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

MELISSA SANDERSON

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
Initial interview date, September 21st, 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Secretary's Morning Summary
Meeting with Secretary Shultz

State Department: Office of Science, Arms Control and Technology (T Bureau); Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (CoCom) 1989-1990
Reginald Bartholomew
Rewriting CoCom Regime
Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE)
Paris meeting
Working with Department of Commerce
Computer technology
Swedish/Soviet violation
Inter-department controversies
US economic slowdown
Security and commercial issues
CoCom Agreement
Russian Federation

Ottawa, Canada: Domestic Political Officer 1990-1993
Separatism
Parti du Quebecois
Meech Lake Two
US "Cultural imperialism"
Relations
Jean Chrétien
Divisions in Canada
Military reductions
Joint public utilities
Canada as peacekeepers
Redesigning Canada
Religion
Women's Rights
Liberal Party sweeps elections
Canadian Immigration policy
Clinton/Gorbachev meeting)

Madrid, Spain: Political Officer; Labor Counselor, and Telecommunications Officer 1993-1996
Spanish Labor Union
US commercial interests
Telecommunications Ministry
Terrorist movement
Separatists
President Clinton/King relations
Ambassador and Mrs. Richard N. Gardner

Expanded NATO Treaty
Trade issues
(Air) cabotage issues
Embassy morale
Environment
President Gutierrez
Security
Royal family

State Department: Foreign Service Institute (FSI); 1996-1997 84
Polish language training

Madrid, Spain: Preparation for Madrid NATO Summit 1997
NATO Expansion
Russian interests
Polish military
Missile systems
General Govan
CFE Treaty
Istanbul NATO Summit
Soviet military
Nuclear basing
Baltics

Warsaw, Poland: Political Officer 1997-2000
President Clinton visit
Environment
European Union
NATO
French

San Salvador, El Salvador: Deputy Political Counselor 200-2001
International Narcotics and Law Enforcement
Drug transits
Anti-money laundering center
Colombia
Salvadoran drug police
DEA
Indigenous organizations
Earthquake
Rebuilding
Ambassador Rose Likins
International earthquake aid
Cargo pre-certification

Moscow, Russia: Deputy Minister Counselor for Science 2001-2003

Technology and Arms Control
Embassy structure
Operations
Fishing fleets
Pollution
Relations
Trade barriers
9/11 (Russian reaction)
Chechnyan conflict
Rural Russia
Public utilities
Patriotism
Class distinctions
Putin
Russian pride
Poland
Germany
Jews
US Research programs
Exchange programs
Scientists
Russian science
Health
Rich/poor divide
Relations with public
Trafficking of young girls
Matchmaking
Cultural life
Ambassador David Johnson

Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo: Political Counselor 2003-2006
Ambassador Aubrey Hooks
President Laurent Kabila assasination
John-Pierre Bemba
Africa's World War
Sun City Conference
Elections
United Nations Peacekeeping Mission
Bill Swing
Operations
International Committee to Accompany the Transition (CIAT)
Rwanda
Natural resources
Relations
Foreign ambassadors
Don Yamamoto

Missionaries
Religions
Infrastructure
Transitional government
Militia
Conflicts
Mobutu
RCD movement
Joseph Kabila
Defense Council meeting
Orientale Province
International Criminal Court
Congolese army
UNICEF
Illegal trafficking
United Nations Missions
US Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)
Tripartheid Initiative
Congo strategic value
US policy
Political Parties

Retirement 2006
Phelps Dodge Corporation, Kinshasa

INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the 21st of September, 2007. This is autumnal equinox today. And this is an interview with Melissa Sanderson. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Just for the transcriber I want to point out that we're doing this in the café of the Old Town Alexandria Hilton, and there's a little ambient sound and all. But I think we're talking loud enough so you should hear over this. Anyway, let's talk in the beginning. Tell me when and where you were born.

SANDERSON: I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio and it was December 18th, 1957.

Q: OK, so you're moving up to your 50th this year.

SANDERSON: Oh my God, don't remind me.

Q: OK (laughs).

SANDERSON: That momentous occasion is coming!

Q: OK. Tell me a little bit about on your father's side. What do you know about I guess Sanderson?

SANDERSON: I'm actually your classic example of first generation American made good, because my father's family were half English and half Irish. They lived in Sheffield, England until my grandfather Sanderson decided to emigrant to the United States. My daddy was six at the time and they came in through Ellis Island. They resettled rather quickly in Cincinnati, Ohio because they had cousins that lived there. So like most immigrants they went where they had a support network. And my daddy dropped out of school in the ninth grade because the Depression had hit and most families needed all the pennies they could get. So Daddy dropped out of school and went to work at a grocery store and other odd jobs and he never went back to school, never got any further formal education. He eventually became an interstate truck driver and did that for a couple of years before he volunteered to join the Army in World War II. He and his best friend, my future uncle Gilbert Stumpf, went together to the recruiting office and later, while the War was still going on, my Daddy married my Mom, Rita, and Gil married my Mom's older sister, Ann, at a double wedding ceremony.

So anyway, when my Dad and Gilbert Stumpf volunteered they became foot soldiers. But then the Army in all of its glorious capacity realized that my dad had experience as trucker, so they transferred him to the transportation division. And my Uncle Gil remained in the foot troops. And so my daddy used to describe his war experience as mostly engaged in chasing like heck after General Patton's soldiers, trying to keep them fed and supplied and warm and trying to find out where they were. Because of course Patton was stormed across Europe, and half the time nobody knew where he was.

Q: He was part of maybe of the Red Ball Express, wasn't he?

SANDERSON: That was the phrase that I heard my daddy use, absolutely.

Q: What did your grandfather -- what had been -- in Sheffield, what was he?

SANDERSON: He was in the mill there, the steelworks.

Q: And so when he came to Cincinnati what did he do?

SANDERSON: Worked in the slaughter yards. Because that was, of course, one of the founding industries of Cincinnati and was still big when I was born there. And he worked down there in the slaughterhouses until he died.

Q: What's the background of your mother?

SANDERSON: Ah, well Mommy's family has an interesting history, because they're Irish Catholics from the West of Ireland. My maternal grandfather was a member of the Irish Revolutionary Army when it was still an army, not a terrorist organization. I want to

point that out because the IRA fractured later into two parts and the more radical elements, that called themselves the Provisionals, were the ones who bombed civilians and engaged in terrorist activities later on. And my grandfather was in the IRA before the rupture, so he was never part of the part of the Provisionals. But he was part of the traditional army that fought the British. He was the youngest of 13 children and the other 12 were killed by the British. Some died in prison in Dublin City and some were killed on the field.

Q: Good heavens.

SANDERSON: So the cousins that were remaining in Ireland scraped up enough money to send my paternal grandfather to America. They didn't have any family in America, but they figured it was his best chance for getting away from the British and forming some kind of a life. And he actually met my maternal grandmother in the United States. She had emigrated separately and was hired out in service as a housemaid. And so when he got himself a job working building bridges and doing carpentry, he met her one day and they found out they were both from the west of Ireland. And so those two got married.

Q: Now does your mother and father, how many children did they have?

SANDERSON: Oh, I'm the only child.

Q: Really?

SANDERSON: They took one look at me and they said enough is enough.

Q: This is remarkable. Coming from that background, family background.

SANDERSON: Absolutely. Although my father's family was small. He only had one sister, an older sister. But the real thing -- the problem was that my mom and dad had one of those RH incompatibilities. Which of course in the '30s and '40s and '50s virtually meant you would never have kids.

Q: It was a blood incompatibility, which resulted in -- they called it blue babies in those times.

SANDERSON: Exactly. And my mom was already 38 when she had me. So there were all kinds of concerns about her even having a baby or what the baby would be like and so forth and so on. So -- and she had me by cesarean, which again at that time that was pretty much it. You had one by cesarean and that's all you got. So when I say they took one look at me, my mom was fond of saying that I saved her life.

Q: Ah.

SANDERSON: Because she had been so extraordinarily close to her father and her mother had passed away already. And my mother, who was the middle of three sisters,

was my grandfather's favorite. So when he got gangrene after an accident where he dropped hot water on himself, it was kind of natural that he would move in with my parents. Also, at the time Mom was the only one who didn't yet have children; both my Aunt Ann and my Aunt Catherine (Mom's younger sister) had kids already. So grandfather died one week before I was born, literally in Mom's arms, and she told me once that she would have gladly killed herself, except she had me coming.

Q: Well OK, growing up, did you grow up in Cincinnati basically?

SANDERSON: Absolutely. I was a Cincinnati hometown girl until I joined the Foreign Service.

Q: Oh, well let's talk about what was home life like? What was the neighborhood like and where did you grow up?

SANDERSON: We lived in an old kind of rundown house on what was at that time the western edge of town. So we were on a hill that actually overlooked Downtown Cincinnati. And when the wind blew the wrong way we also had the stockyard smell in our living room.

Q: Ah yeah.

SANDERSON: We had a big field out behind the house that was always full of dandelions and other wildflowers and needless to say, also full of bumblebees. There was a cave in the hillside under the house, and in the evening the bats would come up and fly around and eat the insects. So I grew up like a tomboy because I was an only child and I was always outside riding my bike or running wild. My dad was working days. My mom worked nights at that time. And so I sort of did what I liked to do.

Q: What was your mother doing?

SANDERSON: At that particular time, Mom was working at a cafeteria, because she also had had to drop out of school during the Depression. She had an eighth grade education. And at that time when I was little she was working in the cafeteria. But later on she worked as a presser in a dry cleaning factory during the days.

Q: You didn't have any brothers and sisters, you only

SANDERSON: Just me. Little old me.

Q: What was the neighborhood like?

SANDERSON: Kind of rundown. Kind of -- it was unusual for Cincinnati in that it was a integrated neighborhood. And the reason I say that is because in the '60s, Cincinnati had serious race issues, with race riots and the Ku Klux Klan burning crosses, and so forth. Most parts of town were segregated and so were the schools, and there was a lot of

turmoil about busing. So it was very unusual in a sense that we had a nice quiet integrated neighborhood. Poor whites, I think you would say, or lower middle class whites and sort of upper middle class at that time blacks. So I remember, I mean one of my best friends growing up was a black boy named Gino McGowen because his father had been Irish and his mother was black. And he and I went to the same Catholic school, St. Leo's. And one of my -- one of my other friends was a redheaded Irish boy named Tom McAfee. And he joined the Navy -- lied about his age and joined the Navy when he was 13.

