can recall, Boehm called on government officials in their offices. I think I met a number of important Turkish Cypriots together at a restaurant; but that may have been for convenience, with Boehm bringing various officials and political people together.

Q: So the South European desk covers Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus. Any of those is a serious foreign policy issue with direct domestic connections. In fact we had bases in both Greece and in Turkey and yet both of those guys did not work well together.

ROPE: Right; and there was a lot of Congressional management involved in my job.

Q: Tell us.

ROPE: Among identifiable foreign affairs “lobbies” in Congress, there is the Taiwan Lobby, powerful in the 1950s, in the days of Knowland and Walter Judd and still in existence though far less powerful. There is the Israeli Lobby, which administrations are loathe to cross; and there is the Greek Lobby, supported by lots of Greek-American citizens, many of whom are successful business people. In my days in Southern Europe, the Greek Lobby was well financed and contributed to both parties. To give an example there was a Senator from South Dakota named Larry Pressler. He had hardly any Greek Americans in his state but was nonetheless an inflexible backer of Greek interests in the Senate. So was Claiborne -- many called him “Stillborn” -- Pell. There can be no doubt that Senators got campaign contributions from friends of Greece and reciprocated with at least some of their votes. One of the leaders of the Greek Lobby in my day was Andy Manatos.

The sacred cow of the Greek Lobby was the “7-10 ratio.” Although not legally required, this unwritten rule of the Congress specified that for every \$10 of US aid to Turkey, Greece should receive \$7. This made it difficult to meet all of Turkey’s needs. Turkey was both larger and poorer, on a per-capita basis, than Greece, and it had broader strategic importance for US regional interests. It directly bordered the USSR, sat astride the waterways giving Russia its only warm-water naval and maritime outlets to the sea, and was neighbor of Iran, Iraq and Syria. It was the only majority Muslim country in NATO and was a secular democracy -- albeit with a strong military in the background. These latter factors made it the kind of model that we would like others in the Islamic world to follow. Richard Perle, an ally when it came to work on Turkey, saw our military relationship with the Turks, and our bases in Turkey, as vitally important for any contingency in Southwest Asia. He worked hard to build that relationship and gain support for large amounts of military aid to the Turks. He was proven right when Iraq invaded Kuwait and we had use of both our established base at Adana and other places farther east in Turkey for operations against and in Iraq.

Both Greece and Turkey were NATO members, and both hosted US and NATO bases and commands. You're correct, though, that there were many problems in Greek-Turkish relations. Besides historic animosity, they clashed on matters like airspace over Greek islands near the Turkish coast. Although the Greeks seemed to me to be far more preoccupied with the Turks than vice-versa, the "7-10 Ratio" was a perennial source of irritation to the Turks, who constantly complained that our aid to Turkey was inadequate and blamed Greece, as well as our Congress and -- by extension -- the Administration for that.

Q: This was not a happy period in our relations with Greece as I recall.

ROPE: No it wasn't. The Greek government, under the leadership of Andreas Papandreou, was very critical of us, and we had a terrorism problem in Greece. There was a radical left-wing group there named November 17 that conducted assassinations of Americans, including US diplomats. The most notorious of those killings was that of Richard Welch, CIA Station Chief in Athens. While I was in Turkey in 1987-89, a very fine Naval Attaché named Bill Nordeen was assassinated, with November 17 taking credit.

These killings often took place in broad daylight, with assassins coming up to their targets on motorcycles to shoot them and then scooting away in Athens traffic. The Greek government wasn't doing nearly enough, in our view, to find and bring them to justice. The TWA hijacking started in Athens. There were anti-American demonstrations, including ones that were threatening to our embassy, which government elements conceivably were culpable in fomenting. At the very least, the anti-American rhetoric of Papandreou contributed to the atmosphere in which these incidents occurred. One key target of anti-American Greeks was our base at Hellenikon, south of Athens.

Papandreou regularly flirted with the Russians. He was unpopular in NATO circles, and most certainly not popular with the Reagan administration; but we had to try to get along with Athens, not just because Papandreou wouldn't always be there -- there was a conservative opposition to him -- but because Greece was in NATO, and its supporters in Congress demanded no less, even though they, too, were increasingly fed up with "Andreas." One last point is that Greece was a party to the Cyprus issue, and no settlement there could be achieved without its support.

We had an excellent Ambassador, Monteagle Stearns who had something of a relationship with Papandreou and was respected in Greece -- not so much in Washington. When "Monty" at one point voiced muted but clear criticisms of the regime in a major Athens speech, Greeks listened. There was only so much he could do, however, to reign in Papandreou's worst instincts. Papandreou and his persona-based party, PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement), were also in the process of ruining the Greek economy, padding the bureaucracy, pursuing statist policies, and running up government debt. The Greek people reap that whirlwind today.

Q: Didn't we have base negotiations going on with Greece?

ROPE: Not during my two years running EUR/SE; but we were heading in that direction. We had Hellenikon, sitting right in the southern suburbs of Athens, co-located with Athens International Airport. We had a small listening post near Marathon, and one at Akrotiri on Crete. At the far western end of Crete we had a naval base at Souda Bay. I thought it would be a great place to which to relocate Hellenikon and even succeeded in getting George Bader, a venerable counterpart at DOD and wonderful gentleman, to accompany me on a trip to Souda Bay to look at it.

Souda had a deep-water harbor and was isolated from highly populated areas. The local people would likely have welcomed it, for the money bases generate, and it could afford us a 10,000 foot runway smack in the middle of the Mediterranean for potential use in Middle East contingencies. Hellenikon, highly visible and accessible, was far too great a magnet for left-wing demonstrations to stay much longer in that location. I guess no one thought enough of my Souda Bay idea to pursue it. When we did have base negotiations after my departure, we closed Hellenikon entirely.

I'm not going to be great at recalling details of my work, or the Office's work on Greece. I remember the work I and my colleagues did on Turkey much more vividly. To be brutally honest, I can recall going to a Miles Davis concert with our DCM, on Mount Lycabettus one night, better than any single official event in Athens. I take that back. I also remember watching George Shultz dance with Melina Mercouri when he visited Athens in 1984.

We were going little more than managing relations with Greece, and dealing with occasional flare-ups, like the TWA hijacking. I traveled to Greece on more than one occasion, including stops during missions to Cyprus, travel with Mike Armacost, by that time Under Secretary, and with Secretary Shultz. I also accompanied a US delegation to a meeting of a US-Greek joint economic committee called for under our DECA – Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement. That may be when George Bader and I flew to Souda Bay.

Bill Kushlis, David Jones, and Peter Collins spent the more time working on the details of relations with Greece -- except when it came to the Hill. There I kept in touch with Sarbanes' staff and other Congressional backers of Greece. I also enjoyed dealing with Ambassador Papoulias and his deputy Alexander Philon, both of whom were quality people. Papoulias, was an experienced, good-humored Ambassador whose English had a charming way of lapsing into gibberish whenever he had to defend indefensible Greek behavior.

Mention of travels reminded me of one thing. You could never have a high-level visitor go to Turkey -- except, I guess, Richard Perle, who was the US representative in annual high-level defense consultations between the US and Turkey and an important backer of Turkey within the administration -- without having that person also visit Greece. Once, when the Secretary or an even higher-ranking official had to go to India for a state

funeral, I realized while taking my morning shower, that Turkey would be a perfect place for a rest-stop, and we could use that to justify a brief visit by Shultz to Turkey without having him stop in Athens. I wrote this up in a formal memo for Burt and raised it with him in person. He said I was crazy; but on the memo he wrote, "keep taking those showers!"

Q: How were your relations with Burt and the EUR front office anyway?

ROPE: I liked Haass. Burt had a nasty side, and I'd never liked him a whole lot. It wasn't always enjoyable sitting in his staff meetings or meetings with foreign diplomats -- because that nasty streak could be visible there, too. He was effective enough, though, and he did state in my efficiency report that I'd made EUR/SE "one of the Bureau's strongest." I couldn't complain about that.

I also found in that same ER my own comments that, in dealing with Congress on Turkey, my superiors couldn't devote time to make the strong efforts I would have liked and I worked hard to compensate for that. I think that's a fairly accurate statement without reflecting negatively on them. This was the European bureau, dealing with East-West relations, USSR, NATO, and all the things that go on in EUR. In a way I had a little backwater in Southern Europe; and an awful lot got left to me.

I liked and respected Burt's Central European Affairs DAS, Tom Niles, and his DAS for the Soviet Bloc, Tom Simons. I never cottoned to PDAS Jim Dobbins, whom Burt had brought into PM to replace me in 1981, though I didn't hold that against him. When Roz Ridgeway replaced Burt, I liked working for her very much, though Jim Wilkinson, whom she brought in to replace Haass, wasn't very effective.

Overall, it was a pleasure being in the European Bureau. I learned a lot, particularly on NATO affairs, where we had a very sharp desk, EUR/RPM, and great officers like Mike Glitman, Bob Frowick, and Steve Ledogar in the field. I liked Vlad Lehovitch, Charlie Thomas, Avis Bohlen, and any number of others working in the Bureau. Their names may escape me now but I feel I could pick up with them any time if I were to see them again.

Q: I've gotten the feeling you don't keep up with a lot of your old Department colleagues.

ROPE: Outside of the China field, not many. I became a school teacher late in my professional life and am still active at it. So my post-Foreign Service life took on a wholly different focus. Once I walked out of the Department in '95, I put it all aside. I did go back for Art Hummel's memorial service there and have visited it there one or two other times in the past 21 years, but that's it. Priscilla and I go to an annual picnic in Battery Kemble Park for China people of all kinds, including Chinese embassy people, organized by Jan Berris of the National Committee on US-China Relations, of which I'm an inactive member. Recently, also, Don Anderson took me to a meeting of the Far East Luncheon Group at DACOR House; and at his urging I've agreed to join that.

Q: Let's get back to Southern Europe Affairs. How were things with Turkey?

ROPE: Much better than with Greece, though the Turks weren't altogether easy either, and we had one major irritant -- a potential Congressional Resolution commemorating the "Armenian Genocide" -- that took up a tremendous amount of my time and those of our Turkish desk officers during my first year. In the second year, the big issue was base negotiations.

Aid to Turkey, primarily military, also took up a good bit of time, given the Congressional realities I've mentioned; though I should note that Robert Byrd of West Virginia was a strong supporter of Turkey before and after he became Senate Majority leader.

We did achieve the highest annual level of aid to Turkey ever achieved -- \$1 billion -- during my tenure. That may have been the high water mark. At least until the Gulf War.

Q. So, taking things first, tell us about the Armenian Genocide Resolution.

ROPE: This was the biggest sideshow I was ever involved with. I count my contributions on the Taiwan Arms issue, and that Communiqué, as the biggest success of my Foreign Service career; but my second biggest success -- at least when it came to dealing with the Congress and overcoming a huge challenge -- was of far less, and transitory, significance: defeating an Armenian Genocide resolution. We had to work extraordinarily hard to do it because we were going up against House Minority Whip Tony Coelho, the resolution's chief sponsor, who also chaired the House Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. It is almost unimaginable that we could beat a congressional leader of his clout on a mere resolution that didn't even go through the House Foreign Affairs Committee and that few Americans knew or cared about; but we did. When I say "we," I refer to my office in the Department; the Turkish Embassy and its lobbying representatives at Hill and Knowlton; and Republican Representative Jim Hanson of Utah, Chairman of the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee, and his committee staff director George Olmos.

The issue first came up in September 1984 when a resolution was introduced in the House, I think by Coelho, that would designate April 24, 1985 as a day of remembrance of victims of what is popularly called the Armenian Genocide. Although pogroms against Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, in what is now eastern Turkey, took place at various times between the end of the 19th Century and World War I, April 24, 1915 is the date that came to be considered, throughout the Armenian diaspora, as the date of the "genocide." The proposed resolution would commemorate its 70th anniversary.

The resolution infuriated Turks and made headlines across Turkey. I don't recall any huge anti-US demonstrations, but there were demonstrations; and some Americans were accosted by angry Turks over the matter. This was reported by our posts in Turkey. One Turkish official put it to me, in approximately these words: "In your country, no one has heard of this resolution; but in our country, everyone has, and they're outraged."

Nowadays, the word “genocide,” is used much more widely than it was in 1984, referring to events in Rwanda, Cambodia, Bosnia, Sudan, and other places. In 1984, its most common usage referred to the Holocaust; and Turks couldn’t abide being put in the same category as Hitler, especially for something that occurred in the Ottoman Empire over a half-century before. In defending themselves against the “genocide” accusation, they would point to tolerance shown by the Ottomans to people of all religions -- including the haven provided to Sephardic Jews fleeing the Inquisition. They noted that during the time when Ottomans are accused of having committed genocide against Armenians in Anatolia, a population of 50,000 Armenians continued to live undisturbed in Istanbul.

It wasn’t just the invidious comparison that drove Turkey’s reaction. At least at the governmental level, the Turks saw it as the opening wedge for reparations demands from “genocide” survivors or their children -- many of whom had moved to the US and whose identity was in many ways bound up in remembrance of what happened to them, or their parents and grandparents, 70 years earlier.

On top of that, there was Armenian terrorism targeting Turkish diplomats around the world. This, too, was little known in the US; but it had resulted in assassinations, including that of the Turkish Consul General in Los Angeles in 1982. There were Armenian summer camps for youths in the US that some considered training grounds for terrorist assassins. I regularly read Armenian-American newspapers in those days, in which hatred for Turks was palpable. If a Turk was killed in an auto accident, that was front page news. I read an article in one Armenian-American publication profiling an Armenian imprisoned in Switzerland for the murder of Turkey’s ambassador to that country. It told of how he grew up hearing stories of the genocide and how he came to be an assassin. He was enjoying the “bucolic setting” of his Swiss prison, it said, and would soon be released to return to his people, who would welcome him as a hero. Without regard to the merits of the genocide charge, such things made it easier to understand the way Turks felt about it.

In any case, during Shultz’s September UNGA bilateral with his Turkish counterpart, Vahit Halefoglu, a gentleman with whom the Secretary developed a very positive relationship, Halefoglu raised the resolution and spoke of the harm it could do to US-Turkish relations. In response, Shultz promised Halefoglu we would block it. Once he’d done that, the onus was on EUR/SE to deliver.

Q. So, what did you do?

ROPE: Well, the resolution died quickly because it was an election year, and the House adjourned soon after Shultz saw Halefoglu. It would have to be reintroduced in the next Congress. It was sure to be, however, and we had to be prepared. I remember telling my people that if you want to win on the Hill in September, you have to be up there in January; and if you want to be up there in January, you have to start planning in the fall. I may have been exaggerating, to motivate my Turkish desk officers, and I don’t recall the specifics of what we did, but I know we started developing a plan of action and putting briefing materials together. Certainly I started getting up to speed on the history

surrounding the issue and the arguments to be made against the resolution.

The Turks were also gearing up to fight it, and one key step was hiring a Lobbying firm, Hill and Knowlton, to help them. Turks are a proud people with an imperial history. It's culturally against their nature to self-promote. In the Turkish view, one should stand on one's own merits and gain respect naturally. Sukru Elekdag, Turkey's ambassador, was a formal, conservative man who embodied that ethos. Getting him to recognize that to deal with the US Congress you need your own lobbyists -- particularly when you have the Greek Lobby and other domestic political forces against you -- was a hard sell. Haass was pushing the Turks on this regularly, and once I saw the lay of the land I did the same.

Q: Isn't this illustrative of some very basic foreign policy problems? We have real national security interests in Turkey and here we have a domestic constituency that wouldn't mind wrecking the relationship to get its way.

ROPE: Yes. In this case, two different constituencies -- the Greek lobby and Armenian Americans. I might quickly note that there are a large number of the latter living in the Fresno, California area. That was Tony Coelho's home district.

Whatever their reservations, the Turks did hire Hill and Knowlton, whose point man for the account was a very experienced Hill operator from Louisiana, Gary Hymel. He was well-connected on the House side, where he'd worked for Hale Boggs and, after Boggs' death, Tip O'Neill. H&K had a few others working on Turkey, but the only one I now recall meeting was the late Frank Mankiewicz, a senior firm member who had worked for Bobby Kennedy.

Q: What was your interaction with these people?

ROPE: We were in constant communication -- the Embassy, Hill and Knowlton, and my office -- though I don't believe we ever crossed bounds of impropriety. I'll try to summarize what happened.

The resolution was re-introduced in the House by Coelho in April, 1985, with a load of co-sponsors. It was not referred to the Foreign Affairs Committee because it wasn't considered a foreign affairs matter. It merely called for a day of national remembrance "of man's inhumanity to man;" and though it referred explicitly to events in Ottoman Turkey it did not mention the modern Turkish republic. Resolutions designating days for honoring American farmers, or remembering Susan B. Anthony, or whatever, are commonplace and go through the House Post Office and Civil Service committee, the chairman of which was Utah's Jim Hanson, Republican. His staff director was George Olmos. Hymel put Olmos in touch with me, or vice-versa, and a great deal of the communication between State and the Hill on this issue went between the two of us.

Once it was re-introduced, Hill and Knowlton went into a full court press lobbying House members against the resolution. Elekdag and others on his staff followed suit. Turkish-American organizations and members of the American Friends of Turkey also made

representations, and a fair number of American scholars working on Turkey became involved -- the most prominent of them Bernard Lewis of Princeton.

Q: Let me ask you this on this kind of issue. State Department's interaction with the Hill is incredibly important in all kinds of ways. There is a whole bureau the H bureau that is supposed to be an actor in this. But what I think I am hearing you say is that the desk took a very up front role in all these negotiations. Did you work with H? Or what was your connection with that bureau?

ROPE: I know H must have been involved at times, but even though Shultz had made that commitment to Halefoglu this was not a top drawer issue for the Department. State principals may also have been involved sometimes, most probably after we defeated the resolution the first time, in a "suspend the rules and pass" vote; but I'm not sure. This was not an easy matter politically, involving a vocal US constituency and a powerful House member; so maybe not. It certainly wasn't like when I was in EA running the China desk, with John Holdridge going up on the Hill all the time, working with Will Itoh and Jim Montgomery, and with principals regularly involved. Burt wasn't active on the issue, and in EUR we didn't have an office like the one I had in EA/RA, with at least some responsibility for Congressional relations. Most Department people aware of the issue didn't think we could win on it, including Richard Haass.

Whenever Ambassador Strausz-Hupé was in town from Ankara, he and I would make calls on the Hill, generally in support of our appropriations requests for aid to Turkey; but in the course of doing so on the House side we might at times have mentioned the genocide resolution.

Q: So most of the action was down where you were.

ROPE: Yes, as far as State was concerned; and what I remember most was working with Olmos. He became seized with the issue -- really threw himself into it. His entire career had focused on domestic matters, and he relished the chance to work on something involving relations with an important NATO ally. So between April and December, when we finally defeated the resolution after several hours of debate on the House floor, he and I were regularly on the phone and I was sending him briefing material providing arguments he could make -- or give others to make -- against approval. In doing so, my one rule was that we wouldn't send him boilerplate; we wouldn't just develop a standard set of points to be Xeroxed and sent up again and again. We would try always to send up something new and tailor what we wrote to its intended audience. At times this drove Arma Jane Karaer a bit nuts, because I made her keep producing original material; but it was worth it in the end.

It's important to note that in making our arguments, we could not deny that a genocide had occurred. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians died in what is now eastern Turkey during World War I, and you can hear this whenever you talk to Armenian Americans. You can learn about grandparents who came to the United States as orphans or who witnessed terrible suffering wreaked on the Armenian people. To have argued that no

genocide occurred would have been the kiss of death, politically. It would have so outraged the Armenian-American community that we'd have no way of winning enough votes to deny the resolution passage.

Moreover, we had no basis for denying that there was a deliberate act of genocide. We would have been lying to claim otherwise. What we could do was point out that legitimate scholars disagreed on the question of whether the Ottomans were guilty of "genocide." We could cite Turkish arguments that what occurred in 1915 and thereafter was the result of a collapse in eastern Anatolia under wartime conditions, with some Armenians siding with Russia against Ottoman Turkey and different ethnic factions fighting one another. We could point to the fact that the key document cited by Armenians as proof of Ottoman guilt, a telegram attributed to a top official, Talat Pasha, was considered a forgery by eminent scholars. We could cite other arguments serious scholars had raised; and we could point to the potential harm to US-Turkish relations that passage of the resolution would do. Beyond that we could not go. This is a powerfully emotional issue throughout the Armenian diaspora to this day. In France a few years ago there was even a law passed criminalizing the denial of the "Armenian genocide."

One thing of note was that -- in a manner similar to the approach of Hu Na's supporters in her political asylum case -- this resolution's backers would settle for nothing short of the word "genocide." Turkish opposition to the resolution would have been far less, if at all, if it had used the word "massacres," or "atrocities," or "pogroms." It was the one word, "genocide," that was anathema to Turks.

Q: You've mentioned the Embassy and its lobbyist firm. What were they doing, and how were you coordinating?

ROPE: We were sort of an informal team -- not exactly coordinating but aware of what we each were doing and interacting constantly. Gary Hymel was our informal quarterback. At the Embassy, the chief strategist, working closely with Gary, was DCM Aidan Karahan. Elekdag made calls on the Hill as they advised him. At least that's the impression I had. We all were in communication with each other, and I remember receiving lists from Gary that were essentially nose counts -- who would vote no, who needed to be persuaded, etc. This happened on aid to Turkey as well.

In June, Coelho sought to win approval of the resolution by means of a motion to "suspend the rules and pass," enabling it to pass without going through normal procedures and bypassing the Rules Committee. That required a 2/3 majority, and our little group thought we were close to enough votes to prevent that. When I told Richard Haass a vote on the motion was coming up, however, he was convinced we'd lose and thought the humiliation would be greater for the Turks if that happened after a full fight to defeat it. He virtually ordered me to call Elekdag to recommend that the Turks and their lobbyist stand down. I didn't want to do that, and I told Richard I thought we had a good shot at defeating the motion; but I didn't argue with Richard the way I'd argued with Haig in 1981. The issue wasn't that consequential, and I wasn't sure Richard was wrong. It was possible Coelho would get his two-thirds. So I called Elekdag as instructed.

Happily, the Ambassador didn't agree, and Hill and Knowlton called out Turkey's supporters for an all-out vote-getting effort; and Coelho suffered the humiliation. I think the number voting against him was 181, well over one-third of House members, though not enough to defeat the bill entirely. The result gave all of us working the issue hope that with more effort we could get the additional votes needed to defeat it; and we had plenty of time. Without suspension of the rules, the resolution would have to be reported out of the Post Office and Civil Service Committee and go to the Rules Committee, where opponents could tie it up for a good while, before it could go back to the House Floor for a simple majority vote.

So the team I've described kept working the issue over the summer and into the fall. Ultimately, I remember Olmos saying, gleefully, that he and his boss Hansen were going to teach all concerned a lesson, by tying up 3 hours of valuable House floor time with a full floor debate on the resolution prior to a vote. As that time approached, 69 American scholars, led by Bernard Lewis, wrote an open letter to all House members, published in full-page Washington Post and New York Times ads, calling on them not to pass the resolution. Their argument was that until such time as the Ottoman archives -- reputed to be a mess -- and those of Russia and, I think, Syria were opened, it was impossible to determine whether a genocide had occurred.

Finally the debate Olmos and Hansen insisted upon took place, and I Haass and others -- I think Angel and Arma Jane -- watched on C-Span. It was a spectacle, featuring a lot of bad speeches. At one point, for example, a Congressman passionately asked, "Have you ever been in a genocide? I can tell you it is terrible!" Only one Representative distinguished himself: Steve Solarz. He gave an extraordinarily eloquent and powerful speech about the importance of our relationship with Turkey, for NATO and broader strategic reasons. He spoke of Turkey as a modern secular Islamic state that was a model for other Muslim nations. He recounted the decision by Harry Truman to send the battleship Missouri through the Dardanelles and up to Istanbul and the Bosphorus. In short, he went through the whole nine yards.

Then, lowering his voice dramatically, Steve said, "But as important as all those things are, they would not be enough. There is another country, another close ally of the United States...the Federal Republic of Germany." If this resolution were about genocide committed by that ally, Solarz continued, no one could oppose it. That was not the case, however. In this case, he concluded, there was too great an element of uncertainty. Citing the letter from the 69 historians, he said he would vote no. Several days afterward, I asked Steve's assistant Stanley Roth for a copy of the speech. Stanley said I'd have to wait to see it in the Congressional Record. Steve had spoken at length, from a few notes.

The vote was close but the resolution was defeated. The number 218 opposed sticks in my mind; but I can't say for sure.

Q: So that was that. While you were on the Desk, did the problem of Kurdish militants in Turkey ever come up?

ROPE: Not much. I remember, during Ambassador Strausz-Hupé's country team meeting, when I was on my orientation trip to Ankara in October 1984, the JUSMAT Chief, General Elmer Pendleton, brought it up, saying something like "this Kurdish thing is beginning to become serious out in the East;" but that's all I recall. During my two years in EUR/SE and even during my time as DCM in Ankara, the focus was on the efforts of Özal to restore normalcy in Turkey and to deal with the economic challenges facing his country. The latter included his proposed "Ataturk Dam" project, designed to boost the economy of eastern Anatolia and benefit its largely Kurdish population. The PKK insurgency was not the problem it later became.

By the way, when I was in Turkey, from 1987-89, the official Turkish line was that the Kurds were entirely Turkish, and their language -- which they could not use in school or in governmental proceedings -- was actually only a dialect of Turkey. That was patently absurd, and when the Deputy Foreign Minister in Ankara told me that during a formal meeting, I could not look at my note-taker, John Hamilton, for fear the two of us would crack up.

Q: So what else came up? Didn't you have a visit from Özal to manage?

ROPE: Yes. In the first half of 1985, before the "genocide" resolution had been introduced. It was an important visit, because, since the Turkish coup of 1980, no Turkish head of state or government had visited Washington. Turgut Özal had been brought in by the military after the coup, as a technocrat to run the government. But by 1985 he had formed a political party and won an election.

I have it in my mind that Özal stayed at Blair House; but I'm not sure that was so -- I think Blair House is reserved for State visits, of which there was one a few years later when Turkish President Evren visited; but still, Blair House sticks in my memory.

In any case Özal came, and though the usual list of US-Turkish issues came up, the key one was US aid to Turkey. He had a clever line on that. He clearly wanted large amounts of aid, but his slogan was "trade, not aid." I recall accompanying him to the Hill for calls on Dole, the Senate Majority Leader, and others, and he did well in his modest, low-key way. It was a successful visit.

Özal was quite a remarkable man. He'd been a World Bank official before the military picked him to run the post-coup interim government, and he was a modern thinker skilled at dealing with the outside world. Among other things, he launched Turkey's campaign to join the EU. I think he understood quite well that even candidate membership in the EU would force Turkey to reform its economy -- at the time about 50 percent dominated by state-owned industries -- and human rights practices. He was the key leader in Turkish politics for a decade.

Q: You mentioned the 1980 coup. That wasn't the first in Turkey. Wasn't that a problem in US-Turkish relations?

ROPE: It had been from time to time. I remember when my dad was with our delegation to NATO he was headed to a meeting in Istanbul in 1960 when there was a coup that created problems for NATO. There have been several coups by the Turkish military, which considers itself the guardian of Ataturk's legacy of secularism. The 1980 coup was the last of them; but the tradition was always to return the government to civilian democratic rule within a few years. That made it easier for NATO countries, the US included, to maintain relations with the Turks even though coups went against the grain of NATO's fundamental principles.

Conditions in Turkey leading up to 1980 had been chaotic and characterized by domestic terrorism, leading to the military takeover. By the time I arrived in EUR/SE, however, constitutional government had been restored, albeit with a powerful military establishment still in the background, and we were dealing with a parliamentary government led by Özal.

Q: So Özal wanted "trade, not aid."

ROPE: That's what he said, though in fact he wanted both. On the trade side, we did negotiate a new, mutual investment treaty, and established the first U.S. Turkish bilateral economic commission. We also promoted the establishment of a U.S. Turkish chamber of commerce.

We also succeeded in expanding quotas for Turkish textiles entering the US. I don't know how things work now, under the WTO, but in those days we had import quotas on textiles from all over the world. It had been an issue when I was first in Hong Kong, working in the Hong Kong-Macao Section. It was an issue with China and lots of other countries. I remember when I was in S/S and Christopher was Deputy Secretary, he was particularly supportive of expanded textile quotas for Bangladesh.

As with Bangladesh, it took the intervention of a Department principal to get something done for Turkey. In the spring of 1986, I traveled with Mike Armacost, then P, to Greece and Turkey, and he became very sympathetic to the Turks' desire for an increased quota. I don't recall exactly what we did after he returned, but I worked with him and his staff -- you'll remember I had a relationship with Mike going back to EA days -- and we did achieve a substantial increase in the quota.

Q: What about aid?

ROPE: This was a perennial job of EUR/SE's, especially given the reality of the "7-10 ratio," which meant that in order to provide large significant amounts of aid for Turkey we also had to gain sizeable amounts for Greece. This required work both inside and outside the Administration. On the economic side, we had to compete internally for pieces of the pie within AID's domain. There were times when I didn't love doing that, because we'd be putting Turkey's needs up against those of African or other poorer and more needy countries; but the strategic side of the Turkey equation, particularly the

potential need for Turkey vis-à-vis Southwest Asian contingencies, trumped a lot.

On the military side, which was the bulk of our aid, I don't remember a lot of details. I do remember quite vividly accompanying Strausz-Hupé, whenever he came to town, up to the Hill to see appropriators like Senator Inouye and lots of others. Strom Thurmond comes to mind, because he seemed totally gaga, leaning on a staff that was supportive of what we wanted. I also worked with staffers up on the Hill. I suppose it's often the difficult ones who stand out in your memory. Once when meeting with a group of Obey staffers and others from the House Appropriations Committee, I referred to the fact that Turkey is a NATO ally. Bill Schuerch, who worked for Obey, exclaimed "that's the worst argument you've made today!" To me it was among the best. Obey and his people leaned toward Greece.

Things were much better with Mike Van Dusen, Staff Director of the House Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee working on Europe – chaired by Lee Hamilton. I saw Mike a lot, along with members of his staff. I also worked at times with Byrd's staff. He was a big supporter of Turkey, as I've mentioned. The Turks imported a fair amount of West Virginia coal.

Mentioning Van Dusen reminds me that one of his subordinate staffers was Chris Van Hollen. His father was an FSO who'd served in Greece and been Ambassador to Sri Lanka. Chris was a very fine young man who later married Kathryn Wilkins, an equally fine young woman who worked for me for about a year in EUR/SE as a presidential intern. She and Chris have a fine family, and he's now a leader in the Congress. Priscilla and I worked for his first campaign and have contributed to his campaigns ever since. He'd make an outstanding President if ever he got the chance.

So aid to Turkey took up a good deal of my time and that of the Turkey desk, particularly Angel Rabasa.

Which is not to say the Turks showered us with gratitude. On the contrary, they took our aid as their due, and it was never enough. However smooth Özal may have been, his foreign ministry never ceased to complain about how inadequate our aid was, even when, in my second year, it reached \$1 billion. So far as they were concerned, it seemed, no amount was good enough to compensate them for our bases and the perceived risks for Turkey that came with them, given what the Turks liked to call their "dangerous neighborhood." While it's jumping ahead, I recall many a banquet when I was DCM in Turkey at which the Turkish host would refer to the "unequal" nature of our relationship and address our alleged shortcomings on the aid side. It was often borderline offensive. I would smilingly respond about how proud we were of our relationship with Turkey and the high levels of aid we had achieved going back to President Truman's day. Then I'd look to the future and toast the bright prospects for long-term US-Turkish cooperation.

Q. Relationships involving dependency can be hard to manage at times.

ROPE: Which brings us to the main business with Turkey in my second year, renewal or

extension of the US-Turkish Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement known by its acronym, the DECA.

Q. Tell us about that.

ROPE: Again, I'm too many years away from it to remember details. The DECA had been reached in 1980, and under it we'd had very good military-to-military relations. The keystone was our annual "High-Level Defense Group" round of talks, led on the US side by Richard Perle. My memory is that they always took place in Ankara. In any case, the DECA was up for renewal in 1985, and the Turkish government, either in the summer or early fall, put forward a demand for aid in exchange for extension of the DECA that was approximately double the level we were providing that year, which, at \$1 billion, was the highest level ever achieved for Turkey.

The demand, first put forward in Ankara by Halefoglu, I believe, was -- to me and I think to most of us on the US side -- an absolute non-starter. Still, we had to enter into negotiations. Perle, wanted to start right away with high-level talks, led by him. For my part, I wanted to keep the negotiation much lower key. My reasoning was that, in the end, the Turks were going to lose; simply because there was no possible way we would get the amount of aid they wanted out of the Congress -- particularly when to do so would require achieving 70 percent of the Turkish level for Greece.

And if the Turks were going to lose as big as I expected, I thought it would be better to have a low-key negotiation where the loss of face would be less. It would also be, I thought, a fairly long negotiation; because it would take time for the Turks to accept that we wouldn't give them what they wanted. So I proposed that we agree to negotiate a DECA renewal with Turkey through negotiations to be conducted in Ankara by Ambassador Strausz-Hupé and counterparts there. You can guess what book I was taking a page from -- Taiwan arms. My superiors, by then Jim Wilkinson and Roz Ridgeway, supported my position.

Perle did not, at least initially. However, when I accompanied him on a delegation to the annual High Level Defense Group talks, Angel Rabasa arranged for me to sit next to him on the DOD plane going over. That gave me a chance to build a relationship with him and put forward my view of how the negotiation should proceed. It worked well. Despite differences of view -- on arms control and years later the invasion of Iraq -- I liked him and we got on pretty well. He even interceded on my behalf once with Elliott Abrams, who had nixed me for a job because, Perle reported, Elliott said I "wanted to send that tennis player back to China" which was a lie. In any case, Richard accepted my proposed negotiating approach, and that's what we did.

As I expected, it took a long time to conclude the negotiation and, in the end, after my departure from EUR/SE, Perle did take over and traveled to Ankara to get it done. During that final year, we -- particularly Angel -- had to do the work of putting together negotiating positions and instruction cables for Strausz-Hupé and his negotiating team. I don't remember how many times the Ambassador met with counterparts for formal

exchanges, but all of that would be in the archives. I do remember that we hadn't made much progress by the time Secretary Shultz visited Turkey in the first half of 1986. I remember telling him on the plane going out that the Turks "are going to make a run at you" on the DECA and their need for more aid; but we had no way, I said, of satisfying them.

Q: So you accompanied Shultz to Turkey as the office director.

ROPE: Yes. That exchange was not long after we took off from Andrews, with Roz and I suppose Jim Wilkinson calling on me to brief the Secretary on the Greece and Turkey portions of the trip. For me, the best part of the whole thing was the delegation's stop in Paris en route. The Secretary had meetings there, and I had no responsibilities. Tony Wayne was by then deputy head of the Political Section in Paris, and I spent a few hours with him, including going with him to the Prime Minister's residence at the Hotel Matignon. It was a day on which the young PM, Laurent Fabius, and his family were just in the process of moving out, and we ended up looking into the residential area, where furniture was being moved, etc. Swing sets for the Fabius children were still in the back courtyard. I also did a lot of walking and stopped at 34 Boulevard Marbeau, where my family lived and I spent vacations during my first two years at Yale.

From Paris we went on to Turkey, and the visit wasn't great. Despite my anticipation of high DECA demands, I hoped somehow Shultz would succeed in lowering Turkish expectations and moving the Turks toward an agreement. That didn't happen. It was a success in terms of Shultz's relationship with Foreign Minister Halefoglu, who made a point of arranging for the Secretary to go to Istanbul first so Halefoglu could show him the sights; but in Ankara, the Secretary was subjected to some unpleasant talk he didn't much like. His meetings with Halefoglu and Özal were okay, but the visit accomplished little.

Ironically, at our next stop, our difficult allies in Greece way outdid the Turks as hosts. After the final dinner, I learned that Shultz still dances like they show in black and white movies of the Sweetheart of Sigma Chi. He danced with Melina Mercouri, shuffling around the floor in sport jacket and bow tie, with Melina, then Minister of Culture in the Papandreou government, slinking around him. Nothing of substance was transacted in Greece, though. The visit did little to improve the relationship.

Q: You had new EUR leadership by this time. How did you get along with them?

ROPE: As I think I've said, I loved working for Roz. She was a good leader and a good diplomat. She was smart. She also said in her review of my efficiency report that I was a tough negotiator. I liked that.

Jim Wilkinson, who replaced Richard Haass, didn't have anything like Richard's understanding of the issues, or intuitive ability to come up with polished proposals; but he was okay. We didn't solve the Cyprus problem, but it's an intractable problem unresolved to this day, and we went through the right motions. Jim made the trips to New

York and to my three posts required of his position, and they went well enough. I got to carry more of the water with UN officials like Picco.

Q: We will return to our conversation with Bill Rope. It is August 1. We are starting a new month. You had a couple of notes you made after our last talk about work on Turkey that you wanted to cover before we move on.

ROPE: There is one other issue I dealt with that was very sensitive, involving certain aspects of Turkish-Pakistani relations. Turkey was very close to Pakistan. I still remember meeting the late Zia al Haq, President of Pakistan, when I was Chargé d'Affaires in Ankara and Zia made a state visit. For most visits by foreign leaders the diplomatic corps didn't troop out to the airport to meet the leader, but we had to for Zia.

There were allegations that elements in Turkey were helping the Pakistani nuclear program -- providing things like centrifuges and so on. Nothing has ever been proven, to my knowledge; but, if that were true, we could be required to cut off aid under the Symington Amendment. The Administration could waive that, but it wouldn't be easy and the Greek Lobby would have been certain to make it very hard. My war college paper helped me on this because I knew all about Pakistan's nuclear program. We had some disputes within the national security community over how to interpret certain reports, and I vaguely recall some fairly sharp conflicts with the OES bureau, which handled proliferation issues. In the end, we never had to consider issuing a Symington Amendment waiver.

Q: You said you wanted to mention something about performance pay.

ROPE: Yes. When the Foreign Service and Civil Service pay and benefits systems were re-worked in the Reagan Administration, Senior FSOs and members of the Senior Civil Service were made eligible for performance bonuses. I received the \$10,000 maximum in each of my years in PRC/M. In EUR/SE I also received performance pay each year, too, but it was half that amount. There was no difference in the amount of effort I put in, nor do I think the quality of my work in EUR/SE was any less than in EA. Perhaps there was a change in the way the performance pay pool was divvied up between 1983 and 1985; but I strongly suspect this shows that if you're working in what some might consider a backwater, you aren't going to fare as well no matter how hard you try. It wasn't the individual effort; it was the importance of the issues.

Q: Well let's close out the Office of Southern European affairs. You are obviously trying to work on your next assignment. How did that process start out and what did it accomplish?

ROPE: I mentioned accompanying Mike Armacost to Greece and Turkey. That led, ultimately, to my going to Ankara as DCM in late summer 1967. The trip took us to Algeria -- fun for me, a novice in that part of the world -- and on to Greece and Turkey. At the end, we flew to Brussels where Mike had meetings at NATO. Steve Ledogar, DCM at USNATO, was a bit of a hero to me -- a big, gruff, bear of guy who'd been a

Navy carrier pilot and worked for my dad in Montreal as a first tour officer when I was at Yale. He eventually became our CFE -- Conventional Forces in Europe -- negotiator, on behalf of NATO, with the Soviets. It provided for reducing the two blocs' conventional forces west of the Urals.

While I was in Brussels with Armacost, Steve offered me the job of Political Advisor to USNATO, effectively the mission's political counselor. I would have replaced Bob Frowick, another personal hero who'd worked for my dad. It was Bob who counseled me to "beg" after I failed my first Foreign Service Oral. He was involved with the establishment of CSCE and ultimately became an Ambassador serving CSCE's successor organization, OSCE, in the Balkans, post-Dayton Accords. I was ready to say yes to Steve. Besides the challenge it offered, I thought once I'd done it no one could ever take my EUR credentials away.

Mike, however, said I shouldn't accept. He said I needed to be a DCM, the next logical step in a normal career. Since he was the Undersecretary, and I knew I'd have his support, I took the advice and looked for DCM jobs; but what was available wasn't great. Howie Schafer, NEA DAS for South Asia, suggested I interview to be DCM in Dacca. That didn't work out, for reasons I've alluded to when we discussed my role in the Grain Embargo repeal cable of 1981. I didn't much want to go there anyway; nor was I crazy about Haiti or Jamaica, for which DCM jobs I also went through the motions of interviewing.

I bid on the job of DCM Athens, but Bob Keeley, who'd replaced Monty Stearns, had an old friend in line for the job. That, too, was okay by me. One job I tried hard for was DCM Tel Aviv, encouraged by long-time friend Charlie Hill, then Secretary Shultz's chief aide. I had a good interview with Tom Pickering, but he picked Art Hughes. I couldn't feel bad losing out to Art, who was very good, and said so to Tom when he called to tell me. That was the only time in my career, even post-retirement, when anyone had the courtesy to call me when I didn't get a job.

One other unsuccessful effort was with Ron Lauder, a political appointee who was nominally George Bader's boss in DOD, under Richard Perle. Ron was going to be Ambassador to Austria, and I tried to persuade him to take me as his DCM. I'd have to learn German, but I told Ron I had a high MLAT and would throw myself into it at FSI as soon as I left EUR/SE. He was skeptical. "I speak perfect German," he said, causing me to wonder if he really did, "and I have to have a DCM who speaks perfect German." He picked Felix Bloch, an economic officer I'd known slightly when he was in my futuristics course at ICAF during my War College year. Did you know Felix Bloch?

Q: The alleged spy? No, I didn't.

ROPE: He was alleged to have spied for the Soviets while working for Ron and in previous assignments in Vienna. He wasn't prosecuted, suggesting the government didn't want to disclose its evidence in the case; but the Department terminated him. When I learned about this I thought Ron could have done worse than choose me, and he did.

Assuming the allegations were true, it would also have been better for the country.

Q: I guess. What else did you pursue?

ROPE: I did something awkward. With no good DCM jobs on the horizon, I called Steve Ledogar, who said I was still his candidate for the USNATO job. By that time, however, an old War College friend of mine, Bob Grey, POLAD to the NATO commanding general at SHAPE, had bid on the job. Some people in EUR supported his candidacy; others wanted me. Another War College friend -- and former Naval aviator -- Charlie Thomas, told me the thinking was that I was the stronger candidate for the long haul, because I was considered a quick learner; but Bob had the right credentials and was ready to go. The Director General, then George Vest, directed that it go to Bob. I worried that this might harm my friendship with Bob, but it didn't. A year or so later, Kate and I stayed with the Greys when I was consulting in Brussels en route to Ankara. I saw Bob again, professionally and socially, when he and I were supernumeraries at USUN in the fall of '94.

So I left EUR/SE without a job, and went off to Ocracoke for another family vacation. On returning, I saw Chas, by then principal DAS in the Africa Bureau under Frank Wisner. He said if I would learn French he would look for an ambassadorship for me in French-speaking Africa. Making Ambassador was not the be all and end all for me; I didn't feel the need for a title on my post-retirement business card as did some FSOs. Still, I was relatively young; and an African Embassy might qualify me for bigger posts in EA or elsewhere afterwards. So I agreed to study French.

Q: Did Chas or Frank have a specific post in mind?

ROPE: No. I was to be assigned to French language training without an onward assignment. I think Armacost's staff helped arrange it. I studied French for what ended up being 30 weeks, doing well enough to get an S-3+ R-3+; and I had a nice family year, without the pressures of work in the Department.

Q: But you didn't end in Africa. You ended up in Turkey. How did that happen?

ROPE: The DCM job in Ankara came up for bid the next summer, and Mike decided I should go there. There were management problems in Ankara, and I had good credentials for the job. Priscilla and the family weren't thrilled by the idea -- though they ultimately came to love Turkey -- but I agreed to go. So in early '87 a cable was sent from Mike to Ambassador Strausz-Hupé proposing me. Normally, an ambassador is offered several choices, one of whom he may already have lined up; and the cable normally comes from Personnel. In this case, the cable came from the Undersecretary and gave the Ambassador only one name -- mine. Strausz-Hupé had no choice but to agree. He and I had plenty of experience with one another, much of it on the Hill; and we'd worked well together so far as I was concerned. Strausz-Hupé, however, had an aversion to strong deputies. He got rid of Dick Boehm not long after getting to Turkey in 1980, and the perception of Department management was that the post had not had good management since.

In accepting Armacost's recommendation, the Ambassador added a curious note. "As for what Mr. Rope should do in the months before he arrives at post," he said, "he should continue his study of French. French, after all, is *la langue de la diplomatie*....French has a rich literature. Turkish does not." That's almost exactly what he said, including the last part about literature.

The point was I should not study Turkish. This may be hard to fathom, but it was true. It's pretty clear that Strausz-Hupé, who could not speak Turkish but was fluent in French, did not want a number two who could do something he couldn't. Maybe he feared I'd outshine him or go behind his back dealing with the Turks in a way he could not. I of course wanted to study Turkish; and if I went into Turkish training right away I could expect to at least approach, if not achieve, professional competence by the time I reported to Ankara.

So I went to the Ray Ewing, Deputy Director General, whom I knew as a former US ambassador to Cyprus. When I showed him Strausz-Hupé's cable, he said, "We're not going to spend money on having you continue to study French. You have to study Turkish." This was music to my ears; but when Strausz-Hupé came to Washington for consultations shortly afterwards, this news made him very unhappy. He said he'd chosen me "because I thought we could work together; but you need to understand. It will be very hierarchical. No alter-ego!" He then reiterated that he wanted me to stay in French. If I couldn't arrange that, he said, I should take some management courses. He thought computer management would be about right.

I told him I'd thought we could work very well together and that he'd "always reminded me of my German-Jewish uncle, whose wedding ring I wear on my finger and after whom we named our son." That had the virtue of being true, and it softened him up a bit. Strausz-Hupé was a European émigré, born of a Magyar Hungarian Jewish father and German Catholic mother. I know I've said the same thing about Vernon Walters. Both statements were true, though the men were very different and I liked Walters a lot better.

I told Ambassador Strausz-Hupé I wanted to do my best to serve him and hoped I could make him proud. It became clear, however, that he was dead set against having me study Turkish. That was sad. There he was in his 80's, five times an ambassador, well connected in the Reagan Administration, and yet not secure enough to let me learn the language of the country to which he was accredited when I had the time to do it.

I went back to Ray Ewing and told this to him, saying I thought I had to give Strausz-Hupé what he wanted for the sake of my relationship with him, which would be critical for the job. Ray said, "All right. You can have ten more weeks of French, and then you can take the Turkish FAST course." The latter was a six week course designed for spouses and staff people, like communicators and secretaries, who wouldn't get the full language course but could learn enough to function politely and get around.

The Ambassador was very happy to hear this. When I told him I'd be taking a quick

course “for housewives,” he said, “Of course. To buy a few vegetables at the market!” When I said there were no courses available in computer management, which was true, he said that was no problem, “Managers are born, not made.” So that’s how I got a 3+-3+ in French that I never got a chance to use professionally in a French-speaking country. It’s also why I was condemned to spend two years in Turkey with only a rudimentary grasp of Turkish. I got an S-1, R-1 in the FAST course, which was helpful out in the countryside but not useful for my work. I might have improved upon that by studying further at post, but that was impossible given the Ambassador’s feelings. I never used it in his presence.

I finished French on a Friday and started the Turkish FAST course on a Monday. Ironically my classmates were two bright and very funny French women, both wives of junior officers I’d serve with in Ankara. At times all three of us would be looking at the wall rather than look at each other; because if we did we would crack up. Even the teacher was funny; she’d crack up, too. I don’t recall the name of one of those women, whose husband I believe served in USIS. The other was Veronique Turner, wife of Bruce Turner who was in full Turkish course and assigned to Ankara’s Political Section. He was a fine young man.

The FAST course ended in June, after which I took the DCM course. I would then have been ready to move with the family to Ankara, but the Ambassador didn’t want me to arrive until the end of September. The DCM I was succeeding, Frank Trinko, did not want to leave until then, I suspect for reasons involving an intention to retire. That the Ambassador wanted to accommodate him wasn’t totally unreasonable; but we wanted to give our daughter Kate -- by then a teenager for whom the thought of leaving the National Cathedral and moving to Ankara was akin to a death sentence -- a chance to get there, settle in, and start school on time. The Ambassador, however, stuck with his guns until George Vest called him and gained his agreement that we could arrive in Ankara on the last weekend in August, with school to start the following Monday.

Q: After Turkish you took the DCM course. How was that?

ROPE: It was a good and enjoyable. I took from it three key points. First, you’re not deputy chief of the Embassy or the State Department part of the Embassy. You’re a State Department officer who is deputy chief of the Mission and all its components. In my comments in efficiency reports I referred to that and said I’d tried my best to do it. Second -- and this was an important thought for life -- you are constantly modeling for others, particularly subordinates. Whatever you want them to do, you should do; whatever you don’t want them to do, you should not do. I basically knew that, just as I knew what my role would be as DCM. I had always tried to lead by example. Still it was a point that stuck with me. After retirement, as an elementary schoolteacher, I was especially conscious that I was modeling behavior for children, and for fellow teachers.

The third thing that struck a chord was when State Department spokesman Chuck Bray said to us, “protect your weaknesses.” I asked him he meant, and he said, “If you are a person like me who’s terrified of getting up in front of an audience but who has a job like

I do, you'd damn well better prepare well." That hit home because I'm like him. Whenever I've had to do public speaking, including testifying before Congress, I've usually done well, especially if there's a TV camera to talk to; but I get terrible stage fright -- just want to run out of the room. In Turkey, within a week of our arrival, Strausz-Hupé left and, as Charge, I had to address the entire Embassy staff and families at a Labor Day picnic. The Ambassador wanted a formal speech for the event, though I tried to make it as informal as I could. Then, at a delivery ceremony for the first Turkish-built F-16s, functioning as Chargé, I had to speak before President Evren, Prime Minister Özal, and the entire diplomatic corps. I remember the Chinese ambassador talking to me as I was getting ready to go on, and I could hardly say a word in Chinese -- had a head full of cotton. But you can bet I prepared; and it looked good that night on TV.

Incidentally, the Senior Seminar included a 2-day course in public speaking that I found very valuable. A key message was that the most wonderful extemporaneous remarks you've ever heard weren't extemporaneous. They were rehearsed. We were taught to rehearse three times -- get a text you like and are comfortable with, rehearse it three times, and don't fool with it any more. That's worked well for me, butterflies notwithstanding. One other thing I liked and have used often was how to introduce a speaker. Instead of just boringly reciting a bio, start off without referring to the speaker. Say something interesting about the importance or challenge of the subject, or characterize it in some other way. Then say how fortunate you are to have an expert there to speak about it. Then give just a short bio and let the speaker take over.

There were lots of nuts and bolts covered in the DCM course -- budget, management controls, intelligence, etc., all of which were valuable. And the camaraderie and exchanges of views with fellow FSOs was great. Like the War College and Senior Seminar, we learned from one another while building new contacts in the Department.

Q: My understanding of the DCM course is it tends to do a couple of things. One, familiarize you with the rules and regulations so the embassy runs well, and, two, talk about various scenarios on your interaction with the ambassador.

ROPE: Yes. We even did role-playing for that. It was an excellent course.

Q: The DCM course is just a couple of weeks, I think, but you're not due at post until the end of August 1987. What did you do in the interim. More time on the Outer Banks?

ROPE: I decided to "repay" the Department for my French training by spending six weeks in France. Two years earlier, I'd helped one of my former S/S-O SWOs, Stan Valerga, a very amusing guy with whom I'd gotten on well, get the job of Consul General in Lyon. I called and asked him how he was. He said he was doing well, borne out by many plaques and certificates we later saw in his residence naming him "chevalier" of the Beaujolais and other districts in the Burgundy region. "You must be about ready for home leave," I said. "Yep," he said, "Coming up this summer." I asked him if he would like us to house-sit while he and his wife were away. He said he would. So his residence, in the small village of Chasselay, outside Lyon just two miles from the Autoroute and the

Beaujolais district, became the centerpiece of two months for our family in Europe.

Q: The benefits of good professional contacts! And how did that go?

ROPE: We had a great summer. The Valerga residence, across a rural road a farm pasture, in walking distance of Chasselay's town square was lovely. The Valergas were leaving around the third week of July, and we spent the intervening weeks packing out and making a few stops in Europe before getting to Lyon. We decided to ease Kate's transition from Washington -- where she'd lived since she was two years old -- by inviting her closest friend, Rebecca Price, to come along. We shipped a new Renault station wagon, bought because Renault services cars all over Europe and in Turkey, to Antwerp. I picked it up there after we stopped in London to visit Jean Stern, widow of my late colleague John, whom we'd known in Beijing.

In London Kate, Rebecca and I visited Oxford, and then I flew to Antwerp, where I spent a day with another former S/S-O SWO, Tom Martin, by then Consul General, before picking up the car and driving to Brussels for consultations at USNATO. Kate and Rebecca flew in from London to join me, and we had a good visit with the Greys, whose teenage daughter took the girls on an evening tour of the city. From there we drove to Bruges, and after a day and overnight we went to Boulogne, France, to pick up Priscilla and Robert, arriving by hovercraft ferry. Driving on to Paris, we stayed in an inexpensive suite-hotel that Embassy Science Counselor and friend Allen Sessoms, my classmate during French training, had lined up for us. After a week in and around Paris we drove to Lyon for two days with the Valergas before they left. Then we had four weeks using Chasselay as a base for visits to Lyon and trips to towns in the countryside, the Auvergne, and up and down the Rhone Valley. I went alone to Stuttgart for consultations at SACEUR. Priscilla and the girls went to Nime-Arles for an ABBA concert in an old Roman amphitheater.

It was not just a great family time but gave me a chance to use the French I'd learned. I was able to use it occasionally in Turkey -- for instance with the wife of the chief of the Turkish General Staff who didn't speak English but could converse in French. That was one way to learn what was going on in the Turkish military world.

After putting Rebecca on a plane home at the end, we drove via the Montblanc and the Valle d'Aosta to Milan and on to Verona and Venice where, after a day and a half we took a ferry to Athens. After I consulted at the Embassy there, we took an overnight ferry to Kuşadası in Turkey, near Izmir where I had final consultations with Consul General Beau Nalle and his staff. Beau was quite a character and was on top of things in Izmir. He knew everybody.

After a short stay with him, we drove to Ankara. No one met us, but we found our way to the DCM's residence, which I'd visited when it was a duplex residence for the Political and Political-Military Counselors' families. Frank Trinka had kicked them out and turned the building into a single DCM residence. It was huge, with private quarters upstairs and two large reception rooms downstairs. It was once the US Embassy, which I learned early

on from an elderly reception guest who said, “I signed the book for Franklin D. Roosevelt in this house.”

We once had a cocktail party there for 400 people. They were cheek by jowl, and it was only because the garden party we’d planned was rained out, but we did it. The guests were archeologists having a conference in Ankara who were delighted to have the Embassy throw a reception for them. They didn’t mind being crammed in.

So, that’s the story of getting to Turkey.

Q: Okay, so now you are in Ankara. Before we get into your work as DCM, what was going on in Turkey. They were coming out of military government, I believe. Can you tell us a bit to set the scene?

ROPE: By this time, 1987, it was seven years since the military staged a coup, after a period of substantial chaos in the form of right wing and left wing terrorist gangs and what the military and many others considered dysfunctional government under Bülent Ecevit and Süleyman Demirel -- the latter ultimately President of Turkey in the 1990s. The tradition in Turkey, going back to Atatürk’s day, was that the military was the guardian of democracy, to which could be added “secular” democracy. So when the military stepped in and mounted a coup in 1980, as it had done twice before, it did not see itself as a source of long-term governance. Its aim was to stabilize the situation, institute reforms and turn the government back to civilian hands.

The two leaders of Turkey before 1980, Demirel and Ecevit, had been banned from political participation by the 1980 coup leaders; and they were not allowed to return to active politics until shortly after I arrived in 1987. In the intervening time, the man who emerged as Turkey’s leading politician was Turgut Özal, a technocrat who had worked in a variety of economic capacities, including a stint at the World Bank and one in Demirel’s government in the 1970s. The military brought him in as chief economist of the post-coup government, and when political parties were allowed to form again in 1983, with elections that fall, Özal and his newly-formed Motherland Party won.

When I took over EUR/SE in 1985, Özal was pretty well entrenched as Turkey’s head of government, though Kenan Evren, leader of the 1980 coup, was President and had both behind-the-scenes influence and key constitutional powers, the latter to be exercised lightly. This was still the situation in the fall of 1987; but by then Özal had been in office four years and was very much in command. His primary focus was economic reform, and he had considerable vision. He continued to implement financial reforms and was working to reduce the state enterprise share of the economy, still about 50 percent at the time. He was pursuing a major dam and electrification project in eastern Turkey designed to fuel economic growth in chronically backward areas encompassing the Kurdish region. In response to Ankara’s terrible air pollution, he negotiated a pipeline from the USSR to bring in natural gas. He was touting “water diplomacy” and wanted to build a water pipeline from Turkey down through Syria into the Middle East. Finally, while we were there, he launched a drive for admission to the EU, an effort I think he saw as a device to

force a whole range of economic and social changes -- including needed human rights changes -- on Turkey.

There were local elections a year or so after I arrived, covered by our political section, which showed that opposition parties were regaining strength; but Özal remained the pre-eminent leader until his death in 1993, by which time he had replaced Evren as President of Turkey. Süleyman Demirel was Prime Minister.

That was the way things were throughout my two years, and I think it's safe to say that most if not all of us in the Embassy and in Washington saw Özal as the chief hope for long-term economic progress and stability in Turkey, which, despite growing prosperity in Western Turkey, remained to the poorest of OECD nations.

Q: And how did you see US interests there?

ROPE: Pretty much as I outlined them when we were talking about my time in EUR/SE. We were still in the Cold War. Turkey was a NATO ally in a strategic part of the world vis-à-vis the USSR. People like Richard Perle in DOD saw the potential value of our bases in Turkey in the event of a Middle East or South Asian contingency, and I agreed with that. There was a broad consensus, I think, within and without the US government that a secular, democratic Turkey constituted a valuable alternative model for other governments in the Islamic world. Given all this, US policy aimed at supporting Turkey both militarily and economically as much as possible, within political constraints, e.g., the Greek Lobby and its "7-10 ratio."

I subscribed to all this and wanted to do all I could to preserve and advance the US-Turkish relationship. This is not to say we saw everything in Turkey as perfect. There were human rights violations that we had to highlight in our human rights report and had to address with the Turks from time to time. Still, our focus was on advancing political, economic and military US-Turkish relations while helping Özal as much as possible.

Q: Now in addition to Özal, these other former leaders, Demirel and Ecevit, were back on the scene. Did you have much to do with them.

ROPE: They were still in the early days of their return to political life, re-building their parties; and while the Ambassador had contacts with them from time to time, I don't recall ever meeting either of them. I'm sure I must have, and I know they were invited to events like our Fourth of July reception, one of which I hosted as Chargé. I think our Political Counselor did; his section certainly reported on the activities of the various parties. Özal's Motherland Party, Demirel's True Path party, and Ecevit's Democratic Socialist Party were the main ones, but there was another opposition party led by, Deniz Baykal with whom we maintained some contact; and there was a fringe, religious party that was the forerunner, I think, of Erdogan's Justice Party. We had occasional contacts with them. Whenever I've seen Abdullah Gul, President for some years after Erdogan became Prime Minister, I think to myself, "I knew that man."

Q: So let's go to your life as DCM. DCMs are in charge of the Mission. What were the various components of the Embassy? What I'm talking about is, who are the other federal agents attached to the Embassy. Was it a large mission?

ROPE: It was. According to what I wrote in one of my ERs there were 1,000 Americans.

Q: All working in the Embassy?

ROPE: No. In the Embassy and at our various constituent posts. We had three consulates, and there was also a sizeable US military presence in Turkey; about 10,000 US military personnel and dependents spread over 20 different offices and facilities. The Embassy and Consulates also had large complements of local employees, mostly Turkish nationals. Within the city of Ankara, we had a JUSMAG, Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group, the "joint" referring to the fact that it had a Turkish military component. JUSMAG was housed on a Turkish military base -- I think it was Balgat, where, conveniently, all Mission personnel had PX privileges. Its commanding general, an Army officer, was an important member of the country team -- particularly in the days of Elmer Pendleton, who had left by the time I arrived. Embassy Ankara was a Class One post.

Of course we had the CIA, with an Ankara Station Chief named John McGaffin, known to the Turkish Government but officially in place as our "Science Attaché." When my visiting sister-in-law asked him what he did, he said, "I science around." It's well known that Istanbul is a center for all kinds of intrigues, and we had a significant Agency presence there under John's overall supervision. We also had a sizeable component from USIA, now part of the State Department but then a separate agency. Our Public Affairs Officer was a colorful guy named Frank Scotton. He was well known for his earlier USIA life in Vietnam -- supposedly a character in Robin Moore's *Green Berets* was modeled after him. Frank was also a Chinese language officer who ultimately served as PAO in Beijing. I met him first in Taichung, where we inherited his wonderful cook and Browser, his German Shepherd. He accompanied Bella Abzug and other members of Congress to Vietnam in 1975 and visited Beijing afterwards. There he told us -- in the bubble with George Bush -- that regardless of what the Department was saying, South Vietnam was falling, as happened only weeks later.

Frank, John McGaffin, and I were kind of a triumvirate when it came to supporting and advising the Ambassador -- what Frank called "the care and feeding of Robert Strausz-Hupé."

We had a commercial attaché, an agricultural attaché, military attachés, a labor attaché, and I can't recall what else -- pretty much the normal panoply of U.S. government agencies with overseas interests and responsibilities. We had an Air Force general who oversaw all non-NATO, non-JUSMAG US military forces in Turkey. There was a US admiral in Izmir, though he served as NATO commander for the Southeastern Europe region and reported to SHAPE in Belgium along with any Americans under his command. On the State side, we had political and political-military sections, a consular section, economic section, and administrative section. We also had a representative of

State's Foreign Buildings Office -- whom I considered incompetent enough that I complained about him to FBO. We can discuss that at some point.

Q: The three consulates -- what were their specific jobs? What were they covering?

ROPE: Consulates or Consulates General are basically local US representatives in the parts of the country, i.e., consular districts, where they're located. They stay in touch with mayors and governors and other important people in their areas and send political and economic reports to Washington. That reporting is done independently, though the consuls and consuls general did report to me and the Ambassador -- I wrote their efficiency reports and reviewed those of their immediate subordinates. The general division of labor was that consulates stuck to straight reporting and analysis in their direct communications to Washington and left policy recommendations to us at the Embassy. If they wanted to weigh in on policy matters, which I don't recall happening during my two years, they would need to go through the Embassy, with the Ambassador and/or the DCM approving. Of course, in the theoretical event that this happened and we didn't approve, they would have access to the Secretary, directly, through the dissent channel.

There were also other agency representatives at some of these constituent posts, some of which I've mentioned.

Q: You mentioned that Izmir had Admiral Schrock as part of its staffing, so obviously there was a strong Pol-mil reason for having that consulate where it was.

ROPE: I don't know how much of a consideration that was. There weren't actually a lot of US military personnel in Izmir, and I'm pretty sure we had a post in Izmir well before NATO was created. It's a major city, third largest in Turkey -- Smyrna in the days when it belonged to the Greeks.

Q: Maybe I'm confusing it with Incirlik.

ROPE: I think so. We had a small consulate in Adana, in southeastern Turkey, with Incirlik Air Base located nearby. The Consul's job was to maintain a non-military US presence in the region and do, on a smaller scale, what our posts in Istanbul and Izmir did. You're right, though, that maintaining good relations and rapport with the US commander and Turkish military personnel was important; and we provided consular services to Americans at Incirlik.

Q: Did you have an opportunity to do in-country travel?

ROPE: I did, though I did less of it on an official basis than I would have liked. I started out with consultations in Izmir and went to Izmir at least three more times in my time there. I went to Adana at least twice, and I went once every 4-6 six months to Istanbul. But I didn't get to meet a lot of officials or other kinds of "contacts" outside of Ankara. Most of those I did meet were in Istanbul. I recall participating in a symposium at Robert College there on one occasion. One fellow panelist was a professor named Tansu Ciller.

She was very bright, but I thought wildly, unfairly, critical of the US. She later became Prime Minister.

Ambassador Strausz-Hupé did a lot more travel, and that basically left me at home base, as chief manager of the Embassy.

I never got out to Eastern Turkey, though Priscilla did. I visited a small post at Sinop on the Black Sea and visited another post in Diyarbakir at one point. There was an interesting problem there, involving a significant operational error being blamed on an enlisted man. When I looked into the matter it seemed he wasn't responsible and was being made a scapegoat. I got that corrected, and I believe it led to personnel changes considerably higher up the chain.

Recreationally, our family did a fair amount of weekend or vacation travel in central, southern and western Anatolia -- I used to point out that there are more Greek ruins in Turkey than in Greece, and we visited quite a few, as well as one major Hittite site and Troy. The tomb of King Midas was an hour outside of Ankara, and archeologists told me there was evidence that people once panned for gold in the nearby river. When it came to official in-country travel, though, I didn't get to do much, though I stayed in regular touch with our consuls general and the consul in Adana.

Q: I would assume there would be an infrequent meeting up at the embassy.

ROPE: Yes. They came to Ankara. I can't remember how often but we had periodic meetings bringing all three of them together.

Q: Now this was the time when certain insurgency or terrorist incidents were happening in Turkey. Did that affect the rest of the staff's travel? Was there, during the time you were there, much of a terrorism threat directed at Americans?

ROPE: The threat existed. However, terrorism -- not so much directed at Americans as at other Turks in the 1970s -- was a much bigger problem in the days leading to the 1980 coup than it was by 1987. Our Embassy staff members traveled throughout the country without security. Still, a senior Saudi diplomat was assassinated while we were in Ankara, and I traveled in a bulletproof car with a bodyguard whenever I was on official business. Even off-duty, driving our family car around Ankara, I had a bodyguard with me; and there were security guards for our residence. When I and my family went out of the city on private travel by car, we had procedures for ensuring that no one followed me before I was free to drive into the countryside. The Ambassador had similar security but used his Embassy car at all times. I don't recall what security our consuls had, but they had something.

We had serious concerns about our consulate general in Istanbul due to its vulnerable location, on a narrow street in the heart of the city, and we needed to find a new location - - sad, because it was in a wonderful old building near the historic Pera Palas Hotel. It couldn't be protected from a car bomb, though, and towards the end of my two years the

search for space where FBO could build a fortress-like ConGen began in earnest. Ambassador Strausz-Hupé and I traveled to Istanbul to look at several properties under consideration.

All this said, I don't recall any security incidents involving US personnel during my two years. We did have a marine die in Istanbul, but it was an accident -- the result of a fall from a balcony during a party.

Q: You said that while you were in Turkish language training you had a couple of spouses as classmates. How was morale for young officers at the Mission -- and the Mission in general?

ROPE: I think junior officer morale was good, and I think mission morale was good in general. We did have an inspection when I was Chargé, after Ambassador Strausz-Hupé left, and the chief inspector reported problems of morale among one or more people in the Political Section. There were complaints suggesting I stifled reporting on sensitive subjects or did too much editing. That was regrettable, but there were underlying personal issues I can't go into. What I can say is that I and our Political Counselor had differences involving the quality of the reporting and writing coming out of that section. He clearly felt he knew a lot more about Turkey than I did and resented any editing on my part.

Q. I gather you didn't agree.

ROPE: I granted and valued his expertise, gained from past experience in Turkey, and his depth of knowledge of the Turkish political scene. I was not without some knowledge and experience myself, however, after 2 years in EUR/SE. From my perspective, my aim was solely to sharpen, not alter, reporting so it would be more likely to be read in Washington -- a place I knew fairly well after 12 straight years in the Department including work on the Seventh Floor. I should also add that I wanted the analysis in any reporting to be based on solid facts, not speculation, though this didn't mean we shouldn't seek to identify trends, or lay out various possible outcomes of events, or make predictions, so long as we had reasonably sound factual bases for doing so.

I got along a lot better with Political-Military Counselor, Mort Dworkin, and Economic Counselor, Clay Nettles, than with the top leadership of the Political Section, and I never saw or heard of any morale problems there.

Among junior officers, I think morale was good. I remembered my own time as a first tour officer in Hong Kong, where we didn't get much attention from the Consuls General or their deputies when I was a visa officer. I've mentioned the trauma of Mike Milner's suicide. I was very conscious of that and met with junior officers regularly, lunching with them and socializing with them. I socialized with a pretty wide swath of Mission personnel -- marines, Foreign Service Nationals, McGaffin's people, secretaries, communicators, etc. Particularly in those lunches, but at all times -- I ate regularly in the Embassy cafeteria -- I wanted to pick up as much as I could on any gripes, problems or ideas on how we could improve. One thing that kept me in touch with younger officers

was the fact that in Robert we had a four year-old son. We brought a sizeable knock-down swing-set with us as part of our personal effects, and I had a large sandbox constructed on the DCM residence grounds which other Mission personnel's children could use whether or not we were there. As parents of a teen-age girl at the George C. Marshall High School at -- I think -- Balgat military base, we were also friends with parents who were military personnel. Kate, in fact, dated the son of the non-JUSMAAG forces commanding general.

We lost one young FSO, Tim Collins, assigned to ConGen Istanbul, who had worked for me in the Ops Center. He became ill and had to be transferred back to Washington, where he died. When I learned this I just broke down crying. I really cared about Tim and did my best to support and mentor him, both in S/S-O and whenever I visited Istanbul, as I did for all the young officers I knew. I'm sad about Tim to this day.

I think I've said that, as a manager, I pushed people fairly hard, as I did myself; but I tried to reward them with positive feedback and the most positive efficiency reports I could write consistent with their performance. I did my best to support and maintain good relations even with subordinates with whom I disagreed -- over reporting, administrative issues, or whatever -- which wasn't always reciprocated. We did the usual thing of inviting single people for Thanksgiving dinner or at Christmas time, or making sure they were taken care of elsewhere.

I had a monthly lunch with the leaders of our FSN association and did all I could to be responsive to concerns they raised -- often regarding pay and working conditions, including treatment of some of them by Mission personnel. My overall aim was to be as open as I could to everyone in that Mission, eating lunches in the cafeteria, showing up at parties, etc.

Strausz-Hupé was not the same kind of outreach person. He was a formal, elderly gentleman -- we celebrated his 85th birthday in Ankara. He had a distinctive, European accent, and manners to go with it. He was erudite, articulate and worldly. I don't think he was beloved, either by many in the Embassy or by the Turks; but he was respected. As an ambassador, particularly as a politically-appointed ambassador, he did his job well.

What else can I say on the morale side? The Consular Section. I tried to impress on consular officers that their section would see more Turks, and receive more visitors, than any other Americans in the Embassy. I considered it essential that the impressions of Americans their visitors formed be positive, even when we couldn't issue a visa or otherwise be of assistance. In short, I wanted service orientation; and that was to include FSN personnel serving in the Consular Section. I think we had that.

On the Administrative Section side, I hope morale was good, but I wasn't satisfied with some of the service Mission personnel received from our General Services Unit; and I did insist on changes that were resisted. I was also unhappy about the way some of our administrative people dealt with their FSN employees. In a large organization composed of human beings, disagreements, conflicts and some inadequate performance is probably

inevitable; but, without going further, I will say that our Administrative Counselor retired after serving under me.

Q: What about your own morale, given some of the conflicts you've mentioned? How was your family's?

ROPE: My own morale was good. Conflict wasn't new to me, and what I'm talking about was nothing compared to the policy fighting that goes on in Washington. If you want to be a leader, you have to face up to all the complications of interpersonal relations. I had a demanding and multifaceted job, with all the usual stresses and strains; but I like challenges and enjoyed the freedom the Ambassador gave me to run things pretty much on my own. I liked the Turks and their country and believed in what we were doing.

My family was happy. Daughter Kate hated having to go to Turkey, but once she made friends with other American and Turkish teenagers at her school that dissipated. By the time we left, she was sad to go. Like the Chinese, Turks dote on children, and Robert, four when we arrived, was the darling of our cook and other servants. He was also very happy in pre-school and kindergarten at the British Embassy school. Our residence was commodious, with nice grounds, and we liked the servants. Our cook was so good he moved up to be chef at the Ambassador's residence when Mort Abramowitz arrived -- and our chief maid -- we made her our butler -- went with him. We had a good set-up for entertaining, indoors and outdoors, and we did a fair amount of it, with the help of an excellent FSN protocol assistant at the Embassy named Aysen.

All this made Priscilla very happy. In addition, she was able to work part-time during the second year, sharing the Community Liaison Officer job with the wife of one of our military attachés.

Q: Okay. Coming back to the Embassy, what more can you say about the Political Section?

ROPE: I think I've covered the essence of it. If you want to go to the top in the Foreign Service you need a mix of assignments overseas and in Washington. This was the whole point of "Wristonization" back in the 1950s that forced my father to leave his job at USUN and go into the Foreign Service. It didn't work out well for him, but the rationale was sound. Just as FSOs must understand what things are like in the field and know the countries and cultures to which they're assigned, they also have to understand Washington and the domestic concerns of our country. That's where having an overseas-home mix comes in.

To be an effective reporting officer, or a Washington analyst in INR, you need to know the needs of your Washington consumers and the dynamics of the leadership you're reporting to. I don't think some in our political section understood that well. I'd receive for approval long or poorly-written drafts that I knew wouldn't get read in Washington; and while my rule was not to re-write but to send drafts back for reworking, in the end I'd have to do more editing than I preferred. No doubt at times this left details on the cutting

floor that the Political Section considered -- rightly or wrongly -- important to a reader's understanding; and no doubt I made mistakes. I didn't want to be a Marty Packman, if you recall my comments from INR days; but I did want our reporting to be sharply focused and good -- as, in fairness, did Marty. I wanted it to be read!

That was the underlying problem.

One other problem stemmed from the fact that Ambassador Strausz-Hupé and I viewed it as an important role of the Embassy to send in policy recommendations from the field; and we didn't want to write them all ourselves. We wanted initiative and/or responsiveness from those below us, and we recognized our need for help from those who had more expertise than we. Unfortunately, I had a lot of trouble getting that from our political section.

Going back to the subject of junior officers, one of the things I realized when I became a school teacher in retirement, is that I had always loved teaching. I loved teaching younger officers, particularly the more junior ones, our craft -- teaching them what was important and how to set priorities; teaching about writing, and all the different things one needs to develop as an FSO. I think I was successful at this over the course of my career. If ever I failed, however, it was with a few middle-grade officers in Ankara.

Q: What kind of policy recommendations were you referring to just now?

ROPE: There were lots over those two years, often involving initiatives we might take with the Turks, or bilateral exchanges -- like a state visit for President Evren -- that we thought would enhance US-Turkish relations. These things would be in the archives. The best example of something that was very important to me was the Bulgarian Turk crisis that arose when I was Chargé, in the interregnum between Strausz-Hupé and Mort Abramowitz. This occupied much of my time in my last two months or so in Turkey, and I felt quite passionate about it. Bulgaria was brutally persecuting its Turks -- enough to make them flee the country. Are you familiar with that? Do you recall that at all?

Q: Not really. I was involved in Tiananmen Square.

ROPE: Yes. I remember saying to Frank Scotton in a small staff meeting on hearing the news from Tiananmen, "They've lost the Mandate of Heaven." As it turned out, that wasn't so. China's leaders went through a bad patch but managed to hold on.

In the spring of '89, Bulgaria, an orthodox Christian country though under Communist rule, began brutally to persecute its Islamic, ethnic Turkish population; and Bulgarian Turks began to flee into Turkey. In the course of two months, the number of these refugees Turkey reached 300,000. Bulgarian Turks were being forced to change their names. Their property was being confiscated. When they fled Bulgaria they would come across the border with carts or trucks full of personal belongings into a big tent city outside of Edirne in Turkish Thrace. Before being allowed to leave, Bulgarian officials made them pay a border tax that effectively robbed them of most of their money. At the

very end of my tour, after Mort arrived, I went to Edirne with a delegation from the Congress -- Frank Lautenberg, Senator from New Jersey, DeConcini of Arizona, still in the Senate, and some others who were members of the Congressional CSCE Commission. We talked with refugees who told all kinds of horror stories. One that sticks out in my mind was mothers who told of their children being submitted to circumcision inspections in schools. We heard things that just couldn't be made up. Then we crossed the border into Bulgaria and met with Communist officials who were like something out of 1984. They told us the refugees were simple tourists, going on holiday in Turkey.

Before Mort Abramowitz's arrival, as Chargé, I needed to be in Ankara. So I depended on our Political Counselor and his people to go up to the border to report. Their reporting was fine. We told Washington what was happening, accurately; but we needed to go further. This was a major human rights disaster, a gross violation of the understandings reached in the various CSCE conferences of the 1970s and '80s. I felt it important to get top-level attention to it in Washington and to motivate Washington to respond appropriately.

Embassy Sofia was not doing that. In my view, they were reluctant to rock the boat of US-Bulgarian relations. I thought it critically important that we fill the vacuum by actively calling for US action to stop, or at least focus world attention on, what was happening. I did so through calls to Mort and others back in Washington; but it was essential that we also put this into policy recommendations from Ankara. 27 years later, it's hard to recall details; but we did send in such cables, including first-person cables, saying, as strongly as I could make them say it, that this was not just a Bulgarian-Turkish bilateral issue. It was a matter of what kind of future Europe we wanted to see and whether the various CSCE accords had any meaning. Those cables are in the archives. The problem was, I had to write them myself -- at a time when I was doing two jobs. I couldn't get them out of our Political Section.

Q: You mentioned issues with the Administrative Section. Do you wish to elaborate?

ROPE: Fundamentally, I see an administrative operation as providing service in support of the Mission. It has to make sure those services are provided as efficiently as possible within budgetary constraints; but to me it's a service operation. You're only as good as the people who work for you, and they're only at their best if their morale is good, for which they need good home situations. When you have families living overseas, in a foreign culture, dependent upon the Embassy's Admin Section for services affecting their daily lives, service needs to be provided -- to the maximum extent possible -- willingly and with a smile.

Not only I, but other members of the Mission were unhappy with that section, or some of the people in it. In our second year, when Priscilla was a CLO, she would sometimes sit in Administrative staff meetings. I didn't supervise her and couldn't act on anything I learned exclusively from her; but she inevitably related to me the negative tone and comments from those meetings: "You can't believe what so and so wants;" things like that. One particular admin FSO was also very harsh with FSN subordinates. I had to try

to get that stopped.

One issue that arose in my first few weeks involved ConGen Istanbul's yacht, if you can believe that. It had belonged to Joseph Grew. Do you know who he was?

Q: Wartime ambassador to Japan, just before the war.

ROPE: Yes; and he'd been Ambassador to Turkey, resident in Istanbul in the 1920s. He was a man of the old school from a wealthy family; and in Istanbul he'd had a yacht which he turned over to our diplomatic post there when he left. It was still there when I was in EUR/SE and was primarily used by ConGen staff for recreational or representational purposes. On my first visit to Istanbul as EUR/SE office director, I rode up the Bosphorus in it with the Consul General.

Shortly after my arrival, with the Ambassador out of the country on vacation, the yacht became an issue. In a budget-cutting exercise before I got there, our Administrative Counselor had cut out of Istanbul's budget a \$32,000 expenditure for the annual upkeep of the yacht. This meant it would have to be disposed of, and ConGen Istanbul was understandably unhappy about it. I tried to persuade the Counselor to reinstate the funding, which was not a lot, especially because it covered both maintenance and the cost of yacht personnel. It was a unique benefit for our people in Istanbul and good for post morale; but the Counselor wouldn't budge. Then John McGaffin came to me and said that one of his superiors from headquarters had learned of this while on a visit to Istanbul and had some end-of-fiscal-year money in his CIA budget that could be transferred to State to cover the shortfall -- with no strings attached. I said "let's do it." John cabled Washington, and the transfer was set in motion.

The Administrative Counselor was away at the time; but on learning of it on return, the Counselor was incensed. It was a classic example of "waste fraud, and mismanagement," the Counselor said. I responded that, in my experience, there is no great equalizer on high who decides judiciously exactly how much money should go to one budget pot or another. If you have access to some money and have a good use for it, I said, you should take it. This was free money, in effect, from another agency, that we could legally accept. The Counselor was adamant, to the point that we had to take it to the Ambassador when he returned. We did, and he didn't disagree with me; but he deferred a decision, saying he'd raise it while on consultations in Washington a week or so later.