Q: OK.

SANDERSON: So that was the kind of neighborhood it was.

Q: How Catholic was your family?

SANDERSON: Oh, my gosh (laughs). Not just church on Sunday, but Catholic schools for me. My parents sacrificed everything for my education. They decided from the day I was born that if I showed the slightest semblance of intelligence I would be encouraged to flourish. So I went to St. Leo's Parochial School, which no longer exists. Unfortunately it closed down about 20 years ago. And then I went to Mother of Mercy High School, an all-girls high school on the West side of Cincinnati. And then I finally went to Xavier University where the Jesuits got their crack at me.

Q: I'd say holy mackerel.

SANDERSON: (laughs) So naturally I was very involved with the Church. I played organ, because I -- my parents got me piano lessons when I was six. And my present for accepting piano lessons was I also got horseback riding lessons because I was a fanatic for horses. So that was how I was induced to take the piano lessons. So by the time I was 12 I was playing the organ for my church and leading the choir, because I loved to sing. And I did that for many years and then later I also became a lector in church and a communion distributor, and taught Sunday School classes.

Q: Did you feel by the time you were moving on up, was the Church as intrusive as it was in earlier times when it was sort of almost say priest-ridden. You know, I mean there were dictates and you couldn't see this, you couldn't read that and all that. By the time you're talking about John Paul had already sort of done this. Did you feel -- was it a stultifying experience or not?

SANDERSON: I don't think I ever had a stultifying experience in my life, but that's only because I normally disregarded most rules that were in effect around me. Yeah, they had had the Vatican reforms and the priests were then facing the congregation to say Mass and it wasn't in Latin. But you know, it didn't change the essential structure of the church. The priest was still the ultimate word of law.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: And if you had a dispute in your family, you took it to the priest and whatever the priest decided that was what you lived by. And my gosh, the nuns. When I went to grade school, all of the girls were assigned chores by the nuns, such as cleaning up their house, doing their laundry, buying their food, cooking their food. The nuns were absolute little tyrants. And if you had the nerve to talk back to them you got sent to, guess who? The priest! Which is even worse. Then you had to go to the rectory and be yelled at. So it was still very strict. It wasn't stultifying though. I wasn't necessarily a good girl. I was a great student because I was so bright.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: I didn't have to worry about homework and stuff. And you know, the nuns loved me because I always knew the answers. So I got away with a lot of stuff; including one time hitting a much bigger boy in the head with a rock.

Q: I assumed he deserved it.

SANDERSON: He did. He did. He was picking on some of the little kids and he'd been doing it for quite some time. And I didn't see the authorities taking any action. And so one day when I was walking out to my daddy's car where he was waiting for me, I saw this big kid had three or four little kids in a corner, I saw a rock handy, I picked it up and hit him over the head with it (laughs). My daddy saw me doing it and he didn't say anything to me (laughs). And the nuns had to have known I did it because he squealed on me.

Q: Yeah, yeah. Well, how did you find the nuns conducted class? You know, I mean was it rude or did they allow you to sort of blossom forth?

SANDERSON: Oh. There was very little blossoming in grade school (laughs). No. It was definitely you had a lesson. If you had studied that lesson you were able to respond to specific question. And you better respond posthaste or you got rapped with a ruler (laughs). So it was still very, very strict and very old fashioned.

Q: Well let's take during grade school. How about reading? Were you as a reader?

SANDERSON: Ah. You know, it's interesting that you mentioned that because my father taught me to read when I was two-years-old. He was suffering at the time from a broken back. He had had a trucking accident. And of course the treatment for a broken back in those days was to put you in a full body cast, lay you down in bed, and hope that your back would heal itself and you'd be able to walk again someday.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: So my dad was confined to bed, totally bored, and he had this miserable little toddler running around, and I was always hyperactive. I don't think that -- let me clarify that. Not in the sense of this famous like "ADD" thing that everybody talks about

these days. But I was just an extremely active child with a short attention span. So he decided to teach me how to read, and once he had taught me to read we took turns reading books to each other.

So by the time I started school I was reading at an eighth grade level. They didn't know what to do with me in grade school because I would give other students the answers to the questions as I didn't want them to fail; I wanted them to do well. And I always knew the answers. It was easy for me.

Q: You were a little smarty pants.

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. I was a holy terror. Absolutely.

Q: I hated kids like you. I suppose you always did well on spelling bees.

SANDERSON: Oh, my God, yeah. I was the school spelling champion.

Q: With books, can you think of any particular books, series of books, any particular book or something that particular -- we're talking about early years -- that particularly grabbed you?

SANDERSON: You know, there was a series of books that I liked that was about Ohio in the frontier days and starred a young man of about 16-years-old named Henry Ware and they were written by a man named Joseph Altsheler. I mean I can't remember right now individual book titles -- yes, I can. One was called Eyes of the Woods. And the theory of these books was Henry was the leader of his little group and he had these followers, four or five followers who of course were just not as good as Henry as shooting Indians or running fast or whatever. But these kids always managed to find a way to contribute to saving their frontier town in Ohio. And one time Henry was captured by the Indians and he lived with them for like four or five years. And he came back and then he had all these issues because the white folks in the settlement didn't necessarily welcome him right away. I mean in many ways these books were ahead of their time. I loved those. And I also loved a series about Tom Corbett, Space Cadet.

Q: About 10 years ago I interviewed a man who's still prominent today, Laurence Silverman, who's a judge, first circuit in Washing -- anyway, just one below the Supreme Court. And he was ambassador to Yugoslavia at one time, and a conservative but very solid person. Anyway, he was an Altsheler fan.

SANDERSON: Talk about coincidence.

Q: Oh yeah. And I loved the books too. I read them all I think too.

SANDERSON: Wow! I thought growing up that nobody but me had ever found these books -

Q: They're not completely out of print because I went to Amazon on the internet and the bookselling outfit and you can get them off there.

SANDERSON: Can you now?

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: Huh. But before the wonderful Internet, when I was a kid growing up it was harder. I had to get my daddy to take me to an antique bookstore downtown in order to look for them. And the guy there searched for them for me.

Q: OK, you went where for high school?

SANDERSON: Mother of Mercy.

Q: Now this is an all female school, is it?

SANDERSON: Oh yes. And it is still an all-girls school.

Q: Did monks teach there too or not or

SANDERSON: Oh no, I had Dominican nuns. Now believe me, they're worse (laughs).

Q: Well, tell me how would you put this? Tough or what, I mean

SANDERSON: It wasn't -- it wasn't a school, for instance, where bad girls were sent to be disciplined. And there are such places in Cincinnati. But Dominicans in general, as a Catholic Church order, are pretty tough, whether you're talking about the priests or the nuns. You're talking about the order that spearheaded the Inquisition for heaven's sakes. And I was fond of thinking even as a child that they hadn't really changed very much. So I mean these were nuns who, for instance, if you showed up in the morning in your blue uniform, your white blouse with the Peter Pan collar, your anklets, and your saddle shoes, they would measure your skirt to make sure that it wasn't more than one quarter of an inch above your knee, because if it was one quarter of an inch above your knee then you got a penalty. You had to stay after school, you got into all kinds of trouble. They would also take a look at your saddle shoes. And if the white part hadn't been recently polished, again you got detention. They would look at the shoelaces. If the shoelaces weren't precisely even on both sides you got detention.

Q: Did you have to press your shoelaces?

SANDERSON: (laughs) They hadn't thought of that one or I'm sure they would have demanded it (laughs).

Q: OK, let's talk about -- you're in high school. Did you find any courses that particularly intrigued you or, you know

SANDERSON: That's where I got into science. Because they had placed me in the advanced program and I was being groomed for college. And most of the subjects were really, really easy for me. But that was where I was introduced to organic chemistry and physics. And I fell in love with physics. And particularly I fell in love with the concept of being an astrophysicist. Because once I began studying that and I realized essentially stars are alive in very many senses of the definition of a living thing. I wanted to find out more about that. And so I started streamlining myself towards a career in science.

Q: Well, when did you graduate? What year?

SANDERSON: 1976. America's Bicentennial year...

Q: 1976. What -- where did your family fall politically?

SANDERSON: Solid Democrats.

Q: I would assume so.

SANDERSON: Catholic, Irish, Democrat. You just put a comma between all those words. Except me. I'm an Independent. I don't believe in political parties.

Q: Ah-ha.

SANDERSON: Because I hated the way that I saw things done at the poling stations when my folks took me along when they were voting because the party people were right at the head of the sidewalk before you even got near the building. And they asked you point blank, "Democrat or Republican?" And you had to give an answer. And as soon as you said Democrat they stuffed the Democratic ticket in your hand and they said, "This is your vote." And most people just blindly did exactly that. They took the little piece of paper into the booth and they checked all those names. And I decided at a very young age that I hated the way the political parties were taking advantage of the inherent laziness and/or stupidity of the average American voter. And I said no, the heck with this, I'm never going to subscribe to that, and never have.

Q: Well, were there any currents in the high school? How did race play out in high school, for example?

SANDERSON: Oh. This is where we get into segregation, because I told you, I grew up in an integrated neighborhood. But when I went to high school it was all white. All white, upper middle class girls. And for instance, one of my classmates was the daughter of the President of Jergens. Another one was the daughter of the Vice President of Proctor & Gamble. So I started flying with a rich, very particular crowd.

Q: Well, did you find, you know, for obvious reasons I didn't go to a girl's high school, but did you find that -- how cliquish and sort of -- I hate to say spoiled -- but I mean was there such a thing as Catholic princesses and that sort of thing?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. Spoiled is the perfect word, absolutely. Because you did have cliques, for sure. You had the jock crowd, you had the I'm rich, beautiful, and stupid crowd. You had the oh, I'm college-bound crowd. And you had the I'm the poor girl going to be a secretary or a court reporter crowd. And you had limited circulation between those crowds. For instance, I mean I moved between the intellectual crowd and the jock crowd, because I was always big in sports. But I would have never qualified for the I'm pretty and rich crowd, because I was neither pretty nor rich. So that was probably the single most exclusive group of girls, and very, very small, and very, very haughty.

Q: How did that play out in the school?

SANDERSON: Oh, a lot of animosities, a tremendous amount of animosities. A lot of jockeying for position. I mean, I'll give you an example, I was in the drama club. I mean inevitably because I'm such a showoff. And because God gifted me with a photographic memory, it was very easy for me to learn my lines and deliver them properly. So I frequently landed the lead in plays, although I wasn't the prettiest girl present. And that caused tremendous resentment because there was a certain assumption among certain people that the prettiest girl should have the lead. So it played out in a lot of ways.

Q: Was there a lot of -- I don't want to get too far into this, but was there a lot of sort of back stabbing and

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Positively. I mean, you know, lots of name calling, you know, there goes fatso, there goes that ugly girl, you know, there go those pretty stuck-ups. You know, look how short that skirt is, call the nun.

Q: Did you find that the nuns had favorites? I mean was this a problem or were the nuns pretty good?

SANDERSON: They absolutely had favorites because I was one of them. I figured out how to manipulate nuns back in grade school. I kept on manipulating them in high school. I mean it was easy enough to get on a nun's good side because what they admired were good students, because it made them feel good as teachers. So they always just assumed that the credit was theirs. They didn't necessarily say, "Ah-ha, I have an extraordinarily gifted student who's not even doing my homework." No. They said, "Because of my brilliant teaching, you know, Melissa's doing so well. I like Melissa because she demonstrates to others I'm an outstanding teacher." So I was usually on the favorite list.

Q: Well, how about the Catholic God business? I mean how did this play out? Did you go around with your hands clasped, up or down or whatever?

SANDERSON: No, actually there was less religion in high school than there had been in grade school. Because in grade school we had to go to mass every morning. And then you had to go to mass again every day at noon. In high school there were no masses. There was a chapel on the grounds that you could visit if you felt like it. But it's funny that you mention the "God business," because really it was in high school that I started to notice how much the Church is interested in money making activities, whether it's collecting tuition from schools or whether it's having activities the parents are expected to contribute to. So I mean yes, God in that sense -- of any organized religion, not just the Catholic church. Religion is a business. And I was beginning to have some significant problems with that business, because the abortion debate started around then. And the Church was just in my mind doing a completely inappropriate campaign with, you know, pictures of dead babies that clearly were real babies, not fetuses.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: You know, like tossed into wastebaskets or whatever and say, "This is what women are doing." And of course that just put my back up and made me a firm what we now call pro-choice person and, you know, began my personal crusade that neither the Pope nor the President has any say in what a woman does with herself.

Q: Well, was there at any point did you feel any pressure to take on the habit and all that or?

SANDERSON: Oh, never. I was never cut out to be a nun. They knew that at first glance. No. That wouldn't have done for me. Too regimented.

Q: OK, you're in physics. I assume you did well in other courses too.

SANDERSON: Oh, well anything like English, language studies was an automatic A plus. So history, geography, anything that involved the written word. I was a lot weaker in mathematics. And again, it's because I resented the discipline of mathematics. I could look at an equation and literally tell you the answer. But because I couldn't work it out step by step in the formulaic way my math teachers didn't like my results. Because they were like well, "You can't explain how you got that result." And I'm like, "Why does it matter if I can explain it or not? Are you telling me the result is correct or incorrect?" "It doesn't matter that it's correct. You can't explain it."

Q: I'm told this is a major problem and has been for generations, when people who really have a feel for mathematics, they can look at something and then figure out what the answer is and they don't have to go through all the steps. And the curriculum is not designed to allow that to be given credit.

So I assume your parents were all for your going to college.

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. That was determined, as I say, almost from the minute of birth because they put such a high value on education, in large part because they didn't

get enough. And they were very aware of how that lack of education put limits on their life.

No good jobs because you didn't even have a high school degree. And so they were determined that if I showed the slightest aptitude everything would be sacrificed and put towards college. And my parents, by the way, were distinct in that. Because my mom's sisters, for instance, didn't believe in that, and none of my cousins ever got four-year degrees, although two of them went and go BA's as adults.

Q: Yeah. Before we move on, during high school at all did you get involved in any jobs or anything like that?

SANDERSON: No, because as poor as the family was, my parents believed that I shouldn't be put into the same trap that they'd been put into. They firmly believed that if I once started working I would give into the lure of money and I would give up on education. So I was not allowed to work.

Q: Very smart. Where did you go and how did you -- how was it determined you would go there after high school?

SANDERSON: Well, you know I wasn't going to go to Xavier University. I actually had a couple of other scholarship offers, one from the Thunderbird Business School in Arizona, and another one from the University of Florida because I was thinking if I didn't do physics I was maybe what I would do is dolphinology, because I was so thrilled with the study that was emerging at the time of dolphins.

Q: Sure.

SANDERSON: But my dad developed cancer and died.

Q: Oh.

SANDERSON: And I was 16 and as particularly as an only child didn't feel it was going to be the time to go away to college. My mom was alone, I was alone and in typical sort of Irish fashion both of us were busy sort of sucking it up. I mean neither one of us talked to the other about how miserable we were. I developed a drinking problem. I don't know how she coped with it.

Q: At 16?

SANDERSON: Oh yeah.

Q: How did that happen? I mean, you know, I mean how can you -- where could you get the stuff?

SANDERSON: (laughs) Everybody had a fake ID in those days. And I was big for my age, I mean well developed physically. So it wasn't any trouble for me to get a fake ID. But besides that, what I was drinking was vodka and moonshine. I wasn't drinking beer or any of that stuff that you really had to go to the liquor store to get. So it was easier for me in that sense to develop a drinking problem because what I wanted was very readily available. And I mean why did I develop it? It's because neither of my mom nor I were talking about what we were feeling. Because we were both devastated.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: I mean I was very much Daddy's girl. And I have to give my mom total credit because my mom was pathologically shy. She was so shy that even her own sisters had to call the house two or three days in advance before they came to visit, because otherwise my mom just could not stand to be around them. I mean she suffered so much every day when she went out to that dry cleaner and pressed clothes.

Q: Oh boy.

SANDERSON: So my daddy was everything for her. He was her shield from the world and she loved him to pieces. And of course, as I say, she made a decision that I wouldn't be her. So she always pushed me to go with my dad. You know, go with your father, because my father was the polar opposite. He was so outgoing he makes me look shy. And everybody loved my dad.

Q: I have to say for this thing that my informant is a very outgoing person (laughs).

SANDERSON: (laughs) Thank you, but my daddy put me in the shade, believe me. People fought to be around my father. And so my mom deliberately made it her strategy to send her daughter out with my Dad so that I would develop a personality like Daddy's and I wouldn't be afraid to face the world and I would know how to deal with people. Because she freely admitted later in life that she did not know how to do those things. So there we both were devastated, and different yet similar, and neither of us willing to talk to the other about it. And she would get up and go out to work, and I would get up and go out to school. And I would start drinking during the day, and I would drink all night, and I would go to bed drunk. And that went on for years.

Q: Did she notice this or

SANDERSON: You know, I ask myself that frequently. Because it is possible, particularly with vodka, that people don't notice it.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: You know, I mixed it with orange juice, I mixed it with tomato juice. She might not have known. Because I was doing a very good job of compensating. Like many intelligent people, you know, to a certain degree you can carry it off.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: As long as you very carefully monitor what you are saying and how you are moving. You learn to duplicate how you move when you're not drunk. And you learn to mimic how you normally speak. And I was very good at that. Because, after all, I was an actress.

Q: Yeah. How about social life? The girls? The guys?

SANDERSON: Oh, forget about guys. No, no, no. No boys.

Q: No boys?

SANDERSON: Nooo boys.

Q: At a Catholic school I would have thought after hours they would be hanging around or something.

SANDERSON: The pretty girls that I mentioned in the pretty and rich crowd all had boyfriends from Elder or Roger Baker. Those were the two all-boy Catholic schools. You have to keep in mind, I was not pretty. I weighed about 180 pounds. I wore glasses. I had straight brown hair and acne. So I was not exactly a prize package. And top all that off, I was to smart and too mouthy.

So I was all kinds of things. If I had been attractive physically there may have been boys that would have approached me anyway, but because I wasn't attractive physically I wasn't worth the effort. So no, no boyfriends. Girlfriends, I had a few. But again, I was very selective, because they had to be at least as smart as I was.

Q: Well then, OK. So you have an alcohol problem, you're really pretty young to be getting out of school, I mean high school. And you have a family tragedy. So what happens?

SANDERSON: That was when I decided that I would take the scholarship offer from Xavier University and stay home.

Q: Xavier University is where? In Cincinnati?

SANDERSON: It's in Cincinnati, Ohio. It's on the north side of town, here in a neighborhood called Avondale. And it is a Jesuit university, the sister, you might say, university to Loyola in New Orleans. It's operated by the exact same element of the Jesuits. But that wasn't the reason I decided to go there, because I had a scholarship offer from the University of Cincinnati too. I picked Xavier University for the dumbest possible reason. When I was a little girl, about seven-years-old, my daddy and I used to drive by the grounds of Xavier University on the way to the piano lessons. Well, Xavier

University had kedgling. Kedgling is this old English bowling on the green game. And Xavier had it and still to this day has it. It's the only place that I know of in Cincinnati.

Q: Same where you have to wear white hats and white dresses

SANDERSON: White -- yes. And you have a small ball, almost like a bocce ball from the Italian game, and you literally have a beautiful green -

Q: They do this in South Africa too, so

SANDERSON: They do. But it's very, very British, of course.

Q: Well, yes.

SANDERSON: And I saw them doing that and I recognized what it was. And I said to Daddy, "That is so cool. They're doing your game! Your game!" Not that my father ever played bowling on the green, it was for rich British. But I remember, he said, "Yes, it is." So all those years later when I had to make the choice I chose Xavier University because of kedgling on the green (laughs.)

Q: Probably as good a reason as any most kids that age do. Well, what about the drinking? I mean did you -- what, 16 or so, what are you going to do about that?

SANDERSON: It actually stopped about halfway through my freshman year in college because of one particular incident. I had a friend whose boyfriend -- let me step back one step. Xavier University was an all-male school when I was little. And it went gender integrated just two years before I entered. So females were scarce on the ground. Now, to resume the story, I had made friends with a girl whose boyfriend was the campus drug pusher. And I of course had my daddy's old car and a license to drive, which she did not, because hers had been yanked. So one day I picked her up at her apartment and we drove to his apartment where a drug party was in progress. And there was all kinds of stuff going on. And I didn't snort or inject or any of that stuff, but there were also pills there. Well, pills are handy when you have a vodka bottle to wash them down with. So I took a fistful. And that's about the last thing I remember. Until I woke up the next day in my own bed with no memory whatsoever of getting there, and the car jumped up on the curve in front of the house. So at that point, I did some self-analysis and basically came up with the question, "If I'm trying to kill myself is that what Daddy would want?" So since the answer clearly was no, I stopped the drinking right away.