That essentially ended it; because as soon as any sign of controversy appeared, John's backer at Langley got cold feet. The offer was withdrawn, and ConGen Istanbul lost the yacht. They did find a way to sell it to a group of Americans in Istanbul that would preserve at least some access to the boat for ConGen staff members; but what I learned from this early episode was that the Counselor and I -- whom I'd known previously when we both served in Hong Kong and had always liked -- had very different priorities regarding matters important to post morale.

Another issue involved a balcony for one of our officers, John Hamilton, who had two

young children. His apartment had a balcony, and balconies of apartments in Ankara were low -- lower than balconies we have in the US. John wanted some something -- netting or wire -- installed to protect his children, particularly the toddler, from falling off. The GSO turned him down, saying he and his wife should keep their children off the balcony. When I looked into this at John's request, GSO said Department regulations require only that balconies in rental apartments be, "to code," and in this case that meant local code which allowed for lower balconies than in the US. I wouldn't accept that. We'd already had a balcony accident and death in Istanbul. I prevailed, and John got a wire mesh barrier installed -- but grudgingly.

Q: DCM's have to deal with issues large and small.

ROPE: Yes; but for me the safety of personnel and their dependents is no small beer.

Q: Why don't we break it off here.

Q: Today is 23 August 2016. We are returning to our conversation with Bill Rope. Bill, we had already started on your assignment as DCM in Ankara. We haven't covered your access to the Ambassador. Do you have any thoughts as to how he saw your role and how did he let you play that?

ROPE: How he saw my role?

Q: Yes.

ROPE: Let me talk about Robert Strausz-Hupé. He was among the most remarkable men I've ever met. He'd come to the US as young man and first worked as a runner in a stock brokerage house. From there he'd gone all the way to a PhD in geopolitics. He'd already written his first book, by the time I was born. He was as eminent a conservative political scientist as could be found and the darling of people like John Lehman and the group now called neocons. Some of them -- Harvey Sicherman was one -- had studied under him at Penn, where he established an institute and co-founded Orbis Magazine. By the time I was his DCM, he was in his fifth embassy, including two in Europe, Embassy Stockholm and USNATO. Other than David Bruce, I don't know of any political ambassador in modern times with a record like that.

He had past ties to the President and served in Ankara throughout all 8 years of the Reagan Administration. He did well on the diplomatic party circuit, not in the hail-fellow-well-met sense but as a person respected by host country officials and individuals as well as fellow diplomats. He was the dean of the Diplomatic Corps at least part of the time I was there. Within the Embassy, people generally looked up to him as a wise and unfailingly polite man, even if he wasn't highly accessible to the average lower-level subordinate.

He even had a mission to China in his background that he never mentioned to me and that I only learned of after we'd worked together in Ankara. Have I mentioned this before?

Q: No.

ROPE: In the immediate post-war period, he worked in the Department of Defense under James Forrestal. The Chinese civil war was raging, and the Marshall mission was under way. Forrestal sent him out to China to assess the situation and give Forrestal an independent view. He went out to Nanjing, where he met Marshall, Madame Chiang, the Generalissimo, and various Chinese Communists, including Ye Jianying who later dealt with Kissinger in 1971 and enunciated that September 30 proposal that was the basis of our linkage in the August 17 Communiqué. When I learned of all this, years later, I found it extraordinary that in four years of working with him, two from Washington and two in Ankara, Ambassador Strausz-Hupé never mentioned this to me.

I think it was because, given the politics of the China question and its stickiness for Republicans, he didn't want to call attention to it. That would be all the more true if, as I suspect, he approved of Nixon's opening to China and our recognition of the PRC. Once, when I was visiting from Washington and staying at the residence along with another guest, Faith Whittlesey, then US Ambassador to Switzerland, Taiwan came up at breakfast. I mentioned having been involved with it as head of the China Desk. Strausz-Hupé said he made it a habit "never to get caught in the middle of the Taiwan Strait."

On the Soviet Union, he was something of an arch conservative. He was most concerned about the USSR's nuclear weaponry, particularly what he called the Soviets' "dirty bombs." He viewed the Bosphorus as the most important piece of real estate in the world. While there were differences of shading, I looked at the Soviets and Turkey's strategic importance in much the same way, and I cannot remember that we ever disagreed on matters of policy or strategy in our two years together. To be sure, we at times disagreed on tactics or read instructions from Washington or elsewhere differently but we were mostly on the same wavelength. It was important to him that I know my place. He'd made those comments back in Washington about "no alter ego." In point of fact, we got on very well; and on matters important to me I generally got my way. So long as I didn't try to upstage him, or be perceived by him as doing so, we got along fine.

In discussions, he was open-minded; and in small-group meetings it was perfectly possible to disagree or argue with him -- politely. In large Country Team meetings, one had to be diplomatic, and perhaps save some comments for afterwards; but the same was still true. At times we would laugh together like pals. Fundamentally, he had confidence in me, and I liked him. I meant it when I said he reminded me of an uncle who was very important to me. When he left Ankara, and we parted at plane-side, he kissed me good bye.

He knew how to pace himself. He'd come into the Embassy in the morning after he'd done a lot of reading, at a reasonable hour like 9:30 or 10:00. He would go home for lunch and might play tennis after lunch, often with Frank Scotton. Then he might take a nap and come back around 4:00. We'd finish off the day, and he'd go off to cocktail or dinner parties. He had good contacts in Istanbul with politicians and business leaders, all

kinds of people in Turkish society.

I think he was over 100 when he died. At 85, early in the first Bush Administration he was still hoping to get another Embassy; and he only wanted one that would challenge him. I helped him draft cables to the political people in the White House handling appointments. They expressed his desire for a country important to US interests, like Spain, perhaps, or one facing important developmental challenges, like Indonesia. Once, when he was hearing nothing back and was a bit discouraged, I told him I thought he could still get the Vatican. He was a practicing Catholic and I thought that might appeal; but he said no. I said, "You can write your memoirs." He said no.

There were times when he got angry or cross with me. Generally it would be when I received praise, or when I had to speak up in negotiations with the Turks. We dealt with some serious arms control issues, and at times I understood them better than he. The big one was CDE, where we needed to bring the Turks along in support of certain compromises. It was complicated, and the Turkey part of it was particularly tricky. I had to inject myself at times. Once, heading to the Foreign Ministry in his car, he told me in no uncertain terms to keep my mouth shut. John Hamilton, our note-taker sitting between us, remembers that to this day. To make matters worse, at the very end of one important CDE negotiation, he got a cable from Shultz complementing him and his staff for their work and singling me out for particular praise. That was the last thing one wanted with Robert Strausz-Hupé.

One example of how we could work together involved our efforts and those of EUR/SE in Washington to get the White House to invite President Evren for a state visit -- something the Turks very much wanted. That was potentially controversial, because Evren had been the leader of the 1980 coup; but by this time Turkey was back to full democracy. We learned from my successor in EUR/SE that all the paper work recommending the visit had been sent over from State; but word had come back informally that Mrs. Reagan had been offended by the Turks in some way and was the main obstacle to having the visit. Strausz-Hupé said to me, "I'm going to send a cable on this to Shultz." I said, "You can but I don't think it will do any good. Who do you know at the White House?" He said, "I know Colin Powell." I said, "I don't think that will help either." He said, "I know Howard Baker" I said, "that will work."

I went right into my office and drafted a back-channel message from the Ambassador to Baker. It stressed how far Turkey had come in 9 years, and Özal's drive to strengthen capitalism in Turkey, promoting the free market, moving away from state enterprises, etc. -- things I knew would appeal to the Reagan White House. I wrote this up and brought it to Strausz-Hupé who sent it off. Shortly after that, the invitation was forthcoming. That's the way he and I worked together and indicative of the kind of guy he was.

Q: We were talking earlier about familiarizing yourself with the country, and you were saying you didn't quite have an opportunity to travel a lot. Did you encourage your officers to travel?

ROPE: I may have overstated my lack of travel. I did get in a substantial amount of personal travel in western and central Anatolia and to the south along the Mediterranean coast and the north up to the Black Sea. I just didn't get in the kind of official travel where you meet local officials and people of importance; and my lack of professional competence in Turkish cut me off from conversations with non-English, non-French speaking Turks.

On the question of whether I encouraged others to get out in the field, I didn't have to. The Political Section did it naturally, and we had adequate travel funds for that. One FSO in that section, Robert Finn, really knew Turkey well and was a very sound reporting officer. Our Economic Counselor, Clay Nettles loved to travel and got his subordinates out, too. He had a good section, with excellent people working for him. Their reporting was good. Clay had been just about everywhere in Turkey and knew a lot of people. On the political military side, I don't remember as much. They had a lot of work in Ankara, but they did get out.

We had pretty good coverage in our consular districts. As I've mentioned, Beau Nalle in Izmir was knowledgeable and well-connected. His replacement, Al Williams, did a good job of getting around the consular district. Tom Carolan was an outstanding Consul General who had good rapport with lots of people in Istanbul. I had occasional problems with some of Istanbul's analytical reporting but not with Tom's. It was with a subordinate of his who, I thought, was neither an accurate nor responsible reporter and whose conduct wasn't great either. Our Consul in Adana, Mary Gin Kennedy, who'd worked for me in S/S-O, was outstanding. She traveled as far south as the Syrian border and out into eastern Turkey. She had a good junior officer named Sheldon Rappaport, who'd also worked with us in S/S-O. They had excellent relations with the commander at Incirlik.

Q: Now with all the U.S. troops and facilities in Turkey there must have been a fairly substantial Pol-Mil section. Who was the head of it at that time?

ROPE: When I got there, it was Mort Dworken. I'd known him to some degree when I was head of EUR/SE. He'd served in Greece at one point. We got along well and are friends to this day. The same goes for John Hamilton whom I'd known a little bit when we were both in EUR. Another good officer was Jim Davis. I was particularly reliant on John and Jim when Mort's successor came in without a lot of experience in pol-mil issues or background on Turkey.

They were a small section. In addition to work on arms control issues, they dealt with a lot of nitty gritty matters involving US bases and relations with the Turkish military. They also had to prepare for annual US-Turkish talks headed up on our side by Richard Perle. I have to confess that I cannot recall many details today. I did lead the US side of a bilateral US-Turkish Commission that met monthly to discuss issues of interest under the DECA, and Mort and his staff had to prep me up for that. They did a good job, and as I recall those meetings ran smoothly, with pleasant lunches with our Turkish counterparts afterwards. One last thing -- Mort's section was skilled at making arrangements for, and handling, Congressional and other visiting delegations, of which we had a lot. John

Hamilton was especially good at it. Just as an aside, one day John came back from a CODEL (congressional delegation) meeting with Özal for which he'd been a note-taker. At one point, Özal got a phone call. He picked it up and said, "Yalnią." John, a Turkish language speaker, knew that meant "wrong number."

Q: So a large embassy like Ankara with a major political-military relationship does draw Congressional attention. Did you have a steady series of CODELs?

ROPE: Yes. We had Congressional delegations regularly. If you could name a major figure in Congress during that time, he or she might well have shown up in Turkey. Even Tony Coelho, of "Armenian Genocide" fame, once paid us an under-the-radar visit. The disastrous Yerevan earthquake in 1988 brought him and a delegation to Armenia, including Deputy Whip David Bonior, Bob Torricelli and others. The last place Coelho wanted to visit was Turkey; but a bad snowstorm blanketing eastern Anatolia and Armenia forced their Air Force plane to land and overnight in Ankara. They quietly checked into a hotel and contacted the Ambassador. Sworn to secrecy, he and I had dinner with them at a restaurant. It had little to do with Turkey, but at my end of the table it was a good source of insider views on the recently concluded US elections.

On the Senate side, Dole came, along with Grassley of Iowa and others whom I don't now remember. Dole was somewhat bitter about his loss to George Bush in the Republican primaries.

Robert Byrd, then Senate Majority Leader, led a memorable delegation to Ankara. He was a big supporter of Turkey, and after leading a delegation to a NATO parliamentarians meeting he brought the entire delegation with him -- SFRC Chairman Pell, Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn, Intelligence Committee Chairman David Boren, and several others. Pell, second in the delegation for protocol purposes, was a big supporter of Greece who confided to me in the car riding in from the airport that being in this delegation made him uncomfortable. At one point, he referred to Turkey as a dictatorship; and when I told him that the Turks had restored democracy he said "don't clutter my mind with petty details."

He was particularly uncomfortable when, during a call on President Evren, Byrd let loose a stem-winder about the importance of US-Turkish relations, since Truman Doctrine days, and the wonder that he said was modern Turkey. His peroration was something like, "As Sheba said to Solomon, 'The half hath not yet been told!'" In the course of this, Byrd declared that so long as he was Majority Leader, an "Armenian Genocide" resolution would never pass the US Senate. Pell was very disturbed by this and asked the aide accompanying him, in my presence, how could they explain this to the "Greek lobby" -- his words, not mine.

We had lots of others. Their names escape me now except for that of Dick Durbin, then an impressive young congressman, who came through. Oh yes, and we had a CODEL led by "Senator" Claude Pepper. I had a wonderful time accompanying him around Ankara and perhaps elsewhere -- I can't quite remember. He was a story-teller!

While I don't remember it happening during the Byrd delegation visit, one feature of many CODELs and of other visits by US officials, was Foreign Ministry complaints about the "insufficient" level of US aid to Turkey; and it didn't stop there. The general line was that the relationship was unequal, i.e. that Turkey contributed more to it than did the US. We've talked mostly about management of the Embassy, but in my time in Turkey I went to innumerable banquets or luncheons, either as Chargé or as the ranking Embassy official, at which I would have to give the US toast in response to that of the Turkish host, usually a Foreign Ministry official. Invariably it would be along the lines I described to you when we were discussing my time in EUR/SE. Turk: "you're not giving us enough;" me: "we're proud of our support all the way back to Truman and the USS Missouri steaming up to the Bosphorus."

Özal, of course, was above that. He was a notably modest and gentle man with a very soft way of pitching to an audience, to which visitors invariably responded well. He'd make clear, indirectly, that Turkey needed aid but would say what Turkey really wanted was "Trade, not aid."

Q: Now Turkey is in the news these days, 2016 for its political scene. At the time you were there, was there growing Islamic fundamentalism?

ROPE: There was some. I've mentioned that Erdogan's people were beginning to emerge, though I never remember meeting him. People were seeing more hijabs, and more observant Muslims. Women were obviously the most noticeable. There were emerging signs of this at Ankara University; but it was nowhere close to being a major political movement.

There was the Kurdish issue in the East, but it, too, wasn't anything like it has been in the last two decades. It had only started up in the mid-80's and wasn't yet a serious problem - though I've noted Özal's interest in improving conditions in eastern Anatolia. I'm sure he didn't approve of the government's refusal to allow the use of the Kurdish language in courts out in the east, where the majority of Kurds lived, or various forms of discrimination against Kurds; and he did do away with at least the worst of those things a few years after my departure. They existed during my time, however; and when lining up visits to the Parliament by delegations from Washington we generally made sure Kurdish parliamentarians were among the people they met.

On one occasion when I was Chargé, State's annual human rights report came out. We had provided the original draft, and it told things as they were with regard to torture and to the treatment of the Kurds. It was the latter that most piqued the Turks; and the number two in the Foreign Ministry called me in to protest. When he came to the part where we said Kurds weren't allowed to use their own language in schools, courts and so on, he told me there is no Kurdish language. So-called Kurdish, he said with a straight face, was just a dialect of Turkish.

I had John Hamilton as my note-taker. If John is anything he's a guy with a quick sense

of humor and great appreciation of the ironic. I couldn't look at him; in fact I couldn't even look directly at the Deputy Foreign Minister, who was quite worked up. I just sort of looked down, because I feared that if I looked at him, or John, I would crack up. What he was saying was that ridiculous! I heard him out but told him that this was an annual report mandated by Congress; and our job was to report what we see.

Q: Shifting gears here, you mentioned a problem with FBO. What was that about.

ROPE: It came up early in my tenure. This was not an admin problem per se. We had an FBO representative who operated independently of the Administrative Counselor. Around the time I got to Ankara, a number of Embassy personnel were moving into brand new apartments that had been built for the Embassy and accepted by the FBO representative, who was Turkish. I don't know whether that had anything to do with the problems we found, but I think it may have. In any case, Frank Scotton came to me to complain about his new apartment. There was a lot of shoddy workmanship – cracked onyx tiles in the kitchen, poorly fitted moldings, badly designed bathrooms with toilets right up against walls so that a tall or large person would have trouble using them comfortably. The absolute topper, though, which I couldn't believe until I made an inspection and saw it, was hot water connected to a toilet.

Even today, telling you this, I can't believe that was true, but it was, and the buildings had been accepted. Once FBO accepts a building, it's far harder to rectify shoddy construction like that. Repairs were made, but things like the cracked tiles remained. I wrote a memo about it to FBO, and when I was back in DC on R&R in the summer of '88, I personally went to FBO's headquarters in Rosslyn to complain. The man was not replaced, but at least he knew he was being watched closely for the duration of his stay.

Q: Now after the 1988 elections, we have a new President, and a new Secretary of State, James Baker comes to Ankara on February 14, 1989. How does the Embassy set itself up, work back and forth with Washington to set up the itinerary and so on? Can you give us some feel for what the Secretary's visit looks like from the Embassy point of view?

ROPE: It wasn't at all like a normal Secretary's visit. It was a short-notice, whirlwind thing that lasted just hours. I can't recall if we even set up his meetings. We were adept at organizing motorcades, but even that was different. Baker rode in the lead car with the Ambassador, and I was in a van with Policy Planning chief Dennis Ross, Margaret Tutwiler, Baker's press spokesperson, Counselor Bob Zoellick, and maybe a couple of others. It was tight. I think, but am not sure, that Mort Dworkin rode with some others in the party. I don't recall that there were any of the usual elements that accompany a Secretary, like traveling press corps, but I think there were some. Maybe it was they with whom Mort rode. I have a vague memory of him recounting his exchanges with reporters during the course of the visit. It was a small party. As I learned when I became Principal DAS in PM, Baker kept people at a distance. Jumping ahead to PM, in 3 years as a Principal DAS who was often Acting Assistant Secretary, I spent less time with Baker than I did as an office director with Shultz and Haig.

Q: Now Ambassador Strausz-Hupé departs shortly thereafter in May of '89. Did he go on to another assignment?

ROPE: As I've noted, he certainly wanted to. All the pictures on the piano at his residence changed from Reagan and Strausz-Hupé to Bush and Strausz-Hupé. Turned out he had lots of Bush photos, and they all came out. This did not forestall the inevitable cable from the White House instructing him to resign and asking if he wanted to express a desire for another posting. He didn't get another assignment, but I heard from a friend -- I think Woody Goldberg -- that even after his departure from Ankara he continued to lobby for a new Embassy.

Q: OK, coming into '89 now, Strausz-Hupé leaves. Did you know at that time that Abramowitz was coming in?

ROPE: I found it out when I had to deliver our Agrément request. I can't recall with certainty, but I think Ambassador Strausz-Hupé was still there and I had to break the news to him; but perhaps that's not right. In any case, I knew Mort, who was a China guy, both by reputation and from some experience early in the Reagan Administration, when he visited Mike Armacost's office in EAP and we talked about the FX issue.

That made it easy for me to tell the Turkish Chief of Protocol -- whom I knew well and on whom I called to deliver the Agrément request and a brief Mort bio -- what an outstanding choice he was. I was very enthusiastic, and I'm sure it showed.

Q: He presents his credentials on August 1. So, you are Chargé from May 18, when Strausz-Hupé leaves, to the new ambassador's presentation of credentials I suppose. What went on during that, I think you called it an interregnum.

ROPE: To be honest, I don't remember a lot other than what I've related already about the Bulgarian Turk issue, which went on for quite some time. By the time I became Chargé ad interim, I'd served in as acting chief of mission enough times that it was not a big change for me. I continued to run the Mission as I had and played the role of leader as appropriate, presiding over Mission staff meetings and Country Team meetings, as I had often done in Strausz-Hupé's absence. I didn't move into the Ambassadorial office but did use the Ambassador's Cadillac instead of my armored Chevy. I think, though, that I didn't use a new one we received at that time -- left it for Mort to inaugurate.

I was in touch with Mort frequently, sometimes on important policy matters like prodding Washington to act on the Bulgarian front, sometimes answering questions about the Mission or US-Turkish matters, and sometimes discussing what were literally housekeeping arrangements, like the transfers of my cook and butler to his residence on our departure.

The one -- to me not insignificant -- event that I recall with no fondness involved the defection of a Soviet Mig-29 pilot, with his aircraft, to Turkey. This happened on a weekend, when it was hard to raise people in the Foreign Ministry or in Washington.

There was no question that the Turks would give the plane -- not the pilot -- back to the USSR; but I thought it imperative that, before doing so, our Turkish ally grant US experts access to the plane. I don't remember the details, but I do remember to this day that it was Nuzhet Kandemir, then number three in the Turkish Foreign Ministry, who blocked that and ensured that I didn't get access to anyone above his level until the plane had been -- quickly -- returned to Soviet hands.

I've never forgotten that. Kandemir had been Turkish Ambassador to Iraq and seemed quite favorable to the Iraqi government. He was one of the Foreign Ministry's best at explaining to Strausz-Hupé and/or me why the Turks -- with so many hostile or potentially hostile countries on their borders -- couldn't do this or that thing the US wanted Turkey to do. He was equally good at criticizing US behavior. I didn't see a great change in him even when, while I was PDAS in PM, he was Turkey's Ambassador here in Washington. In any case, while I understood that Turkey is always sensitive to Russian power to the north, especially in those days when it was still the Cold War, I nevertheless thought it essential that we have a look at that plane and gain whatever intelligence could be obtained from it; and this would have been done secretly. The Soviets would have assumed it in any case.

I count it as a personal failure that I was unable to press enough buttons quickly and firmly enough to get that done. It was a reminder that, notwithstanding all we do to guarantee their security, the Turks can't always be counted on -- though Özal came through big time in the Gulf War. I've never forgiven Kandemir.

Q: You had just a bit of time with Ambassador Abramowitz. What was he like as a manager?

ROPE: Mort is a very nice guy, with a relaxed leadership style. I asked him shortly after he arrived how he wanted us, his staff, to address him. He said, "Within the Embassy it should be 'Mort.' In front of others, 'Mr. Ambassador.'" He was that kind of a leader, quite different from his predecessor. One could never have imagined anyone calling Ambassador Strausz-Hupé "Robert." Mort is very sharp, and he had a lot of experience in high positions. Before presentation of credentials, he just read in, observed things, got around to meet people informally and did the usual kind of things one does quietly before becoming official.

I had a great relationship with him and was very happy. I didn't stay long after he presented credentials, but I remember we had one CODEL for which he did a good job as a briefer. He was particularly anxious to help them understand the Cyprus issue. He knew there had been problems between me and the Political Counselor, and he did what he could to ensure that his relations with the individual got off on a good footing. He was inclined to live with what you have, go with what you've got, and leave it at that. Of course, he was bringing in Marc Grossman to replace me, and Marc is a terrific manager, a super-sharp guy, and a terrific motivator. He followed me in two successive assignments before going far beyond any positions I ever held.

Mort had a quick sense of humor and was lively and activist by nature. He's a very direct and candid guy who can get to the heart of things -- or cut through BS -- quickly and do it without being offensive. He comes across as your friend. I think he was there for our Fourth of July reception, for which I had to be the official host but at which I could introduce him to lots of people. It was easy to do. He knew what we had to do protocol-wise and didn't mind in the least that I had to be out front as our official representative. He's just a very fine person.

Q: Now I know there's a story about when you went into Bulgaria in the last days of your tour.

ROPE: We talked earlier about what the Bulgarians were doing to their Turkish minority. In my final days, after Mort presented credentials, a Congressional CSCE delegation came through. I escorted them up to the border in Thrace and on into Bulgaria. It was a very emotional time for me. Priscilla and the family left in our car for Izmir and a ferry to Italy in the morning; and the parting between the family and our servants was tearful. That afternoon, as I remember it, the delegation and I flew to Edirne, formerly Adrianople, in western Thrace. We overnighted at a very fine, but simple, old caravansary. Edirne is home to one of the most perfect of the great architect Sinan's mosques, and I went there on my own at night. It brought home to me how much I'd come to love Turkey and the Turks and how sad I was to be leaving. I cried.

The next morning we went to what I think was an International Red Cross or Red Crescent refugee camp and interviewed inhabitants at random. Some of them told us in lurid detail their treatment in Bulgaria. We then went in a bus across the border into Bulgaria for a meeting with Bulgarian officials led by a vice minister or maybe a vice premier. It was the only time in my life that I ever saw classic 1984-like double-think in action. Even in Mao's China I never saw what we experienced. The vice minister or vice premier said the people we'd just seen were not refugees. They were just tourists on holiday who would be returning when their Turkish adventures were over. He was patronizing and repulsive. He did grant the Senators' request that we be allowed to meet with Bulgarian Turks who were preparing to go to Turkey; but only on the condition that we first meet some people who had gone to Turkey and chosen to return.

We were then escorted to a railroad station where, on a platform, we saw a line of baggage said to contain the bags of people who had returned -- not long, maybe ten to fifteen feet. There were no people with the bags. Then, somewhere near the station, we were taken to meet two people, separately. The first was a wizened old man with bloodshot eyes who didn't really look at us and spoke in a low mumble. I don't recall the language he was using, but if it had been Turkish I would have noticed that. So I'm pretty sure it was Bulgarian. Our government-provided interpreter said he said he'd gone to Turkey but didn't like it, and he'd come back. He was a sorry-looking soul who looked beaten down.

After this we moved on to speak with a younger, robust woman, perhaps in her early 40's. She addressed us directly and forcefully in Bulgarian, saying Turkey was a bad country

and she'd made a big mistake by going there. She was glad to be back in Bulgaria.

That was it. Those were the "people" who had come back from their "tourist trips." All of this -- and everything else we did -- was filmed by a Bulgarian TV crew. As we drove away, heading for a spot about 15 minutes away where we would meet Bulgarian Turks seeking to go to Turkey, I looked out the bus window and saw that woman being interviewed on camera. She was shaking her fist. I thought to myself, "That's what will be seen on Sofia TV tonight."

Then we were taken to a place along a roadside where refugees were stretched out as far as we could see. Judging by the depth of their ranks, the density of people, and the distance over which their lines extended, I estimated there were perhaps 10,000 people who, we were told, had been waiting to go to Turkey for three days. They weren't going to get into Turkey because of something Özal had just announced, though they probably didn't know it. They had all their household possessions, tables and chairs and furniture, all kinds of stuff piled up on trucks and carts, waiting for their chance to go across the border.

Q: What had Özal said?

ROPE: He'd announced that the number of refugees in Turkey had reached 300,000, and Turkey was unable to take any more. Mind you, these refugees weren't just sitting in that camp. Many had already been resettled, in the city of Bursa and a few other places. If they had relatives in Turkey, they were being matched up with relatives. The Turkish government was doing as much as it could, or at least as much as it felt it could, to absorb them; but Turkey is not today a wealthy country. In any case, Özal said it had to stop. They had to seal the border. None of the people we were looking at would reach their destination, and I doubted they even knew it. They were a pathetic looking lot in a bad situation. I suppose they had food and water with them, but there were no facilities for them in sight; just the road and roadside fields.

The delegation went to speak to some of them through Bulgarian interpreters. I walked away from them and went up to some refugees by myself, saying "hello" in Turkish. They waved me away and said "çok zor, çok zor," which in English means "very hard, very hard." I went back and rejoined the delegation who weren't very satisfied with their conversations through Bulgarian interpreters. We were driven back to the border.

It was all pretty outrageous. As I mentioned, we had TV cameras on us all day, and as we were driving away a TV camera man came running beside the bus sticking his camera up at my window. I had my chin on my fist looking out, and without much thought I just flipped up my middle finger. This ultimately appeared as a fuzzy picture in a Bulgarian magazine with a caption saying "Who is the foreign diplomat insulting our country?" That became a subject of Seventh Floor attention back in Washington and ended up in a Washington Post column by Dale Van Atta.

Q: Tell us about that.

ROPE: After I returned to the Department, working in PM, I had a phone conversation with Marc Grossman back in Ankara. At the end, he asked me if I'd "flipped the bird" to anyone "over there in Bulgaria." I said "Uh oh." Then David Ransom, EUR/SE Director, told me Van Atta was aware of the incident and was asking people on the Hill about it. A day or two later, I returned from lunch and found a phone message that "Dale Van Atta" had called. I called Richard Boucher, then Department spokesperson, and told him, saying that I thought I had to tell Van Atta I'd done it. Richard agreed and said, "we'll back you up."

Before I could call Van Atta, a Congressional staffer with whom I'd been sitting when I gestured to the cameraman, called me and told me that Van Atta knew what had happened and had my name. If I denied doing it, he'd publish my name; if I didn't, my name would stay out of it. I told the staffer I'd already decided to own up, and I did. I called Van Atta and told him the whole story. The result was a column focused not on the gesture but on what the Bulgarians had been doing to their Turkish minority. It led off with something like "What could make this seasoned diplomat with over 20 years' experience do that?" and then it explained. The column appeared in the Post in September or October 1989.

Around this time, I went up to Eagleburger's office to say hello for the first time since my return, I ran into Saul Polansky, our Ambassador to Bulgaria, outside Eagle's office. He said to me in a low, grave voice "You've caused me a lot of trouble." I said, "I know. I never should have done that. I'm very sorry." He said, "You say you are, but I know you're not." Then I went in to see Eagle. I told him I'd just seen Polansky, who was mad at me. "For what?" he asked. "I gave the finger to a TV camera in Bulgaria," I said. He banged his desk and said, "That's what you always should do in Bulgaria!" I got kidded about this for a while. Someone even mentioned in one of the Secretary's staff meetings that someone or other should be given the "Bulgarian salute."

Q: In wrapping up Ankara here, how did you go about coming up with your next job?

ROPE: I didn't. It came to me, though I had begun to put feelers out. My primary concern was avoiding having to send Kate away for schooling. Priscilla and I weren't satisfied with the education she was getting at the DOD school in Ankara, and in the fall she had applied to prep schools. She was accepted at Milton and Andover and would have gone to Andover had we stayed in Ankara for the last year of what was to be a three-year tour.

Our preference, though, was to return to Washington, where she could go back to NCS to finish her last two years of high school. Once the new administration was in place, I wrote letters to Eagleburger, Reggie Bartholomew and others I knew in positions to be helpful saying I would like to come back and would be interested in a deputy assistant secretary position in the Department. I probably mentioned bureaus that I would be interested in serving. I got friendly responses from them but don't know if they did anything. Then Dick Clarke called me. You know Richard Clarke? He and I had been together in PM during my brief stint under Reggie after I left the Ops Center in 1980.

Dick told me he was going to be Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs and wanted me to be his principal deputy. This was totally out of the blue, but I'd had those four months of schooling under Reggie in 1980, had served in the military for four years, and had worked on a variety of global and pol-mil issues; so I thought I could do it. I promised to think about it. Then Dick Solomon called. He was going to be Assistant Secretary in EAP, a job I'd hoped he'd get back in '82 instead of Paul Wolfowitz. He, too, offered me a job as a Deputy Assistant Secretary overseeing China work. I would not be his PDAS, however. Desaix Anderson, my former fellow student in Taichung and later fellow office director in EA, would have that job, with responsibility for Japan and Korea. I agreed to think about it.

I would love to have gone back to EA and have been forever grateful to Dick for offering me the opportunity. After thinking it over, though, I decided to go to PM. Though he was not always the most diplomatic guy in the world, I liked Dick Clarke. He was a career civil servant. Someone later told me I was the only FSO he'd ever known whom he didn't hate. I doubt that, though he was a civil servant and very much favored civil servants. He outlined a broad agenda of arms control work that we'd be doing. I told Dick Solomon, and have told him a couple of times since, that I would never forget his offer to come back to EA, but I was going to go to PM. I did let him know that if I could be the PDAS in EAP I'd have accepted; but that wasn't in the cards. Later, when Tiananmen happened, I wasn't sorry I'd opted for PM.

I had to wait a bit, while Dick gained the agreement of Baker and Under Secretary for Political Affairs Bob Kimmitt, but it all went through. I'd never known Kimmitt, but when I first met him he was effusive about my work on China.

So that's how I got my next job and why Kate never went to Andover.

After the Bulgaria trip, I had only a day or two more in Ankara before Mort drove me to the airport and I flew to Istanbul for a night with Tom Carolan and some friends there before flying on to Milan. Priscilla, with the children, had driven our Renault to Izmir and traveled to Venice by ferry, driving on from there to pick me up. We went up into Switzerland and on through France to Antwerp, where we dropped the car off for shipment home. My old friend and PRC/M colleague Shelly Krebs was by then Consul General there. After a stop in Brussels, where I had consultations, we flew home.

Q: Why don't we take a break at this point and we can talk about PM next time around.

ROPE: Okay.

Q: It is October 25, and we are returning to our conversation with Bill Rope. Bill, we are going to talk about your assignment as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in PM. You were the Office Director of PM/ISP earlier, so this bureau is not unfamiliar to you.

ROPE: Yes. I've often said that in four months under Reggie Bartholomew -- I count it as four months because in November and December of 1980 I was largely recovering from my second back surgery, and Reg was gone by January -- I learned more about

bureaucratics, more intensively, than in any comparable time in my career. Watching Reggie, working with Reggie, getting things done for Reggie, taught me a lot and was helpful to me in every job I held thereafter.

The second time around, my longest time in any job, I was involved, in one way or another, in all kinds of issues, from China issues, to a coup in the Philippines, to a wide variety of very technical but highly important weapons and weapons-related issues, to nuclear proliferation, the Gulf War, base negotiations, and even a new initiative starting up to address the problem of land mines left in warzones that were killing or maiming farmers and children; and there was a lot more.

It was interesting and absorbing; but much of the time I was managing experts on whose judgments I had to rely, without as much ability to make personal input as I'd had before. We were also working in a State Department that was different from any I'd experienced before -- in which a strong, smart, but remote Secretary, James Baker, operated from on high through an immediate circle of equally strong and smart subordinates, notably Counselor Bob Zoellick, Policy Planning chief Dennis Ross and Under Secretary for Political Affairs Bob Kimmitt. It was a structure that granted career subordinates below their level far less access than was the case under previous Secretaries. Finally, I was working for an extremely smart but at times abrasive and arrogant hard charger, Dick Clarke whom I liked but who wasn't an easy guy to keep up with or serve. I wasn't always comfortable in that position.

Q: Yes. In part you're making a broader point about the difference between a regional bureau and a functional one where instead of dealing with a discrete set of countries and issues, even if they fit within a larger or even global context, you're dealing with a whole lot of issues, world-wide, that require many different types of expertise and people. And PM is just about at the top of the list when it comes to breadth and technical levels.

ROPE: Right; but personally what I'm alluding to is that, even though I was one of the highest ranking FSOs in the Department and was much of the time working on important policy and operational issues, I was more of a helper, facilitator and implementer than an initiator. That's perhaps inevitable when one's number one job is to help a leader, in my case Dick Clarke, be successful, by ensuring that the organization he leads runs well. As a manager, I felt more than up to that task; and on many issues we dealt with I felt competent. At times, though, I felt less than fully adequate and just hung in there.

Q: Also, in a functional bureau sometimes you feel like you're running behind the curve because regional bureaus, particularly the strong ones like EUR, NEA and EAP, may get the lion's share of the action and you can even be cut out.

ROPE: Yes, though we were pretty good at cutting in. As I mentioned earlier, in my brief PM stint in 1980, offices often fought one another for turf and then went out to fight the regional bureaus for turf. Functional bureaus have to assert themselves in a way geographic bureaus don't. On North Korea, for example, EAP clearly resisted PM's efforts -- largely mine -- to have a role in deciding how to deal with North Korean nuclear

proliferation in the early '90s. It considered itself the lead bureau on the matter and resented our efforts to have an equal voice. From our perspective, however, this was a major proliferation issue, with arms control aspects, and we refused to be excluded.

Q: So let's come to the beginning, when you were deciding to take the job. What did you know about what areas, or portfolio, you'd have to cover.

ROPE: I asked Dick what I'd have in our second or third conversation while I was still Ankara. He said, "All of it. You'll be number two and involved in everything." That was it. As I looked this morning at my first efficiency report, I see my duties were listed as the overall management of the Bureau and serving as Acting Assistant Secretary whenever Dick wasn't present. It noted, however, that I would oversee all of Bureau activities regarding East Asia and Southern Europe. Throughout my time in PM, incidentally, I attended and participated actively in Dick Solomon's weekly small-group meeting with counterparts in DOD, the NSC and CIA.

So I did carve out some specific areas. For the rest of it, I was, as I've indicated, involved at one time or other in almost everything we did. Certainly I was the chief manager, as I'd been in Ankara. The difference, however, was that Dick Clarke wasn't in his eighties. He was in his prime, and a rough and tumble kind of leader who wasn't easy to keep up with.

Q: Let's talk about the front office of PM bureau at the time. You were PDAS. There were three other deputy assistant secretaries, Sinclair Martell, Elizabeth Verville and Robert Walpole.

ROPE: Right.

Q: What were each of those assigned and how did the group work together?

ROPE: Bob Walpole was an arms control specialist who'd worked for Dick in INR when Dick was PDAS there under Mort Abramowitz. I think he was on loan from the CIA. Certainly he had lot of contacts in the intelligence community. He was a bit young to be a DAS, probably a good thing because Dick really ran the show, as he did with almost everything. Bob had a lot going on in the areas of strategic nuclear weaponry and conventional forces, primarily in the European, East-West, arena.

Liz Verville was our proliferation DAS, but this took her, too, into arms control. Negotiations leading to a major international agreement, the Chemical Weapons Convention, were just getting started. Dick was a driving force within the US government on that, and Liz was his key implementer. She also oversaw officers working quietly in sensitive areas like biological weapons. We had been good friends for years, dating to my time on the China desk, when she was the East Asia Legal Advisor in L. She ensured that the positions we took in Taiwan Arms Communiqué negotiations withstood legal scrutiny; and she had that key role in dealing with the Hukuang issue.

Sandy Martell was a political appointee, not a career FSO or civil servant. He was a

retired Navy Lieutenant Commander whom I'd known a bit in Hong Kong, when he was an attaché at our Consulate General. Most, if not all State Bureaus had political appointees.

Q: Schedule C employees.

ROPE: Right. I think it had been this way since at least the Carter administration. So Sandy was our political person. He'd worked in the Bush campaign and was a friend, or at least acquaintance of Andy Card, who I think worked under John Sununu at the White House. He didn't have many specific duties. Dick assigned him things as they came up. One area was operational naval matters, like a blockade the Coalition put together during the Gulf War.

As for how we worked together as a front office, we got on very well. Unlike the multi-polar PM I'd known under Reggie, we had a pretty harmonious, team-oriented bureau. I don't remember any of the turf-grabbing, undermining, or cutting-people-out tendencies that existed when I ran PM/ISP, even though Dick brought in a lot of young, ambitious and very smart officers.

One more person I should mention was Charlie Duelfer. He wasn't a DAS, but he had a kind of lead position. Dick gave him special assignments. One important one was as director of the Gulf War working group in the Ops Center throughout the Gulf War -- except for the first night, when I stood in for him. Charlie became quite well known, in the early 2000s, as chief UN inspector searching for Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Q: Let's talk about individual policy items you might have covered and offices you might have turned to. Non-proliferation?

ROPE: I was very much involved in Korea work, particularly during my last half-year. I went on several trips to Seoul with Ron Lehman, head of ACDA -- The Arms Control and Disarmament Agency -- then an independent agency, now a part of State. Ron, I, and various of his subordinates, met in Seoul and Washington with high-ranking South Korean officials, advising them on -- and actually designing for them -- a nuclear arms control regime they could propose in negotiations with North Korea. This was a follow-up to an agreement, reached by Pyongyang and Seoul at the end of 1991 and signed by the two parties in early 1992. It called for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and specified that the two parties would negotiate the establishment of an inspection regime to implement the accord. It never went anywhere, because, as with virtually all agreements on the nuclear issue that the North entered into, Pyongyang was never willing to carry out its part of the bargain; and the negotiations, such as they were in the first half of 1992, petered out, ending sometime after I left PM.

I don't recall who I had working on this, but I had at least one officer, probably from Bob Walpole's or Liz Verville's team.