Q: Xavier, what was it like when you were there?

SANDERSON: I loved it to pieces.

Q: You were there from '76 to?

SANDERSON: '80.

Q: '80, all right.

SANDERSON: Mm-hmm. Yep. And I loved it. It was small, it was intimate. A couple of my girlfriends from Mercy were there too, so I had some friends there. And the teachers, at least in some of the areas, were very cutting edge. The physics program was very advanced, very good lab work, and actually it's because I went to Xavier University that I wound up in the Foreign Service because one of my professors, the one who was teaching Far Eastern studies was a former Foreign Service officer.

Q: Oh.

SANDERSON: And it was Frank McVay who eventually said to me, you know, "What are you going to do with your life?"

And I was like, "I don't know, I've not the slightest idea."

And it was he who said, "Why don't you join the Foreign Service."

And I said, "They're not looking for me; they want John F. Kennedy Jr."

And his response was what convinced me, because he said, "Nonsense. I am an Ohio farm boy and they took me."

Q: Yeah. Yeah.

SANDERSON: And I thought, "Well, you can't fight that."

Q: Well, how would you characterize Xavier student body?

SANDERSON: Mostly all white, upper middle class, insular and insulated. It was a very particular private little world. And we didn't have sororities or fraternities. They were forbidden because the university believed that they caused cliquishness and divisions, and they do I think. Inside of the campus it was small, private and secure. There were only 550 students in my graduating class. So you really got to know most of the people that were in college with you. And the buildings were those beautiful old gray stone buildings covered with ivy and everything was very quiet because you were in a very tree-y area. There weren't a lot of big highways around. You felt removed from the world. You felt safe. Which I don't think is the experience of most college campuses these days.

Q: No, no.

SANDERSON: And ironically enough, one of my cousins wound up being Chief of Security there. So I felt extra safe because I always knew Danny would watch out for me (laughs).

Q: How about courses? Any ones drive you more than others or did you move in different directions or what?

SANDERSON: You know, in addition to my scholarship I was in the Scholar's Program at Xavier - a special program of advanced studies for gifted scholars. It was limited to 20 students a year of each incoming class. And so those 20 students were basically given complete latitude. I could take any course at any supposed level that I wanted. So if what interested me was a so-called graduate course in, you know, English literature, I could sign myself up for that and be welcomed in it. So it's hard to single out any one course because for me college was one continuous excitement after another. I took 21 credit hours every semester. I got to the university no later tan 7:30 in the morning and I left at like, 8:00 at night. And I was on a constant high because everything was new and exciting. But I will say this. I double majored in Economics and English -- I was almost forced economics because my scholarship advisor basically said that an English degree is worthless; take something practical. And I double minored in philosophy and theology. And one of my favorite courses was theology because the professor was so radical that he was eventually banned by the Jesuits and lost his job.

Q: Was he one of these God is dead types or what?

SANDERSON: He was one of those you have a right to question God types, which was considered even worse, because you heard me talk about how the Church still was then and the many ways it still is now. Thou shalt not question the edicts of the Pope. And he was given his readings and he was actively teaching things like, you know, the Bible is just a book that was written by a bunch of guys. It's how they remember things, it's how they say that God or Jesus said it. And there are translation issues -- so basically, the Bible may not be the literal truth!

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: Oh, my God, that's heresy! And he eventually was kicked out of the church for so called heresy. So his courses do stick in my mind because I had that feeling that went with my sort of rebellious nature that I was doing something that mattered and that allowed me to think and to question. So those stuck in my mind for sure.

Q: Well, something that we haven't during high school or college, how about international affairs? They intrude at all?

SANDERSON: Absolutely not. I was a typical insular Cincinnati girl. The closest I got to international affairs was studying my family history, which led me to study Irish history very intensely.

Q: Uh-huh.

SANDERSON: But our idea of taking a vacation was to get in the car and drive to Tennessee (laughs). We didn't go anywhere. There was never any money for that.

Q: Well, did the Cold War intrude or anything like that?

SANDERSON: No. You know, I see these programs on television where they show like all the school kids cowering under their desks during bomb drills and stuff, I have absolutely no memory of ever being called upon to do that. You know, the thing about Cincinnati is it's a mentality. There was always a sense in Cincinnati of being safe, of being special, of being apart. And therefore, gosh, even if the Russians send the bombs, they're going to bomb the heck out of Washington, but they're not going to bomb us, you know?

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: Because nobody talked about strategic interests in those days. I mean, we had GE (General Electric) in Cincinnati manufacturing, you know, military parts. But nobody made those kind of analyses in those days. That's just GE, who cares?

Q: Yeah. So I mean maybe you didn't find yourself pushing to find out Soviet history or?

SANDERSON: Not at all (laughs).

Q: Well, you were due to graduate in '80.

SANDERSON: Yes, and I graduated.

Q: Oh you did '80.

SANDERSON: Yes, with all of those little titles behind my name, the two -- the two bachelors degrees, the two associates degrees, and I went straight into grad school and got a master's degree.

Q: Where did you go to grad school?

SANDERSON: Xavier.

Q: How were relations with your mother at that point? I mean

SANDERSON: We were doing much better. We were doing much better. We never did really get around to getting to talking about Daddy, not until even the day that she died we didn't really ever talk about that. But we were doing better.

Q: Well, were you tempted to take grad school and get out and see something beyond the -- beyond the borders of Cincinnati or not?

SANDERSON: Not at all. You know, it was clear to me even from when I was a little girl that if anything ever happened to Daddy it would be up to me to protect Mommy,

because even as a child I could see that my mom wasn't able to cope with some of the simplest things, like you know, OK, they didn't send the electric bill so you have to go to the company and get the bill. My mom couldn't do that. That had to be me.

Q: I was wondering, you know, looking back on it and we've got all sorts of diagnoses and all, was this -- I don't know what the term is -- a pathological problem or

SANDERSON: I always say that she was pathologically shy, but I think in large part it was sort of middle child syndrome carried to an extreme. Because my mom's older sister when she was growing up was very sickly. And so she always got a lot of attention and she never had to do chores or anything of the sort. And her younger sister was a classic Irish beauty, six foot tall, flaming red hair, green eyes. She got a lot of attention and she never had to stay home and do any chores either.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: So Mom was kind of like the Cinderella who got to stay home and sleep by the cinders and do all the chores and never go out and never speak and so forth and so on. And she just -- it got exaggerated in her. But the reason I say it's pathological is I have a cousin who has the exact same problem and it's been very, very difficult for him in life. So that's why I say there's something genetic in there as well that was complicated in her case by being the middle child. But he was the oldest in his family, so there's definitely something there.

Q: What about news? I mean what paper did -- did you get papers? Watch TV? I mean magazines? You know, this is how one observes things from other places. Did you

SANDERSON: Absolutely. We had the Cincinnati Enquirer and Daddy subscribed to Time Magazine. So there was always stuff around the house about world affairs and world issues. But I don't recall my parents ever speaking much about that. I'll give you an example. I mean in our house we didn't have television for a long time, but when we did get television we didn't watch television while we were eating dinner. You went into the kitchen, you sat down and ate dinner, and what we did at my house was my dad brought the great big Oxford Unabridged Dictionary to the table -- this comes back to why I'm such a good speller -- he would flip it open, randomly pick out a word and ask me to tell him the definition and spell it. And so it was kind of a game because then I could do the same and I'd pick a word and he would spell and tell. So -- but this was what we did for amusement and I don't recall that we had big discussions about international affairs. But you know where I got interested in the world was at the Cincinnati Art Museum, because twice a year my parents made it a habit, at Christmas and Easter, for us to go to the art museum. And that's where I learned to love art, and it's also where I began to learn so much about the world and the way people express their worlds. It was through art more than through Time Magazine, in my case.

Q: I take it you didn't run across many foreign students.

SANDERSON: Uh, not at that time in Cincinnati. We had a couple -- interestingly had a couple Iranians that I do recall at Xavier University that, you know, were sort of with the Shah and had been exiled by the extremist regime. And there were a couple of Chinese, but really in that 550 that graduated in my class there was the one Iraqi boy and that was it.

Q: I was thinking today there's such an infusion of foreign students.

SANDERSON: Absolutely.

Q: OK, so your 1980 to '82 you were at grad school? Is that

SANDERSON: '80 to '81. I did the master's degree in one year.

Q: What was it in?

SANDERSON: International Financial Economics, because I had figured out that money's what drives the world.

Q: OK, international. Now did this plug you into the world?

SANDERSON: Not at Xavier (laughs). Again, we're still in good old insular Cincinnati. But what it did show was that largely thanks to Professor McVay I was starting to think of international things because he had convinced me to go ahead and take the Foreign Service exam, which I did in my junior year. Because at that time I wasn't really thinking about going and getting a master's, so I figured I'd graduate.

Q: You were pretty young to be doing that.

SANDERSON: I was 18?

Q: Yeah I was just at the age level. Nowadays I think you have to be 21. Well, you have to -- at one point you had to be 21 in order to get in to the Foreign Service. You could take it earlier.

SANDERSON: OK, well maybe -- see, maybe that explains some of this because I took the exam at his urging. I mean he kind of choked me into it. Because I was hesitant, didn't really see the value. But as I recall, he essentially said "Look, it's a test, you love taking tests. Take it for fun." Which was pretty much what I did. Passed it on the first try. Then I got a letter from the Department basically saying congratulations, you passed, we'll let you know when we want you for your oral exam. And you know, I graduated undergrad and was halfway through my master's when I got another letter from them saying OK, now you have to run to Chicago and have your oral exam. My whole family went to the airport. This was a big thing. Nobody except my Uncle Gil had ever been on a plane. My uncle, my aunt, my cousins, my mom, everybody took me to the airport. I remember my uncle giving me a pack of gum and telling me I needed to chew every stick or my ears

would explode. I was terrified! Just terrified! Of course, there I was the big adventurer off to Chicago, which by the way I hated and loathed, but that is another story. Took the oral exam, got a letter again from the Department saying congratulations, you passed, now we'll let you know when the next step comes up with your security and medical clearances.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions during the oral exam?

SANDERSON: Oh, my God, I remember my favorite question: "If you had a foreign friend and you had to take her to only one movie actually playing in America today, which movie would you take her to as exemplifying American culture and values and why?" I remember that one.

Q: Do you remember the movie?

SANDERSON: "Star Wars." I said I would take her to "Star Wars" because it exemplifies the American moral virtues of right versus wrong, it exemplifies the importance that Americans attach to science and technology, and I would take her because it had family values. So they liked that answer.

Q: Yeah, sure.

SANDERSON: They were a little amazed when I said "Star Wars." I saw people kind of looking at each other like "Star Wars?" But I pulled it off.

Q: Well, did you have the feeling that they were wondering about being a woman would you last or get married or what have you or what? Did that come up at all or did you -

SANDERSON: It did.

Q: -- get the feeling?

SANDERSON: It did in a way because I was the only female applicant being interviewed that day. And one of the interviewers asked me would I find it a problem to be a woman in a man's network. And I had started working already at Fifth Third Bank in Cincinnati and I looked him right in the eye and said no, I'm already doing it and I think I do just fine, thank you very much. But I knew what he was getting at.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: And I suppose in hindsight the question skates close to the edge of a sexual discrimination question.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

SANDERSON: But I regarded it as a fair question.

Q: Well, I mean essentially it is a fair question, particularly at the time because, I mean you'd grown up to a rather precious background of school, isolated school and all that.

SANDERSON: Exactly, absolutely. And plus which, although I didn't know it at the time, that was about the time that the class action suit by women was getting underway in the department. And I think that that might have also engendered some sensitivity on the examiner's parts, like let's not bring anymore of these Gloria Steinem types. Which, thank God, I never was a Gloria Steinem type.

Q: Well, how did the emergence of women as a force in American politics, sexual revolution, you know, all that stuff, was that before your time? During your time? Or how did that get you?

SANDERSON: It was -- I consider it to be during my time, because even in grade school, I mean, everybody talked about Gloria Steinem. And I'll tell you, by the time I got to high school I was kind of discouraged, because I felt as if she and other radical feminists had gone too far. You know, I like -- I like traditional relations between a man and a woman. God made women different for basic and good reasons. So there's nothing wrong with a man opening the door, you know? There's nothing wrong with a man holding a chair. There's not even anything wrong with a man helping to carry my bags. And I appreciate when a man does that. I consider it courteous. And I try to treat men in a courteous way. Everybody has a right to their dignity. Women have a right to be paid equally for equal work. That is a very objective and quantifiable issue. You can look at the job descriptions and if they are identical those two people with identical experience should be paid the same.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: That cause I always did and will always support and has not yet been realized. But all this business about these women carrying so far, you know, well men -- men don't have to do this for us, we'll do it for ourselves. I hate that.

Q: Yeah. Well, Gloria Steinem was renowned for saying a woman needs a man the way a fish needs a bicycle.

SANDERSON: Exactly. And that's bologna. Men and women complement each other on a very basic level. And that is why God made two genders. If women didn't need anymore than fish need bicycles there wouldn't be any men on earth.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: And the same for men. If men had no need for women there'd be no women on earth. We need each other for intellectual stimulation, for companionship, and for the different points of view.

Q: And for

SANDERSON: Sex (laughs).

Q: And for continuing the species.

SANDERSON: Yes. And for sex. And for sex, absolutely.

Q: Absolutely.

SANDERSON: And all of those are valid and admirable reasons to respect each other.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: But they refused to respect men.

Q: Well, did you find -- was this being played out at your -- by the time you were in college or in any way?

SANDERSON: Absolutely, it was terrible. Because the guys in college were firmly convinced that the few of us women that were around were all some kind of radical nut balls, in part because we were there. We were helping to integrate, quote un-quote, the university. And they automatically assumed it was some kind of cause celeb with each person. It was no cause celeb for me. I was at Xavier because of other reasons. You know, I just happened to be among the first wave of women. It was coincidence.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: But there was a lot of hostility, a lot of negative attitude, a lot of oh, you're a dyke kind of thing. You know, you wouldn't be here if you weren't a dyke. Like hello?

Q: For somebody who may reading this in some centuries later, dyke is a -- the term for lesbian.

SANDERSON: Yes.

Q: D-Y-K-E, I think.

SANDERSON: And so that was hard -- yeah, D-Y-K-E, yeah. And in that sense it was hard.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: And as I look back, you know, that attitude was I think the forerunner of a lot of problems between American men and women today. Because you see, some

American men prefer to have foreign brides. I mean I served in Russia and I actually talked to American men about this. It's pathetic, the number of American men in their 40s and 50s and even 60s who think all American women are opinionated, selfish, and you know, unwilling to be a good mother or whatever. And I'm like get off of it, everybody's an individual. You don't have to run to a different country to quote, have a submissive bride. Why do you think you need a submissive bride? I think that's a valid question. Isn't marriage supposed to be about equals?

Q: I was interviewing a man this morning who married a Japanese wife. We were talking about the core American guys who thought if they married an Asian wife they'd get a nice submissive one. Anybody who served in those areas knows

SANDERSON: That ain't the case.

Q: That ain't the case at all. But it just seems that way.

SANDERSON: Absolutely. Absolutely. And yet the motive is there in many instances.

Q: Oh, absolutely.

SANDERSON: And that is what is sad. Because as I say, to me the key question is why do you think you need a wife to be submissive?

Q: Yeah. Oh yeah. Well, anyway so what happened? You passed the oral. Did they ask you -- had you done any reading or research about what is this thing, the Foreign Service?

SANDERSON: Absolutely not. It was all a kind of a lark to me. It was all absolutely kind of a lark. What I knew was what Professor McVay had told me. Frank McVay told me about going on safari in Africa. He told me about walking at night in the streets of Vienna while the snow falls. He told me about Washington and the men who have power and make change happen. So no, for me it was just kind of a lark. I hadn't done any research. It was like yeah, well, whatever, take the test, see what happens.

Q: Yeah. So what happened?

SANDERSON: Oh well, so I -- I mentioned I had started working at Fifth Third Bank. While I was still at school I worked as an assistant branch manager. But after I got the graduate degree my branch manager -- who's my hero, he's like my second father, his name's Larry Paff -- he pushed me to get into the management training program and go to the central bank downtown. So I got into investment banking with Fifth Third Bank and was working in that area for one year and decided this is a fool's game, because if you do investment banking honestly you're helping other people to make tremendous amounts of money while you work for salary. And if that isn't a fool's game I don't know what is. So I decided to get out of that. And I had heard about these secret interviews that

Saks Fifth Avenue was having in Cincinnati. And I went to the interviews on a lark and was hired to be the deputy store manager.

Q: Did you say secret interview?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely because Saks was not announcing its intention to open a new store in Cincinnati. But one whole area on Fifth Street, which is the main street in Downtown Cincinnati, had been blocked off for a long time and everybody knew something was being built. And eventually two weeks before the grand opening they put up a big sign, "Saks Fifth Avenue, Midwest Flagship Store Coming," you know, "In Two Weeks."

The interviews were secret because they were trying not to be overwhelmed by people. I heard about them from one of my clients who actually owned one of the, at that time, premiere clothing stores in Cincinnati who basically came in wringing his hands and saying my life is over; Saks Fifth Avenue is opening across the street from me. And in a less than sympathetic way I was like, "How do you know? Oh, they're having interviews? Where would those be? Oh! What day was that going to be?" You know, so I pumped him ruthlessly, took a sick day from the bank, went to the interviews and as I say, get hired. So switched over to Saks and worked for Saks for exactly one year.

Now to keep the chronology straight, it's now been five years since I took that first written exam. Two years elapsed before I took the oral exam. Another year went by before they started my security thing and my clearance, my medical clearance and all that. So this is now fifth year.

And here comes the magic day. My store manager calls me into his office and he says, "You know what? I just had a call from New York. They wanted to know if I thought if they offer you a position as store manager in San Antonio, Texas would you take it?"

And I was like huh. And I said, "What'd you tell them?"

And he said, "Oh, I said I thought you'd jump at it."

I said, "You're so right."

He said, "Well, then you should expect a call."

So I went back to my office and my secretary tells me, "Some woman called from you from Washington, DC. Here's your message."

I called back and it's from the registrar's office. And they're like, "Congratulations," you know, "We now have money and we're now hiring people. And you have a choice, you can be a political officer or an economic officer, but we need to know right away what you want to do and you need to show up in two weeks and start training."

And I'm like, excuse me? I said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. I waited five years for you people. I have an actual career here, I have an actual life. I've just gotten another job offer. I don't even know what you're talking about. What do you mean, political officer, economic officer? What is all this stuff?" And she was just like it's not my job to explain it to you. And I said, "Do you have a boss? Do you have a supervisor?" So I got the supervisor on the phone who was much nicer, of course. And I said, "Look, I need somebody to call me. I need one political officer and one economic officer to call me and tell me what it is they do and what kind of a career they've had and why it matters." So now I'm going to do my research, right? And I said, "And based on what I hear from that I will call you back with a decision, but it will be some time next week."

And he was very nice. He was like OK, I will make those arrangements. So over the weekend I had a call, one male political officer, one woman economic officer, which I later saw was fairly typical. There weren't that many at that time, women in the political cone. And they both talked about what it was that they did, and frankly I thought the political sounded a lot more interesting. But I felt more comfortable with the economic because I'd been doing economics. But I still wasn't sure that I really wanted to do it. And I asked my Mom. I said, "You know, if I were going to take this job and go live in other countries would you go with me?" Because I wouldn't have done it if she would not have gone with me. I couldn't have left her. She said, "Of course I would, but you have to make your own decision. Do what's right for you."

Then I went to Larry. Remember the guy I mentioned from the bank? I laid out my dilemma and he laughed in my face. He said, "Melissa, this is so easy. You know, you have one chance to join the Foreign Service. Take it and join. If you hate it, quit and go back to work for Saks Fifth Avenue because clearly they love you."

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: As soon as he put it that way it was so simple. I called back and I said, "OK, I take your offer. I'll be an economic officer," which of course isn't going to last because I'm going to be a political officer. But I came in as an economic officer.

Q: So when did this happen?

SANDERSON: Well, I finally went to Washington for training in March of 1985 and I got that call in January. So I put them off for about two months so I could get my life in order.

Q: Had you been to Washington before?

SANDERSON: No! I hadn't been anywhere except for Chicago! And remember, I hated Chicago.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: No, I hadn't been anywhere. We packed -- we packed all of our stuff into a U-Haul and we drove to Washington (laughs), because I didn't know -- I didn't know how else to get there. Nobody had told me like oh, they pay for your airplane ticket or anything and I was like, "Well shucks, how am I going to get there? Ah, I know! I'll U-Haul it!" That's how I arrived (laughs).