There was a significant interagency split over Korea, and it was probably costly to me in

my post-PM career. Within State I opposed -- and successfully blocked -- approaches Dick Solomon and the EAP Bureau advocated. DOD and ACDA were also opposed, and I understand Scowcroft at the NSC would not have agreed to what EAP wanted to do. The issue arose as intelligence showed that North Korea was building a reprocessing facility in Yongbyon and was unwilling to have IAEA inspectors look at the plant. Everyone agreed that for North Korea to develop nuclear weapons would be very destabilizing, not just on the Korean peninsula but for all of Northeast Asia. It would put tremendous pressure on Japan to move away from its traditional non-nuclear, defensive posture and could start a regional nuclear arms race.

This many years later, and I have trouble remembering the exact chronology and details. Speaking broadly, Chuck Kartman, a fine guy who had worked for Mike Armacost when Mike was in P and had become Korea desk officer in EAP, began arguing for a US course aimed at appealing to alleged moderates in Kim Il-Sung's government. He and EAP advocated a change in long-standing US refusal to engage in direct talks between the US and North Korea. It had long been a North Korean goal to draw us into direct talks, over the heads of their South Korean brethren. We had always refused to engage that way, since it would suggest that North Korea, and only North Korea, was the legitimate government of all Korea while putting the South in an inferior position, cut out of whatever might be discussed and decided.

I and the others I've mentioned had a big problem with that. For my part, I knew of no evidence that there was a "moderate" group in Pyongyang. It might be logical to suppose there was, but absent evidence to back it up it amounted to little more than wishful thinking. When I was in INR, we knew so little about the internal dynamics of the North that we put out at least one report based on year-old evidence. Chuck was talking about this over a decade later, of course, but I didn't think our intelligence was much better. Certainly I knew of no intelligence -- zero -- that would support Chuck's assertions. It was reminiscent of Iran-Contra, when the North-McFarland-Poindexter-Abrams group got into dealings with so-called moderates in Tehran.

Beyond the lack of evidence that there was a group we could appeal to in Pyongyang, there was a perfectly good mechanism for testing North Korean good will and willingness to comply with international norms. That was the IAEA, to which the DPRK had become a party in order to receive Russian pilot nuclear plants in the mid-1980s. We also had potential partners for dealing with the North in China and -- at that time at least -- Russia. What we needed to do, I thought, was raise world-wide consciousness of what was going on at Yongbyon and North Korean refusal to accept IAEA inspectors; and then push hard for tough international sanctions on the North if they didn't relent and let IAEA in.

I did have my own view of an offer we could make to Pyongyang, via Beijing, that it shouldn't refuse, coupled with a world-wide push for tougher international sanctions if it did refuse; but I could never find support for that until I was on the Policy Planning Staff several years later; and even then it was scorned by EAP.

We, i.e., PM, did not oppose informal contacts between North Korean and US diplomats on the margins of the UN in New York; and I think Chuck went up for those. At some point, the North Koreans put forth an argument that they were only pursuing peaceful nuclear energy development to meet their great need for electric power. If the United States would help by providing nuclear power plants to North Korea, they said, it would obviate the need for their own program.

I saw that as nothing but a ruse. The North was making us an offer they thought we'd surely refuse. It would cost a fortune to provide nuclear power plants, and they must have been totally surprised when, ultimately, we bought the idea. In any case, EAP found this idea very appealing and wanted to pursue it. The US did pursue it after Bob Gallucci replaced Dick as PM Assistant Secretary and the US moved into the Clinton Administration. Bob ultimately became the chief US negotiator, reaching agreement with the North Koreans in the fall of 1994 -- by which time I was up at the UN as a UNGA supernumerary -- under which we agreed to provide the plants, through an organization called KEDO, using South Korean and Japanese money. This foundered in due course, as I fully thought it would.

But's that's jumping ahead. The key PM-EA dispute was something along the lines I've outlined. We opposed offering direct talks at an official level, as did DOD and ACDA, unless the South was participating as well. At one point in the fall of 1991 Secretary Baker, on a trip to Asia, made an important speech in Japan. Without clearing it with us or anyone else, so far as I know, EAP inserted a line in the draft of that speech saying the US would be willing to have direct talks with the North. I learned about that on a Saturday morning when the Secretary was already en route to Japan; and I moved immediately to quash it.

I suspect I was Acting Assistant Secretary, because I don't remember Dick being involved at all. I went straight to Arnie Kantor, who had replaced Bob Kimmitt as P, and said he needed to have that passage deleted the Secretary's speech. Besides opposing it for the reasons I've noted, I felt it would be totally wrong for the Secretary to announce such a thing in Tokyo before meeting with South Korean leaders in Seoul. The appropriate thing to do, if we were really going to do that, would be to inform Japanese leaders quietly and defer announcement until the matter was discussed in Seoul. But I opposed doing it in any case.

I was angry that EAP had tried to make an end run like that, and Arnie, while calmer, agreed with me. He called Dick Solomon to his office, and the two of us had a sharp debate over the issue. Arnie sided with me and cabled the Secretary's party to have the offending passage removed. Sometime later, as we were leaving the Secretary's morning staff meeting on a day when I was Acting, Solomon told me I'd better watch myself if I knew what was good for me. It was a clear warning that if I wanted an ambassadorship in East Asia, I'd better stop opposing EAP on Korea. I told Dick, "We can't have a conversation like this. We just can't. We can't operate this way," or words close to that.

It was a friendly response on my part, and we stayed friends so far as I know; but he did

say that, and in the final analysis, when it came time for me to find my next assignment, which would logically be an Ambassadorship, I got no support from EA. I was never willing to let who wrote my efficiency report or who might help me get a job, or help me in any other way, influence how I came down on a matter of importance. That's what I was conveying to Dick. We'd known each other a long time.

Q: Okay. This was something you obviously cared a lot about. Coming back to your early days in PM, what was on your plate as you started up in PM in August 1989?

ROPE: Actually, since you've got me going on this, I'd like to finish it first, acknowledging that today I'm hazy on the details of what became a prolonged PM-EAP struggle over North Korean nuclear policy. It won't take long to finish it up.

One of the points the DPRK would make whenever objections to its nascent nuclear program were raised was that the US had nuclear weapons in South Korea that constituted a direct threat to the North; and of course Pyongyang regularly demanded that we remove them. We actually didn't need them, but we couldn't pull them out in response to a North Korean demand. Our activities in South Korea were defensive, in view of the threat the North posed and past history. However, an opportunity did arise that enabled us to deprive the North of that talking point without actually giving in.

In the late summer or early fall of 1991, I accompanied DOD Undersecretary for Policy Paul Wolfowitz on a trip to Turkey and northern Iraq. In Ankara, when he called on President Özal, he refused to bring me along, though I argued for inclusion on the grounds that I was State's representative on his delegation and should be included. I was, of course, no stranger to meeting with Turgut Özal. Later, on the plane flying home, I learned that the US was about to announce the removal of all tactical nuclear weapons from Europe and from US surface naval vessels. When I asked Paul if this was so, he said it was and added that this was why he felt could not bring me along on the Özal call. He had been instructed to inform Özal of the President's decision, but it was still secret. So, he said, he could not let me or any others in our delegation know. I asked him if nuclear weapons in South Korea were included. He said they were not.

That was a mistake. Just as we no longer needed tactical nukes in Europe, we didn't need them in South Korea; and removing them in the context of a world-wide withdrawal would take the propaganda point away from the North without constituting a surrender to the DPRK. On return to Washington I went straight to Reggie Bartholomew in T and made the argument to him. He agreed and initiated action that led to the inclusion of those weapons in the overall withdrawal.

The second point was that at the end of 1991, the North surprised all of us when it joined Seoul in a joint declaration of a non-nuclear Korean peninsula and agreed to enter into North-South negotiations on an arms control accord to put it into effect. From then on, I worked closely with Ron Lehman and his people in ACDA as I've said, to assist the South Koreans to develop an arms control regime for the South to propose to the North. My differences with EAP continued, however. We even disagreed over exactly what the

North had agreed to, forcing me when in Seoul, in a call on the South Korean Blue House official responsible for dealing with the North, to obtained explicit confirmation of what I believed to be true. I made sure my Embassy note-taker included that in his reporting cable, but it didn't dissuade Dick Solomon from denying what I said was so.

Essentially EAP put little stock in the North-South non-nuclear agreement and wasn't very supportive of Lehman's and my efforts to help the South's arms control negotiators put the North Koreans to the test. EA was too far into its dream of a larger deal negotiated directly between the US and the North -- as ultimately came to what I would call fruitless fruition in the fall of 1994.

As I indicated, I did have my own idea involving making the North an offer they shouldn't refuse and campaigning for heavy-duty international sanctions if they did. EAP was only interested in its approach, however, and people at the NSC said Scowcroft opposed any overtures to North Korea because he believed the North was in such bad economic shape it would collapse of its own weight. I finally put my proposal in writing in a memo to Under Secretary for Political Affairs Peter Tarnoff in the spring of 1994.

One more note: at some point during all this, Wolfowitz held talks in Hawaii with South Korean counterparts to discuss strategy on the nuclear issue. I accompanied him, together with DOD subordinates and ACDA representatives. I don't recall whether anyone came along from EAP. Maybe Chuck was along. At one point during the discussions, we got the impression the South Koreans thought nuclear weapons developed by the North could be useful in the event of North-South reunification. Wolfowitz's partner seemed to like the thought of "inheriting" them.

I think it's known that in the '70s the US had to lean hard on Seoul to stop it from pursuing its own clandestine nuclear program, just as we had to with Taiwan around the same time. In any case, those of us below Wolfowitz's level discussed this and decided we had to get Paul to tell his counterpart in a one-on-one breakfast this was a terrible idea the US could never accept. We did, and Paul did. Enough about Korea.

Q: Fine. So back to what was on your plate in August 1989?

ROPE: There were a number of things, some of them managerial, some involving specific bilateral pol-mil issues, some involving standing in for Dick, and some involving dealing with the Congress.

For the first few weeks, much of my work was just getting around the Bureau, meeting with office directors and others, and getting briefed on issues -- from how to store nuclear waste underground, to START, INF and CDE, to military aid and assistance issues, and loads of others, world-wide. I also had to get up to speed on a major expansion of PM personnel Dick had initiated, to upgrade our ability to carry out legal responsibilities in the commercial arms transfers area.

Very early I was as part of a group led by Bob Kimmitt dealing with a problem in a US-

China, program under which Grumman was upgrading Chinese F-8 fighter-bombers. Have you ever heard of the Peace Pearl Program?

Q: No.

We can come to that later, too, because what stands out most in my mind in those first few weeks was a trip I took to Australia, as a member of Secretary Baker's delegation to annual US-Australian joint security talks, in which DOD Secretary Cheney also took part. That's when I learned how different the Baker State Department was from previous ones I'd known. It was also kind of a baptism of fire on chemical weapons that never happened, due to the way Baker operated.

Q: Tell us about it.

ROPE: I think it was in late September. Dick was scheduled to go, because the one serious issue to come up -- apart from the usual round of consultations standard for two close allies -- was positions taken by the two governments in the lead-up to Chemical Weapons negotiations. Australia's Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, had been a prime mover pushing for an international agreement; and coordination with Australia would be important throughout the negotiations. The idea of banning chemical weapons, however, as the Convention ultimately required, was not easy for the US, particularly for DOD. This was not so much because of a reluctance to give up the weapons per se but because of the difficulty, or perceived difficulty, of creating effective verification regimes.

After tough interagency wrangling, President Bush had just agreed to a major change in the US position. I don't remember precisely what it was. The point was, though, that our new position did not go as far as Evans wanted, and he publicly criticized it. That wasn't helpful -- not just because of the criticism but for the effect it could have on other nations' positions.

Dick was a leader in the effort to move the USG into negotiations, and he could be expected to be a key advisor to the Secretary on the trip; or at least so I thought. At the last minute, however, he couldn't go and I -- knowing virtually nothing about the issues at that point, aside from some knowledge of the weapons involved -- had to make do with minimal briefings and a little time to talk with Dick before heading to Andrews to catch the Secretary's plane.

Since we had to arrive at Andrews well ahead of the Secretary, I had time, madly, to read through thick briefing books I'd been given, anticipating that once Baker arrived and we took off he might have a meeting to discuss objectives for the trip. That's what I'd experienced before with Haig and Shultz. When I asked others in the delegation when that would happen, they said it probably wouldn't. Still, I wanted to be ready in case it did. On the first, over-night legs, of the flight, to Travis Air Force Base in California and on to Hickam in Hawaii, I read until I fell asleep.

At Hickam in the morning, I found there'd be no meeting there. So I continued reading,

on the ground and as we flew on the next leg, to Pago Pago. By afternoon, I'd absorbed enough to be writing up what I thought the Secretary should say at the talks, to be held in Sydney. I'd just finished that when Bob Zoellick came down the airplane aisle to speak to me.

To my surprise, Zoellick told me the points he thought Baker should make, and they were virtually the same as mine. I told Zoellick that and added one point. The key thing, I said, was to tell Evans directly that the President had come a long way with his latest change of US position. It was clear further modifications might be needed in time, but the question was: would Australia work with us to gain the outcome we both desired or work at cross purposes by criticizing us? Zoellick made a quick squiggle on his notepad, thanked me and left.

That was it. By then it was dawning on me that the Secretary never would have any form of meeting. We landed in Pago Pago, where Baker had an airport meet and greet with the American Samoan governor while Dick Solomon went into town -- arriving back just as we taxied off without him, leaving him to catch a ride on Cheney's plane later. That night I ran into Dick at our Sydney hotel and asked him if he expected Baker to meet with us. He did not, and Baker did not. It was my first exposure to the Baker style, which I've described, that held true throughout my time in PM.

Q: What happened in the talks? Did the Secretary ever talk to you or call on you?

ROPE: I still thought something might happen, and was ready; but he did not. On the margins, I consulted with Australian politico-military counterparts, stressing essentially what I'd told Zoellick, saying this wasn't an easy issue for us and the President had gone out on a limb siding against hard liners to move us forward. Then, in the last hour of the day-and-one-half talks, Chemical Weapons finally came up; and it was very brief. Baker looked at Evans and said, "what I want to know, Gareth, is, are you going to support the President or not?" It reminded me of the way LBJ would talk to people about "your President." Evans kind of gulped and said. "Oh yes," or something similar, and that was that. In the press conference afterwards, Chemical Weapons was the first topic brought up by the Australian Press. Evans said there had been a good exchange of views and Australia supported the US position.

Q: How did you feel about all that.

ROPE: We got the desired outcome, and I felt like I'd contributed. The meetings were a good introduction to a variety of issues, and I liked seeing the two US Secretaries in action. I knew far more about Chemical Weapons, and the challenges involved in negotiating their abolition, than I'd known before; and Sydney's not a bad place to go.

Q: And you learned how the Secretary liked to operate.

ROPE: I did. Baker just kept us at arm's length. In his first months as Secretary, the number of people allowed to come to his morning staff meetings or weekly staff meetings

-- I don't remember how often they were held -- was highly restricted. I think it consisted of his coterie of Under Secretaries, the Executive Secretary, Margaret Tutwiler, Zoellick and Janet Mullins, Baker's Legislative Affairs Assistant Secretary. To that were added the five regional Bureau Assistant Secretaries.

Functional Bureaus like PM were excluded. Instead, those Assistant Secretaries were required to come up, on a rotating basis, to make five-minute presentations on any issues in their area they wished to call to the Secretary's attention. They had to sit outside while the meeting was conducted, unable to hear what was being discussed, and then go in cold to make their presentations and leave. I thought it a cruel and demeaning way to treat Assistant Secretaries of State.

Once, late in 1989 when Dick was away, it fell to me to do that, speaking on an arms control subject I didn't know well. It made me extremely nervous, and I know I did a poor job. By early 1990 or so, PM was invited to join the club, so to speak, along with EB and a couple of others. Then when I stood in for Dick I could interact as a normal participant and watch others go through the 5 minute dog-and-pony ordeal. Some of them could hardly make it through the presentation they felt so much pressure.

Another Baker practice was to limit an Assistant Secretary's attendance to either the Assistant Secretary or the PDAS. If both were away or otherwise unable to attend, they could not be represented by one of the other DASes.

In three years in PM, I can only recall one instance in which I was in any kind of decision-making meeting with James Baker and only one other time when I was called up to his office for any matter. The latter was purely to give him some piece of information, not for any kind of conversation. The former was when I was Acting and participated in a small meeting in which Baker made a significant decision to modify an arms control position. "We have to keep this secret for now," he said; then he counted the number of people in the room, which I believe totaled five, and shrugged his shoulders, as if to say "Oh well, with this number of people there's no way it won't leak out." That was my perception. This is not to say I don't view Baker as an outstanding Secretary of State, because I do; and, particularly in Zoellick and Ross, he had brilliant people around him. He just wasn't good about including more rank and file members of the Department, even senior FSOs or civil servants.

Q: Had you been the one recommending the position change?

ROPE: Not that I recall. It was probably something that Dick had worked out with Reggie, who was Under Secretary for International Security Affairs and through whom we formally reported to the Secretary. I was just standing in for Dick. Reggie probably made the presentation. I'd remember if I'd done it.

Q: So you got into a problem involving the F-8 after Tiananmen Square. I think you referred to a Peace Pearl program. What was that?

ROPE: As part of sanctions put on after Tiananmen, we froze a fledgling FMS program by that name. Grumman had been in the process of upgrading China's F-8 fighter -- giving the plane more advanced avionics and other things -- and it had to stop. This wouldn't have been a problem if the F-8's had been physically located in China. The Grumman people could have just come home; but these aircraft had been flown to Grumman's plant on Long Island, and they were effectively stranded there. Peace Pearl fell under DOD's FMS system, and the project had been put out for bids to several US aircraft manufacturers. Grumman had come in with what was by far the low bid, around \$500 million, and the Chinese and DOD had agreed to it.

Once into the project, Grumman found it wasn't easy to do the work promised within the limits of what might be called a "low-ball" bid. The F-8s Grumman received weren't uniform. It was almost as if they had been custom-made rather than turned out on an assembly line. Wiring and other components might go through one side of the cockpit in one aircraft and have a different path in another. Without standardized configurations, it was hard to design upgrade arrangements that would work for all F-8s. Then came Tiananmen, and the program ended, with China left to pay the bill before the aircraft could be returned -- not a good initiation into how our FMS system works.

Adding insult to injury, Grumman decided to hike its price by a hefty amount. First it put the cost of closing out the deal at around \$630 million. Then it went up to over \$700 million; at least that's what I recall. I thought Grumman was taking advantage of the situation to recoup losses due to lack of due diligence in the first place. In any case, it was a problem, and Kimmitt had a little group working on it, which I joined. In the end, we didn't have to come up with a solution; the Chinese quietly paid up and the aircraft were returned.

That was one early China thing. Another that's a bit harder to discuss arose fairly early, and there was a third during my time in PM, as well as annual visits from a high level Taiwan purchasing mission, in which I often ended up representing the State Department at banquets and breakfasts that my EAP counterpart, Desaix, chose not to attend.

Q: What was the early one?

ROPE: You'll recall my advice to my PRCM successor Don Anderson that we not implement a progressive decline in arms sales to Taiwan and that we remind the PRC, if necessary, of our rejection of the word "progressive" in the final days of Communiqué negotiations in 1982. I warned that if we put in place a steady downward trend in sales, instead of allowing the natural ups and downs that occur from year to year, we'd create expectations on the Chinese side that the trend would always be downward; and it would be harder to go up again when we needed to. We'd told the Chinese they'd "see the trend over time," and in fact they would, though it might take many years.

On arrival in PM seven years after issuance of the Communiqué, however, I found that Paul Wolfowitz, Jim Lilley, and others who led EAP in the 1980s had implemented exactly the kind of steady decline I'd counseled against; and they compounded their error

by never adjusting sales to account for inflation. The result was that Taiwan's purchasing power had been roughly halved, in constant dollars, by the time I arrived in PM in late summer of '89. This had people in EAP, and Stape Roy who was then Executive Secretary but was an important influence on China policy, very worried. To deal with the problem, they had proposed what might be considered accounting changes that would reduce the apparent level of sales reported to the Congress. The trouble was, their idea -- while not exactly Ollie North material -- would not be legal. In PM we devised a way to make adjustments that did greatly ease the situation, and the Congress was informed in a manner that made it completely lawful.

One other East Asia thing that came up fairly early was an attempted coup by military officers in the Philippines. Dick and I alternated, I think, as participants in interagency meetings, via teleconference that linked us with DOD and the White House situation room, with Nick Platt, by then US Ambassador to the Philippines, hooked in via secure phone. It went on over 2 or 3 days and was finally settled when we decided to have some US F-4s from Clark Air Force Base buzz the coup plotters -- called the RAM -- at a base at Sangley Point on Manila Bay. I don't recall the decision-making process, though I believe State took the lead and suppose Bob Kimmitt was the key guy on our side. I do remember telling my father at the time that I hoped he'd notice that the first time I was involved in a decision to use force it led to a peaceful outcome with no one harmed.

One impression I took away was unfavorable. The White House participants, Vice President Quayle, Bob Gates and Karl Jackson, seemed to treat the matter lightly, often laughing and joking as it unfolded. Someone told me they were sympathetic to the RAM. Later Quayle claimed the episode as an example of a time when he was a strong, decisive leader in a crisis. I must have been out of the teleconference when that happened, because all I saw was cavalier behavior.

Q: You said there was a third thing involving Taiwan, I believe.

ROPE: The indigenous fighter program. Are you familiar with that?

Q: Yep, the IDF.

ROPE: I know I mentioned approving the sale of Garrett engines to Taiwan back in '81. It didn't hurt that Senator Goldwater very much wanted the sale, but the idea in my mind was that it could help Taipei, over time, develop the capacity to produce fighter aircraft. Taiwan already had connections with the Israeli Defense Forces and had held some talks about getting Kfir aircraft.

In the 1980s, Taiwan did develop its own indigenously produced fighter, I suppose with help from DOD/DSAA. It had prototypes flying successfully by the time I returned to PM. I read USG analyses of the aircraft, and the plane looked promising. Somewhere in the middle of my tenure, however, DOD decided to scuttle this program on the grounds that the aircraft "had no legs," meaning its range and ability to loiter on station were too limited by its allegedly inadequate fuel capacity. I argued with counterparts in ISA about

this. For one, with more work maybe that could be overcome. Secondly, on Coral Sea when I was an air controller, we equipped some of our A-4 fighter-bombers with refueling belly tanks that enabled them to serve as airborne tankers refueling other A-4s. I saw no reason why Taiwan couldn't do the same, if necessary. When I pointed that out to my ISA friends, their response was, "We can't sell tankers to Taiwan!" The fact is, DOD liked selling to Taiwan, which was practically a captured DSAA market.

As it happened, Taiwan produced quite a few IDF aircraft, named Ching-Kuo after Chiang Ching-Kuo, in the 1990s. They're apparently used now as trainers; but DOD/ISA and DSAA's focus was on building a case for F-16 sales to Taiwan for which Wolfowitz and Lilley, by then at DOD, gained Presidential approval during the election campaign of 1992. They played on White House fears that Bush might lose Texas, where F-16s were produced in Fort Worth. It was a cynical move, and Clinton still won the state.

In my final days in PM, Frank Wisner, who had replaced Reggie Bartholomew in T, asked me to work with Lynn Pascoe, who'd become EAP PDAS, to make a study of whether Taiwan needed F-16s. I literally had only a day or two left, but over a weekend I wrote a memo outlining an appropriate interagency approach for deciding the matter. It paralleled what had been done in 1981, starting with an intelligence community analysis of the "need" issue, with analysis to be made by EAP of the potential ramifications for US-PRC relations. I believe I passed that on to Lynn, but I don't know what he did with it, and in any case it was quickly overtaken by events. So far as I know, no analysis was undertaken, and the sale was announced. The Chinese, predictably, made a fuss, leaving EAP having to explain it. They argued, with some merit, that since the planes were older models of the F-16 it really wasn't a violation of the 1982 communiqué. It wasn't a strong case, but the PRC ultimately swallowed it. China wanted Bush re-elected. For me it was proof that the Communiqué works even when we violate it!

Q: You mentioned a decision involving Pakistan to me at some point. What was that about?

ROPE: Before doing that, I want to talk about how my job actually worked in PM. I was involved in a lot of issues, but I had no people working for me other than my secretary and the small administrative section that handled HR and logistical matters, i.e., PM/EX. In time Iraq became an exception to this after Saddam invaded Kuwait. I became a member of an intra-Departmental group that met daily with Bob Kimmitt, and I had support from, and to some extent tasked and gave guidance to, an office in PM led by a sharp young civil servant named Vann Van Diepen. This continued after the Gulf War when we played an important role in setting up and backstopping UNSCOM, the UN Commission for the Destruction of Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction.

And I ran the Bureau's East Asia work, but that was a relatively limited area of PM concern -- North Korea, and the China issues I've mentioned, excepted.

When I was Acting Assistant Secretary, however, I signed off on everything going out of the Bureau to Seventh Floor leadership. Dick was a peripatetic Assistant Secretary, so I

had lots of time as acting chief. The Pak nuclear issue came up in that context.

The Department had to decide whether to recommend issuing a Symington Amendment waiver or certification that Pakistan wasn't trying to develop a nuclear weapon. If we couldn't, we'd have to cut off all aid to Pakistan -- a very serious matter. While there were arguments to be made that we didn't have sufficient evidence to say the Paks were working on a bomb, to me the intelligence that they were was indisputable. NEA DAS Tezi Schaefer strongly argued -- in a decision memo to Eagleburger, who may have been Acting Secretary -- that we must issue the certification or waiver on the grounds of the importance of our relationship with Pakistan and the devastating impact an aid cut-off would have. I decided PM's position, which dissented from NEA's, writing the final wording, saying "We don't take this position because we think cutting off aid will stop Pakistan from developing nuclear weapons. We do so because we believe it is the only course that has a chance of stopping it from doing so," with "only" in italics.

Q: This involved the Congress, correct?

ROPE: Yes. The Symington Amendment to foreign aid legislation required that we cut off aid to Pakistan unless we could certify that it was not developing nuclear weapons. If not, there was a way to issue a waiver. I think I'm remembering this right. If I don't, I've got the gist of it right. Extreme as it was, I had PM advocate cutting off aid to Pakistan because, as I wrote into our dissent in the memo, it was the only conceivable way I could think of to make Islamabad stop. In the event, NEA's position prevailed, and we continued our economic and military support while Pakistan continued its nuclear weapons development.

Q: Now who and what desk level would be backing you up? Wouldn't there be a desk in PM that would be backing you up and providing paperwork?

ROPE: Yes, there was, but in that case I dictated the position, and I knew Dick would back me up. He was not afraid to take controversial or tough stands.

Q: Now you are interacting with him frequently. You are up there in the front office together. Your doors are probably facing each other or something. Was there any down time when you put your feet up on the desk and chatted? What was he like?

There were lots of those times at days' ends. During one, I put forth Bob Gallucci's name to be deputy head of UNSCOM, which, ironically, led, in time, to Bob's replacing Dick and Bob's decision to replace me with Marc Grossman.

Dick was just what I perceived in 1980, only more so -- a super bright and aggressive guy not only full of policy ideas and strategies but full of ideas for exactly how to implement them. One irony in his selection of me for a deputy was that eight years earlier, when I was leaving PM and Burt and Blackwill asked me who were the best people in the Bureau, I named Dick Clarke first and said if I were staying in ISP I'd make him my deputy. He was tremendously sharp, knew a lot about arms control and weapons systems,

was not ideological, and had a healthy degree of skepticism, including a sometimes cynical sense of humor. In his office he had an empty, lucite box -- a long, rectangular prism. Underneath it was a small sign that said "Stealth Bomber." Dick never knew about this exchange between me and Burt and Blackwill, so far as I know, when he chose me to be his deputy.

We generally got along well. That doesn't mean he wouldn't put me down or put down something I said if he disagreed with it; but we never fought over anything. There were times when I really had to appeal to him not to do something, and generally I got my way. One area involved FSO positions in the Bureau. Dick was a career civil servant and didn't have much use for many of the FSOs who ended up in PM. His clear bias favored civil servants, as I've mentioned. My bias went the other way. So at times Dick would move to abolish FSO slots and replace them with civil service slots. I'd have to try to talk him out of that or quietly block him.

But Dick was an excellent Assistant Secretary. I say that because he was highly effective, and PM was respected and utilized by Department leadership. He had the Bureau running on all cylinders and was always spinning off ideas that he made sure got implemented. He was great at attracting smart young people into the Bureau, often tapping into the Presidential Management Intern program to get them. He understood the ins and outs of personnel work. We expanded PM by at least one-third during our three years together.

He had excellent relations with Bob Kimmitt and Bob's successor, Arnie Kantor. He was very close to Reggie, and Larry Eagleburger liked and generally supported him. He could be very smooth when it came to relations with important members of Congress, like Howard Berman, who was important on chemical weapons; and he did a lot of work with Israel, representing the US in annual talks with Israeli counterparts. He could recite the mantra of our "unshakeable commitment" to Israel with the best of them.

He could also be abrasive. There were times when I had to clean up after him. One example involved Janet Mullins, the imperious Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations. She was close to Baker and said to be exceptionally close to Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell.

Dick, always thinking ahead, and generally knowing what needed to be done, went to Janet as Mike Glitman was wrapping up INF negotiations -- over SS-20s on Soviet side and Pershing II missiles and GLCMS for NATO -- that got going when I was in PM/ISP. Dick felt we needed to have a Hill strategy ready to assure ratification, and he presented it to Janet. Bob Mantel, PM's Congressional relations person told me immediately afterward it was the worst meeting he'd ever been. Janet said, "Mr. Clarke, when we want your opinion we'll call you." Dick responded, "Why are you always such a bitch?"

That might be fine with some people, but not with Janet. From then on I was the senior PM officer dealing with her. Mantel dealt with H on the working level, but when he needed someone higher to weigh in, I would go to Janet's office, stand quietly and respectfully in her doorway, and with exaggerated humility and say, "May I come in?"

She would say “If you dare,” and I would say “I dare.” Then we would talk.

This didn’t help Dick in the long run. He ended up spinning in the wind in 1992 when he got into trouble over alleged acts of omission involving a sensitive matter. He had alienated more than just Mullins in the Baker inner circle, and Bob Kimmitt who probably would have supported him within that group, was gone. Eagleburger intervened to salvage things. We can discuss that later.

Q: You say Dick, with your help, expanded the Bureau by about one-third? That must have been pretty hard in the budget atmosphere of those times. How did you do it?

ROPE: When I got to PM, Dick had already put into motion a substantial expansion of the office dealing with foreign commercial military sales -- I forget its exact name. It’s the one Rick Burt asked me to head back in 1981. For the sake of discussion, let’s call it PM/FCS.

PM had no operational responsibilities for most US military export sales, because they were transacted through DOD/DSAA’s FMS program, under which DOD procured, sold and supported military systems and services sold abroad. It was possible, though, for foreign customers to buy military systems and equipment without going through DOD, dealing directly with US suppliers instead. One example in my experience involved Greece, which at one point was in a sufficiently anti-American mood -- or at least sufficiently distrustful of the US government -- that it decided to buy F-16s commercially rather than buy them through FMS.

The licensing of those, commercial, transactions was a State responsibility; and it was PM/FCS that exercised that power within State. Not long before Dick’s arrival, there had been an inspection of PM, or at least of PM/FCS, in which inspectors found PM/FCS understaffed and deficient in carrying out its responsibilities. As Dick explained it to me, PM/FCS was doing a fine job of approving licenses for commercial sales of US military equipment; but it had no capacity for ensuring that equipment it licensed actually ended up where it was supposed to go. Do you understand what I am saying?

Q: Not quite.

ROPE: In the non-military export control area, you may be familiar with end-user checks carried out by US embassies or other posts abroad to make sure that foreign purchasers of export-controlled items are legitimate and that items sold abroad reach their legitimate destinations. I was in charge of this work when I was in the Hong Kong-Macao Section of ConGen Hong Kong during my first tour, with a local employee working for me who carried out checks under my supervision.

Q: Yes. I’m aware of that system.

ROPE: Well, there was no comparable system in place for commercial military sales. As Dick put it, “we’re sending stuff out the door, and we don’t know where it ends up!” To

be sure, when it came to things like fighters for the Greek government, it would not have been hard to detect if the items had been diverted from their licensed purposes; but PM/FCS approved licenses for a multitude of things -- including even hand guns -- that were far less easy to track.

Dick told me he had informed the Secretary of this situation as soon as he learned of it and made clear he would not serve as Assistant Secretary overseeing the operation unless we put in place a satisfactory end-use checking system. For that, a whole set of procedures had to be developed, and one was. I think it was called the "Red Lantern" program, to be implemented by FSOs at Embassies and other posts in the field and run from Washington by officers who would have to be added to the staff of PM/FCMS.

The Secretary agreed to this, and Dick went out to other agencies -- Commerce, DOD, and the CIA, all before I got there -- to arrange for an initial group of officers, including several military officers, to be detailed to State to fill the positions and set up the program. My job was to gain more positions within State, to get us additional "FTE" for positions that would carry out this work on a permanent basis. That took the rest of my time in PM, and I was assiduous at it -- to the point of being in the office of the woman in Personnel, or under M, in charge of State's FTE budget on the Saturday morning of the weekend when the fiscal year ended, to make sure that any end-of-the-year FTE -- I think FTE stands for "full-time equivalent positions" -- would go to PM, which they did.

Beyond that, we needed more people to work on START, CFCE, the Chemical weapons convention, biological work, INF which I have mentioned, a whole new Missile Technology Control Regime being set up, plus Gulf War work and the backstopping of UNSCOM afterwards. Dick was able, as I've mentioned, to get some excellent young officers through the Presidential Management Intern system. Every so often I see someone on the PBS News Hours and say to Priscilla, "Look, there's Steve Simon" or Jim Lewis, or Roger so and so, or one of the other sharp young guys who worked for us.

Besides those Dick brought in on his own, I got others out of Personnel, sometimes working through PM/EX, sometimes acting directly with my friends in M -- Pat Kennedy, then working for Under Secretary for Management Ivan Selin -- and the woman I just mentioned. Whatever it took, we reached out for people. In our 3 years in PM, our staff grew from around 180 when I got there to around 250 by the time I left. I don't remember how well we did funding-wise in the same period, but I know we got money to reconfigure our 7th Floor spaces, modularizing and modernizing them to accommodate our increases in personnel. I noticed in one of my ERs that we also gained a 25 percent increase in travel funds, and another ER noted that I got M to give us half a million dollars, actually almost like \$600,000 for a new computer system. I think that was another end-of-the-fiscal-year effort on my part. We needed it in conjunction with our munitions export control work; but it would upgrade the Bureau's entire system as well.

Dick wanted PM to be a major player, and he found many ways to assure that we would be. During the Gulf War, he loaned a couple of our bright guys to Schwarzkopf's field headquarters staff. They would give us reports of what was happening by secure phone

every morning. We could turn this into a write-up for Kimmitt that he could share with Baker and others in the inner circle, providing information ahead of what they'd get from counterparts at DOD. Dick also had Steve Simon and people working for Steve writing end-of-war strategy papers for Kimmitt that I believe were drawn upon as the final terms for Iraq's retreat from Kuwait were negotiated -- but not those allowing the Republican Guard to escape at the end or permitting Saddam to use helicopters against his own people, as happened. That was on Schwarzkopf and DOD.

Q: So you've begun to talk about your role as chief PM manager. Let's talk about that.

ROPE: I was chief Bureau personnel officer. I paid close attention to all hiring decisions by individual PM offices. I worked hard to identify and recruit good FSOs for jobs in PM, never easy because regional bureaus had a lot more natural attraction for them. That was particularly true of EUR, where there were plum jobs in EUR/RPM, the "RPM" standing for "Regional Political-Military." RPM backstopped USNATO and was heavily into all European arms control matters. Regional bureaus also had overseas jobs for their FSOs. So, like Avis, we had to try harder. This is kind of a pun, because RPM's deputy director was Avis Bohlen, whom I admired very much.

I also had contacts in DOD who could help me find good military officers for details to PM. Scooter Libby was one of my friends over there. He was running a policy planning shop for Wolfowitz. I recruited good FSOs to work for his staff on detail and he helped me in searches for, or evaluations of, military officers we wanted from the Pentagon.

Q: Now one of the things you would be working on too was the position of political advisor to the military commands. Was there an office? Did you get involved in that? Explain the POLAD program and how you fit into it.

ROPE: Most, if not all, major commands have FSOs on loan from the State Department serving as political advisors; hence the acronym POLAD. They are generally senior FSOs, with rank equivalent to one-star or two-star flag officers; and within a command they hold important positions. Their FTE positions resided in PM. Regional bureaus had an interest in filling them, but we were in a position to make the final decisions if we wished to assert ourselves; and I did. Not all POLADS go on to high Department positions, but some do. One good example is Mort Abramowitz, who was once CINCPAC POLAD.

I don't want to say I picked the POLADs, because there was a process run by Personnel, and anyone with the appropriate rank could bid on the positions; but I really did pick them, sometimes clearing my decisions with Dick. We also had people on detail to teaching positions at the various war colleges. These, too, were generally senior officer positions, and they could be used to fill gaps for FSOs headed for higher things but temporarily without assignments. One example was Paul Taylor, an excellent economic officer I'd known at the National War College, for whom I found a place at the Naval War College. He was a very cerebral FSO and no doubt an asset to the Newport faculty. He went on to be an Ambassador in South America. Another example was Chris Szymanski,

who had worked for me in INR and who served as POLAD at SPACECOM, at NORAD in Colorado.

Q: So this is one of the ways the State Department is quite interconnected with DOD and the military commands.

ROPE: Yes. And we stayed in regular touch with our POLADS. I don't want to say they became spies for us, but they helped keep us, and through us the Seventh Floor, well informed.

Q: Well one of the things that you are saying is that for the functional bureaus as opposed to the regional bureaus it is a different kind of expertise you need. You have people who have to know missile throw-weights and very specific scientific things. So the PM bureau, as I understand it, has a lot of different kinds of people in it, not just career foreign service officers but a fair number of retired and active military.

ROPE: Yes. Often military officers on detail; and making sure we got good ones was part of my job, though Dick or the other DASes were also, through their own contacts, able to identify officers they wanted -- at which point it became my job, with PM/EX working for me, to make sure we got them.

Then we had PM civil servants who were experts. Often these were the arms controllers, again supplemented by military officers. They knew about throw-weights, nuclear, chemical and biological weaponry, and a lot about inspection regimes and ways to evade them -- i.e., pitfalls to be avoided in creating verification regimes. Walpole and Verville worked with them daily, but I had plenty of interactions with them, too, including standing in, at times, for a given DAS when he or she was away. I had to know and/or absorb enough to be able to provide sensible guidance or make intelligent decisions.

I've mentioned the Dick's use of Presidential Management interns. Dick went to PENN and MIT. He'd been around a good while and had contacts in universities and think tanks as well as throughout the national security bureaucracy. He was good at identifying and attracting young national security types straight out of academia. These were not necessarily guys who were going to spend a career in the bureaucracy, but they were eager, smart and analytical hard chargers.

One I've mentioned was Steve Simon. Another was Vann Van Diepen. After the Gulf War, we played a key role in setting up UNSCOM. Their people formed the core of an interagency group set up in PM to backstop UNSCOM, providing intelligence and other forms of support. I exercised loose supervision over them and fronted for them in interagency dealings. For example, when Saddam wouldn't allow UNSCOM inspectors into a facility and we had to threaten to bomb or threaten to bomb him, I usually did the liaising with DOD to get that done. That often had to go to Colin Powell's level at the Pentagon, and it could be a lot slower than we liked because he was very conservative about it.

Those people frequently traveled to New York to deal directly with UNSCOM, and they weren't always good about keeping USUN informed. I remember one amusing phone exchange with Tom Pickering, then our UN Ambassador, over that -- my last with him, as it turned out. He called me one morning irate over some interaction between our team and UNSCOM and bellowed, "I'm going to shut you down!" I said, "No you're not!" He said, "Larry's calling me on the other line," meaning Eagleburger. I said, "Take it!" And that was the end of it. We stayed in business.

Q: Let's follow another subject for a moment. One of the aspects of American policy is having bases overseas.

ROPE: Yes.

Q: PM and the regional bureaus would be quite consumed with base negotiations or what units get to go to what base and whatnot.

ROPE: That fell under the purview of an office like the one I headed back in 1980, PM/ISP. Often, though, regional bureaus were more in the lead in those kinds of negotiations. At least it was that way when I was working on Greece and Turkey, though those base negotiations took place after I left EUR/SE.