Q: So you took the basic officer's course, A100 course in March of '85.

SANDERSON: Absolutely.

Q: Can you characterize the composition of your A100 kind of? How did they strike you?

SANDERSON: You know, it was funny because of the hiring freeze they were bringing in much larger than normal classes, and there were 55 in my class. And we even had three people that were coming in sort of streamlined for senior service, and then it was sort of the rest of us JO (junior officer) types. And there were very few women. There were about eight women, eight or nine women. We had one black man, and he was one of those that was going to come in as like an 01 or something, because he had vast experience. I remember he had gray hair and a gray beard. And there was a couple that came in straight out of the university, but the vast majority were like me that had two or three years of doing something and were now coming into the Foreign Service. And a lot of -- a lot of playfulness because there was a lot of sense of rebellion, and I guess it was something to do with the times. So people were kind of fed up with all this bureaucracy, and there was a lot of exchange of stories like well, how did you get your call? "Yeah, I think I talked to that same rude woman!" You know, that kind of stuff. And you know, how they don't -- how the department didn't share information very well. We spent a lot of time trying to find things out because nobody told us the simplest things, you know, like how do you get a housing allowance. God, I don't know. "Well, somebody has to venture over there across the river and find out." You know, so it's like sending a scouting party. I remember -

Q: This was the time when you were being trained in Rosslyn on the Virginia side and the State Department is on the District of Columbia side.

SANDERSON: Absolutely. So somebody had to jump on the shuttle bus and venture into this horrible massive place and retrieve information and bring it back for everybody else. I mean it really was -- in some ways it was like, you know, we're the Western settlers and we're going to explore with the hostile Indians to see if anything could be negotiated about eating! Because everybody needed money to eat! And nobody knew how you got an allowance! And they were so busy teaching us important things, like to know what political officers do and so forth and so on, but nobody talked about practical things like how am I going to pay for this apartment! So there was a lot of sort of rebellious feeling that this group doesn't treat you very well.

Q: How did things settle out? Well or not? Were you still by the time you finished the course, in what, about six weeks

SANDERSON: Six weeks.

Q: Did you still come out of there kind of dissatisfied with how they treated you or?

SANDERSON: No -- yes and no. Because the biggest source of dissatisfaction was the assignments process, which particularly at that time was completely non-transparent. I mean one had the sense that they just tossed names into a basket and picked them out at random and stuck them on a tack board. Because yes, you had this so called career development officer, but when you went to see that person they didn't have much to tell you because they were like you're a JO, you have no say in this matter, you know, you'll get a call, we'll tell you where you're going. And it was like, what? And like me, for instance, I very much wanted to go to China. So I spent a lot of time telling my career development officer I wanted to go to China. Well, I spoke Spanish. Want to guess where I found myself on my first tour? Mexico! Which is not where I wanted to go. We were in desperate need of Spanish speaking bodies on the visa line. So in hindsight I absolutely understand the assignment process, but at the time it was like I felt very disgruntled, because I was like how many times did I go all the way over there and ask for China? How many people can possibly want to go to China? Why won't they let me go to China? You know, so then it was like, Mexico? That's like right next-door! That's not even a foreign country! Because by then I was very keen to go someplace exotic.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: That's part of the reason for China, right? And it was like this is no fun! Mexico? Mexico? So yeah, I think I left disgruntled (laughs).

Q: Were there any issues, was the gender issue or anything like that sort of raging in the corridors in A100 or not or was -- had this been pretty well settled?

SANDERSON: No, absolutely there was a big gender issue because the women's class action suit was well underway at that point. And basically the very first thing that happened to young women coming in was you got a package with all these legal looking documents in it and a cover letter saying you want to sign on to this because this is going to get you all kinds of benefits. And you know nothing about it and who's going to read all that massive package? Nobody. And then a lady shows up and she's kind of like have you signed your form yet, you know? why haven't you signed your form yet. You really want to be parry to this class action thing. And it basically got all the new young women to sign onto it. And so yes, there definitely was a gender issue raging and it gave a very strong impression that the department was anti-women and, you know, I was all these old East Coast white men who wanted to keep everybody down, so very much a gender issue raging.

Q: Did you feel that, you know, in a way -- or did you feel this is somebody else's issue?

SANDERSON: I very much felt it was somebody else's issue, in part because I had been successful working in the bank. Goodness knows, banks are bastions of male authority.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

SANDERSON: And I had managed to obtain a nice job that I liked and I was treated well and I was treated respectfully and in my mind at least I made good money. So I was like why get all agitated about this?

Q: Well so when you ended up going to Mexico.

SANDERSON: Guadalajara.

Q: Guadalajara. Was this the time when one approached personnel almost practically with your attorney at your side to, you know, to negotiate? Or was this -- this is where you go.

SANDERSON: Oh, it was very much a dictate. You know, here it is. You know, they actually had a day in A100 when the human resources person came over and he had the list and read it out, you know, so name by name and country by country. So then, you know, Melissa Sanderson, Guadalajara, Mexico. And of course everybody applauds nicely. Next name. So it was just fiat. There you were, congratulations, you're going to Guadalajara.

Q: Well normally I would think -- I understand the personnel system usually wouldn't assign somebody to China or to Soviet Union on the first go round.

SANDERSON: Actually -- actually no, yes, they did, because every place needed consular officers. And it was normally first JOs that were staffing the lines. And so yeah, we actually had a guy in my class that got sent to China. Which of course just further exaggerated my grievance.

Not only did they not send me, they sent that man over there! Me that says it wasn't a gender thing, but still there it was in my head, you know? What, a woman wasn't good enough? They had to send that man? Because that was in the air.

Q: So then you went to Guadalajara.

SANDERSON: Yeah.

Q: And you were there from when to when?

SANDERSON: '85 to '87.

Q: I'm thinking I'd rather -- I think this is probably a good place to stop at this point.

SANDERSON: OK.

Q: And we'll keep Guadalajara and your experiences there in some detail.

SANDERSON: Oh yeah, because that's a good story.

Q: Great. OK.

SANDERSON: Thank you.

Q: Today is the 10th of December, 2009, interview -- this is second interview with Melissa Sanderson. And we are now -- you are just on your way to Guadalajara.

SANDERSON: Yes, that's right, that's where we left off.

Q: OK, that's where we left off. Now when did you go to Guadalajara?

SANDERSON: That was in May of 1985.

Q: OK, you were there what, two years?

SANDERSON: Yes.

Q: OK, let's talk about Guadalajara sort of as a city and what -- how did you find it as a city, personally? We'll get down to the job specifics.

SANDERSON: Guadalajara when I was there was absolutely gorgeous because it was the most Spanish colonial of any of the large cities of Mexico. My Mom, our two cats and I drove down from Washington to Guadalajara; that was an adventure in America and even more so in Mexico -- we got lost in Monterrey and I thought we'd never escape but we finally did... So when Mom and I arrived we drove through the large plaza area and it was our first time to see strolling mariachi bands and outdoor cafes with the beautiful flowers. The province of Jalisco, with Guadalajara as its capital, is also the source of most things that people associate with Mexico. Tequila's made there, mariachi music comes from there, the best-known ranchero singers come from there. So it was both very Spanish colonial in the architectural sense, but very, very Mexican in the cultural sense.

Q: OK. Well, I assume the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party)) was there. I mean

SANDERSON: Oh yes, there was no Mexico without PRI.

Q: Was Guadalajara -- I mean would you call it, at least in the city, was there extreme poverty or was it a pretty flourishing place or how would you describe it?

SANDERSON: At the time it was by Mexican standards a flourishing place. Very large. I think if I remember right the population at the time was something like five or six million. It was the third largest city at the time. Monterrey was second. But yeah, it was pretty much a flourishing place because they had attracted some industries. We had the maquiladoras back then, which was the first sort of duty-free American outsourcing -

Q: -- factory towns or factory organization zones or -

SANDERSON: Exactly. And Guadalajara had several of those. Unfortunately at the time Guadalajara was also one of the big centers for the Mexican narcotics trade. The fact is I got down there just a couple months after a very famous episode where a DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) agent, Kiki Camarena, was kidnapped and tortured to death. And so it was the center of -- really a central focus for the drug wars as well.

Q: OK. Was this -- Guadalajara, there are sections of Guadalajara which are attractive for American retirees out there.

SANDERSON: Yes there were. Tlaquepaque, Lake Chapala, and Tonala. Those are the three areas, very artistic and very nice physical setup -- or at least it was when I was there. Goodness knows what it's like now. And as a matter fact, at the time I think that was the largest ex-pat community in Mexico because there were 50 to 60,000 retired Americans living in Guadalajara. The Consulate even had a Social Security office!

Q: Well OK, who was the consul general when you got there?

SANDERSON: Irwin Rubenstein. He was my very first boss in the Foreign Service.

Q: How was he?

SANDERSON: I liked him. He was a very experienced officer, but you know, fairly laid back. He was very good with junior officers before the regulations required that more senior officers paid attention. He would have functions at the house and made sure that you were invited, professional functions. His wife, Vicky, was much less popular, I have to say. It was kind of a prelude to a phenomenon that you sometimes see in the Foreign Service where the wife of the person in charge tends to feel that she's actually the leader. This alienates a lot of people. But Irwin was good people.

Q: Yeah, mm-hmm. How big was the consulate general?

SANDERSON: We actually had -- let me think. We had one officer that was doing political/economic work. And then in the American citizen services section of the consulate there was the lady in charge who was my sponsor, that was Joy Churchill. She really got us off to the right foot in the Foreign Service. And she had three American officers and then on the visa line we had six American officers, plus the visa chief, plus his supervisor. So that's about a dozen people, 12 to 15.

Q: Hm.

SANDERSON: Plus we had a big DEA office. They had staffing of about another 10 to 12. It was big because of what was going on. And as a matter fact, that ramped up more while I was there. Department of Justice had two people there. In fact it's one of the only consulates that I ever saw that had a Department of Justice office in it -- so yeah, it was a big operation.

Q: What was your job at first? Did you -

SANDERSON: Refusing visas (laughs).

Q: These are nonimmigrant visas.