The main base negotiation going on during my years in PM was with the Philippines; and for that we had a very high-level negotiator who operated more or less on his own, interacting with DOD, EAP, the relevant military commands and embassies in the field, and to some degree us. He was Rich Armitage, who'd headed DOD/ISA when I was head of PRC/M and who ultimately served as Deputy Secretary of State in Bush II. He would drop by PM periodically and brief Dick and me on what he was doing. It gave us a chance to have input if we wanted to, but we were quite happy with him and his approach. He had his own staff, and we didn't even have to backstop him.

There was yet another PM responsibility to track, and coordinate with DOD when necessary, US military exercises. It wasn't a very exciting shop, but State needed to be aware of the nature, scope, duration, etc., of such events, and PM was where that responsibility resided. Sandy Martell may have overseen this. It fell under the purview of the office Reggie initially offered me, in 1980, that I declined.

Before we go further, the mention of Rich Armitage and his periodic briefings for Dick and me -- and of course working-level officers would often be sitting in -- reminds me that we had a constant flow of high-level political-military visitors who were received by Dick, or by me in his absence. Ones who come to mind, in no particular order, include Jim Woolsey, who took over from Steve Ledogar as our CFE negotiator, Joe Hoar, who replaced Norman Schwarzkopf at CENTCOM, the General who was going down to assume command at SOUTHCOM in Panama, American Jewish groups interested in our military support for Israel, Ambassadors to countries where we had important security interests or were at war -- as in the case of Chas Freeman, then Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. We also received foreign dignitaries like the British Labour Party's Shadow

Defense Minister who once called on me, and Sven Hirdman, the Swedish Government's top arms control specialist, an old contact with whom I'd served in Beijing.

I might also mention a lot of interactions we had with Capitol Hill. They may well come up elsewhere, but we did have to go up and testify from time to time. Testimony I remember doing included presenting the annual Javits Report of planned US arms sales world-wide to the SFRC, defending the sale of armored personnel carriers to Saudi Arabia before the HFAC, explaining a Korean fighter issue to a House sub-committee, and a long session testifying before the House Banking Committee, the chairman of which, Henry Gonzalez, was seeking to prove that the Bush administration had "coddled" Saddam Hussein before the Gulf War. I never got over the stage-fright preceding these outings, particularly immediately before I spoke, but I did well enough once they began -- in fact a good bit better than "well enough" some people said.

Q: Now, speaking of the Gulf War, about a year into your tenure that came up, and I know you had a role to play there. So let's go to that.

ROPE: I did, but as was the case for most of my high-level FSO colleagues in the Department, it was a supporting one. My main participation was as a member of a group that met with daily with Bob Kimmitt, starting sometime in the fall of 1990, after Saddam's invasion of Kuwait and lasting throughout the Gulf War and beyond.

I think it was August 2, 1990 when Saddam invaded Kuwait. The situation at that point was dire, with the Saudi oil fields only 4 hours by six-lane highway from the Kuwaiti border. Dick was involved in top-level deliberations in the Department and interagency community, in which I believe Kimmitt was the key State player -- because Baker was hunting in Mongolia. The President dispatched DOD Secretary Cheney to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, plus Egypt, to tell them we were ready to send rapid deployment forces immediately and start putting together what became the Gulf War coalition. Dick went with Cheney, and I stayed home as Acting Assistant Secretary.

The Saudis accepted the offer, and army airborne and other US assets deployed immediately. Two weeks later, I went on Cheney's second trip to the region, essentially a money-soliciting mission. We were a small Group, flying in a DOD Gulfstream. Besides a military aide for Cheney it included Skip Gnehm, DAS from NEA and Art Hughes, on detail to DOD/ISA working on the Middle East. It was my first trip to any Middle East Arab country, and while I didn't do much I learned a good bit.

We flew first to a base in Saudi Arabia and helicoptered to USS Eisenhower in the Red Sea for a night. I saw air control facilities light years ahead of where Coral Sea was in my day, in a much larger Combat Information Center. I think we saw nighttime flight ops. I enjoyed that.

The next day we flew back to Saudi Arabia and to Dhahran, for briefings by US and Saudi military officials and inspections of Army and Air Force troops and facilities there. At day's end we flew on to Bahrain. Soldiers in 120 degree heat thanked us for coming

out in our suits and ties -- the least we could do when they were out in that every day.

In Bahrain Cheney met with the Emir, who hosted us for dinner and an overnight. The next day we covered 5 countries, flying from Bahrain to the UAE, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, where we ended up in Jeddah. The essence of the Cheney pitch was that we were glad we were able to put initial forces in place and would be putting together the necessary troops to evict Iraq from Kuwait. It would be a very expensive operation, and we hoped our Gulf allies would contribute. In the end, they virtually paid for the war. Three meetings stand out.

One was in the Abu Dhabi. Sheik Zayed went on and on about his "brother" George Bush, saying "when my brother comes to help me, I know he is my brother today, and tomorrow, and forever," etc. He was thrown slightly off stride when Cheney brought up the subject of money, but he caught himself and continued "I know, when my brother asks, how can I deny him." Afterward our Ambassador said what we'd seen was "pure Bedouin."

A second was in Oman, where we flew down to Sultan Qaboos' summer palace in Salalah, on the Arabian Sea -- cooler than other places we visited. Reggie visited Qaboos regularly during the Carter Administration when we were building up prepositioned supply bases in the Arabian Peninsula following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Qaboos had a reputation as a strategic thinker, and that was the kind of talk he and Cheney had -- high level analysis from a leader who really understood his region.

The third was Qatar. It wasn't on our itinerary because US-Qatari relations had been strained for some time. As we reflected on the plane out of Salalah on how well the Secretary's discussions were going, Art Hughes thought it would be worth seeing if we could call on the leadership in Doha and bring the Qataris on board. Cheney liked that, and Art or Skip called our Ambassador there to set it up. Cheney was warmly received that evening. Qatar joined the Coalition, and I think we've had good relations with Qatar ever since.

We flew on to Jeddah, where Cheney had an audience with the King -- I think Fahd at the time. Then we flew home, stopping briefly at Cairo airport where the Secretary met with his Egyptian counterpart and I had a brief chat with my old boss, Frank Wisner, then Ambassador to Egypt. As I say, I was in many ways an observer; and I did not get into the meeting with the Saudi King. I did write a memo to Dick on returning, concluding that everyone was on our side but the sands looked shifty.

Q: So then you say you were in a group that met with Under Secretary Kimmitt.

ROPE: Yes. I'm not sure when it started, sometime in the fall, I think. It included the principal deputies from IO, NEA, PM, and INR, EB, along with people from the Refugee Bureau and AID. We would generally start with a briefing on the previous night's events and other news by Peter Burley, INR's PDAS. Then Kimmitt would go around for reports from the rest of us on whatever was happening in our spheres, for example what was

going on at the UN? How were sanctions going? Where did things stand with our forces in the field? What were the merits of going for a Congressional resolution authorizing the use of military force under the War Powers Act? And so forth. Kimmitt was very much the driver, and the meetings were often just a vehicle for him to give out instructions. I remember once during the War, when Bob was away and Larry Eagleburger chaired our meeting, Larry asked us for recommendations on what to do. I thought, "This is like it used to be. Larry wants us to tell him what we should do. We've gotten out of practice on that."

At some point that fall, I represented PM in an interagency meeting tasked with figuring out ways to help Özal, who was way out on a limb, domestically, allowing us to build up for strikes into Iraq from Incirlik. I don't recall who chaired it, but it involved people from NEA, PM, and maybe EB or E at State. Glen Rudd was there from DSAA, and there were probably other DOD people plus representatives of AID. Our task from on high was to find ways to help Özal financially; but the mood was negative. Whenever any kind of special aid came up, people would shoot it down, citing legal difficulties and probable opposition from the Greek Lobby.

I presented an idea that most said would never work. It was to get our Gulf allies to contribute to a Turkish Defense Fund. This would avoid having to increase our own aid to Turkey but would give Özal funds with which to purchase military equipment, and thus free up funds for Turkish government use elsewhere. I thought we could ask the Saudis for \$1 billion, and maybe get the UAE and Kuwait to put up half a billion each. In addition, I proposed going to the Egyptians to get them to buy their next tranche of F-16s, using US foreign military assistance funds, from Turkey's F-16 factory rather than from Fort Worth. Since General Dynamics was responsible for assuring quality control for aircraft procured from either source, there would be no diminution in the quality of the aircraft Egypt received. The idea of a fund wasn't my original idea. I got it from Mike McNamara, a retired Army Colonel I'd known at DOD when I was in EUR/SE. He'd become a lobbyist for Turkey and had thrown it out as an idea over lunch, sometime before.

No one was buying my proposal. I kept saying "I don't say this is the best idea; I'm saying it's the only idea I can think of. I'm waiting to hear the better ideas, but so far I haven't." The meeting broke up with no results. Clarke liked the idea, however, and at the end of December, when I was actually away on leave, he put it into a memo to Kimmitt or the Secretary. The President approved and wrote letters in support of it to the various country leaders involved. Even then, we got bureaucratic resistance in the Department. I remember the Egypt country director saying that Egyptians didn't like Turks -- who'd been their overlords in the Ottoman period -- and Cairo would never accept Turkish-made F-16s. When I pointed out that Bush had written Mubarak asking for that, she said, "That's just a Presidential letter." Chas Freeman told Dick and me the Saudis would never contribute to the Turkish Defense Fund. I told him the President was behind the idea and it would have to happen. And it did. I think my breakdown is right, and the fund alone amounted to \$2 billion for Özal.

One other issue I remember well that fall or winter was a request by Embassy Riyadh for gas masks to protect its personnel in the event of Iraqi attack using chemical weapons. Ivan Selin had at least one large meeting to consider this request. I argued successfully against it, on two grounds. First, a gas mask is inadequate protection against chemical attack. It takes a full body suit, because chemicals penetrate through clothing and skin. Many people don't know that, but it's true. Second, if we thought there was any danger of that, we'd get our people out before it could occur. There was a tension there, of course.

The Embassy did not accept this, and Chas became very vocal as the war approached, in first-person cables, to the point that a Principals Meeting was scheduled to discuss it at the Cabinet Secretary level. Then at the last minute Chas came in with another cable saying that he'd met with Cheney, Colin Powell, and Schwarzkopf, who were out there, and they had persuaded him that what he'd been demanding wasn't necessary. You can imagine how that went down on the Seventh Floor, after they'd been so ginned up by cables from the Ambassador.

In the end, once the war started, Embassy Riyadh again demanded gas masks, which was frustrating. Nevertheless, I was tasked with getting DOD to provide them. At that point Army supplies were stretched thin; but one of my DOD counterparts ran an operation that pulled together gas masks from ships at sea and other sources. They were shipped to a warehouse in Dhahran, where the Embassy protested that they couldn't be found. When they were found the Embassy complained that they were used and in poor condition. They were never needed in any case.

One other thing happened that fall, as Coalition forces were building up in Saudi Arabia. I was called to a secret briefing by Air Force General John Jumper from the JCS staff. He was someone I dealt with frequently. In this case it was a very close-hold, small-group meeting involving inoculation of US forces against germ warfare. Initially, DOD had decided against this. There was no evidence Iraq was equipped with deliverable biological weapons, and there was not enough supply of the drugs needed to protect against the standard biological agents used in such weapons, Anthrax and Botulinum Toxin. One additional factor was that what we did have had not received FDA approval.

Nevertheless, when the British moved to inoculate their troops, DOD decided it would have to change its policy and do the same, even though it would have to ration our supplies on the basis of the greatest need among the troops. I was brought in out of concern for what other Coalition partners -- like the Egyptians, who were providing 100,000 ground troops as I recall -- would think if they learned we were inoculating our troops but not theirs. So I either had to clear, or have prepared, a message to those allies saying that as soon as we got sufficient supplies we would share them.

The funny part of all this was the source of those supplies. For Anthrax, it was a normal pharmaceutical factory. For Botulinum Toxin, the "factory" producing the serum was "a horse at Fort Myer." I'm not joking. This is what John Jumper told us. When I reported this to Clarke, we couldn't help but laugh -- what would happen if the horse died? Dick wrote about this in his post-9-11 book, getting it slightly wrong. He said he learned it

from a Colonel. Only I went to that briefing, and only I told him.

Q: So what happened when the war started?

ROPE: As was always the case in crisis situations, a working group had been set up in the Ops Center with NEA as the lead bureau. It was agreed, however, that once the balloon went up, leadership would switch from NEA to PM; and we had decided that Charlie Duelfer would head the working group. Dick, I, and anyone else Dick may have shared the information with, if any in PM, knew roughly when Operation Desert Storm would begin and when the first Coalition strikes would occur. We didn't know precisely, though, and when we did learn around 2 p.m. one afternoon that they would start that night, Washington time, Charlie was on a plane to California. So I had to stand in for him.

Around 6 pm there was a report -- that Bob Kimmitt tried hard to have retrieved -- that a US naval vessel in the Persian Gulf had launched a cruise missile. That told us things were about to start. It would take a SLCM about an hour to reach Baghdad. I met up with Jock Covey, an outstanding officer who was NEA PDAS, around 6 p.m. and remember saying to him as we entered the Ops Center that we'd spent our careers working in the cause of preventing war and now we were going to be part of one. We went into the Working Group room, and he explained to the NEA people in the lead there that I and PM were taking over -- but didn't say why. I guess some of our people replaced NEA people, but I don't remember. All I remember was quietly watching from a kind of control booth, looking down on the working group as we waited for things to happen. Then we saw, on TV around 7 pm, the skies lighting up in Baghdad, with Bernard Shaw reporting.

I don't remember the details of that evening beyond what everyone could see on TV, but I was on the phone a lot with a general on the JCS staff, and most of my work consisted of lining up flight clearances with foreign governments for a stream of aircraft coming from the US to the Middle East. I assume I passed instructions on either to Working Group members who did the necessary or by direct calls to embassies abroad. In any case, I was in charge that first night and reported on all that had gone on to Kimmitt's group the next morning.

Then I continued to be a member of Kimmitt's group for the duration.

Q: You've talked about setting up and backstopping UNSCOM after the war. What can you tell us about that?

ROPE: First I was part of a small group chaired by IO PDAS John Wolfe charged with drafting what became UN Resolution 687, the formal document ending the war. My part involved the portions dealing with the destruction of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, principally chemical weapons. For a time, on Dick's instructions, I kept inserting wording that would empower US military forces to take possession of and destroy those weapons. Kimmitt, however, rejected that, which we sent to him several times. Finally, he basically said to Dick, "Don't you get it? We're not doing that." It was to be done through the UN. So we did Bob's bidding, and I put in the part calling for the establishment of the UN

Special Commission.

Then we had to come up with a plan for that body. Here's where that end-of-the-day "down time" you asked about earlier came in. Dick and I talked about it in that kind of setting. We envisioned a commission led by a high-ranking diplomat from a neutral country like Sweden. We then needed an active US deputy with a strong proliferation background. We wanted a very competent administrative person, also to be American, for which I recruited Mary Ryan, whom I'd known when she headed EUR's Executive Office and who ultimately became an ambassador and Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs. We'd also have people on loan from DOD and the intelligence community who could work as part of the Commission or work with us in Washington, where we were setting up a backstopping office in PM.

All of this came to pass, though I don't remember every detail. Someone identified a very fine, capable and determined Swede in Rolf Ekeus, to head the commission. I proposed Bob Gallucci to Dick, and that's the event that ultimately affected both of our futures – well maybe just mine.

Q: Oh?

ROPE: Bob was a State Department civil servant whom I'd known and liked when he was doing non-proliferation work in OES, the Oceans, Environment and Sciences Bureau. He'd also worked in PM. In 1990, however, he was in his fourth year of a detail to the National War College. Periodically he would call me up as he looked for his next assignment. He wanted to come back to State, but he was sure Dick hated him. I discouraged him from thinking that and said I'd look for possible assignments for him. When at one point he told me he was thinking of taking a staff assistant job in Reggie's office, I told him I thought he could do better.

To make a long story short, when Dick and I were having one of these end-of-the-day chats, he asked who I thought would be good for the UNSCOM deputy job, someone who was a good operator and knew proliferation. I said, "Gallucci." Dick said "yes." I said, "I'll get him," and I ran into my office to call Bob before Dick could change his mind. As soon as I described the job to him, Bob said he wanted it. We cleared his name with Reggie, who took it to Eagleburger. For those who know who Bob Gallucci is, the rest is history.

Q: How did this affect your future.

ROPE: To keep it simple, Bob got Eagle to give him an ambassadorial title for the job, and he did very well at it. I was in Turkey on that trip with Wolfowitz when I saw him on TV in a Baghdad parking lot in a stand-off with Saddam's government over inspections. He was a hard charger, and he eventually got into conflict with Hans Blix, head of IAEA, who wanted him removed. To ease the situation, we brought him down to Washington on some other business. About that time, Dick got into the trouble I mentioned earlier and had to leave PM. Larry Eagleburger had to give Dick some kind of censure and then got

him a job on the NSC, where he did very well, lasting through the rest of Bush I; 8 years of the Clinton Administration; and into Bush II.

Who was picked to replace Dick in PM? Bob Gallucci. What did Bob do almost as soon as he was chosen for the job? He chose someone to replace me!

Q: So this brings us to the end of your tour and your next assignment. How did that turn out?

ROPE: Not well. It was the beginning of the end of my career. There are some aspects of the way it unfolded that leave me still slightly bitter, though I'm not terribly sorry about how things worked out. It ultimately led me into an entirely new and rewarding phase of my life -- as an elementary school teacher.

Q: Okay. Let's turn to that.

ROPE: Not quite yet. There are a few more things I'd like to cover. One is a bit more on the North Korean nuclear issue. Another is backstopping UNSCOM.

Q: Okay. Which do you want to take first?

ROPE: North Korea. I've talked about that already, including the New Year's Eve agreement on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula reached by the North and South at the end of 1991. This followed a South Korean response to President Bush's withdrawal of all nuclear weapons from South Korea, which was to issue a declaration committing South Korea not to produce, possess, deploy, store or use nuclear weapons. It also foreswore South Korean possession of uranium reprocessing or enrichment facilities. These commitments satisfied an entire series of conditions Pyongyang had put forward for allowing IAEA inspection of North Korean nuclear facilities, and those inspections began sometime after that, but not including Yongbyon.

To me, frankly, it was a surprise when the North agreed on December 31 to join the South in declaring the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and entered into a joint North-South commitment not to test, manufacture, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy or use nuclear weapons or to possess nuclear reprocessing or uranium enrichment facilities. Not only that, but they agreed to mutual inspections for verification to be negotiated by the two sides in a joint commission to be set up by North and South for that purpose.

I believed we should follow up on this agreement immediately, by helping the South develop a nuclear inspection regime proposal, and I found a big ally in Ron Lehman and his staff. Relatively quickly, PM officers, whose names I greatly regret forgetting at this moment but who were working under my supervision, put together a model inspection regime that ACDA agreed on. It was specific enough, concrete enough that I went out with Lehman and his top people to Seoul to present it to South Korean officials dealing with the north. Our chief interlocutor was an Ambassador named Kong, who was serving as the South's chief negotiator with the North. I know we made at least two trips during

the next couple of months, and from the point of view of supporting the South they were productive. There was not much that was encouraging coming from the North, however. Ambassador Kong related to us a variety of crude North Korean tactics for avoiding any serious negotiating. One I remember was berating him for having “a Chinese name.” Kong was, in fact, of Chinese extraction, and his name was the same as that of Confucius, whose family lived in China’s Shandong Peninsula, opposite Korea, from whence Ambassador Kong’s family came.

There were, however, some concrete exchanges of proposals between the two sides. The South, of course, wanted to inspect Yongbyon. For its part, the North demanded that its inspectors be able to look at every single US military installation in the South, in intrusive ways that would be hard for the US to accept. In any case, the negotiations weren’t making much progress.

That’s what I remember. For its part, the East Asia Bureau showed little interest in supporting what Lehman and I were doing. It continued to promote the idea of engaging in direct talks with the North Koreans and pursuing the North’s proposal that we supply peaceful nuclear power plants so that it would not need to pursue nuclear development on its own.

Q: Shall we move to PM’s support of UNSCOM, then?

ROPE: Yes.

We had very active cooperation between the Commission and the group we assembled in PM to provide intelligence and other support, including logistical support, to help UNSCOM identify, search out, and inspect Iraqi WMD facilities, including ministries and other organizations that supported Iraq’s chemical weapons forces and development. Rolf Ekeus visited Washington regularly, and we were kind of his home base. He’d call on Dick and/or me to discuss the Commission’s work and any problems; and we’d escort him to meetings with higher-level officials. He was a very fine man, and we had excellent rapport with him, as we did with Gallucci -- primarily me in the latter case.

I don’t recall how we went about setting up the backstopping office. It may well have been that Dick directed or arranged it himself. In any case, we had people from the intelligence community and other agencies working with us. Also, when I say we helped with logistical support, I’m talking about vehicles that we arranged to be loaned to UNSCOM for its operations by the US. I’m pretty sure we did this. The US also provided military support for UNSCOM on several occasions, in the form of air strikes or, at a minimum, unequivocal threats of force; and we initiated requests for these operations within the USG.

One thing I don’t recall, but that I noticed when I reviewed my final ER from PM, is that I got credit for “being a key strategist of inter-agency efforts to drain Saddam’s financial assets to pay for UNSCOM work.” I don’t remember that at all, but it would have been something I would have involved in.

What I remember most clearly is that -- as in the case of Bob's Baghdad parking lot stand-off -- there were frequent instances in which Saddam's government would refuse UNSCOM access to sites it needed to see. One was the ministry of agriculture, I remember, where it took a couple of days to get UNSCOM in. The tried and true method to get what we wanted was to threaten Saddam with bombing. For this we had to get DOD cooperation, and I worked a lot -- as I did throughout my time as PM PDAS -- with counterparts on the JCS staff like John Jumper and General Dave Hale. I think for bombing threats it was primarily Hale, who had to go all the way to Colin Powell to get approvals. This was a frustrating exercise, because Powell was always slow to agree. To be honest, now, I'm not sure we ever actually had to bomb Saddam to get what we wanted. I think we did once; but, in any case, threatening to do so was generally all we needed to get it.

I remember at the very end of my tenure, there was a standoff going on and Powell was really dragging his feet on authorizing us to threaten Saddam with bombing. It went on for at least three weeks. I remember one other time when the need for threat of was so totally obvious and urgent that Dave Hale cleared off for JCS on a cable instructing our representatives in Baghdad to make the threat. Powell hadn't been available, and we needed DOD agreement. I later learned that Powell blew up when he learned what Hale had done. The threat worked, however, as it always did. I have to say, that although I could see him only at a distance, I didn't form a favorable impression of Powell. This moves me to tell a story from years later when George W. Bush had wrapped up the nomination for president.

Q: Oh?

ROPE: In 1990 Scooter Libby invited me to join a Sunday softball group. I did, and although that group disbanded, he and I joined another group and we've been Sunday softball -- and winter touch football -- pals ever since. One day in the spring of 2000, after W had wrapped up the nomination, Scooter and I were throwing the ball around and talking about who W might choose as Vice President. I mentioned Colin Powell, saying I wasn't a fan of Powell's but he couldn't do much harm as Veep. Scooter's answer was, "No. He can be Secretary of State He can't do much harm over there." True story. Whether Scooter had inside information, given his closeness to Cheney, I don't know; but it was reflective of how Powell was viewed in that circle.

Q: Does that about wrap things up?

ROPE: A few last things.

One was our own little mini-aid program for Russia that Dick put together that spring. After the Gulf War, DOD had a large surplus of MREs -- Meals Ready to Eat -- that it wanted to dispose of. At the time, things were quite bad in Russia. There was a lot of economic distress. So Dick worked out with the Pentagon a program to fly a plane load, possibly two, planeloads of MREs to Russia, for distribution to service organizations in

Moscow. He took the idea to Eagleburger, who bought it, and I think Baker approved. I don't recall how it was set up, because it required volunteers from Embassy Moscow to make arrangements for unloading the planes and distributing the goods; but it was done. Perhaps it was set up through the Embassy Attachés. In any case, on the day it all happened, Embassy Moscow sent in a cable objecting to it all. The objections seemed to be focused on the inconvenience the Embassy was caused by the unloading and distribution operation, which happened on a weekend. In any case, Moscow was unhappy.

Dick was out of town, so Eagle called me up to his small inner office, along with the PM Colonel in charge of the whole thing. He went into a tirade banging his gold eagle-topped cane on his desk and saying "I'm going to fire Dick Clarke." I said, "No you're not," while the Colonel retreated outside. Larry calmed down, and that was the end of it. I think the program was perfectly fine. It was unorthodox, though -- an example of Dick Clarke creativity that sometimes annoyed people. We did a variety of unusual things like that.

One other item -- initiated by the Colonel I just mentioned, whose name I wish I could recall -- proved later to be of real significance. He was concerned about the issue of land mines, left unretrieved after conflicts that were killing or maiming farmers, children and other innocent civilians; and he started a small campaign within the bureaucracy that led, I believe to some US initiatives in this area in the year or two following my departure. Ultimately this became a much bigger issue, and I believe the US has now foresworn the use of land mines altogether. I don't remember more about the Colonel's initiative -- just that Dick and I encouraged it.

Finally, in that last half year I accompanied Reggie to a session in the White House situation Room where we worked on a post-fall-of-the-Berlin-Wall strategy. My one contribution was a line that we had a window of opportunity to permanently alienate the former Soviet Satellites from Russia. I also went on a trip with EUR Assistant Secretary Tom Niles and my old bosses Richard Haass and Dave Gompert from the NSC for consultations on various matters, including the emerging crisis in the Balkans. We met with counterparts in London, Bonn and Paris.

That's it. So much went on in those years it's good I can't remember it all or this oral history would never end!

Q: So now, you've essentially said you were the one who revived Bob Gallucci's career, getting Clarke to agree to his appointment as deputy chief of UNSCOM. Yet when he replaced Dick, Bob moved quickly to replace you. You've also said, though, that you and he had good working relationship. So Gallucci's decision to replace you wasn't related to clashes of personality?

ROPE: Not so far as I was concerned, and we worked together reasonably well in the one or two months between the time of Dick's move to the NSC and my departure from PM. I did find it annoying that Bob refused to use the secure E-Mail system Dick and I used to

communicate with people throughout the Bureau and in the Seventh Floor leadership, because it was less efficient and made it harder to get information to and out of him. But that was not a huge deal. In any case, Bob had chosen Marc Grossman as my successor months before. He didn't let me know, and even when I told him I'd heard rumors to that effect he wouldn't confirm it. I thought that was silly, particularly given the history of our past conversations about his future and role in bringing him back to the Department; but I didn't take it, or the decision not to keep me on, personally -- it was just ironic.

The key reason, I'm pretty sure, came down to differences on North Korea. They didn't surface in our two months together; but after I left in the summer of 1992 and Marc came back from Turkey to replace me, one of my former subordinates told me Marc had said he and Bob were going to change the way PM dealt with the Korean nuclear issue and stop opposing EA's proposed approach. They certainly did that! Bob not only championed the approach I had opposed but within a couple of years was our chief negotiator, reaching agreement on deal under which we undertook to give the DPRK nuclear power plants in exchange for their agreement -- not carried out -- to give up their nuclear program. To this day I believe that deal was a mistake, and while I know it's not a simple matter we can see what it led to -- collapse of the deal entirely.

Q: So, now let's get to your next assignment. You said it didn't go well. You were well qualified to become an Ambassador; but once you're at the PDAS/Ambassador level, the personnel process isn't the same as for lower-ranking jobs. What can you tell us about how that worked?

ROPE: At that level there's no longer a bidding process. To be nominated as an Ambassador to any given country, an FSO needs to be the candidate of the regional bureau overseeing the post in question, or Personnel's candidate -- or one of Personnel's candidates if PER has more than one -- or be backed by a high Department principal. I assume it's still pretty much the same. In my time, anyway, that process would produce a short list of names for the Director General to send to the Deputies Committee, chaired by the Deputy Secretary, then Larry Eagleburger. Other members included the Director General and I'm not sure who else. The Executive Secretary attended, but I don't know if he or she had a vote.

The Deputies Committee would decide upon one officer to be the Department's nominee, often the candidate of the regional bureau, though that wasn't assured. After that was done, the next step would be to gain White House approval, in one of the periodic meetings in which the Deputy Secretary, accompanied by the Director General, would meet with political counterparts at the White House to decide whether the President would nominate the Department's candidate or a political nominee. There was a lot of sheer luck involved in the process. I know one excellent FSO who was crushed when he didn't get to be a DCM in a major European post. As a consolation prize, his Assistant Secretary arranged for him to be the Department's candidate to be an Ambassador in Scandinavia. When his name reached the White House, then White House Chief of Staff Don Regan reportedly said the White House had a Scandinavian-American for that job, and he asked if my colleague would be interested in a much larger post under EUR's

purview. So instead of being a DCM, he became Ambassador to a major country and went from there to be EUR Assistant Secretary and later to another important embassy before retiring.

I wanted to be an ambassador and wanted to return to East Asia if possible. There were no alternate jobs in the Department available, at least none that interested me. If I didn't become an Ambassador, my career lifespan would end fairly quickly. I was already a Minister Counselor, and there were only two supergrades above that -- Career Minister and Career Ambassador. Ten-year time-in-grade rules meant that if I wasn't promoted to Career Minister within the next 4 years, I'd have to retire.

I had a good record. I'd received \$10,000 performance pay awards every year I was in PM and received performance pay in every job going back to PRC/M. I'd received several Superior Honor Awards and one Presidential Honor Award -- though the plaque had to be retrieved when it was discovered that those of all recipients had a typo recognizing them for "outsanding" performance, and I never got a replacement. My efficiency reports from Dick, endorsed by Reggie, strongly recommended me for promotion to Career Minister. Nonetheless, aside from Charlie Hill and I guess Jo Sisco, I'd never known of anyone who got that promotion without first being an Ambassador. And though I was only 51, if I didn't receive a promotion within 4 years, I'd have to retire.

I very much wanted to return to EAP, which I still considered my "home bureau." It became clear that spring, however, that I'd have no support for that from the EAP front office. I'd had that one exchange with Dick Solomon, in which he told me to watch my step on North Korea; but I prefer to think my problem was regional bureau parochialism.

I'd remained on good terms with EAP colleagues even when we had differences. Desaix, EAP's PDAS, whose support would be critical if I wanted to be EAP's candidate for any post, was a friend since Taichung days. We'd been fellow office directors when I headed PRC/M, and in those days he was full of support, sympathy, and praise for my work. When I sought his support for an Embassy, however, he said that would be hard for him because he at least five more junior, less qualified FSO's in EAP who must be taken care of first because they were "in the Bureau."

I won't say a lot more -- it just sounds whiney. I'd had to leave EA not because I'd wanted to but because Wolfowitz opposed my work on the Taiwan Arms Communiqué and had no place for me when I left PRC/M. I'd managed to make something of myself in other areas, out of necessity; and I thought it unfair that I'd be excluded just because I wasn't "in the Bureau" nine years later. I found it reminiscent of when Tom Shoesmith said he was the "Godfather" of the Chrysanthemum club and couldn't bring himself to let me have an assignment in Japan. In retrospect, perhaps I shouldn't have turned down Dick Solomon's offer to be EAP's China DAS in 1989; but the PM job was better, and I don't regret taking it.

Getting EAP's support wasn't the only way, however, and I did get myself on at least one

list that went to the Deputies Committee that spring, probably with Dick Clarke's or Reggie's help, but maybe just through my own efforts with PER. I was someone's candidate to be Ambassador to Indonesia, and Desaix was EAP's. Seventh Floor sources told me the Deputies Committee deadlocked over which of us should get the job, so Larry decided to select a third FSO, Bob Barry. Bob was a fine officer who'd headed the Soviet Desk and was senior in years and time-in-grade to both Desaix and me. He'd headed the promotion board I served on in 1976, and I had great respect for him. Djakarta would have been a very large Ambassadorial starting point in any case. Kuala Lumpur would have been more appropriate, but Bob Kimmitt had a candidate for that, IO PDAS John Wolfe, whom I also liked and respected; and John got KL.

At that point there was really only one other Ambassadorial-level spot of interest to me in EA. That was the non-official position of Director of AIT Taipei. AIT was much larger than many embassies, and it was a Chinese Language post. Again, I wasn't EAP's candidate, but Eagleburger stepped in and got it for me, gaining Secretary Baker's agreement to name me to the post. The current AIT Director, Stan Brooks, wasn't due to leave for a year. So I was assigned to Chinese language refresher training in the interim.

Q: Despite the fact that you were so involved in the 1982 Communiqué, you were headed to Taiwan and wanted to go there?

ROPE: Yes. I knew that some like Fred Chien might not be happy about it, but I had reason to hope that in other quarters I'd been rehabilitated, if you will. I'd regularly served as the lead State Department officer at affairs honoring Taiwan's annual purchasing missions, and I'd established good rapport with the Admiral who led them. He'd been a friend of Scott Hallford's during Scott's 4-year stint as Deputy Director of AIT, and a friend of Scott's was a friend of mine. I'd also devised a means of substantially increasing Taiwan's arms purchasing power on my arrival in PM, as I mentioned earlier; and Taiwan officials were aware of that. I'd also lunched frequently with Taiwan's military attaché in DC and had contacts with others at CCNAA.

Q: So you went back to FSI for more Chinese language training.

ROPE: Yes. I hadn't served in a Chinese-language post since 1975 and hadn't worked on China since 1983, so I needed to bring my Chinese back up to snuff. I was put in a class with Richard Mueller, Gene Martin and Carol Reynolds, all of whom were headed for China posts -- Richard to be Consul General in Hong Kong, Gene to the same post in Guangzhou, and Carol to be a political officer in Beijing. Ms. Ou'yang, a wonderful instructor from whom I'd first learned Chinese and with whom I still stay in touch, was our main teacher. It was the first time I'd studied Chinese at FSI as a member of a class. Up until then, all my instruction had been tutorial.

I stayed in that class for 9 or 10 months, and got my Chinese back up to professional levels of competence; but things started to go south on my assignment fairly quickly.

Q: How so?

ROPE: When I left PM, I went to see David Zweifel, the officer in Personnel who handled senior officer assignments. I'd known him years earlier when he was head of the Libya desk. When he showed me the paper Baker had signed appointing me to AIT, I told him I thought we should not send an Agrément request to Taipei right away.

Q: Why?

ROPE: It was an election year. I thought we should wait until that was over. If President Bush was re-elected, the request would have more authority behind it. The Taiwan government had a record of resisting US requests to send FSOs to head AIT. I think it perceived FSOs as more likely to hew closely to the limits of our position on Taiwan's status and relations with the PRC than political appointees. Political appointees were also more likely to be strong advocates for Taiwan in Congress. In my case, there was the additional possibility of an objection because of my role in the Taiwan Arms Communiqué. After it was issued, there had been one article in the Taipei press identifying me as the source of the "pro-Communist wind" blowing in the EA Bureau, or rather saying that it was my departure that put an end to it. This was another reason why I wanted to be in the strongest possible position, with a re-elected President's name behind me, indeed a President for whom I'd worked, before I was proposed.

On the other hand, if Bush wasn't re-elected, all Ambassadorial appointments would be moot, and it would be up to a new State Department team to decide whether to keep me as the nominee or name a new candidate. That in itself was a good reason for holding off on requesting Agrément.

Zweifel, however, insisted that since AIT was not an official diplomatic post, and my appointment did not require Senate confirmation, we did not need to send an Agrément request to Taipei. I explained this was not so. Though US-Taiwan relations were unofficial, we observed the same diplomatic niceties with Taiwan when it came to naming a chief of mission as we did with any other post to which we sent an ambassador, or in my case a quasi-ambassador. We just did it differently. An Agrément request would be sent to AIT Taipei by AIT Washington. It would go through the same, highly restricted, Agrément channel used with all embassies and would be delivered only to the chief of mission and/or deputy chief of mission. When Zweifel still expressed doubts, I told him he needed to talk to EAP, which would confirm all this and explain how to do it. I thought he accepted that and went off for a post-PM Ocracoke vacation.

When I returned I found, to my horror, that Zweifel had not only not consulted with EAP but on his own initiative had sent a routine, unclassified cable -- a standard "TM-1" -- to AIT Taipei announcing my assignment as Stan Brooks' replacement. Unlike a close-hold Agrément message, a TM-1 would be distributed to AIT's administrative section and other addressees at post as well as in Washington. It greatly increased the likelihood that word of my appointment would reach the Taipei government before AIT could ever convey a proper Agrément request.

This was serious blunder. Zweifel's cable was the first Stan Brooks heard that he would be replaced, and that was no way to inform him. I know from an old friend who brought the TM-1 to him that he saw the mistake immediately and moved quickly to have all copies of the message retrieved and destroyed.

The ultimate result, however, was exactly what I had not wanted. After learning what had happened, Lynn Pascoe, who'd replaced Desaix, decided we needed to send an Agrément request immediately. So EAP put together the bio that goes with an Agrément request and sent it off sometime in September. I wasn't even consulted. Lynn, incidentally, ended up getting the AIT job.

Q: What was Taiwan's reaction?

ROPE: I don't know if there ever was an official response. Those things can take time, and I was at FSI studying Chinese every day. It wasn't until after the election that I heard anything more. Then Eagleburger's top aide, Bill Montgomery phoned to tell me Senators Helms, Wallop, and a few others of their ilk had learned of my appointment and called Eagleburger -- by then Secretary of State -- to demand that the assignment be cancelled. It was clear the reason for this demand was my role in the 1982 Communiqué.

Around the same time, Bill said, a Chinese businessman, who on occasion served as an unofficial emissary from Taipei, contacted Scowcroft with a similar message. Eagleburger and Scowcroft agreed, Bill said, that while one of those things alone wouldn't be enough to derail my assignment, the two taken together -- Senatorial interventions and the Taiwan guy -- left them no choice. My appointment was cancelled, and Larry wanted me to go to Personnel, again it would be Zweifel, to "see what they have for you there."

Q: Do you know what lay behind all that?

ROPE: I never really knew. I heard that a Helms staffer had been in Taiwan some time before, and Helms, of course, had very much opposed the 1982 Taiwan Arms Communiqué; but I never knew exactly what took place. Perhaps some in the Department played a role. I just have no idea. Bill Gleysteen once told me "you can never be too suspicious;" but what's the use of wondering, as Julie said in Carousel. I went into this knowing it was possible I'd never get to Taipei.

Q: So after you talked with Montgomery, you went to Personnel. Where did that lead?

ROPE: I went to see Zweifel, not the smartest or most creative FSO I ever knew. He said with my qualifications I'd be a great candidate to be CINCPAC POLAD. That would be a real step down; I'd been choosing POLADS for the last three years. Zweifel had no other ideas of value, though, so I said I'd think about it and then went up to Eagleburger's office. There, Montgomery said Zweifel "was supposed to offer you Consul General Frankfurt." Frankfurt was a huge post, with between 400 and 500 people -- bigger than AIT and most embassies. It was the only kind of thing Larry could offer. Assignment to a

Consulate General wouldn't be affected by the change in administrations, and, as a lame duck, or "lame Eagle," Larry was in no position to offer more.

I thanked Bill but said that just wasn't what I wanted. I'd have had to learn German, and it wouldn't take me back to EA. It also was most unlikely to gain me promotion to Career Minister, and without that I'd have to retire at the end of my tour. All I asked of Larry, I said, was to let me stay in Chinese language training, against the possibility that a China language post would come up for me under the new administration, and to put in a good word for me, if he could, with the new Department leadership. I don't know if the latter ever happened, but I was allowed to continue Chinese.

A few weeks later, I got a request from Frank Wisner not unlike the one from him just before I left PM. He was hearing conflicting things about China from EAP and DOD. At DOD, he said, Lilley was portraying China as a growing military threat. EAP disagreed, but Frank wasn't sure he agreed with whatever they were saying. I wrote a paper for him outlining the multiple social and economic challenges facing China domestically and saying it would be preoccupied with internal development for the foreseeable future. It would be a long time before it could pose a serious military threat, and our challenge was to build a strong, constructive relationship with Beijing in the interim so that would never be a problem. This was 1992, of course.

In the course of my exchanges with Frank on that, he talked with Larry, who confirmed all Bill Montgomery had said. Larry had wanted to see me, Frank said, but he just wasn't good about giving bad news.

Q: OK, so you stayed in Chinese and a new administration came into office. Then what?

ROPE: I hoped for a time that the new EAP Assistant Secretary might be Susan Shirk. I'd known her in Hong Kong, as I mentioned, and thought she might be supportive of my interest in returning to EA, perhaps even as her PDAS. Her husband was Sam Popkin, whom Priscilla and I also knew in Hong Kong -- they were in that CCAS Group that went into China after Ping Pong and met with Zhou Enlai.

Sam had been a pollster for the Clinton campaign, and the two of them had received enough encouragement about jobs in Washington that they'd found a house here and lined up private schools for their children. Then word got out that Winston Lord would get the EAP job. On Inauguration Eve, at a Newsweek party, we ran into Susan. She immediately asked me if it was true Winston would be the new EAP Assistant Secretary, and I told her I was pretty sure that was so. She hadn't even been told! There was nothing for her and Sam to do but return to California. A few years later, she did become an EAP DAS.

Once Winston was in place, I went to see him to congratulate him on his new post. I told him what had happened with my AIT appointment and said I'd be honored to be re-named to the AIT directorship, though I'd fully understand if I were not. I also asked to be considered for any appropriate jobs in EAP. Winston was non-committal, but he

declared that he had strongly supported the 1982 Communiqué.

I also tried to see your and my old S/S chief, Peter Tarnoff, who'd become Under Secretary for Political Affairs. I'd had a chance encounter with him in the Department Lobby, and he'd been friendly. I couldn't get an interview with him, though; Marc Grossman, the new Executive Secretary, said he just wasn't seeing old colleagues. Marc did pass a memo to him from me, telling him briefly what I'd been doing and what had happened about AIT. As with Winston, I said I'd appreciate any support he could give me for a new post. This wasn't an unusual thing to do. I'd worked for Peter for two years, and what had happened to me wasn't dissimilar to what happened to Peter in the Reagan administration, when he couldn't get a job. There was reason to think he might be sympathetic.

I went to see Peter Burley, whom I'd known when we were members of Kimmitt's daily Iraq group. He'd become deputy to the new Director General, Genta Hawkins Holmes. I asked his advice and said that one post for which I thought I'd be particularly well qualified for was Cyprus, though I'd heard my former -- outstanding -- subordinate Richard Boucher might get that. Peter was sympathetic but said if I wanted help from Personnel I'd have to see Genta, whom I'd never met. So I went to her secretary to make an appointment. By chance, she came out of her office and invited me in for a chat.

I briefly told her what had happened about AIT, and expressed hope that I could be in the running for new ambassadorial appointments. I raised my desire to be put on Personnel's list for Cyprus. I had the background for it, I said, and while the Cyprus problem was pretty intractable the recent election of Greek Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides, an old schoolmate of Turkish Cypriot leader Denktash, raised at least the possibility that we could help the UN broker a settlement. I thought it was a good conversation, and I clearly understood Genta to agree to make me Personnel's candidate. In retrospect, maybe I said something wrong. Marc Grossman told me that, when the Deputies Committee met and selected Richard Boucher, Genta never mentioned my name.

Around the same time, Dick Clarke called me from the NSC. He was overseeing our military intervention in Somalia, where Admiral Jon Howe, whom I'd known when he replaced Rick Burt as PM Assistant Secretary, was going to head a UN peacekeeping force. Dick asked if I'd be willing to serve as Howe's chief of staff. That was potentially quite dangerous, and our son Robert was still just short of 10 years old; but it was important, and I said I'd do it. Howe decided he didn't want a chief of staff, however, and that was the end of that.

One day, I dropped in on Bill Montgomery, who had become chief aide to the new Deputy Secretary of State, Clifton Wharton. Bill had just come back from a meeting with Wharton at the White House, and he was dejected. Secretary Christopher had already said ambassadorial appointments would "reflect America," which was code for "diversity," which was code for "women and minorities." At the White House meeting, Montgomery said, Clinton aide Bruce Lindsay said that while ambassadorial appointments would "reflect America," this would not apply to political appointees, who would make up

between 30 and 40 percent of the total, including most top posts. The Foreign Service, Lindsay said, would “make up the difference.” What that meant was that a substantial number of the FSO appointments would have to go to women and/or minorities. White, male FSOs would be at a significant disadvantage.

This proved true for me. For the first time in my career, over the next two years, I was told several times not to bother competing for jobs because they were “going to a woman.” I’d always tried to help women -- and minorities -- advance in the Department, so I found it ironic. It was understandable, but it didn’t increase my prospects any.

“Reinventing Government” was also going on, and the new administration was seeking to cut the size of the bureaucracy. Christopher had said “State must do its part.” Outstanding senior FSOs like Mike Glitman, former INF negotiator, former Ambassador to Belgium, and still relatively young, were being told to retire. If they did not, they could be relegated to doing Freedom of Information work -- declassifying documents. Overall, few FSOs that I knew from my generation ended up becoming ambassadors.

One colleague I was particularly concerned about was Jock Covey. He’d been my counterpart in the Near East and South Asia Bureau throughout the Gulf War. He was as fine an officer of my generation -- actually a bit younger than I -- as I knew. His record was impeccable, and he should have received a good ambassadorial appointment after NEA. Instead, the early Clinton administration found him consigned to a State Department annex working on a security project. You’ll recall that House Banking Committee Chairman Henry Gonzalez and some others on Capitol Hill had attacked the Bush Administration for purportedly “coddling” Saddam Hussein, via agricultural credits, prior to the Gulf War. Jock’s Assistant Secretary, John Kelly, was off in Scandinavia as an ambassador by then, and I think Jock was bearing the brunt of political blame.

Naively, I sent Peter Tarnoff another short, unsolicited memo, expressing concern over what was happening to Jock. “No one I knew during the Gulf War, except Bob Kimmitt,” I said, “carried a heavier load than Jock.” Jock was a strong, extremely capable officer of high integrity with good judgment, I told Peter, and I hoped he would receive consideration for a significant post. I later heard that Peter, as head of the San Francisco World Affairs Council, had opposed the Gulf War. I thought, “With friends like me, Jock doesn’t need enemies.”

Q: So where did all this leave you?

ROPE: I continued studying Chinese. I really wanted to get back to full professional competence, and I ultimately did. I hoped I’d get to use it as an FSO, but if my career was going to end, as was beginning to look likely, I wanted to go back to China and work in the private sector or for a non-profit.

Around April, my nemesis Zweifel called me to say he wanted to assign me, over complement, to the Policy Planning Staff. S/P, he said, needed someone to do a paper on a global non-proliferation policy for the new administration. I knew a fair amount about

proliferation, but I was far from an expert and would have to have at least one subordinate working for me to produce such a paper, and there were still undecided posts, like Singapore, for which I had at least a chance of qualifying and for which I'd need Chinese. So I said I'd prefer to finish out my Chinese course, due to end in June. I also knew that the standard NSDM on non-proliferation policy -- or whatever the interagency policy papers for the President were called in those days -- had already been completed and approved by Clinton. So a paper by S/P at that point would be of little relevance.

Zweifel accepted this for a time, but then he really began to get on my case. He told me I was committing "waste, fraud and mismanagement" by staying in Chinese and said that in resisting the S/P assignment I was lacking in service discipline. I was already pretty fed up with him for his blunder of the past summer, and I blew up. I told him I'd been willing to go to Somalia at considerable personal risk, "so I don't need you, David, to lecture me about service discipline." Still, I agreed to talk to Hans Binnendijk, Deputy to Sam Lewis, head of Policy Planning.

Q: This is now about May of '93?

ROPE: Correct. When I talked to Binnendijk, I found he was in no hurry for me to report to S/P, and he agreed I could stay in Chinese until the course was over. So I finished it, getting an S-3 R-3, and reported to S/P. I found it to be a rather depressed group of people. In Baker's time, under Dennis Ross, Policy Planning had been a high-flying operation with a lot of top-flight people. Not so in the new administration. Sam Lewis was a wise and respected senior diplomat, a former Ambassador to Israel; and he did have one interesting exercise going on with Joe Nye, then Chairman of the National Intelligence Council at CIA. I got involved with that at the end of 1993. There were also some excellent people still there -- Luigi Einaudi, Charles Gati, and later a kind of abrasive fellow whom I liked a lot, Phil Kaplan. It was easy to see, however, that under Warren Christopher the Policy Planning Staff was being little used, and morale was low.

Q: What happened with the nuclear proliferation study?

ROPE: I didn't have to start on it instantly, but I did ask Hans why, since the Administration had completed its non-proliferation policy review, we needed such a paper. He still wanted it done. So I agreed to start reading up on it and making contacts that could help me. Fairly quickly, however, something came up that put it on hold.

Q: What was that?

ROPE: Peter Thomsen, who been Lord's DCM in China, had become Winston's PDAS in EAP. We'd been friends in the Senior Seminar, when, as I mentioned, he'd gone out of his way to extol my work in PRC/M. Notwithstanding that, he was no more helpful than Desaix when it came to supporting me for an embassy. He did, however, ask if I'd be interested in going out to Brunei for 3-4 months to serve as Chargé d'Affaires. Terri Tull was slated to become the new ambassador, but it would be a few months before she'd get there. Though she was junior to me in rank and senior to me in age, that was how things

were going. We'd been colleagues in INR, and I liked her. Embassy Bandar Seri Begawan was a very small post, and the DCM was due for home leave. The Administration was gearing up to host a big meeting of APEC heads of state in Seattle, and EAP wanted to be sure the Sultan of Brunei attended. I agreed to go, and Hans didn't object. We worked out the logistical details, and off I went.

Q: What was that like?

ROPE: It was great! Brunei's a small oil sultanate in the middle of North Borneo that's one of the richest places, per capita, in the world; but it's not a place I'd have wanted to spend three years in as an ambassador. For a few months, it was wonderful. Priscilla and the kids came along at our own expense, and we lived in the Ambassadorial residence with a pool and tennis court. I called on the Sultan at least once and dealt with his key advisors. Brunei was a member of ASEAN, and I had lots of ASEAN-related business to do with the Foreign Ministry; and there were other kinds of exchanges with the government. As a short-time job, it was quite interesting.

Q: So you never did write that paper.

ROPE: Not then, and in the end not ever.

Priscilla was finishing an MAT program at George Mason University. So I took ten year-old son Robert with me and went out via Hawaii, where we had old friends; Hong Kong, where we stayed with the Muellers; and up to Guangzhou to see Gene and Joyce Martin. We spent a couple of days in Singapore, where I had consultations, staying with Chargé d'Affaires Skip Boyce, a very funny and sharp old colleague. Though I had at least some business to do, it was largely a father-son sightseeing trip. Then we flew to Brunei.

Priscilla, and Kate on summer break from college, came out a few days later, and we had a great six weeks -- swimming, playing tennis, exploring what there was to see in Brunei, and having meals prepared by a wonderful Chinese cook. There was enough business to keep me occupied for a normal workday; and by reading all the ASEAN traffic I could educate myself about US activities throughout Southeast Asia. The Sultan lived in an 1,800-room palace with a gold-ball-topped tower that looked like a gilded version of the radome on the tower at Dulles Airport. He had a huge fleet of cars, and I'd see him occasionally driving his own Bentley coupe. My mission to deliver the President's invitation to the meeting in Seattle was a total success, with the Sultan taking pleasure in the fact that he and President Clinton were about the same age.

I got to use my Chinese a fair amount. The key man in the Foreign Ministry was its Under Secretary, Dato Lim Jock Seng. He was ethnic Chinese, as was his brother, who was number three in the Finance Ministry. In Brunei, top posts went to Malays, largely relatives of the Sultan, and down a few pegs were Chinese -- or in some cases British expat -- officials who ran things. We took a trip to Kota Kinabalu in Sabah, which is a totally Chinese-speaking town, and we socialized with both the Chinese Ambassador and Taiwan's representative. Our cook, an ethnic Chinese Malay, couldn't read Chinese but

spoke excellent Mandarin and was well educated. After Priscilla and the family returned home, I went back to Kota Kinabalu to attend his wedding. I even ate lunch, regularly, in a downtown Chinese restaurant.

We had a large, Frank Stella print in our living room. A year later, when I was at the UN for the fall, I saw it on Madelyn Albright's wall in the Waldorf Towers.

Brunei was in a very conservative, religious phase. Women wrapped themselves in colorful polyester sarongs that wrapped up around their heads -- this in the summer, near the equator. Alcohol was banned. I could tell which officials found that onerous when I threw parties. Some would head straight for the Buckler, Heineken's non-alcoholic beer that had half a percent of alcohol. The biggest social problem was young men who would slip across the border into Sarawak and bring back large amounts of cough syrup on which to get high.

The embassy was so small that I did almost all the work, supported by local employees. I found trade promotion work that took me back to Beijing days, sending trade opportunity reports off to Commerce for infrastructure projects, such as a big new airport Brunei wanted to build. The aviation chief said he wanted it to be as good as Denver's brand new, modern airport, which he'd seen. I also met or corresponded with US business people, like Bechtel's Singapore representative, who visited periodically from Singapore. There was a lot of construction going on in Brunei. Families were being moved out of traditional stilt houses along the rivers and mangrove swamps and into land-based housing developments -- also on stilts, but this time concrete.

There was some economic reporting to do. Brunei had huge oil wealth, with Shell operating oil rigs off-shore. I don't recall specifics, but the government was secretive about its finances, and I devoted some time to making contacts with long-time British advisors, actually civil servants within the Brunei government, who were the brains behind managing the Sultanate's money. The Sultan's brother, a man with a big playboy reputation, was Minister of Finance, but underlings like Dato Lim's brother really ran things. We had a military attaché based in Singapore who visited from time to time, and I accompanied him to events with the Bruneian military.

He was a good guy, as were all the people who worked for me in Brunei. We socialized with the Ambassadorial secretary, a very savvy, veteran FSS Officer named Helga, and her husband Charlie. I played squash with our communicator -- a lot after the family left. The administrative officer was very, and we socialized with her, too. The local staff were good. It was a happy little team.

I stayed there from mid-July until just before Thanksgiving, without the family for the last ten weeks. I took a trip into Sarawak and camped in a national park, near caves where humans lived 40,000 years ago and where, from the high, high, cave ceilings, farmers harvested swallows nests to be sold at high prices for birds nest soup. I traveled once to Singapore on business, socialized on the diplomatic circuit, and read a long biography of Sir Stamford Raffles, detailing the history of his travels throughout the region and

reactions to what he saw. At night I would call periodically to the Department to see if any assignment possibilities were coming up -- which consistently were not. Pierre Shostal, a friend I'd known when he was at NATO years earlier, had succeeded Zweifel. As I was talking to him from Brunei one night he said "the word is you tried a little too hard to get an embassy." That was annoying. I hadn't done anything other than people normally do, I said, and he was sympathetic; but it hardly boded well.

In any case, I had a wonderful time. Home after Thanksgiving, I went back to Policy Planning. What do you think Hans Binnendijk wanted me to do?

Q: How about something on proliferation?

ROPE: He still wanted that paper, and I still really didn't want to do it. How important could it be if, for five months, he hadn't assigned it to someone else?"

Q: You were being difficult again, eh?

ROPE: Not really. I had a good relationship with Hans. I even knew his wife, Mary Locke, who worked on the Hill. Along with her colleague Broadus Bailey, I'd had lots of contact back with her in China Desk days. And, notwithstanding occasionally testy exchanges as with Mr. Zweifel, I was generally a team player. I stood up when important policy issues were at stake and could argue a position hard, as I did with the Turkish Defense Fund; but I would have had no problem with doing that paper. I just didn't have the depth of knowledge and experience needed to produce a quality product -- at least not without a good proliferation expert to work with -- and it wasn't needed.

A fortuitous thing saved me from it for good. A naval officer on loan from DOD, who had the S/P East Asia portfolio, was suddenly called back to the Pentagon. S/P had no replacement, so I took it on; and very quickly I was involved in the exercise I mentioned that Sam Lewis and Joe Nye were doing.

Q: What was that?

ROPE: It was a monthly project that brought the two leaders together, along with someone from DOD and maybe a staffer from the NSC, plus subordinates as needed. The idea was to focus on a country important to US interests -- call it Country X -- and look ahead ten years. Nye's people at the CIA were to project where Country X would be in ten years. Policy Planning's job was to think of policies the US should follow to put us where we wanted to be in our relations with Country X ten years hence. The results would go into a joint paper they would brief to Tony Lake and Sandy Berger at the NSC. This gave Nye, a public policy professor on leave from Harvard ensconced in an agency whose job was analysis, not policy, an entry into the policy arena; and it gave Lewis a way of exerting influence beyond the limits of the Department.

China was the next country on the agenda, it turned out, and I became fully involved. In our initial meeting, Sam, Joe and others concluded that one looming issue was so

threatening to US-China relations that it would be fruitless to try to look out ten years without dealing with it first.

Q: What was that?

ROPE: Most Favored Nation treatment for China. Nancy Pelosi, then a Congresswoman from California, not yet Speaker, was demanding that we withdraw MFN treatment from China if it didn't improve its human rights record. Clinton had endorsed this position as a candidate, and Winston Lord had bought it hook, line and sinker. Christopher seemed to subscribe to it as well. There was tremendous public focus on the matter, and Lord liked to refer to the US and China as two trains heading down a single track directly at each other. Unless China improved its human rights record, he would say, there would be a "trainwreck."

Lewis, Nye, and the others in our small group, didn't think this wise, and I strongly agreed. We didn't think China would give in to outside pressure on human rights, and if we took the kind of drastic action being contemplated it could lead to a rupture in US-China relations akin -- in my words -- to the Sino-Soviet split three decades earlier. If that were the case, there was no predicting where we might be in 10 years. So we decided to focus solely on the human rights-MFN issue. I was assigned the job of drafting a paper proposing an alternative course, one that could advance the cause of human rights in China without the disastrous effects of withdrawing MFN.

Q: You thought it would be that bad?

ROPE: Yes. The Chinese economy had become heavily export driven, and the US was China's biggest single market. A CIA estimate -- it may have been an NIE -- predicted that if we withdrew MFN, 30 million jobs would be lost in China, and the impact on the PRC economy would be devastating. It would take years to recover.

The paper I drafted should be in the archives somewhere. So I'll summarize. Given the intelligence analysis, I argued that, it would be the worst thing a foreign country had done to China since the Soviets withdrew their engineers in 1960; and it would engender the same kind of long-term Chinese bitterness and resentment. The economic and political fall-out in East Asia would be substantial, leading our friends and allies throughout the region to press us to reconsider. Our businessmen would be alarmed. The cost of imports from China would go up, creating problems for large US retailers. Beijing would retaliate against US exports, leading to major losses for companies like Boeing. The net result would be tremendous pressures on us to rescind our action, which we inevitably would have to do. We'd be in the position of having made a threat, carried it out, and then been forced to back off. That would be a terrible outcome for the Administration.

Q: What was your alternative course?

ROPE: It was to increase US government support to the many NGOs already in China that were already doing things that would promote improvement in human rights over

time. I had in mind the work of the Ford Foundation, American Bar Association and others. I had a problem, though. I'd been away from work on China so long I didn't know how many NGOs were there or all that they were doing. I needed help from EAP or somebody to flesh that out, and I sought help from Don Keyser, an old friend who was in my old job as head of PRC/M.

Don was a brilliant Chinese linguist with a wicked sense of humor. He delighted in skewering his bosses for what he, too, considered a terrible policy. He showed me one memorandum from Lord to Christopher, drafted by Winston and Peter Thomsen telling Christopher that when he visited China in the spring, and explained our position in his lawyerly way, Beijing's leaders would immediately see the light and make concessions on human rights. This would be in the archives. To me, the paper was reminiscent of what the tailors told the Emperor about his resplendent new clothes. Still, however cynical Don may have been, he absolutely would not help me in my quest for information on NGOs in China. He said Lord had decreed that EAP would not, in capital letters, cooperate with anyone who didn't support the policy of the "train wreck."

Faced with this, I called an old friend at the National Committee for US-China relations, Jan Berris. I explained what I was doing, and she agreed to help. I faxed a copy of my draft up to her, and she sent me material I could use. I need to point out that my underlying rationale was really to impress upon the paper's audience how much effort was going on in the private, NGO sector to promote human rights, all of which would be endangered by a decision to withdraw MFN. It wasn't clear to me that we could actually do much to "increase support" for US NGOs in China, because USG support would likely be the last thing many of them would want; but this approach had a ring to it that the Administration could sell as an alternative to something entirely unworkable.

So I drafted the paper, and it was approved. Sam Lewis had suddenly retired, so Hans Binnendijk, as the acting head of S/P, joined Joe Nye in presenting it to Lake and Berger. Meanwhile Jan Berris called me to say she had received a call from a friend, David Gergen, adviser to the President. Gergen wanted to know what she could tell him about the MFN issue, because he wanted to get involved in it. Jan said she told him the best paper she had seen on the issue was mine. I'm not trying to toot my horn here. That's what happened. Not long afterward, one of Gergen's secretaries called me and asked if he could have a copy of my paper. I went over to the old EOB and delivered a copy to his office. I never saw him, and that was the end of my involvement in the China MFN issue.

A few months later, I was off on another temporary assignment in Fiji. One morning out there, I picked my daily press summary and read that the President had decided not to revoke MFN for China. This, despite the fact that when Christopher made his trip to Beijing seeking to convince the Chinese to change their human rights policies, they brutally rebuffed him. They even rounded up dissidents on the eve of his visit.

The policy the President announced looked a lot like what was in my paper. To this day, though, I have no idea whether it had any impact on the decision. Among those explaining the decision in a White House press conference, alongside Lord, were Tony

Lake and Treasury Secretary Bob Rubin. They essentially said the President had made up his mind weeks before Christopher made his final recommendation on the matter. It came out the right way.

Q: So tell us about Fiji.

ROPE: First, there's one other paper I did in this time in Policy Planning. It's the one I mentioned dealing with the North Korean nuclear problem.

Q: Yes. You mentioned that before.

ROPE: I'm going to make this brief, because I don't quite recall the circumstances that led to it. The North Korean nuclear problem had continued to grow, and in the first quarter of 1994 things were getting tense. EAP had pretty consistently argued in favor of acceding to North Korea's long-standing demand for direct talks between the US and Pyongyang without the participation of the South and was interested in responding to Pyongyang's -- to me deceitful and self-serving -- argument that if only we would provide the North nuclear power plants it could forgo its own nuclear program. The approach I advocated, which I'll relate in a minute, would have involved ratcheting up sanctions if Pyongyang didn't accept a US offer they shouldn't refuse.

When I spoke of sanctions to Binnendijk, who seemed to favor the EAP approach, he exclaimed that "you'd start a war!" It was true that the North had said that new sanctions would be a casus belli; but it said a lot of things. The idea that the North would go to war over sanctions was absurd. I told Hans the North Koreans were -- and I believe today still are -- greatly afraid of us. Why else would they pursue nuclear weapons? They knew what we could do to them in a war and wanted a nuclear deterrent.

At some point, Hans, still the acting head of S/P, agreed to let me send a memo from him to Tarnoff laying out my proposed approach to the problem. It embodied a two-pronged strategy for offering Pyongyang a path to full diplomatic relations with the US, coupled with the prospect of much more severe sanctions if they spurned the offer and continued on the nuclear path.

For the first prong, I proposed that President Clinton write to Kim Il-Sung proposing what would effectively be a step-by-step normalization process, to include DPRK acceptance of IAEA safeguards inspections; implementation of the North-South agreement for a denuclearized peninsula, with the creation of a mutual inspections regime; military confidence-building measures; and other steps leading to a full North-South peace accord and international treaty to end, formally, the Korean War. As Pyongyang did its part, we would take corresponding steps, gradually eliminating sanctions, allowing trade, engaging in exchanges of trade offices or other missions short of embassies, with embassies to be established at the end of the process. It would have been like what unfolded after Kissinger's secret visit and Nixon's trip to China, and its components would have required Pyongyang to deal with the South, thus avoiding the problem of cutting Seoul out.

My proposed “postman” for this letter was Deng Xiaoping. The Chinese were forever holding back from pressuring Pyongyang on the nuclear issue, while telling us we needed to do more. If we were to give Deng a letter from Clinton and asked him to pass it to Kim, he could hardly refuse; and we’d at one stroke undercut Chinese protestations that we weren’t doing enough.

If we made such an offer, and Pyongyang agreed to start the process, great. If they rejected it, or claimed to do so but refused to undertake moves we could reciprocate, we’d be in a strong position to focus world attention on the danger of a nuclear-armed North Korea and to call for comprehensive, stringent international sanctions to force Pyongyang to end its program.

EAP cleared the memo, but openly scoffed at it. Tom Hubbard, EAP’s DAS dealing with Korea pompously belittled it and chuckled when Tarnoff rejected it. I think it was a good memo. If Clinton had made the effort it envisioned, the impact could have been dramatic. I don’t say it would have worked, but it was worth a try. Certainly it didn’t deserve to be laughed off.

For my part, to this day I can’t help but scoff at the softer approach EAP and Bob Gallucci pursued. I was at the UN that fall when Bob concluded the “Framework Agreement” to provide nuclear power plants -- and some fuel oil -- to the North. It would have cost billions -- not of our money but South Korean and Japanese money -- to build the plants. I don’t know how much was expended before Pyongyang reneged on its commitments and the deal fell apart, but they did renege. I never thought the North could be trusted in a deal like that and from the beginning saw it as a bluff to gain time. I would have loved to be proven wrong. The hard part of being a hard-liner on the losing end is that all you can do is hope you were wrong!

Q: So. On to Fiji

ROPE: Almost. One last thing to relate is that, throughout this period, I was working on my résumé and sending out letters to friends in the business and NGO world seeking advice or soliciting opportunities. Mike Lampton and Jan Berris helped me get an interview at the Ford Foundation for the position of head of their office in China. I spent a day with Peter Geithner, head of their Asia program -- and, incidentally, father of former Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner -- and I absolutely wanted the job. Mike Oksenberg told me sometime later that Geithner told him I’d done very well; but the job went to an excellent English scholar with a PhD. One strike against me, I thought, was that -- at the time -- we were still threatening withdrawal of MFN. Ford may well have thought it wiser, should that happen, to have a non-US citizen heading its operation.

Peter asked how I’d handle the MFN question if it was raised by the Chinese. I said it would be a huge relief not to have to defend our policy. I could explain it. I could explain our human rights concerns and our internal political dynamics; but I wouldn’t have to support or justify the policy.

I had another job interview on my way to Fiji, stopping at the Asia Foundation in San Francisco to talk about the possibility of setting up a Foundation office in Hong Kong. Nothing came of it. I think for budgetary reasons they decided against opening the office.

Now for Fiji.

Q: So you're going off to the South Pacific. How did that come about?

ROPE: As I said, Sam Lewis retired suddenly in early 1994. After an interim in which Hans was our leader, Jim Steinberg, a DAS, or the PDAS in INR, succeeded Lewis. From what I'd seen of Jim in INR, I liked him; but I wasn't impressed with him as a manager or thinker in S/P. I wasn't there long, however, because my future there quickly became uncertain and I bailed out. I know Jim went on to higher positions in the Clinton and, later, Obama administrations; so my impressions may have been wrong.

Q: What caused the uncertainty?

ROPE: I didn't have a permanent position. There was no FTE covering me. I'd been assigned to S/P over complement as had a number of FSOs in S/P, including my friend Phil Kaplan. Not long after Jim's arrival, he was told by the Under Secretary for Management that he needed to eliminate these positions. He met with those of us affected, told us the news, and said he'd meet with us individually to discuss the matter further. In my meeting, Jim said he really liked what I was doing and wanted me to stay; but he couldn't say how long that would be.

I thought if he really liked my work, Jim could find a way to keep me; at least if he was a competent operator. I'd never minded job insecurity; but things were beginning to look pretty dim for me, and I needed to protect myself. One consolation of being forced to go to the Policy Planning Staff was that, even post-Baker it had some prestige -- pictures of George Kennan and his original team still hung on the wall. That was far better than being shunted off to Freedom of Information work, faced with which I'd rather retire, as Mike Glitman did.

Peter Thomsen had approached me a few weeks before to see if I'd like to do another chargé stint for EAP, this time in Fiji. I had said no. Right after my talk with Steinberg, though, I called Peter back. He still wanted me, and in short order I was transferred, over-complement, to EAP and Embassy Suva.

Q: How was that?

ROPE: Fiji is hardly the center of the universe, but it was a job, and even out there I'd be able to stay eligible for an appropriate assignment if one came up; and I could lobby a bit, long distance. I have to say, though, that for the first time in my career I didn't like subordinates working immediately around me. The previous DCM, who'd left, had run a very tight ship -- one might say a stiffly bureaucratic operation. I wasn't that kind of

leader.

As soon as Embassy Suva found out I'd be going, the Post -- or perhaps the DCM, who was still there serving as Chargé -- cabled EAP asking if I'd be leasing a rental car in Fiji. If I did not, the cable indicated, I'd pretty much be stuck in the Embassy residence, because the Ambassadorial car would be available to me only for formal business, such as going to and from work and for official calls or social events. My reaction, shared by the EAP office chief who backstopped Embassy Suva, was that, if I were to be chief of mission, even an acting chief of mission, wherever I went I'd be representing the US and learning about my country of assignment. Therefore, the Embassy was told, the car would be available to me at all times. As I'd done in Brunei, when not going to and from the Embassy or on other official business, I drove it myself, which was deemed legal.

If that hadn't been possible, I couldn't have gone. The cost of a rental car would have been prohibitive. The post, however, didn't like that, and when I arrived I found subordinates who'd very much liked the previous DCM -- there hadn't been an Ambassador for close to two years -- who resented almost anything I did that deviated from his ways; and there were lots of deviations.

Nevertheless, Fiji had its interesting aspects, and I at least had a country team to lead. Familywise it was great -- again, Priscilla, Robert and Kate came out for the summer at our expense. The Residence was splendid. I could open French doors from our bedroom in the morning and almost dive right into the swimming pool. I'd go out each morning and swim laps before breakfast. I'd swim a mile and plan my day. The family took tennis lessons; my daughter learned to Scuba Dive; after the family left, I played golf -- I'd taken lessons while studying Chinese, because if I went to Taipei I knew golf would be one way to gain access to Lee Teng-Hui and other leaders.

We didn't have a Chinese cook, but we had a very warm woman, Elizabeth Qalnikaono, who cooked, ran the household and lived with her family on the premises. Her son Alec -- now a British military officer -- and Robert became friends. Robert, incidentally went to school. We were in the Southern Hemisphere, and school was in session. So we put Robert into 4th grade at a local school so he'd have more friends. Alec was older and in a different school. At the end of the summer, we flew to Canberra for a visit with our friends from Turkey days, the Dworkins. Then we rented a car and drove to Sydney, for several days of tourism and a medical exam for me -- I'd developed a strange and persistent low-grade fever in Suva. Happily, nothing serious was wrong. Priscilla and the kids flew home from there and I returned to Fiji.

Q: What were the main issues with Fiji? Were they still under a cloud for their domestic politics?

ROPE: They were under a bit of a cloud. Some years before there had been a coup -- actually several coups -- the most recent led by a colonel named Rabuka. Theoretically the country had returned to democracy, and Rabuka had been elected prime minister. They had a president who was a distinguished Fijian, greatly respected, but possessed of

only moral suasion power. The chief internal conflict was a long-standing split between the native Melanesian population and a minority population of Indian extraction that had been brought in by the British in colonial days to work on sugar cane plantations. The Indians controlled much of the business and economic sector; the Fijians dominated the political sphere. The latter were physically large and had something of a warrior tradition; they controlled the military. When coups occurred, it was generally because of this split. If an Indian threatened to become Prime Minister, the native Fijian-dominated military would step in.

By the time I got there, the situation wasn't terrible from a human rights point of view. The basic organs of government, including the Parliament, were functioning, and I don't recall problems of political prisoners or suppression of dissidents. It was clear Rabuka was in control, but he wasn't a tyrant.

The biggest gripe of the Fijians, was that the Clinton Administration had been in office for over a year and had yet to nominate an ambassador. This was raised by their foreign minister or another high ranking official who came to Washington while I was preparing to go to post. He was in Washington and called on Strobe Talbot, Deputy Secretary.

There were two things about that meeting. First, I had regularly received Strobe Talbot when he was a Time magazine journalist and I headed the China Desk. He was a bit shocked that I hadn't been made an ambassador, but that didn't translate into any effort on his part to do something. Second, he told his Fijian caller that we were sending "a wonderful guy sitting beside me, Bill Rope, and he is going to be great for you," etc., etc.

That led to considerable fanfare when I got there, and I did something one normally would not do. No good professional in the position I was in would call oneself anything but "Chargé d'Affaires." Still, what Fiji wanted was an Ambassador. So in my first Country Team meeting I raised the question of what title we should give me. The Public Affairs Officer, who was one subordinate I did like and thought highly of, immediately jumped in and said, "We should call you the 'Acting Ambassador.'" I agreed, and she put out a press release using that title. This proved very successful. I called on the Prime Minister and President, had a big reception to meet all the local bigwigs and media people, and got excellent press. Thereafter, on TV or in the papers it was always "The Acting Ambassador of the US" did this or that.

So at least temporarily I solved the lack of ambassador problem. We didn't have a lot of bilateral issues beyond that. We had a Peace Corps operation, and I got on well with its director. The PAO was good, as I've said, and we had a bright, eager political officer, first name Jane who enjoyed following and reporting on Fijian politics. Not long after I arrived, we got word through the French Embassy that the remains of a downed World War II US pilot, still in his aircraft, had been found under water in French New Caledonia. I sent Jane there to represent the US at ceremonies that followed. She was pretty adventurous and actually joined local officials in snorkeling around the wreck.

A problem arose when, after her return, DOD dragged its feet on sending a team to

repatriate the pilot's remains. The French ambassador found this hard to believe and kept pressing me on the issue. Routine cables asking when a team would come went unanswered. The ambassador found this hard to believe, saying the French would never dally in such a matter. I had gone to an EAP Chiefs of Mission conference in Hawaii in June and visited the DOD laboratory there that receives and seeks to identify MIA remains. The staff gave me an excellent briefing and tour but couldn't say when a party would be dispatched to New Caledonia. I finally cabled Chas, then a DOD Assistant Secretary, and asked him to intervene. That worked. It might have been the biggest issue I had to deal with at Embassy Suva.

I was an active participant at that Chiefs of Mission conference, by the way, not trying to push Fiji issues, though the issue of coral reef bleaching may have come up, but enjoying the opportunity to contribute and to see people like Stape Roy, who was by then Ambassador in Beijing. I wasn't wearing my heart on my sleeve about a job, but I wanted to stay visible.

I did my best to get around and represent the United States in Fiji, calling on government offices, hosting representational parties, and running the mission.

Q: Was Mike Marine there at the time you were there?

ROPE: Mike Marine was the DCM I mentioned who had been Chargé and departed just before I got there. I think he'd actually been a marine. I believe he served in China at some point, and I'm sure he's a fine guy. But I've never met him.

Q: Now the Fijians volunteered a lot for UN peace-keeping duty.

ROPE: Yes. They were very proud of it, and it was profitable for them. They had a professional military. Like most places where the British have been, Fiji had pretty good government institutions, and the military was well organized. I don't think we had a military attaché; but I had contacts with the military leadership.

Q: How big was the Peace Corps and what kind of duties did they have?

ROPE: I think there were perhaps 15 or 20 of them. They were teaching English and working on local development projects, helping Fijians to develop their handicraft industries and market their products for profit. I don't recall what else.

Q: Did you travel much?

ROPE: A bit. Chiefly to Nadi, on the west coast of Viti Levu, Fiji's main island, where the cane fields were and where most Indian-Fijians lived. The tourist industry was also centered there, because it had good beaches, attracting primarily Australians. I went there to call on the leader of the opposition party.

Besides Fiji, Embassy Suva was accredited to four other countries -- Tuvalu, Kiribati,

Tonga, and Nauru -- and a kind of loose regional association headquartered in Suva. I went to Tonga once and met with the foreign minister, who was also the Crown Prince. I stayed the night, called on other officials, toured around and came back. Tonga has a king, whom I saw at a distance at some kind of outdoor event; but I didn't meet him. While traveling around, I passed my French colleague from Suva who was also visiting. When I got back, I found he'd been miffed that the King didn't receive him. At an event in Suva he asked me if I'd seen the King. I couldn't resist saying "Yes, I saw him, you didn't?" Maybe I explained myself. I quite liked the French Ambassador.

Q: You said you could continue to "lobby" for a job from Fiji. Did you?

ROPE: I had reasons to speak with Peter Thomsen from time to time, and I'd remind him that I needed a posting. One I raised with him several times, for which I was well suited was Chargé d'Affaires in Myanmar, which we still insisted on calling "Burma." We didn't have an Ambassador in Yangon, aka Rangoon, where Aung San Suu-Kyi was under house arrest; but there were signs of at least economic liberalization there, and it was conceivable that at some point we might want to upgrade relations to the ambassadorial level.

I told Peter I'd be a perfect candidate for that job, because I was qualified to serve as Chargé but had the rank to stay on as Ambassador should we decide to upgrade. His response was that, because Aung San Suu Kyi was a woman, EAP planned to send a woman there. I reminded Peter that I had written my Master's thesis on the coming of independence to Burma; and while it was unlikely that our Chargé would be able to spend time with her, I knew a great deal about the circumstances that literally gave birth to Aung San Suu Kyi.

Peter was unmoved, but I raised it with him more than once. Finally, he put his foot down and exclaimed over the phone, "Bill, it's going to a woman!" That was that. You know, these exchanges may have taken place when I was in Brunei. Brunei or Fiji, either way I remember them to this day.

Beyond that, I kept in touch with Pierre Shostal, in Personnel, but though he was a good guy -- and far more capable than his predecessor -- nothing turned up. There was one other possibility I could see, but it wasn't one I could count on much no matter how hard I worked in Fiji or how good a job I did out there.

Q: What was that?

ROPE: It involved the possibility that Jay Hormel, whom I'd learned would be nominated to serve as Ambassador to Fiji, would never be confirmed, theoretically creating an opportunity for me to move from "Acting Ambassador" to actual "Ambassador Rope."

Q: Oh, yes. Tell us more about that.

ROPE: Jay Hormel was a scion of the Hormel Ham family. He was a big Democratic

contributor, a philanthropist and a leader in the San Francisco Gay community. The Clinton Administration planned to make him the first openly gay American Ambassador; and while it hadn't been made public, the intention was to nominate him as Ambassador to Fiji. His open homosexuality, however, was sure to be a problem.

Q: How so?

ROPE: In the South Pacific homosexuality is not historically taboo; but in Fiji, where missionaries had converted the population to Christianity, it wasn't publicly acknowledged. It could be generally known, but it couldn't be openly flouted. One important government minister was gay, for example, and everyone knew that; but he had a wife and family and had his gay affairs on the side. Fiji had anti-sodomy laws. If nominated, Hormel would have to get through the SFRC, where Senator Helms would surely raise those laws. Given this problem, I thought Hormel was never going to make it to Suva, and I thought it would be cruel and stupid to put him through that. In the end, he became Ambassador to Luxembourg.

After I was back in Washington, I had lunch with Mr. Hormel. He seemed a fine individual. He did not know much about Fiji, but he was reading up. When he asked me if he could bring his partner to live with him, I said I didn't think that would be possible. His partner could "visit" regularly, and those "visits" could stretch over long periods of time, I said; but I didn't think the two could openly live together.

At some point, news that Hormel would be coming to Fiji started to leak, and one small mention of the possibility appeared in a local newspaper. There had been no Agrément request, but I began to be questioned about it. At one point, it even came up in a conversation I had with President Mara.

When I could, I would evade the question, saying that no one had been formally nominated. In the case of President Mara, or when otherwise appropriate, I followed that with a statement that I knew Mr. Jay Hormel of San Francisco to be an outstanding citizen and a very high caliber person. Were he ever to serve as ambassador to Fiji, I was confident he'd be an excellent envoy.

That is what I would say, while thinking that it would never happen; and, I'd think to myself, "Guess what else will never happen. When they give up on sending up Hormel's nomination to the Hill they are not going to put mine name forward, no matter how hard I work, no matter how well I do." So I decided there was no point in staying into the fall, as I had in Brunei. I called Peter and said I wanted to go home. By then Bruce Gray had arrived as a replacement for Michael Marine and was serving under me as DCM. It would have been hard for him then to become an "acting ambassador," but I wasn't going to concern myself with that. I was pretty much through.

Q: So when you left in September who then became the senior officer?

Bruce. EAP agreed, and that was that. I came back as an over-complement FSO assigned

to EAP. I don't recall who proposed it, but my next stop was to go up to USUN as one of the supernumeraries the Department sends up there each fall, to work the General Assembly.

Q: Every bureau does that.