SANDERSON: Yes, nonimmigrant visas. I was supposed to be on a tour where you rotate through all the sections of consular service, but actually I wound up doing visas for the minimum time you could do them, the eight-month stint, because the wife of the officer who was doing the political economic reporting became pregnant and was having a lot of difficulties. So they backed out. And it turned out that among the people at post I had the best economic background. So I was asked to step in. And at the same time -- oh, I forgot to mention the Department of Commerce had an office in the Consulate too. Around the same time that the pol-econ officer left the Commerce officer also had to leave because he got sick. So the CG made the decision to put me upstairs to do the political economic reporting for State and also represent the Foreign Commercial Service. So I just did eight months of refusing visas. And let me tell you about visas.

Q: Yeah, let's talk about visas, OK?

SANDERSON: Yeah. Let me tell you about visas in Mexico in those days, because it was a very different world. We had turned part of the parking lot into an outside waiting area for applicants -- we called it the cattle pen. Essentially the procedure was as many people as could squeeze themselves into that space were guaranteed an interview during the day. So each officer on the line averaged anywhere between 700 and a thousand interviews a day.

Q: Oh God.

SANDERSON: Uh-huh. Yeah. That's why they called them visa mills.

Q: Uh-huh.

SANDERSON: And so you very quickly developed a rhythm because nobody had time to actually read documents and so forth, and pay attention to details with that pressure. So you developed a rhythm. You would look towards the door and see who was coming in and you would make a prejudgment in your mind. Oh OK, here comes a sheep farmer, here comes a cattle farmer, here comes a probable prostitute, here comes a possible

person that could qualify for a visa, there's a grandmother who's never going anywhere. And basically before anybody got anywhere near the window you had prejudged their case.

Q: OK, well let's take this. I come up to the window, what would you look at?

SANDERSON: Manner of dress. So if you're wearing a big vaquero hat and you're wearing a vest and you're wearing chaps, I'd know right away that you're a cattle farmer. And cattle farmers were not a good bet for visas.

Q: Really? I would think they would -- they wouldn't find much in the way in the States to go to so that they would probably be better employed in Mexico.

SANDERSON: No, because the thing that was interesting about Mexican visa applicants at the time was they were essentially economic opportunity seekers. They wanted to be able to get across that boarder, and in their own mind the visa made their entry legitimate, so that they could legitimately, quote unquote, get a job and send those big American dollars back home to build their other operation. So let's say you're a cattleman, you may have five or six cattle, but if you can go to the United States and get a job for five or 10 years and invest, when you can come back, you can have 500 cows and you can be a big man.

Q: Mm-hmm.

SANDERSON: So people really -- most of it was economically motivated visa solicitation, let's say. And very few people were going to visit Disneyland. Although that was the number one thing that was written down on applications, visit Disneyland -

Q: Yeah, I can remember in the '60s going through -- having people tell me from a small village in Macedonia who were going to I think the Montreal Expo '69 or Expo '67. You know, I wouldn't go, you know, from Washington to go up and see an Expo. To go from this small village?

SANDERSON: Exactly.

Q: There were special flights Canada Air put on. And so this was your excuse, you see.

SANDERSON: Absolutely. Well, and at the time we were also giving unlimited duration tourist visas, I think in an effort to deal with the massive numbers of applicants. So if one could qualify for an unlimited visa, many Mexicans thought, and probably many others as well, that this was permission to live indefinitely in the United States -

Q: Well, it really was.

SANDERSON: -- and work and everything else.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: So it was like if I can only get that visa.....

Q: Well, did you sort of -- what did you do? Did you sort of mumble a few words before you said no or?

SANDERSON: (laughs) Basically. There were two big reasons officially for refusing the visa. Number one was the applicant didn't have a bank account of sufficient longevity and with sufficient liquidity. That was the number one refusal excuse. And number two refusal excuse was your letter of employment is so obviously fake that it's almost laughable. Because of course we required certain specific documents. You had to have your bank account, you had to have your letter of employment, you had to have a letter from whoever you were going to visit in the United States. And basically we never even got to that point unless we seriously thought somebody deserved a visa. Then we looked at that.

Q: There must have been equivalent to, I don't know what they'd call them, but visa brokers. I mean, people you'd go to who could fix you up with a different suit and fix you up with a -- a story and documents that look good.

SANDERSON: It was a big business in Mexico at the time and probably still is, and usually involved the production of fake documentation as well. And so one of the things you got a sense for very quickly on the line was certain companies to watch out for, because you would notice over and over people coming in with letters of employment from certain specific companies and really, if you summed it up, those four or five companies would have been employing two or three or four million people if you took those letters seriously. So our visa fraud officer was always very active, because we would of course just keep those letters and send the person away and pass all that documentation on to our fraud officer.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about the dynamics. Your first Foreign Service appointment, and I've had people talk particularly about going to say, Mexico, where there really is, say OK, it sounds awful, but there's a wonderful team spirit. Did you find this, I mean that you'd kind of sit around and drink your beer afterwards or what have you and sort of giggle about the various things? Was there sort of a team spirit or not?

SANDERSON: Well, I think particularly in Guadalajara there was. And the other thing I think is worth mentioning is that just before I got there Mexico City had its huge earthquake, and the byproduct of that in diplomatic terms was it produced more camaraderie than I think was normal between the Embassy and ourselves. Because I had been in Guadalajara about four days, and I got pulled and sent up to Mexico City to help with the disaster relief efforts and evacuation of Americans and so forth. And that of course allowed us to get to know our colleagues in Mexico City, you know, in a way that we wouldn't otherwise have done.

Q: Yes.

SANDERSON: So while I was there there was both a lot of team spirit among ourselves in Guadalajara, which was heightened by this whole drug thing and the sense of maybe being a little bit targeted, particularly because my best friends were all the DEA agents. There were three of us from the consular section, three women, that hung out all the time with the DEA guys and the DEA girls. And on top of that we had this camaraderie with our Mexico City friends who would fly down to us or we would fly up to Mexico City and spend weekends together. So yeah, there was a tremendous sense of camaraderie. And it broke the stress of saying no to 800 people a day basically.

Q: How did your clients take no?

SANDERSON: Mexicans at that time were basically very passive. I only remember very, very few times having to have security drag someone out. Most of the time they would sort of look at you sadly and start to beg in a very quiet voice, which I found very, very hard to take.

Q: Well, did you sort of develop a sense of almost dejection or what have you about having to say no so often? Or how did you deal with that?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. I knew within the first few weeks that if I had been coming into the Foreign Service to be a professional consular office I would have quit, because I could tell right away I wasn't cut out for it. I have very high pity factor. I mean I think, you remember we talked about I come from a very blue-collar family.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: So I have a lot of sympathy for working class people scratching and biting to get ahead. So I knew that I could not do this for a living. It was hard.

Q: What about the drug factor on the visa side? Do the drug guys come in with too much gold hanging from their necks or something like that or what?

SANDERSON: No, you don't -- actually we got that phenomenon, but that was the music industry. Because Guadalajara was also one of the big centers of the Mexican professional music industry and we had some of the biggest Mexican promoters in Guadalajara. So the guys that would come in with the big gold nugget rings and stuff were usually the owners of these promotional companies.

Q: So they'd get a visa.

SANDERSON: Or a visa for one of their bands.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: Whatever group they were promoting. There's a group that's still going in the United States today called Los Bukis. Los Bukis got their start back in '85 with one of these companies and got their first visas at the time that I was there. So maybe they were also drug lords on the side, I wouldn't know, but I definitely remember the promotion business.

Q: Did you have a problem of being said get a drug lord, you better issue this visa or you're in trouble. Did anything like that come up?

SANDERSON: No, but I will tell you a story about a very good friend of mine. Her name was Sue and she worked in DEA. She was the administrative assistant to the at the time head of the DEA office there. And at that time DEA was still having to shuttle large sums of cash back and forth between Mexican City and Guadalajara for paying informants and so forth. And so they had a regular courier run. I was having my very first huge party ever, and I invited of course everybody from the consulate, plus a few Mexican friends to my house. I had gone over to Sue's house earlier in the day because I had last minute jitters that I didn't have enough alcohol. Because trust me, we were all a heavy drinking crowd in those days. Not just tequila, but anything that was alcoholic went down the hatch. And I did my inventory and I was like oh, my God, I don't have enough booze! So Sue lived nearby and I ran over to her house to see if I could borrow some booze. And she had courier run that night going to the airport to pick up another DEA colleague, Linda. And she told me she would be late getting to the party, but that she and Linda were going to come after they dropped the cash off at the safe in the office. So I take my booze and leave. Later, the party's rolling along and I notice that in addition to Sue and Linda, our American citizen services officer, who was also duty officer that night, Jim, wasn't there. I thought that was kind of odd, but I figured well he got sucked into something because he's duty officer. All of a sudden my phone rings and it's Jim and he asks for Irwin (our consul general).

So even I could tell that something serious was up; I found Irwin and took him upstairs to use the phone where it was quiet He came back downstairs in about 15 minutes and the look on his face scared me to death. And he took me out into our patio out back and he said, "You know, Mel, there isn't any easy way to tell anybody this. Sue's dead. Her car was boxed in by two trucks while she was on her way to the airport and they ran her head on into a concrete bridge abutment. We had witnesses that are already evaporating. The Mexican police have seized her car, we can't find it. Jim is at the morgue, we do have her body. And Irwin said they needed to find Sue's daughter.

All I knew from what Sue had told me was that her daughter was going to spend the night with friends, but I didn't know which friends. So everyone mobilized to find the little girl and get her out of Mexico immediately -- which we did. And that was my experience with drug lords in Mexico.

Q: God. Did you feel at all under -- well, how did the consul general or the staff react to all this? Particularly the DEA people, I would think they would, you know, they'd be out for blood, wouldn't they?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. And rightly so, in my opinion.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: Tony -- he was the head of the Guadalajara DEA Office -- Tony called in reinforcements from Mexico City. Basically they got on a plane within a couple of hours and the Justice Department guy that I mentioned called the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) specialists in auto forensics from the United States, who arrived the very next day. Irwin was down at the mayor's office and police chief's office demanding that the car be turned over for investigation. There was -- there was a very strong coming together. People were very, very kind to me because as it turned out I had been the last person to see Sue alive and they were looking for her daughter and they were trying to keep her ex-husband, who was a Mexican, from getting hold of the little girl. And they needed to get her out of the country very quickly. It took two days, but they got the car. The FBI Forensics Investigation Team was able to determine that it had been tampered with not once, but twice. Their supposition was it was tampered with the first time to cut the brakes and then a second time to try to make it look as if that hadn't happened. But they were able to determine that it had. And Tony's guys were basically out, you know, routin' and shoutin' and beatin' on folks. The best they could ever figure out was the people in the trucks had been sent back to Monterey and from Monterey into the United States because the investigation moved over to our side of the border. But very quick mobilization, very much a sense of a family, family under siege. And particularly DEA guys, because this was their second hit within a year.