ROPE: Exactly. So I went up for that, unfortunately too late to be in on any of the Secretary's bilaterals with East Asia counterparts. The assignment was long enough, however, that I could use my per diem to rent a studio apartment in New York, just a few blocks from the UN and the US Mission. I commuted home to Washington on weekends.

Q: Let's talk about this a little bit because when the general assembly is in session which is October-December, I think every bureau enhances the staff of the mission so that there will be expertise to deal with its issues and meet the social requirements. Now were you the only guy for Asia-Pacific? I thought there was a little larger delegation that went up from Washington.

ROPE: I think I was the only EAP person up there. There was someone working on North Korea, but he was a USUN officer. When the "Framework Agreement" was concluded that fall, I remember expressing my skepticism to him that it would ever work. The day that news broke, by the way, I had lunch with the South Korean DCM, whom I'd known when he was assigned to the ROK embassy in Washington. He was down in the dumps -- didn't think it would work either, and he was very concerned that his government would have to pay for it.

From my perspective, USUN wasn't a well-managed mission, at least when it came to business before the GA. There seemed to be no priorities set for anything. Any junior officer could come to me and tell me his or her issue was the most important one on our agenda and I must go to all the missions from EAP countries to make strong representations about it. Sometimes that made sense. Sometimes it would make no sense to spend diplomatic capital on it. In the latter case, I would take the talking points I was given or that were just left on my chair with a note, and dump them in the classified burn bag or in the trash if unclassified. I pretty much decided what we would push and what we'd leave alone.

I did, of course, get around to all the missions under my purview and make calls on appropriate counterparts. I dealt with the Chinese ambassador, who ultimately became ambassador to Washington and then foreign minister. You know the key things that arise every year in the General Assembly, like the annual effort to condemn Israel for not following UN resolutions. The United States always opposes those things, and I loyally tried to drum up support for our position, though it was largely hopeless. As always, only a very few countries stood with us. There were other issues like that. One involved Cuba.

I attended Madeleine Albright's staff meetings, and regularly sat in the US delegate's seat in the General Assembly. USUN always needs this help, because it doesn't have enough people. The real action takes place in the Security Council, but we have to cover the GA.

A lot of it was listening to boring speeches, and I'd put on my headphones and listen in French or Chinese just for fun. The Chinese translators didn't seem particularly good, but maybe it was just a comprehension failure on my part. One day I was sitting in the General Assembly, in that wonderful hall, and passed a note to the young FSO note-taker sitting by me. "I used to run all around this place as a boy," I wrote. "I can't believe I'm sitting here in the US delegate's seat." That was true. I think I've mentioned my adventures with my photographer friend Jimmy Bilchik when my Dad was working at USUN. I still have a close-up picture of Andrei Vyshinsky -- smoke curling up from his cigarette as he sat in the Soviet seat -- taken by Jimmy on one of our visits.

Q: So your focus was really the General Assembly.

ROPE: Entirely. One day I almost got to address it.

Q: Really?

I think I've mentioned that I had lunch once in the Delegate's Dining Room with my old friend Ji Chaozhu, who by that time had become the highest ranking Chinese official in the UN Secretariat. That was a great lunch, but I couldn't fully enjoy it, because just before I left my office, the chief of the USUN political section came to me and asked if I'd be willing to give a speech to the GA that afternoon.

I know I've also mentioned that I get horrible butterflies before a speech, though I generally manage to do it well enough. The speech in this case wouldn't be long, but I would have little or no preparation time. I thought of saying no, but I knew that if I were given the chance to address the UN General Assembly and didn't take it I'd never forgive myself. So I said I would. The speech was still being drafted, and I'd get the text when I got back. I didn't know what the subject was, but the political chief said they wanted someone who could give a tough speech.

All through the lunch, I did my best to enjoy the conversation with Ji, while worrying about that speech. One comforting thought was that it was supposed to be a tough speech. I do better when I can put some emotion into it. Then, when I got back and asked for the text, I found that someone from the USUN legal department was going to give it instead. There'd been a fight while I was out. The legal people had been infuriated that this speech, which had to do with UN dues or something similar, was going to be handed to someone up from Washington. They wanted one of their people to do it, and they won.

Q: Too bad. You could have made history.

ROPE: Personal history.

Q: Now let me ask you this. You are making demarches or imploring the other Asian delegations to support us, which raises a couple of questions. Which other delegation did you think was well rounded and worthwhile working with? And physically how far away from them were you. When you picked some points up off your desk, how far did you have

to go to get to the Japanese or the Chinese or the Cambodians?

ROPE: I don't think any of them were terribly far, but I really can't remember. Which ones did I think were good? Certainly, the British. I didn't just visit the East Asian missions. If an issue involving East Asia came up I might well deal with non-Asian embassies, and if it was a non-Asian issue I might deal with Asian embassies. I had perfectly good relationships with all my counterparts and didn't find any that seemed incompetent. Generally, countries send some of their best people to the UN. I had enough rank that I would usually see the deputy head of the mission or in some cases the ambassador. At one point, the Sultan of Brunei came to town. I was the ranking U.S. official to go to a reception he gave. People don't pay a lot of attention to Brunei, and he was quite flattered. We had a nice conversation recalling my time there.

Now I'm going to make an admission. I saw matinees every Wednesday. It really wasn't a full time job. My apartment building had a pool, and I swam laps every morning before going to work. I got additional exercise on long walks every day.

One job possibility briefly arose. There was a need to put an American into the UN Secretariat, working for Kofi Annan, then in charge of UN peacekeeping operations. There was a sharp naval officer on the staff of the Mission who knew Dick Clarke. He thought that if I was willing to retire I'd be a possible candidate for the job. I asked the head of the Political Section what he thought, and he made one comment that reflects in certain ways on the way the Secretariat works -- at least as he saw it at that time. Pointing out the window at the Secretariat building, he said, "You know, when you go over there, that's the last thing you every have to do."

Q: Meaning what?

ROPE: That I'd have a job for life. This didn't go anywhere, however. It wasn't a matter of being turned down, or that someone refused to support me. It was just a thing that came up and interested me. I think maybe the position went away. Had it gone somewhere, who knows what it could have led to. Kofi Anan became UN Secretary General not long after that.

Q: The Surge which is why the bureau sends somebody up to the General assembly is generally over by December, so what happens to you after that.

ROPE: For some reason this brings to mind, Arnie Schifferdecker. When I was in Turkey I heard lots about Arnie. He'd been political counselor in Ankara several years before my time and was remembered fondly and with respect by all who'd known him, Turkish and American. He had broad South Asia expertise as well. Anyway, he was one of my fellow UNGA supernumeraries, up from the NEA Bureau, and I really liked him. To me, he epitomized the kind of loyal FSO who keeps working, doing his or her best, without looking out for their own interests, and to whom the system ultimately shows no loyalty. This goes back to the view of the Foreign Service I formulated before I ever was an FSO, based on my father's experience. Arnie was one rank junior to me, but he had only one

year left in grade before he'd have to retire, and he had no job prospects. So far as I could see, his career was doomed; but he planned to stay on at State, doing whatever he was asked to do, until he was forced to retire.

As a matter of personal pride, I was determined not to have my career play out that way. Like Arnie, by 1994 I had only one year left in grade before mandatory retirement. That would be extended if I were an ambassador, with a crack at promotion to Career Minister; but there was nothing on the horizon, and I wasn't going to hang around until I was pushed out.

When I got back to Washington in December, Peter and EAP had nothing for me, nor did Personnel -- nothing of any substance, that is. One of the least imaginative people who had worked for me in PRC/M was by that time in Personnel and was raising the ultimate anathema to me: Freedom of Information work. That was too much to take. At the same time, the Department, in its effort to cut staff, was offering buy-outs. I told my father it was going to be the hardest thing I'd ever done, but I was going to take a buy-out and retire. I did, and would have retired at the end of January were it not for something totally out of the blue that caused a slight delay. Johns Hopkins got in touch with me about a job in China.

Q: Really. Tell us about it.

ROPE: Steve Sabo, Dean of Academic Affairs at SAIS, Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, called and said Hopkins was looking for a new American Co-Director to lead, with a Chinese counterpart, the Johns Hopkins University-Nanjing University Center for Chinese and American Studies in Nanjing. Steve said they needed a good manager, and Ambassador Steve Low, who headed FSI when I was in the Senior Seminar thought I might be interested. After retiring, Low had gone to Bologna, where Hopkins had a similar binational center. Sabo said SAIS, which oversaw both Hopkins-Nanjing and Hopkins-Bologna, found having an FSO in that position worked well. So I got that call.

It was a wonderful break! I looked into the job and decided I wanted it. I interviewed before a faculty committee and got the job. The Department had just announced another buy-out offer, effective through the end of March, and I was allowed to shift into that one. That would make my exit from the Foreign Service less hasty and give me time to say final good byes, etc. I also had a medical issue to take care of. My golfing activities in Fiji had led to a tennis elbow problem, and I also needed arthroscopic knee surgery. Both could be combined into one operation. I took medical leave, had the surgery, and spent most of my last month as an FSO at home recuperating. On March 31, 1995, I retired from the Foreign Service. I was 54 years old.

Q: How did you feel?

ROPE: I felt good. Ever since I'd left PRC/M, I'd had strong, positive feelings about my career. Although I have trouble, today, capturing the day-in-day-out challenge of that

time, the Taiwan Arms issue was a major policy fight, and one that tested my ability to stand up for what I believed, regardless of the consequences. There were days when I had to speak truth to power, and I passed that test. The outcome we achieved in the August 17, 1982 Communiqué was a triumph for me, for those who worked for me, and for the leaders above me, most particularly John Holdridge and Secretary Haig. I didn't care that it had resulted in my effective exile from the area I loved the most; and I was proud of what I accomplished in other areas. Most FSOs who retired at my age or younger were officers who did so because they hadn't been promoted to senior ranks and were "selected out." In my case, it was due to advancement so rapid that I was in the most senior rank too long. I was proud of my career, proud of myself, and happy to have something new and exciting to look forward to.

Q: So you and the State Department were formally done.

ROPE: Yes. I wrapped up all the decisions on pension, survivor benefits, all the nuts and bolts things, in the last couple of weeks of March. My last act was to name Pago Pago in American Samoa as my retirement address. Without going into the details, that enabled me to ship some of Kate's personal goods to her as she started a job with Ernst and Young in LA and ship some items I wanted off to Nanjing.

I didn't go to the ceremony Christopher gave for retiring FSOs, of whom there were more than a few due to those buy-outs. Later, I received in the mail a grey metal pin one would never wear, commemorating my 27 years of service. I've been inside the Department perhaps three times since, one of those for Art Hummel's memorial service. I keep in touch with old friends, but otherwise I moved on pretty quickly. Besides the Hopkins-Nanjing stint that I loved, I had one other job in China in the late '90s, and then I became a DC Public Schools teacher, opening up a whole new profession life for me. My years as an FSO and role in the US-China relations were, and are forever, a part of my identity, as is my ability to speak Chinese, which I still have. My one regret is that I never had a chance to serve at the NSC; but you can't have everything. I was lucky to have a new adventure fall into my lap in 1995, when I was still relatively young, and off I went.

Q: Let's see. As you know, we started this oral history before you were an FSO, and we don't end it when you retire. So let's cover a few more things. Your tour in Nanjing was for a year tour of duty?

ROPE: I had a one-year contract, which I could have renewed but did not solely because of family considerations. My time in Nanjing was one of the happiest years of my life. I might well still be there were it not for the lack of schooling for Robert that kept me from staying on. I absolutely loved it.

Q: Just for background the Nanjing Center has been there for how long? When did it start up?

ROPE: I just went to its 30th anniversary in June. I think it opened in '85 and graduated its first class in '86. Leon Slawecki a retired USIA officer and former colleague of mine

in Hong Kong, was its first American Co-Director. I think he served there five years. He and his Chinese counterpart, Wang Zhigang, were the pathbreakers, working through the myriad issues, academic and practical, of opening a new institution in a challenging environment.

Q: This Center really was remarkable from what I know of it -- one of those things, once we established diplomatic relations with China, that allowed greater interaction between two societies, in this case young academicians.

ROPE: Yes. There was an explosion of academic interchange pretty quickly, both formal and informal. By the time I was office director for Chinese affairs in 1981, we had at least 10,000 PRC students studying in American universities. Still it's quite amazing that -- at a time of real tension in US-China relations -- Johns Hopkins' President Steve Muller conceived of something as ambitious as Hopkins-Nanjing. At the recent 30th anniversary celebration, Mike Lampton spoke of being in a group of China experts called in by Muller to comment on his idea of opening a center in China similar to the one JHU had in Bologna. Mike said they all told Muller why it would be impossible, or at least extremely difficult, to do that, to which Muller replied, "I didn't ask you here to tell me how not to do it. I want you to tell me how we're going to do it." At the celebration I can't tell you how many times, in Chinese, Priscilla and I heard the words Mu Le, Muller's Chinese name. We heard it over, and over, and over again.

Q: Why was it located in Nanjing?

ROPE: I forget how the connection was made with Nanjing University, often said to be China's third-ranking university. Nanjing had the advantage of being away from Beijing and Shanghai, and it had significant American connections from when it was the Nationalist capital in the Republican period. At one point, while I was heading the China Desk, George Packard, Dean of SAIS at the time, invited me and Priscilla to a dinner for a delegation from Nanjing. They had just signed a memorandum calling for the Center's establishment. I thought, "Wow, here we have all these problems, and Hopkins is going ahead with this!" It was the first American university to get into China and the Center remains a unique US-Chinese institution.

Q: The Nanjing facilities -- were those newly built buildings or did Nanjing University turn over some buildings?

ROPE: It was a new building, on the edge of the Nanjing campus. It was not possible, in China of the 1980s to have a center like that integrated into Nanda, as Nanjing University is called in Chinese. HNJ was built right beside the campus, close to where the foreign students' dorm was. It was created as a foreign entity, but was demonstrably Sino-American. Hopkins paid for the building. Nanda provided the land.

Q: Were the dormitories part of the agreement?

ROPE: The building was a self-contained entity, equipped with classrooms, meeting

facilities, dormitory, dining and recreation facilities, faculty offices and apartments for international faculty and staff. According to Hopkins, it had the first open stacks library in China. It was quite an intellectually free institution, thanks in part to protection from a high-ranking official and Deng Xiaoping associate in Beijing, Vice Premier Wan Li. You may recall Wan as the courtly gentleman who welcomed Vice President Bush to China in May 1982 -- when Bush let the press know he had a Presidential letter for Hu Yaobang, leading to the publication of those three Reagan letters.

Q: What was the structure? Did you have to share all decision-making with the Chinese side? How much were you tied to the Hopkins or SAIS home office? Who were the students? What was their level?

ROPE: The Center had been established as a graduate-level, certificate-granting institution with a one-year program, attended by Chinese post-graduate students who applied through Nanda and international, primarily American, post-grads who applied through Johns Hopkins. One interesting thing about the Center was that students from the two sides did not take classes together. Chinese students took classes in English under professors provided by Johns Hopkins, studying US history and institutions; international politics and economics; and -- in my time -- research methodology. This last was important because Chinese students needed to understand that copying from others -- something long practiced in China but that we consider flat-out plagiarism -- was not acceptable in scholarly research. International students took classes in Chinese with professors provided by Nanda, studying Chinese history and culture; China's economy; and the history of China under the Communist regime

Outside class, the two sides were totally mixed. To the maximum extent possible, every Chinese student had an international room-mate, and vice-versa. The rooms were all doubles, with their own baths. Students roomed together and shared dining hall, library, recreational facilities and all areas of extra-curricular and social life, of which there was a great deal. The result was a tremendously successful intercultural experience for both groups. In my year at least, student morale was high, and they stayed in touch after graduation. Priscilla and I saw students from my year regularly when we lived in Shanghai in 1997-98, and we still see them from time to time here in Washington. If one of them comes into town from China or elsewhere, those living in DC invariably put together some kind of mini-reunion. I'm on the distribution list for the Hopkins-Nanjing alumni club in Beijing, and I know that they organize frequent events, formal and informal.

Structurally, the Center was led by two Co-Directors, one from each side, with decision-making by consensus. In my year, it was a very happy arrangement. My counterpart, Chen Yongxiang was an easy-going gentleman, and we got on well. There was a tacit division of labor in which the Chinese side handled all the facilities maintenance, provided the librarians and other forms of support, and Hopkins supplied the hard currency funding and -- I'd say -- considerable leadership on the curricular and academic management side.

As regards my level of independence, ironically, Paul Wolfowitz, then Dean of SAIS, exercised oversight over me, though my direct superior was the President of Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, and I always kept that fact in mind. Despite policy differences, Paul and I'd always had satisfactory working relations; and I was pretty much left to operate on my own in Nanjing, keeping the home office informed but not having to seek approval for most decisions. Paul's biases did emerge in the area of fundraising. There he was more in favor of seeking support for Southeast Asia professorships at SAIS than raising money for Hopkins-Nanjing.

Q: So you moved right from State over to Johns Hopkins?

ROPE: My Hopkins-Nanjing job didn't start until the end of August. Priscilla was teaching in an elementary special education program serving DC Public Schools, and Robert was in sixth grade at Georgetown Day School. Kate, ten years older than Robert, was a senior at Occidental College in LA, about to graduate Phi Beta Kappa in Public Policy. I was a full-time house-husband, serving as chief family cook and addicted to Court TV and the O.J. Simpson trial. In the summer, old friends of Priscilla's invited us to house-sit their house and pool, high in the Tiburon hills north of San Francisco, with access to a tennis club. We had a long, lovely, family time there.

I made one orientation trip to Hopkins-Nanjing at graduation time in June, to meet Chinese counterparts and American colleagues I'd be working with and get a feel for the job itself. During the visit, I was asked by a group of parents to head the fledgling international school board, and I accepted. In Washington, I attended a two-day orientation program at SAIS for incoming international faculty members who'd be working with me. Those two events set me up to hit the ground running when I left Priscilla and Robert at home in Washington and headed out to Nanjing.

Q: So you didn't go as a family?

ROPE: No. There was no school for Robert in Nanjing. He didn't speak Chinese and couldn't go into a Chinese school; and the fledgling, non-registered, international school serving the Center and some foreign business people in Nanjing was just a one-room operation with a small number of elementary school students taught by a wonderful American teacher, Kim Gibson. However, we were able to persuade Georgetown Day School to let Robert come out with Priscilla for almost two months, from the week before Thanksgiving until the end of the year. Priscilla home-schooled him, and we lined up a Chinese tutor for him as well.

One great thing about the job at that time was the amount of time off I had. We had a week's break in fall and spring, plus five weeks in the winter between semesters. The Center totally shut down at those times, giving our international students -- and me -- ample time to travel in China. At fall break, I went to Hong Kong to meet Robert and Priscilla, staying with the Muellers in the Consul General's residence. Then we flew to Beijing for five days with Scott and Dana Hallford -- he was by then DCM at the Embassy -- before going to the Center. In the long semester break, I flew home, though

for tax reasons I had to stay out of the US most of the time. I rented an apartment for a week in Montreal, where my sister and brother-in-law drove my Dad up from Vermont -- my mom had died several years earlier -- and Dad and I relived old times there. I flew to Washington for a few days before flying down to Cuernavaca Mexico with the family -- Kate included, flying in from LA -- for two weeks there. Back in Washington for a few more days, I did some business at SAIS, including meeting with Paul and interested faculty members. Then I returned to Nanjing.

Then we had family separation, from February until the end of school in June. During our time together in Nanjing Priscilla and I decided, reluctantly, that there was no way to solve the schooling problem for Robert, and I would have to give up the job when my contract was up. That was extraordinarily hard for me, because I loved the Center and loved being back in China at a tremendously exciting time. The contrast between the China of USLO days and China in the mid-nineties was incredible, and the freedom I had to go wherever I wanted, interact with the people freely, and get to know Chinese young people was incredible. The whole experience was wonderful.

Q: You hinted at management problems there. How did those work out?

ROPE: They turned out to be rather simple, in part solved by turnover of personalities as I and a group of new Hopkins-recruited international professors moved in. In June, I'd heard a lot of griping from departing faculty members, some of which seemed to reflect poor interpersonal skills on their part but conveyed a sense that they'd felt neglected by Center leadership. On the student side, it seemed the main thing I needed to do was be accessible.

Q: So what was your approach?

ROPE: A lot of friendly, collegial interpersonal contact, starting with orientation trips for faculty and staff new-comers, to show them how to get around -- by bicycle mainly, although there were taxis -- where to shop, what cultural sights were there to be enjoyed, where to go for recreation, etc. I instituted weekly faculty meetings every Friday, with TGIF parties to follow in my apartment. Rather quickly, the meetings became pro-forma, but the parties did not. One of the American professors, Peggy Karns of University of Dayton, put together a monthly luncheon forum where the Chinese and international faculty members joined to hear a paper delivered by one of their colleagues, with students serving as simultaneous interpreters. That worked well

There were only 6 professors on the international faculty, plus a few international support staff, two spouses, and two young children. They were adventurous enough that they didn't need a lot of help getting out and around China, and in Nanjing we became a very happy, well-knit group. Priscilla and I learned long ago that a key element to good life overseas was to pay servants well and employ a great cook. I asked Chen Yongxiang to help me find such a cook in Nanjing, and he came up with a retired Shaoxing Opera star who'd actually met Zhou Enlai at one point in her stage career, with pictures to prove it. She, Mrs. Zhang, could put together all manner of great Chinese meals to which I could

invite not only faculty and staff friends but, on an organized basis working with Chen Yongxiang, every Center student at least once during the year.

Q: How about management with the Chinese side?

ROPE: As I said, that was easy. Chen Yongxiang and I had adjoining offices. We had a wise old Chinese dean with whom I interacted a lot on academic issues. We held wider staff meetings weekly, where I struggled to understand all manner of nuts and bolts discussions in the “lanjing” dialect, ranging from garbage collection, to plumbing and boiler issues, to the provisioning of the Center’s canteen. In this area, I had a wonderful source of help, an ex-military officer and Center graduate named Milo Manley, who as Deputy American Co-Director had been there almost from the beginning and knew everything there was to know about how the Center operated, physically and otherwise. Priscilla and I make annual donations to the Center in Milo’s name -- he’s still there.

Q: And how about the students?

ROPE: That wasn’t hard. The wonderful thing about the institution was that the students who came to it, from both sides, were highly motivated, and desirous of lots of cultural interchange. They were also keenly interested in world affairs and US-China relations.

In the first week, we helped them set up class representatives and social committees, and they took it from there. There was a serious academic component to Center life. By definition, the requirement of taking courses in a foreign language, writing research papers, taking mid-term tests, etc. ensured that it was a major challenge. Still, the students organized dances and a variety of social events. We had regular visiting scholars and lecturers, with excellent programs averaging at least twice a month if not more. Zhang Wenjin’s son, a researcher in the CCP archives spoke to the students; former Huang Hua interpreter and now State Counselor Yang Jiechi’s brother Yang Jiemian, a scholar in Shanghai came; John Anderson, third-party Presidential candidate in 1980 was a big hit. My old Hong Kong FSO colleague, Jay Taylor, who in retirement had authored a fine biography of Chiang Ching-Kuo, and was researching another book on his father, The Generalissimo, paid us several visits; and there were a lot more.

We also went on field trips from time to time. In the spring we had a three-day career seminar in Shanghai to which international businesses were invited to come and make presentations. These served them as recruiting trips and gave our students opportunities to learn about international business and interview for post-graduation positions. Our program did not lead to a degree, though in the years since my departure the Center has more than doubled in size and added a two year MA program. Students in that program get two degrees, one conferred by Johns Hopkins, the other by Nanda.

Q: And how about your interaction with the Students? Were you accessible?

ROPE: Yes; and I think I was pretty popular. For one thing, with my past experience in US-China relations and as a China watcher during the Cultural Revolution, I knew a lot

in an area where the Chinese students knew little. I had plenty to offer both groups, and I loved being with them. Particularly when I was on my own, I tried to eat at least one meal a day in the cafeteria, and I pretty much got to know all the students, who totaled about 70 that year.

I can't tell you how much I enjoyed being with those young people. The contrast between China in 1995 and the Maoist China we'd left in 1975 was incredible in itself; but even more striking was how bright and open-minded the Chinese students were. They were very knowledgeable, though not about the Cultural Revolution; and while they weren't standing on soap boxes criticizing their government, the atmosphere in the Center was -- for an institution in China -- one of considerable intellectual freedom. So there was much to talk about, and I thoroughly enjoyed it, all year long. I also had one great trip through the Yangtze Gorges at spring break, flying into Chongqing without a reservation, booking passage on an ordinary Chinese passenger boat, and spending four glorious days in which only once did I see any occidentals, and those at a considerable distance.

Q: You said you agreed to head that tiny international school board. How did that go?

ROPE: I put a lot of work into that, not all of it easy because it got contentious at times, with one difficult European. I thought it important to build up a good school in Nanjing, not just so others wouldn't face the dilemma Priscilla and I did, but for recruiting reasons. It was common sense that -- absent a school for faculty children -- our recruiting pool would be limited to single people or young professors without or with only small children, plus older professors who were empty-nesters. We had the space to house families, and medical care wasn't a major problem; but without a school how could we appeal to the range of professors in their prime who had middle or high school-age children?

Over time, I saw that an expanding school was inevitable. Nanjing wasn't developing at breakneck speed like Shanghai, but multinational joint ventures were growing, and the German firm BASF was negotiating to build a very large operation there. Siemens was there; Iveco was building trucks. Ericsson was making mobile phones. The foreign community would grow, and -- particularly as I saw the attitudes of some on our small board -- I foresaw a potential tug of war over the future direction of the school. Since we had at least a fledgling school to build on, with a teacher housed within Hopkins-Nanjing, working on an American model, with support from the Shanghai American School, we were well positioned to keep the school's American orientation; but Center leadership could help assure that outcome.

Q: What exactly did you have in this school?

ROPE: Virtually a one-room school house, housed on the grounds of a local secondary school or university, I forget which. There were a couple of small ancillary spaces, but basically it was one large room, in which American teacher Kim Gibson, taught perhaps 8-10 children ranging from kindergarten to fifth grade. There was a small play area outside, and the host school permitted some additional use of its meager outdoor

recreation facilities. Ms. Gibson had been in China for a few years, teaching English in local universities, and she had a US elementary certification. I don't recall the source of her curriculum, whether it was Calvert -- as we had in Beijing -- or drawn from another source; but she kept in close touch with the Principal and Vice Principal of the Shanghai American School, a married couple whom I also met with Kim when I first arrived in Shanghai, before proceeding to Nanjing.

Kim had been the school's teacher for several years by the time I got there, and Hopkins-Nanjing rented a small suite in the Center to the school for her housing.

Q: So the school had a budget, tuition arrangements, bank account, etc. Correct?

ROPE: It did; but it was not a registered entity that could legally operate in the PRC. That was a concern to all of us involved in running the school.

Q: And who were those besides you?

ROPE: Representatives of a few multinational companies and one or two parents with children in the school. Most important among them was the Swedish company, Ericsson, which made space available to us for board meetings and one clerical person, a very dedicated woman whose first name was Lindsey, to serve as secretary-treasurer. She managed the school's bank account, collection of tuition, payment of rents, Kim Gibson's salary, etc. She was also in charge of the effort to get the school registered with the State Education Commission. There was a process for doing that, and it had been under way for some time before my arrival.

Q: Were you successful in that?

ROPE: Yes. In the course of the year we did get the school registered as the Nanjing International School; and we made progress in other areas as well.

Q: Such as?

ROPE: Doubling the faculty. I joke, here, because when you start with only one teacher, doubling's not hard. Still, operating in China, in 1995-96, it wasn't easy. We needed a second teacher for some of our older primary students, and for more students who could be expected the next year. This required recruiting someone and coming up with housing, a benefits package, etc. We also spent a good bit of time working out a proper contractual and benefits arrangement for Kim Gibson. We couldn't easily rent an apartment in Nanjing, and the Center couldn't house a second teacher; so we had to search for suitable accommodations elsewhere, finally negotiating barely-adequate space in the foreign students' dormitory. We also needed a larger, more permanent facility. All of this took a lot of attention, and board time, as well as time outside our bi-weekly -- I think -- board meetings.

Q: You said it got contentious at times. What were the problems?

ROPE: It was just personalities. When you're small, and you need everyone's cooperation, a difficult individual can create big problems when none need exist. We had a parent, not from the Center, who was so critical of Kim Gibson that I had to devote time to observing her teach and documenting what I observed for the board. I didn't have the experience I have today, but I had seen enough of overseas schools and private schools like NCRC, Beauvoir and GDS, that our children attended, to be able to make reasonable judgments. I thought Kim Gibson had a lovely way with children and was a dedicated, well-organized, competent teacher. I prevailed on that, but unfortunately the additional teacher whom we recruited from Australia and Kim didn't get along. She said he would fly off the handle, at her and at the children. I believed her, but he had some parent allies. When the board had to choose between losing her or not rehiring him, he lost out; but it was acrimonious. He proved our decision correct when I broke the news to him as gently and professionally as I could. As soon as he sensed what was up, he blew up and exclaimed, "Now I know why American foreign policy is such a mess!"

Concurrently, a Board sub-committee found a local hotel that housed a variety of foreigners and was eager to have us move the school to its premises. The space was ample and would be cost free. On my last day in Nanjing, Lindsey and I signed the lease for a much better space there, on behalf of the board. We were also successful in finding a very good second teacher to work the next year with Kim. When I visited the school during HNJ's 10th anniversary celebration in October 1996, it looked great, and the teachers were happy. I recently looked up the Nanjing International School online. Today it has over 100 faculty members and a pre-school through high school student body of 700; and it retains its American orientation. The teen-age children of Jason Patent, a recent American Co-Director, went there.

Q: You must have felt pretty good about that.

ROPE: I did. I felt good about the whole year, and I hated to give it up; but I had to. Priscilla and I agreed, though, that while I would return home to Washington I would look for another position in China -- in Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, or Hong Kong, where there would be a suitable school for Robert. China was where the action was, so far as I was concerned, and that's where I was most marketable.

I flew home after graduation in June. Again for tax reasons, I needed to stay out of the US for a time. We bought a van and camper trailer and went across Canada, starting with a week on a Quebec lake with Kate, my dad and sister and brother-in-law and then driving across the trans-Canada highway. In Edmonton we stopped to pick up the son of one of my HNJ colleagues, whose son had been friendly with Robert in Nanjing, and we traveled through the Canadian Rockies with the two boys. It was a great adventure. At the end, Priscilla and Robert returned to Washington. I spent a couple of months in Vermont, with my father, who suffered a stroke and was dying, and then -- with my sister Sandra -- winding up his estate. Then I spent another year as a house-husband, and volunteer tutor in one DC school program, before moving the family to Shanghai. There I joined another, less successful, academic adventure.

Q: How did that come about?

ROPE: About the same way Hopkins-Nanjing did. It dropped into my lap. During my year in Nanjing I'd made a number of connections with head hunters and business people, and I was actively seeking, a new job in China; but it was purely by chance that the Shanghai possibility came up. Mary Baker, a friend of my late father, ran into Julian Sobin, a Boston-area chemicals businessman whom I'd known in my China Trade days in Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Beijing. Julian had a connection with Thunderbird, the American Graduate School of International Management, in Phoenix, Arizona, now part of Arizona State University. He knew Thunderbird was interested in setting something up in China, and he put me in touch with people there. I knew a little about Thunderbird, since John Frankenstein, an old USIA friend, spent time teaching there in retirement.

Q: I lectured there a couple of times.

ROPE: That makes sense. At the time, Thunderbird was rated by U.S. News and World Report as the number one international business school in the US. Harvard, in this category, was rated number 5. I don't put great stock in such ratings, but it seemed to be a solid enough institution. What I didn't know was that, the office that hired me was a small, money-making part of Thunderbird not representative of the institution at its best.

Q: Really? Tell us about it; and when you went out to Shanghai what were your duties on the job?

ROPE: The people who hired me specialized in grantsmanship. They were running a program in Russia with AID funding that they wanted to replicate in China. They had opened a small office in Shanghai, under Department of Commerce auspices, they said, staffed by a recent Thunderbird graduate. In Moscow, my future boss explained in my initial interview, Thunderbird employed Russians who had gone to the US to gain MBAs and returned to Russia, to train Russian managers. They wanted to do this in China, though without AID funding. My job would be to find Chinese with US MBAs who could provide training -- to be marketed to Chinese and multinational corporations -- at the same high quality level as was provided at Thunderbird's home campus.

I told this gentleman that I didn't know much about Russia -- actually not true -- but I did know China; and in my experience, most Chinese who go to the US to earn MBA degrees don't return. If they do, I said, and they're good enough to teach at Thunderbird level, they're in high demand and can command high salaries. It was doubtful, I thought, that Thunderbird could induce such people to become management trainers "unless you are prepared to offer very substantial compensation packages."

That, Thunderbird wasn't prepared to do. So I proposed an alternative approach. Just as manufacturing companies sometimes move into off-shore production by starting with co-production, where products are manufactured in the US and then assembled in a foreign country, we could set up a small center in China, offering short training courses; and we

could import our product by bringing in Thunderbird professors from Phoenix to teach them. We might augment that with long-distance learning using satellite TV that Thunderbird already had. Once we had that going, establishing the Thunderbird brand, we might look at how best to expand, including possibly trying a Moscow-style operation.

This engendered a positive response. “If we can’t do it the Russian way,” my future boss said, “we’ll just have to do it another way. We have to be flexible.” I liked that, and I liked the challenge of setting up something entirely new. When I received a draft one-year contract over ten pages long, giving Thunderbird intellectual property rights to anything I thought of or wrote while working for it, I wondered about what I was getting into; but my lawyer knocked that all out and T-Bird agreed. The money offered was good, and it would put us in Shanghai. So I agreed.

Soon after I got there, though, I found that this man who’d hired me was neither flexible nor imaginative. He really should have thanked me for the nice ideas and hired someone else. Because, as soon as I was in Shanghai, his only question was, “How are you coming setting up the Russia model.” I also found that the “office” in Shanghai wasn’t operating under Commerce auspices. It was located in a Commerce Department space in Shanghai designed for temporary use by American business representatives visiting Shanghai.

Once Commerce learned from the Thunderbird representative there -- who had nebulous duties unrelated to mine and wasn’t doing much -- that what we intended was a permanent location within its center, it gave us a deadline to vacate. There wasn’t space for me in any case, so I had to work from home. I kind of liked that, but it wasn’t my idea of how to represent a prestigious American business school.

Thunderbird had also made no attempt to register with the Chinese government and wanted to avoid doing that. That might be okay for a small entrepreneur, but not for what we wanted to do. If we wanted to be a legitimate operation, we had to register. Absent that, we could find ourselves signing agreements with companies to deliver courses in circumstances where we could be closed at any time. There was also a question of whether we wanted to register as an educational institution, which I knew from experience wasn’t easy, or as a for-profit venture, which I would have preferred but which would have significant tax implications. My boss hadn’t thought about, and didn’t want to hear, any of this. I began to see I’d signed up for amateur hour.

I went about making contacts in Shanghai, with the AmCham, Consulate General, and Commerce representatives, and began calling on corporations, mostly multinationals, explaining our intentions and gathering information on what kinds of training would be most useful and attractive to them. As I did so, I began to conceive of a kind of “mini-MBA” course that we might offer, bringing out different Thunderbird professors over a period of months to offer short seminars on different aspects of business management. I sent messages about that and other ideas to the home office, but they went unanswered.

Q: Did you have the family with you?

ROPE: Not at first. I first lived in the old Peace Hotel on the Bund, refurbished and comfortable, but not the \$500 a night five-star it is today. I couldn't find a decent two-bedroom apartment for what Thunderbird was prepared to pay, and I was only able to get my allowance raised a small amount; but things were happening with Priscilla that would ease the situation. I introduced her at long distance to Shanghai American School Principal Ron Montgomery who was holding a recruiting fair in Bethesda; and he hired her as a fifth grade teacher. Robert was also accepted into the school's freshman class, colocated with the place in the suburbs where Priscilla would teach. So drawing on part on her salary package, I found us a nice apartment in the French Quarter, with -- rare in those days -- a swimming pool! It was so new that the landlord -- actually his agent, because he lived in Taiwan -- gave us an allowance to furnish the apartment with modern furniture, along with some quite elegant traditional Chinese pieces I got him to throw in.

In late July, I went home to help the family move. We rented our house quite easily to diplomats and put our furniture in storage. I stopped in Phoenix on the way back to Shanghai, for a rather inconclusive visit. My overseer was only vaguely responsive to my mini-MBA idea and still wanted the Russia model set up. He said, however, that in a few weeks Thunderbird would send out an experienced former management person out to meet with me, survey the scene, and give us suggestions. I also met some better quality people at Thunderbird, improving my confidence in the institution as a whole. I did find, however, that they had so much business providing Executive MBA programs in the US that they didn't have a lot of interest in venturing overseas, which actually made sense to me. Still, I learned a little about who was good and who might be a good fit for courses in Shanghai.

Q: So, the family joined you, and how did that work out?

ROPE: Wonderfully. Priscilla, who's a good enough swimmer to have swum the Bosphorus from Asia to Europe in Turkey, loved the apartment and its pool; and we were able to furnish it in a way that pleased all of us, Robert included. Though it still wasn't the dazzling city it is today, Shanghai had enough to give us lots to do on the weekends, and Priscilla was busy enough at the Shanghai American School. It couldn't equal Georgetown Day School for Robert, but he loved his biology class and teacher, and we tend to mark that as the beginning of the path that led him to be the doctor he is today.

I would walk Priscilla to her faculty bus-stop every day and then spend an hour walking all over the French Quarter, in and out of back alleys, having the same view of everyday street life in China that I had on morning walks in Nanjing. I was able to get my Nanjing opera star cook to come down and work for us for two months until we found a cook who, while not Mrs. Zhang, was an excellent replacement, enabling us to have dinner parties for friends we met and for Hopkins-Nanjing alumni with whom I stayed in touch. There was not a lot of entertainment, but at home there were a few British dramas and comedies on the TV that we watched weekly -- "Allo, Allo," "Inspector Morse," "Are you Being Served," and one or two others. We had a happy family life.

We also traveled a lot and were even joined at times by Kate, Priscilla's sister and brother in law, and two of Robert's best friends from GDS. Besides Hangzhou and Suzhou, we visited Xiamen, the lovely Guilin-Yangzhou area, Beijing again, Xian, Chongqing and the Yangtze Gorges, and more. It was a great family year.

Q: And the work?

ROPE: That was another story, and I'll try to be sparing of the details. My boss did send out a very fine guy, also named Bill, who had taught at Thunderbird and later been a higher level academic manager. I was apprehensive about his coming, but when I outlined my thoughts for what we could do, including the Mini-MBA idea, riding in from the airport, he completely agreed with me. And he communicated that back to Phoenix almost immediately. Then we went around to major business offices, with Bill telling people about the wonderful mini-MBA course we would offer. We got a lot of enthusiastic responses, and I was totally pleased. Bill reported all this back to Thunderbird, where my boss's office approved. Or so I thought.

Then Bill went home, and his involvement ended. For months nothing more happened. I continued to get around Shanghai, and as I did I'd send in more ideas about what our course should look like, but I was totally dependent on Thunderbird to come up with something presentable. It didn't come and didn't come and didn't come, and there was little I could tell companies that asked when our course would start aside from assurances that it would be good. I found office space and moved in with the young MBA lady and a secretary we'd hired; but nothing was happening. One professor I'd met in Phoenix came up with a short course in cross-cultural communication he'd like to deliver, and I sold that to a local company, earning my first commission. It went off fairly well; but nothing else was happening.

Suddenly, my boss got fired. In late winter a Thunderbird consultant came out for a visit, sending home a report endorsing what I'd been doing and saying there was lots of potential in Shanghai with proper support from home. She then became the interim manager of my home office, until a permanent person was found. He'd been head of the Moscow operation and turned out to be a horrible guy.

I finally get a proposed Mini-MBA course out of my home office, but it was so poorly done I had to rewrite a lot of it. Worse, though, was the fact that it wasn't to be taught by Thunderbird. It would be provided by Long Beach State University. That undercut everything I'd been telling potential customers since Bill's visit in the summer about Thunderbird and its number one US News rating; and while I tried my best to market what I'd been given, there were few takers. The course was eventually put on that fall, but by then I'd departed.

Q: Did you quit?

ROPE: Not exactly, but essentially yes, and the family decision was to go home to D.C. rather than have me look for another China job. Priscilla and I were happy enough back

in China, but the Shanghai American School had expanded very rapidly, and we weren't satisfied with the high school education Robert was getting. There were 14 kids in the SAS high school graduating class that year, and over 70 in Robert's freshman class. That's how fast the school was growing.

Q: It reflects the foreign business people that are piling into Shanghai because the Chinese have opened the whole economy up.

ROPE: Exactly. One of the benefits of having a job in which the support from home is inadequate and you don't have enough work as a result is that you have time of your own during the workday -- sort of like going to matinees from USUN. At one point I spent a few days watching a party congress on TV, and I enjoyed seeing President Jiang Zemin proclaim the glories of "Deng Xiaoping Zhuyi" -- Deng Xiaoping thought -- which Jiang extolled as a pragmatic philosophy grounded in the real world. What a change from the days of Mao!

The quality of the Shanghai American School faculty was mixed. There were even teachers who'd come out as missionaries in disguise. By day they taught school, but outside school they pursued their true mission, proselytizing, seeking converts and holding services in their homes. We thought Robert had got just about as much benefit as there was to be had at that time living in China, and we wanted to get him back to GDS. It would have been a harder decision if I'd been happy with Thunderbird, but I wasn't.

I told Thunderbird I wasn't prepared to renew my contract but would stay until a replacement could be found. Then my new boss came out for a disastrous visit, with the consultant. He and I were very different people, and I was embarrassed to take him around on calls. Alcohol flowed freely, though not on my part; I stopped drinking hard liquor in 1984. At one point in the new boss's hotel room, he laid out a vision for how we should go forward that I thought was totally unworkable. As I set forth some of the problems I saw with it, he was so angered he crushed his beer can in his hands.

I knew it was time to go. I let the consultant know I could stay through July but would have to leave then, replacement or no. And I did. As a side note, the man who ultimately did replace me was another man from Moscow. I learned later that he soon quit, but not before locking all the office computer files so no one else could ever access them.

So that's what I can tell you about Thunderbird! It just didn't work out. A nice year for the family, and we really liked Shanghai; but that was that.

Q: Do you want to take a break now?

ROPE: Yes. What else do we have to cover? I'm out of the Foreign Service and pretty much out of China -- though in the past four years we've been back as tourists, for about a month each time, traveling on our own.

Q: I am interested in your experience and observations on teaching in the DC school

system.

ROPE: Okay, next time. I am playing in a double header tonight and have to get ready.

Q: So a year in Shanghai and then you come back to Washington and a year later, in 1999 you got a job as a teacher in the District of Columbia schools.

ROPE: Yes. I've thought a lot about how to address this period. It was a true second career, spanning 12 years of full-time teaching in public elementary school, and, since retiring a second time in 2011, 5 years as an active substitute teacher.

Twelve years is equivalent to the time between my entry into the Foreign Service and assignment to head the Operations Center in 1978 -- a span in which, I rose from the old rank of FSO-7 to FSO-3, what is an FSO-1 today. In that time, I learned Chinese; served in Hong Kong twice; spent 18 months in Taiwan, although that was part of my Chinese study; served 2 years at USLO and another 2 in INR. I also served on the old FSO-4 to old FSO-3 promotion board and attended the War College. In short, that was a long time, and I did a lot.

My time as a full-time teacher was no different in terms of amount of activity -- only different in nature and substance. In 12 years with DC Public Schools, I taught 2nd grade for two years and 3rd grade for 10, in 3 different DCPS schools. I also became active in teacher's union work, first as one of 4 members who sued corrupt former leaders of the Washington Teachers Union as well as the American Federation of Teachers and then in a leadership role as a WTU trustee and board member. In this same amount of time, our daughter Kate got married and had two children, and Robert, ten years Kate's junior, graduated from high school, college, and medical school. I'm very proud of all this, but unless you want to interview me over another half-year, I'll just have to summarize.

Q: Okay. We won't do that, so let's start with how you made this radical change at so late in life.

ROPE: In 1996-97, between Nanjing and Shanghai, I got into tutoring public school children, in a program run by John McCarthy, an ex-minor league baseball player and son of journalist Coleman McCarthy, a wonderful idealist if you've ever encountered him. John's program gave kids from poor backgrounds the chance to play little league baseball with free equipment and coaching, provided they maintained good school grades. If they didn't, they had to accept after-school tutoring from people like me. It was my first introduction to the challenges facing DC schools. I gained experience, and I also saw that children who haven't mastered reading by third grade are in serious trouble; practically ruined for life.

Q: That's a pretty harsh judgment.

ROPE: It is; but I've seen too many examples where the sense of failure and frustration in such children translates into misbehavior and acting out which only worsens as they fall

farther and farther behind and move into adolescence. This belief -- call it a prejudice, if you wish -- and what I knew about brain development, led me, later, to resolve never to teach above the third grade level, though in my post-teacher-retirement substitute teaching, I've taught in every grade from Pre-K up.

Back from Shanghai in 1998, I had no prospect of returning to China for at least the three years remaining in Robert's schooling. As a househusband, I became a pretty good Chinese chef, able to put on dinner parties; but I needed more than that and looked first to volunteer tutoring. A big challenge quickly materialized at Priscilla's school, in Southwest DC. A newly-arrived Chinese student spoke no English, and the school's ESL teacher couldn't deal with him. I volunteered to try and ended up spending about 6 hours a day working with him, one-on-one, trying to reverse the process by which I learned Chinese. In mid-year another Chinese boy arrived, a fourth grader in Priscilla's class, and I worked with him, too. This went on all year. I got them started in English, and for a while afterwards we kept in touch.

As I spent those days in Priscilla's school, seeing DCPS teachers every day, I began to wonder if I could do what they did, maybe even better. I applied for a DCPS program for mid-career professionals seeking a transition into teaching, and was accepted -- despite skepticism from some interviewers who clearly thought me too old or wondered why, with my background, I'd be doing this.

The program provided me and a cohort of about twenty others a two-week crash course in August 1999, after which we were thrown into classrooms as regular teachers. We taught by day and took a one-year teacher-training course at Trinity College by night. The latter was in some ways a sham. We'd be put into groups, with each member assigned a different part of a book or text to read. Then, after reading for 20 minutes or so, we'd brief one another on what we'd read. There were, however a few courses in which experienced teachers shared their real-world experiences and techniques for managing a classroom, teaching, and dealing with the system. That was valuable.

As often happens with new teachers, we were sent to schools in tough neighborhoods, where it's hard to find enough teachers to fully staff a school. I became a second grade teacher at Miner Elementary, in a high-crime, high-drug area of northeast DC. The area's gentrified today, and Miner has a good-looking new building. In those days, it was so run down I had to tape the cracks in my windows in the winter to keep out the cold.

I was terrified by the prospect of teaching with so little preparation. So I went to Miner's principal and volunteered to be an unpaid aide in its six-week summer school program. That gave me some introduction to daily routines and how to deal with difficult children. I also met and worked with a few of my future colleagues. The principal refused, however, to give me any curriculum materials to study, which would have helped a lot. I did read a great book Priscilla gave me, *The First Days of School*, by Harry Wong. It was a teaching-for-dummies kind of text, and it became my bible. Later, when I was experienced enough to supervise student teachers from AU, UDC, and Howard, I invariably gave them that book as a good-bye present.

As I turned 59, my first year as a teacher began; and it was sink-or-swim. We had a structured morning reading program called “Success for All,” that I came to dub “Failure for All.” It was highly scripted, though, and that at least made my first days and weeks easier. I learned a few techniques from it that were useful my whole career. Still, it was a bad program, ironically developed at Johns Hopkins. Particularly in a tough school, you need to bond with your kids -- and develop relationships with their parents -- early. Then you work with them all year. With “Success for All,” my reading students changed every six weeks, and I had no chance to get to know their families. This was really not good, because student behavior was my biggest problem.

It was baptism by fire. Fire-walking might be more apt, since, to mix the metaphor, I just put one foot in front of the other, determined to finish the first week, then the first month, then a month until Halloween, then the weeks leading to Thanksgiving, after which it was only a short time to Christmas, etc. I survived the year; and though it was a struggle to deal with a lot of bad behavior, my children did well on standardized tests. Then I went back for a second year. What I’ve just described, though -- one foot in front of the other, week to week -- became my mantra for new teachers, especially for some who wanted to flee immediately, convinced they just couldn’t make it.

Q: Teaching is a hard job.

ROPE: You have no idea how hard it is until you do it. The demands of managing a classroom and teaching are hard enough; but, as in all things, it’s the preparation that counts; and lesson planning plus grading papers, added to my Trinity course work, kept me up regularly until 1 a.m. Then I’d get up at 6:00 and go back at it. On weekends I’d have some time off, but from Sunday afternoon until late in the evening I’d be working again. Once, testifying before the Board of Education, I said I’d been a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, but nothing I ever did at State was any harder than teaching school. I meant it. Only the tension level was lower; the stakes were not as high -- though from the point of view of the children they were.

Some say it takes five years for a teacher to hit his or her stride; some say seven. I’ll say they’re both right. In my early years, people would ask me if I liked teaching. I’d say, “I must like it, because I keep doing it; but it’s really tough.” Somewhere along the line I started admitting I loved teaching. I love children, and at some point I also realized that I’d been teaching for a long time without knowing it. As an FSO, I loved passing on our craft to others. In INR I was teaching. In Turkey, with junior officers, I was teaching. I was also modeling, as I’d been taught in the DCM course; only in DCPS I was modeling for children ages 7-9.

Much of inner-city teaching is socialization -- modeling appropriate behavioral standards to students and finding ways to hold them to those standards. One thing I found, over time, was that I often ended up caring the most about the children whose behavior was the worst. I guess, that was because I put so much effort into trying to figure them out and help them get on a better track, or at least to teach them something along the way. I

invested a lot in them and wanted to help them succeed. Sometimes they did.

One huge advantage I had was that I lived with an experienced teacher. Priscilla was a tremendous help, particularly in my early days. Besides her knowledge, she had loads of resources and teaching materials to share. She was an important sounding board for ideas, sometimes so brutally honest I'd get discouraged, but for the most part a tremendous help. I would not have gotten into teaching had she not been there already; and I don't know how I would have survived without her support.

I think I should mention here that Priscilla herself got into teaching through a program sponsored by the State Department Family Liaison Office not long after we came back from Turkey. That program, run by George Mason University, was designed to give Foreign Service spouses, who often find themselves unable to work when their spouses are assigned overseas, a skill, teaching, that can be used in almost any country of assignment, world-wide. Priscilla enrolled in it, did the coursework and student teaching, and ultimately did the extra work necessary to gain an MAT degree at George Mason. We never went overseas again with the Foreign Service, but she became a teacher thanks to that FLO-sponsored program. We both owe FLO a debt of gratitude for that.

Q: Now I want to get to all that's gone on in DC Public Schools, especially all the reforms instituted by Michelle Rhee; but first, you say you taught in three different schools. How were those experiences?

ROPE: I'll try to say something about Rhee, but like most teachers I really disliked her. She had a horrible way of treating people, and I consider her dishonest. She had little background in education, inflated her résumé, and was arrogant. I think she did far more harm than good -- if any of it was good -- to DCPS.

To come back to me, a simple DCPS teacher, I taught Second Grade at Miner for two years, both hard, because I had so many kids from dysfunctional backgrounds. I got so I could pretty much which children came from two-parent families, and I had a few kids who got strong support from at least one parent, or from aunts and other relatives. I had sexual misconduct cases -- among second graders -- and real physical violence problems.

Once, one of my students -- a boy who'd, among other misdeeds, destroyed the stalls in the boys' bathroom with impunity -- told me to "wipe my balls with your face." He was a tough kid, but not wildly atypical. I was slightly amused that he'd come up with that and pretended I hadn't heard it. At day's end, when I was handing out favors to the students for doing something good, he was unhappy when I didn't give him one. I told him he'd said something unacceptable to me, and I'd be a bad teacher if I let him think that he could do that and still be rewarded.

"Wha'd I say?" he demanded. I said, "you know." "No, I don't!" he insisted. I said, "Yes you do." Then he said, "Oh," and he mouthed the words he'd spoken with a bit of laughter in his eyes. "Okay," he said, and off he went. I liked Philip, though I'm not sure I helped him; but this gives you an idea of some of the kids I was trying to reach.

I also was on the other side of racism at times. One parent, who clearly didn't like me because I was white and made no secret of it, filed two separate "choking" complaints against me. Both stemmed from incidents where, standing behind his son, I reached around and put my arm across the boy's chest, just below the shoulders, to keep him from beating up another child. That was totally appropriate -- restraint is not corporal punishment. The charges were dismissed, though I was never told. In DCPS, you were guilty until proven innocent, and in the latter case you just never heard from your interrogators again.

My students were all black, and I felt the dislike of more than a few parents; but on two occasions when my children were speaking pejoratively of white people I noted that I was white. Their answer was, "No you're not!" One time, one of my most difficult students did call me a "white bitch." At the end of the day, I told her mother she had not had a good day and had called me that name. The girl stamped her foot and said, "I did not! I called him a 'white booger!'"

Q: Why only two years? Was that a normal tour?

ROPE: I might still be there, but I couldn't stand the principal. She was cruel. I think she enjoyed not giving me any materials to study over that first summer before I started just to make it tougher for me.

Principals have far more power over subordinates than superiors in the Foreign Service. Ratings are reviewed by a principal's superior, as with FSOs, but the reviewer is only on the scene once or twice a year and hardly knows the teacher. The process is pro-forma, and there's no further recourse -- unless the Union steps in, which varies from school to school. I suppose we had a union rep at Miner, but if we did that individual was totally passive and no doubt cowed by the principal. There should be chapter meetings in every school once a month, but I don't recall any at Miner.

My principal gave teachers no support and made life miserable for anyone not strong enough to stand up to her. One of my colleagues -- a young African-American woman with a degree from a major northeast college and obvious love of children -- totally buckled under the pressure. She spoke to me of having visions; and when she blew up at the principal one day, the principal called the police and had her hauled off. Despite mistreating most of us, the principal did all she could to keep her teachers from finding jobs elsewhere -- by giving us bad or mediocre ratings that made it hard to find jobs or giving bad references when asked by other principals.

Both those things happened to me, but I had the advantage of not being dependent on my employment and didn't have to put up with it. I also knew how to file a convincing grievance and did so in her case, noting, *inter alia*, that my children had made sizeable advances in reading and math. I found one reliable advisor at the union's downtown office, and I won. I also volunteered to transfer to a school that was in such bad shape it was being "reconstituted" under a new principal. My principal couldn't block that. To my

amusement, she seemed generally surprised when she found out I was leaving.

Q: How was the next one?

ROPE: Incredibly better. My ratings went from the cellar to the top, though I was still in a pretty tough school and my style of teaching didn't change. I taught there, at H.D. Cooke Elementary in Adams Morgan, for four years. We had a wonderful principal, Erasmo Garza. He was reputed to have been the first Hispanic-American Assistant Principal in DCPS, first Hispanic Principal, first Hispanic Assistant Superintendent, etc., and he was assigned to "reconstitute" Cooke because it had experienced lots of black-Hispanic racial animosity that broke out in the press -- something DCPS abhors. Garza was a laid-back and calm, but also alert, proactive and smart principal, who brought in a lot of good new people. Among them was an outstanding, African-American assistant principal, Ron Taylor -- now a superintendent of schools in New Jersey. He also brought in good parent-liaison people to improve school-community relations. Teachers liked and respected him, and he supported us.

I had to agree to teach third grade, which is much harder than second, but I came to love teaching third. If you want to teach in the inner city and make an impact, it was, and remains, my view that you should stay below fourth grade. By age ten or so, 90 percent of a child's brain is developed, and change is much harder to achieve.

Garza brought into H.D. Cooke a program run by a new DC Non-profit, In2Books. It provided children carefully-vetted and masked adult pen-pals to correspond with students about books they'd read. Each month, every child would receive the same book, which we'd read and discuss in class. In2Books pen pals would read the same book and write to their student about it. The students would write back, and the process would begin again.

The letters weren't short, though they may have been at first. They identified key themes in the book and related them to their own lives. For each monthly letter, we'd go through a full brainstorming and drafting exercise, with me teaching the essentials of editing and writing, as the students developed and improved their letters. To support teachers in the program, In2Books provided monthly training; and we had required reading -- first-rate books and articles on how to teach reading and writing -- about which we'd write papers or "reflections." DCPS gave us credit toward recertification for this work. It was the best training I received in 12 years of full-time teaching.

My experience with In2Books confirmed something I already strongly felt. You can teach kids how to write, and how to edit their work, at a very young age. And what they learn will serve them forever. I also believe that writing makes kids better readers, and vice versa.

I built on the pen-pal writing by adding another writing component to my teaching. At Miner, a veteran teacher had shown me how to take children on field trips using public transportation, not the chartered buses that schools with large PTA funds or other outside resources can provide. I also learned how to get it for free most of the time. This made it

possible for me to take children on lots of field trips, and I did. DC's Third grade Social Studies curriculum focused on "My Community," and I took that as D.C. writ large. I'd take the class on monthly outings to major sites in Washington, and they'd write up what they saw for about a week.

I learned to make mini-notebooks for them so they could take notes on what they saw and heard. They'd use their notes to do a first draft of a trip report, and then we'd go through the revising and editing process, with me teaching the same techniques I'd learned from Bob Drexler, decades earlier.

I developed this further when In2Books provided my kids a wonderful picture book called, *Washington, DC, a Scrapbook*. It was about kids visiting Washington, and it was loaded with textual features I could teach about -- glossary, index, table of contents, captions, inserts, pictures of trip souvenirs, historical timelines, and more. Once I'd seen that book, I used it for the rest of my teaching career. I'd get copies, using a grant, or whatever funds I could find, and give them to kids to read early in each school year. Then I'd ask them if they'd like to make their own scrapbooks, which they invariably would.

From then on, every field trip report became a chapter for their scrapbooks, and they could see their writing improve over time. I added more to the project when I learned of a Kennedy Center artists program providing "artists-in-residence" to DCPS schools to teach once a week for a month or so. From that program I got a wonderful artist whose specialty was book binding. She would come each May -- after spring testing was through -- and lead the children through a six-week series of art projects, helping them put their scrapbooks together. I remember one mother who spent a year telling me what a terrible teacher I was who, at the beginning of the next year, came in with her daughter's scrapbook and thanked me, saying the family would "keep it forever!"

In short, I flourished at H.D. Cooke and developed techniques that were increasingly my own, building on what I learned from In2Books. I also learned a lot about how to get grants, which helped me help my children in other ways, including an online math program I got with a Washington Post grant that was eventually adopted by DCPS system-wide. I became an expert on free programs -- like the Washington National Opera's annual Opera Look-in for kids, or a free day riding the DC Tourmobile with a Park Service guide named Ranger Jen, or Maret's Horizons summer camp that cost students' parents \$25 for six weeks and provided free transportation, lunch and aftercare. I learned a lot of different ways to expose my children to free or low-cost programs that they could enjoy and that broadened the scope of their learning.

Q: But you left this school, too.

ROPE: I had to, or to put it another way, something happened that put the future of many of us at H.D. Cooke in doubt. It was not a reflection on any of us, but it involved a major potential budget cut that caused Erasmo Garza to retire immediately, in disgust. I quickly went to a DCPS job fair and was offered a job at a small school, not totally unlike the less-privileged schools I'd taught at, but so close to my home near the National Cathedral

that I could commute by bike in only ten-minutes. I couldn't turn it down.

Q: What school was that?

ROPE: Phoebe Hearst Elementary, named after William Randolph Hearst's mother. She'd been a founder of the US PTA movement, and while living in Washington as the wife of a Hearst's father, a California Senator, she contributed funds for a special kindergarten room when the school was built. Hearst was a very small school, going only through third grade; and there was only one third grade class -- mine. Since third grade was the first at which standardized tests, linked to a school's ratings, were administered, that meant that how my children performed at spring testing time had a major impact on how the school was rated by my principal's superiors and how it was viewed by the public, since school test scores were published on the DCPS web site and in the press.

Before we go further, though, we might want to talk about my union activities, which really got going when I was at H.D. Cooke, and maybe say a little more about Michelle Rhee.

Q: Okay. You said you actually sued the Union and then became a leader.

ROPE: I'd always been very pro-labor, less so after George Meany backed the war in Vietnam, and a bit less today, after my own experiences with union politics. I believe in the importance of progressive unions. As an FSO, I didn't vote for AFSA when we had an election. I wanted a real labor union that could represent us on bread and butter issues.

So I was happy I could join a real union on entering DCPS. In my first two months, there was a terrible payroll glitch and lots of new teachers weren't paid for weeks, including non-payment of moving allowances for teachers who'd paid out of pocket to move to DC. I had to loan money to one of my new colleagues at Miner until it was straightened out. We had a Union demonstration over that, and I happily participated. I quickly learned, however, that Washington Teachers' Union leadership was, at a minimum, inept. I even wrote a letter to President Barbara Bullock complaining about her policies.

One day in my first year at H.D. Cooke, a fellow teacher came to me waving a newspaper article and saying "You were right." Bullock had been caught stealing from the Union and was arrested. Our parent union, the American Federation of Teachers commissioned a forensic audit that ultimately detailed embezzlement by Bullock of at least \$5 million. It also stated clearly that her deputy, Esther Hankerson, had learned of the thievery years earlier and done nothing other than -- she claimed -- speak to Bullock about it. Bullock said she'd pay it back, and Hankerson let it go at that, she said. This assumes she wasn't in on the take herself.

Motivated by this, I got myself elected to the WTU Elections Committee, a group untainted by scandal that would have been in charge of conducting elections for a new WTU leadership. However, when AFT appointed an administrator to take control of WTU, George Springer, his first move was to dismiss our committee and suspend the

Union's Constitution. Then he decided to keep as his deputy Esther Hankerson, the one person whom we know could have stopped the fraud but didn't.

That infuriated me and a lot of other union members, leading to three months of shouting matches at meetings convened by Springer before he finally fired Hankerson. In the course of this, he admitted to me that he'd never read the forensic audit. I found that incredible. It was only 53 pages. To this day I suspect that some AFT officials knew what Bullock was doing and may even have been on the receiving end of her benefices. AFT may well have had reasons for wanting to keep Hankerson on and keeping WTU members from learning the full extent of what had happened.

When a lawyer friend of Priscilla's sister said his law firm was willing to represent, pro bono, any teachers who'd like to sue Ms. Bullock, I took him up on it. I contacted George Parker a long-time opponent of Bullock's who became our president once AFT turned the union back to WTU control, and he and two other teachers joined me in a lawsuit against Bullock for what she'd done. The suit also included Hankerson, Ms. Bullock's chauffeur, a bank that had laundered funds for her, and AFT which, at best, we said, failed to exercise proper oversight over WTU.

Out of this came formation of a group led by Parker that actively pressed the AFT administrator to institute reforms and hold elections for new WTU leaders. In the course of this, I learned more than a little about how union politics work and how tough things can get. At one point, Parker and I were told point blank by AFT's top lawyers that if we didn't drop our lawsuit, "we'll crush you." We persisted, and ultimately a settlement was reached. AFT admitted no wrongdoing. I won't discuss it further, but I can say that over the next few years WTU received significant in-kind contributions from AFT worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

When AFT finally let us hold elections, a slate led by Parker won. I became one of three trustees charged with overseeing WTU financial operations. Later, in our second term, I became a member of the WTU board. We led the union for about seven years, during which the famous Ms. Rhee became DC Schools Chancellor.

So, during that period, besides my day-to-day work as a teacher, I spent a lot of time on WTU business, often as chief drafter for Parker, with whom I remained pretty close throughout. I met and worked with teachers all over the city, spoke at rallies, testified before the Board of Ed. and kept in E-Mail correspondence with DC Council members like Kathy Patterson and Vincent Gray. We negotiated a new union contract with Rhee that was path-breaking in many ways; though it also got us voted out of office.

Q: How so?

ROPE: We knew that, whatever we might think of Rhee, DCPS needed reforming, and we didn't want teachers, most especially WTU, to be seen as an obstacle. We had to be constructive; and the way we did that in our contract negotiations was to agree to extend the school year, add one-half hour to the school day, agree to new ways in which

underperforming teachers could be selected out, and give Rhee a few other things she wanted that we considered constructive, like daily collaborative planning.

In exchange, we got a very large pay increase for all teachers. I have in mind 20 percent, but that may be an overstatement. It brought DC teacher pay up to, and in some cases above, parity with surrounding jurisdictions in Northern Virginia and Maryland. No successor WTU leadership has come close to that. The method in our madness was to eliminate a perennial handicap facing WTU whenever it sought to negotiate over pay, i.e., the fact that we worked shorter years and shorter days than counterparts in Montgomery County and Northern Virginia. When we ended that disparity, we were consciously laying the ground work for future contract negotiations in which we could argue that our teachers should be paid more than suburban counterparts because working conditions in the inner city were tougher. Unfortunately, we didn't get to negotiate another contract, and two successive WTU presidents have failed to do so.

We also agreed to provisions for performance pay, which Rhee badly wanted; and while we made it easier to weed out underperforming teachers, we gained substantially improved protections and severance terms for teachers affected. Our opponents in WTU attacked us for surrendering "tenure," and Rhee liked to play this up as such; but WTU members had never had tenure. We could be fired at any time using what was called a 90-day plan. Under that, principals had to take time to document perceived poor performance and put mentoring arrangements in place to help failing teachers improve. Ms. Rhee and other DCPS critics maintained that this was so onerous that it effectively made removal of inadequate teachers impossible; but that was not so.,

The problem was that principals routinely failed to use the tool, and when they did they often didn't follow the required procedures, giving WTU no choice but to defend its members and get adverse actions thrown out. This led to the canard that it was impossible to get rid of bad teachers because the Union would obstruct any and all efforts to do so. If Rhee had just invested a little in training principals how to use the 90-day vehicle effectively and fairly, she could have accomplished her goals with no objections from WTU.

Besides better pay, we gained improved working conditions and more in-school planning time for teachers, easing their afterschool workloads. Still, George Parker and those of us around him had to campaign hard for ratification of the contract and were voted out of office in the first election after its conclusion. Our opponents claimed we'd "sold out" to Rhee. We lost by around 30 votes in an election where only a quarter of the membership voted. That was a big problem in WTU. The majority of teachers had no interest in being active, and WTU meetings tended to be dominated by loud and unruly minorities -- often some of the worst elements in our teacher corps. There were factions that had fought one another for years. What I've described scratches the surface.

Q: Were you bitter?

ROPE: No. Unhappy, yes. But that's life. George, with our support, should have run a

better campaign; but despite our demise, I think we did a lot for teachers, whether they knew about it or not, or liked it or not. In the course of all this, I met dedicated teachers throughout the city and went into schools I'd never have gone into otherwise. That thoroughly convinced me that Rhee's wholesale assault on DC teachers and principals was wrong. As for the AFT, I dislike it to this day. Whether she understood it or not, and I suspect it was the former, AFT President Randi Weingarten played an enabling role in bringing George Parker down; which resulted in the election of a loathsome gentleman to replace him whom I considered at best potentially corrupt.

Q: So let's talk about Ms. Rhee.

ROPE: I've thought about this and don't want to say a lot. Rhee was kind of a bad dream for DCPS, and her successor, Kaya Henderson, who'd been Rhee's deputy, wasn't much better. I need to say up front that just as my classroom management guru was Harry Wong, and my teaching was highly influenced by In2Books training, my thoughts on education policy were heavily influenced by a man who was my daughter Kate's mentor at Occidental College, Richard Rothstein. I met him through Kate when I was at Miner and was a faithful reader of his weekly education columns in the New York Times as well as various books he's authored on education and social policy, particularly regarding the challenge of closing the "black-white achievement gap." Rothstein and Diane Ravitch, whose work Priscilla and I also like very much, have little use for standardized testing and the various "accountability" models that have been introduced into our school systems by people like Rhee who have little actual experience with education. I include in this, people like Bill Gates, Sam Walton and Eli Broad, whom Ravitch calls "the Billionaire Boys Club."

Rothstein, Ravitch, and people like them believe what society needs to recognize first and foremost is that until we attack the socio-economic conditions that create dysfunctional families, neighborhoods and communities and address problems of poverty and physical and mental health, no amount of tinkering or "reforms" will save our inner city schools. As Richard puts it, they can at best affect things "at the margins." I subscribe to all of that and think we also need to pay teachers a lot more and give them a lot more training and support if we want to attract and retain top quality people. Teach for America, which Ms. Rhee ran before heading DCPS, isn't the answer. It may bring in bright, motivated young people; but many of them, lacking experience, are unable to perform well; and those who do more often than not burn out and leave within a few years.

One more point before speaking of Ms. Rhee. It's important to know that before she arrived we had a very good superintendent in Clifford Janey. He couldn't equal Rhee in self-promotion and PR, though, and he was unceremoniously fired when newly elected Mayor Adrian Fenty took over the school system.

Janey was a professional educator who came to DC from Massachusetts, which has one of the nation's best school systems and best set of academic standards. In DC, Janey introduced a similar set of standards, along with Everyday Math, a wonderful new program from the University of Chicago that I believe led to improvements in DC math

scores for which Rhee got to claim the credit. Janey had an outstanding Deputy Superintendent for academics, Meria Carstarphen who went on to lead the school systems of St. Paul, Minnesota, Austin, Texas, and, today, Atlanta Georgia. Unfortunately, she and Janey had less than two years to make changes in DC, hardly enough.

Now to Rhee, who consistently violated a fundamental rule of good management, i.e., not to mistreat people. Rather than take time to look around to see what worked, find out who was good, and build on what was there to introduce change, she came in with guns blazing, telling us we were all bad and had better shape up fast. I think the way she put it was something like, “You’re not going to get away with it anymore.” She terrorized principals, even going so far as to fire one on television. Although I’ve praised In2Books training as the best I ever got, under Janey we also got some excellent training, with periodic conferences bringing in high-quality specialists in teaching reading; and we had good science, social studies and math teacher training. Under Rhee and her successors, all that stopped. The sole focus of training became how to “teach to the test.”

Rhee didn’t have a background in education. All she cared about was raising standardized test scores and linking them to teacher evaluations. Since reading and math were the only subjects tested, art, music and other subjects were neglected, including science. Early on it became obvious she’d falsified her résumé, claiming miraculous achievements during two years as a Teach for America teacher in Baltimore. Her claims were just not credible, and no one -- Rhee included -- could produce evidence to substantiate them.

Soon after her arrival, she and Fenty brought in photographers to show her touring a DCPS warehouse and supposedly uncovering new textbooks sitting undistributed. Then she made a big deal of arranging for their distribution by the beginning of school. In fact she was dealing with a small number of books still not distributed to schools that had failed to put in, or had understated, their requisitions for the coming year. Janey had ensured that the bulk of the books in question were distributed the previous spring. She and Fenty looked good on the front page of the Post, and many people accepted as fact that she was shaking up a totally moribund, incompetent system in need of tough medicine; but it was a sham.

There were some gains in test scores during Rhee’s tenure but the overall picture was mixed, and some gains were questionable. There were cheating scandals, and pressures on principals to increase high school graduation rates through phony programs like “credit recapture,” allowing students who skipped classes and received failing grades to do minimal things -- in some cases amounting to nothing -- and gain a diploma. It’s now close to a decade since Rhee left and standardized test scores have gone up to a degree, which Rhee’s successors never cease to trumpet. The increases, however, correlate closely with demographic, socio-economic changes in the district, as substantial gentrification occurred. This has pushed out a significant number of the poorest student population, from which -- sadly, come the bulk of underperforming children.

I want to get to my final years at Hearst Elementary, but even this connects back to Rhee. In my second year at Hearst, I had the smartest class I’d ever taught. Their test scores

went up so sharply over the previous year that our school qualified for a major bonus under a program Rhee had initiated. Each teacher received \$8,000. The principal received \$10,000. Staff people, down to janitors received \$2,000. At that year's opening-of-school rally, we were presented with a huge cardboard \$132,000 check representing the bonus total. There were a number of other schools similarly commended, but they were subsequently found to have cheated. We were not!

Soon thereafter, my principal went to have her annual meeting with Rhee. Instead of congratulating her and asking her how she planned to keep up the good work, Rhee opened with "I don't like what I hear about you." You couldn't make up what my principal told me Rhee had said. Apparently a few parents had complained about something, and my principal was not good at defending herself. Over the following year, my principal was hounded into retirement, with one of the charges against her being that she was failing to attract enough neighborhood white children into our school. What was done to her sticks in my craw to this day. She had strengths and weaknesses; but I always thought leaders got credit for what their people produced. Not in her case.

I thought it would be hard to repeat the test scores of that year I've just mentioned, but my kids test grades stayed up the next year; and even though Hearst drew many students from out of bounds, across the city, at least during my time, our scores rivaled those of Janney and Lafayette, generally recognized as the top elementary schools in DC, drawing from relatively prosperous homes in Northwest.

How can you chase out a principal whose staff got results like that? But that's the kind of person Rhee was. Ultimately, her style caught up with her. City Council Chairman Vincent Gray, toward whom Rhee had repeatedly behaved arrogantly, ran against Fenty in the Democratic primary. As it became increasingly likely that Fenty would lose, Rhee joined Fenty on the campaign trail, pretty clearly violating the Hatch Act, though she claimed she was only acting "as a private citizen." That sealed her fate with Gray. She resigned before she could be kicked out.

Q: I guess that's enough about Rhee. It seems pretty clear you didn't like her but enjoyed your time at Hearst.

ROPE: I did. Once established, I got to be kind of a big fish in a small pond. Hearst had some excellent teachers, starting with pre-K and Kindergarten teachers, but since the school only went through third grade in my first few years, I was kind of the final act. One of my duties was to organize an elaborate graduation ceremony at the end of each year. I continued the writing program I'd developed at H.D. Cooke, and kept adding to it. I was nominated by my parents to be Washington Post Teacher of the Year, and I was one of three finalists. I got an award from DC Rotary for the most imaginative use of the dictionary-almanacs they handed out to DC third graders every year. I got my children to enter a Washington National's Father of the Year essay contest that was held annually for several years, and twice one of my students won.

A lot of good things happened. In my initial interview with Hearst's hiring committee,

when asked what I thought made up a good teacher, I said the question made me think of a song from a 1950's Broadway musical, which I proceeded to sing. That might have been a bit risky, but it was accepted. Only when I reported to Hearst in August did I learn that the principal played the piano and loved to organize faculty and student singing.

Want to hear the song lyrics? You don't get a choice. It came from Wish You Were Here, and it was a lament by the social director of a singles camp in the Adirondacks. Here it is:

"Social Director, social director, what do they expect from a social director? Nothing, nothing much. Only that he should have the best characteristics of the following personalities. He should be Emily Post and Sigmund Freud, Superman and William Boyd, Moss Hart and Danny Kaye, Sir Lawrence Olivier, William Tilden, Audubon, Charlie Chaplain, Thomas Mann; Milton Berle, Professor Kinsey, Charles Laughton, Howard Lindsay...." and so on until it ended with "Tyrone Power, Eisenhower!" I thought that summed up what's expected of a teacher pretty well.

My field trips continued and got better. In my home office I have a picture of my class with President Obama. Another teacher with whom I worked met Chief White House Usher Admiral Rochon, and he gave us a special tour during which the President walked by and stopped to shake every child's hand. I had kids saying afterwards they'd never wash their hands again! Even after the first principal was hounded out, we had another excellent principal. Overall, I had six great years teaching at Hearst. I loved the school and I loved the kids.

I'll stop with one final note. A few years ago I got a call from an Ethiopian cab driver. I didn't remember him until he mentioned his son's name. His boy was in my class at H.D. Cooke in my first year, and I helped him after that to get into two different private schools. The father said he'd just returned from dropping his son off to start his freshman year at Northwestern, and he wanted to let me know. I still tear up thinking of that. Not all my kids would have ended up like that, but I hope more than just Beimnet did. I know that an Hispanic girl from his same class is now at Emory. I hope there are others like them, but for those who weren't superstars I hope I at least gave them something that has helped them out in life.

Q: Why did you retire from this second career?

ROPE: It's pretty simple, and it relates back to the Rhee generation of DCPS leaders. In this case DCPS under Kaya Henderson, a woman I never respected, along with her top subordinates.

On August 15, 2011, I returned to Hearst from summer vacation, about to turn 71. I thought, "I feel good. I think I'll teach until I'm 75." Then, for two days, I heard a new principal -- from outside DC, who'd been to Henderson's opening-of-the-year training and "drunk the Kool-Aid" -- lay out how DCPS was going to be among the first in the nation to adopt the new "Common Core" standards. I had no problem with that, per se. When new standards come in, good teachers adapt what they've been doing to make sure

they cover those standards, and that's that.

The problem was, we weren't being asked to do just that. We were being told to do it with no new textbooks or supporting materials. We were to throw over all we'd been doing, discard the old texts, and virtually invent a new curriculum on our own. Every six weeks we'd give our kids standardized tests to see how they were doing and hold intensive meetings afterward to see how we could get them to do better the next time. Our teaching days were to be broken into prescribed, micromanaged blocks. I don't subscribe to the view that Common Core is terrible; but I do think that was the worst possible way to introduce it. All it represented, I think, was an effort by Kaya to impress Education Secretary Arne Duncan -- something she and Rhee loved to do -- by leading the way, however unprepared, in hopes of being a winner in his "Race to the Top."

I wasn't willing to give up all I'd developed in favor of something that seemed absolutely crazy. I loved our reading program, which would go out the window. The Chicago math program would be subject to cut-and-paste re-organization that ran counter to its entire teaching philosophy. Multiple innovations of mine would be sacrificed, even though they were consistent with, or could be adapted to, the Common Core. The final straw was that I'd have to give up field trips. Twice a year would be the limit. I hated that.

Toward the end of her second day of going over all this, the new principal said "In case anyone feels they can't do this, I've got a stack of résumés on my desk." She said it cheerfully, but it wasn't a nice thing to say. Afterward, I went to her and said, "We have to talk. I'm afraid I cannot serve you the way you want to be served. You may have to hit your stack of résumés." We talked for 45 minutes. She tried to persuade me to stay but used the word "non-negotiable" three times. Wouldn't I try it for a year, she asked? "That's the trouble," I said. "It's a year. The children come in the door Monday morning, and they're yours. You can't leave them! I have to go now, while you still have a few days to find someone else."

I went through two days of processing, and on August 19, 2011 I retired. My fellow teachers, none of whom had the option I had, stayed on and were terribly unhappy. For my part, I joined Priscilla, who'd retired a few years earlier, as a DCPS substitute teacher, working mostly in nearby schools. I quickly found that if a different person had come in as Hearst's new principal in 2011, I might not have retired; because I saw other new principals who weren't so extreme and might have given me the chance to do Common Core my way.

Still, I've never been sorry. I've substituted in every grade from pre-K to twelfth. Besides standard classroom stints, I've taught music, art, Chinese, various forms of special education, and I've substituted as a librarian. I love library, because I get to read lots of stories to children, which makes me think back to Chappaqua and "Story Hour" at my mother's library. She taught me how to read with expression, something I've always tried to pass on to children, and when I'm librarian I like to think she's looking down on me.

I've also done long-term sub stints, once for 4 months of Special Ed pull-outs in 2012

and another month teaching 2nd grade at the end of the school year in 2013. Normally, though, I work when I want to and enjoy life with Priscilla when I don't. I no longer have to put in long hours after a school day ends. No more in bed at 1 a.m. and up at 6. We can travel off-season when we want to. We've spent a month in China in three of the last four years and made lots of other trips. When we're in Washington, I'm still regularly in the world of children; and I still love it.

I feel very happy about both my careers.

Q: Great. Let's leave it here. This was obviously fabulous. When you get the text, and face the next job of editing this all, which is the hardest part, I hope you'll extend your comments both on the school system stuff and the Foreign Service because I think you will find it worthwhile. You will think of more. And I will send you this interview chronology that we have been working on that I have been adding to at each step. That will help you with some names. Remember, too, that one benefit of these histories is that they are family records, and you can expand on family aspects as well.

ROPE: How would you ever imagine I'd think of more to say?

Q: I talked to Priscilla.

ROPE: OK. I'll stand by to get the transcript. I promise to do as you ask, and I'll fact check, too. I know I've mentioned editing frequently, and I'll try my best. We've talked a lot, though, so I don't guarantee perfection. What will be most important to me will be the Taiwan Arms Communiqué part. I'll do my best to get that right.

Now I have to go play softball. Thanks you for getting me to do this. It's taken a lot of time, but you've been a pleasure to work with. I always liked you from afar. Now I know how right I was.

Q: It's mutual. Bye-bye.

ROPE: Bye.

End of interview