Q: Right.

SANDERSON: And they were going to have one more while I was still there. Another agent was picked up.

Q: Why don't we pick that up now. What happened?

SANDERSON: He was out doing some routine contact work, about to pay off an informant. And while he was with the informant Mexican drug police, who of course at the time at least were terribly corrupt, were seen to have pulled up next to his car and forced him into their car. The informant ran away with the money. And it was just sort of by the grace of God, because this was how they had gotten Kiki Camarena as well, another informant who was a friend of the agent had seen this happening and called the office and said, "You need to know that they've just taken this guy."

And so this is actually a very good story because Tony and the guys went right over to the arms locker and got out their heavy weapons and got in their car and went straight downtown to the head of the narcotics police. And while the two guys kept their guns on the Mexican narcotics agents, Tony went into the chief's office, put his gun to the chief's head and said, "My guy or your brains." And they got him back. He'd already been

tortured, but they got him back alive. And they got he and his pregnant wife out of the country. So it was tough times for DEA in those days.

Q: Oh boy. Well OK, did this, I mean this drug business and the corruption, did this sort of give you a disdain for the Mexican government?

SANDERSON: No. Maybe I was too young to feel disdain. What I felt was pity for the people, for sure. And it certainly brought me much closer to my DEA friends and taught me early on a lot of respect for them and the justice folks and the work that they were trying to do overseas. But basically, I was in Mexico to do my job from, you know, eight until five refusing visas, and then go out to have fun, which is what most of us did most of the time. Went out partying, drinking, eating, dancing. Most of us were members of the British Hash House Harriers, a group that got together to hike in the barranca (canyon) outside town. It was also an easy drive, about 4-5 hours, to the beach so folks would frequently go there as well, or sometimes to Mexico City. There wasn't a sense that we were going to make any difference in what was going on. That was -- that was for the DEA friends and so forth, it wasn't for we little, you know, first tour visa officers. So no, not disdain.

Q: All right, well when you got the economics thing, economics, slash, commercial, what were you up to?

SANDERSON: Oh, I was promoting the maquiladora industry in our consular district, six Mexican states which would have been roughly the size of the East Coast as far down as Georgia, and getting out there hustling with Irwin (our CG) to scope out where the economic opportunities were, talk to the provincial administrations, try to pave the way for the American companies to get in. That was -- that was very fascinating stuff, but the odd part was that before the end of my tour Congress essentially turned off the maquiladora program because U.S. labor unions couldn't stand it. From their point of view it was jobs slipping away into lower salary areas depriving them of work. And so they successfully lobbied Congress to force the Department of Commerce to stop promoting the maquiladora concept. So I did maquiladoras heavily for about six months. In the last two months that I was still doing that work you couldn't even mention the word anymore.

Q: Did you find you were able to sort of come in and use your work credentials prior to the Foreign Service to establish yourself?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. Having come from the banking sector was a very big thing because I was able to talk credibly about the financial benefits of the maquiladora industry for the province, for the Mexican state. I was able to talk to American businesses credibly about their opportunities and the downside risks as well.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: Because particularly from a financial perspective Mexico was very high-risk in those days.

Q: Did the people -- you were basically targeting the managerial class.

SANDERSON: Basically talking to the politically corrupt class.

Q: Politically corrupt class. OK, so did you feel the hand of the PRI on all that you were doing?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely because you knew for a fact that even though you'll be talking to a provincial governor, the reality was he wasn't going to make any decision. He was going to pass on your information through the party structure to Mexico City. And the Mexico City central party structure was going to decide if his province merited that particular investment or not. Everything had to do with how loyal he had been and how strong the party was in the province, and how faithful the members were. And it wasn't going to have anything to do with the economic variables that we were talking about face-to-face. That was well understood.

Q: Well, in a way you were talking to people who -- I mean did you feel at least you were initiating something so it got consideration as opposed to, I mean if you didn't do it it wouldn't get consideration.

SANDERSON: No, absolutely. I definitely felt that it was very important work because the way I saw it then, the way I still see it now is it's a kind of investment that was going to do things for Mexico in terms of providing jobs in terms of lifting up the people and paying taxes, and by providing jobs in Mexico it would also help to reduce illegal immigration to the US. The program also was going to help American companies by allowing them to increase their productivity and therefore their revenues. So to me it was a win/win regardless of all the political dynamics. And the governors were not well informed. I mean it's hard to believe now, as we're sitting here with our digital recorders and everything, but you remember. Those were the days before cell phones, before internet. So a provincial governor sitting in his capital city was not going to be able to go on the internet, type maquiladora in the Google box and find out everything he wanted to know. So if somebody like me didn't show up to do this information sharing there was no entry whatsoever.

Q: In the area you were dealing with what were the Maquiladora. What were they?

SANDERSON: Fabrics mostly, textile manufacturing, because Mexico had a very good agricultural potential for growing cotton and so forth, and a long history of textile manufacturing indigenously. So one downside of the industry from the Mexican point of view was industrial displacement. Because of course an American company would come in with new and improved techniques and displace a Mexican company that wasn't able to compete. But the industrial potential was there and it was -- for them it was a lot about industrial transformation, because why should the Mexican industry languish in medieval

conditions? Essentially Erwin and I used to do factory visits. And you would go to a textile factory and there would literally be a massive amount of loose small pieces of fabric floating in the air near the ceiling. And Mexican workers weren't wearing masks or anything of the sort, so they were inhaling all of this. And tuberculosis was endemic in Mexico at the time. I got it myself. But factory workers in Mexico were getting tuberculosis from having inhaled all this fiber full of dirt and disease. Agricultural workers were getting tuberculosis because at the time the Mexicans were still using human feces as fertilizer. And of course when it dried everybody inhaled it. That's how I got it too.

Q: Well, on this were we bringing in American labor practices, you know, like masks -

SANDERSON: and ventilation systems.

Q: -- ventilating systems, washing facilities, you know, the whole thing?

SANDERSON: Absolutely.

Q: Was that part of the deal?

SANDERSON: Absolutely. And that's why I say that for me, yes, there was displacement because some Mexican companies were definitely forced out of business. But it was also a process of industrial transformation. Because once these standards had been introduced by American companies Mexican workers in Mexican companies wanted the same standards.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: So to me, that was one of the great advantages of the maquiladora industry for Mexico. It was a quantum leap in industrial standards and workers' rights.

Q: Well, I assume that you were driving the people in the Carolinas up the wall, because that's where the factories have been before.

SANDERSON: Absolutely. That's why I was saying that there was a push on the U.S. side of the boarder by labor unions to convince Congress that this was actually antithecal to U.S. interests because it was costing American jobs. And that's also true. Again, it's about industrial transformation. From a company's standpoint, they were going to a lower cost production base. They were transforming the industry in Mexico, but ours was also being transformed because in comparative wage terms at the time -- and of course NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) has since helped stabilize a lot of that -- but at the time, American textile workers were being overpaid in comparative terms. Even though in real terms we know that they were actually among the lowest paid factory workers in the United States at the time. So it was a very complex and bad problem for the politicians, I know.

Q: And of course, as you say, you had the PRI politicians and the American politicians.

SANDERSON: Yep.

Q: And so much of what we're doing is not a rational system, but it's a political balancing of forces. And you were on the cutting edge of one of these things.

SANDERSON: Absolutely.

Q: What happened when Congress knocked off the system? Did it stop immediately or was there -- there must have been a phase out time, wasn't there?

SANDERSON: In terms of promotion of the industry, it stopped immediately. Companies that were already placed in Mexico had a grandfathering period in which the two countries tried to work out by what provisions the privileges would be maintained. But promotionally it was a dead stop right away.

Q: Had there been essentially a queue of Mexican industries waiting, you know, working with you or obviously with others to get into this?

SANDERSON: No, not at all. This was very much a U.S. driven initiative, and the Mexicans outside of the central government in Mexico City were largely unaware it existed or what benefits it could offer.

Q: Mm-hmm.

SANDERSON: So no, they weren't queuing up saying please, please.

Q: So in a way you were spared having to go and tell them that Christmas has been canceled or something.

SANDERSON: Exactly. I didn't have to be in that position like I was with the visas because we didn't have the Mexican push demand.

Q: How did you find your relationship -- I'm sure doing what you were doing on the commercial economic side your relations with the embassy, because they're -- I mean that was -- that was your major customer, wasn't it?

SANDERSON: On the State side it absolutely was. I mean one thing that I found very fascinating was -- and I don't know if it's still true -- but at the time, Foreign Commercial Service acted very directly with Commercial Service here in Washington and didn't actually go through the Embassy. And to the extent that this was a program mostly under the domain of the Department of Commerce, I profited from that direct channel to Washington. I would talk to the desk officer and to the economic development team in the Department of Commerce. But on the State side, yes, I had my first and last taste of being a satellite organization to the embassy and finding that from the satellite

perspective the embassy was constantly trying to butt in and second guess our decisions. That was frustrating. I don't like being second guessed (laughs). Never did.

Q: Well, did you find yourself caught -- on your economic hand when you weren't -- was there going out and reporting on other matters other than, you know, how crops are flourishing?

SANDERSON: Oh no, absolutely. Because of my financial background, one thing that I was always interested in and reported a lot on was the banking structure in our particular area, our six states. Because of course before -- we weren't using widely the term money laundering at the time for the narcotics traffickers. But the instinct was already there that banks, particularly banks who were having liquidity difficulties, would be victims of the narcotics trade. And so I spent a lot of time actually talking to bankers in our six-state area, trying to lure them into giving me a sense for how well liquidified they were and what sort of sources they had for that liquidity. But also I took a long and hard look at the effect of the tourist trade, because at the time the Mexican economy was being heavily dollarized by the influx of tourist cash. And that was quite clear in talking to the banks.

So it set up a dilemma for the Mexican Government because it was great to have all that money flowing in, but the fact was it was highly destabilizing to the peso, and also made fiscal tools hard for the Mexican government to use effectively. And they had just had that huge period of hyperinflation two years before I got there and the peso was once again being undercut by all of this dollarization. So the Mexican Government had a choice: welcome the dollar with a ton of consequences for the peso, eliminate the peso entirely as a national financial instrument, or regulate the entry of dollars and force all tourists to change dollars to pesos essentially at the first point of entry. And they felt that the third option would greatly discourage tourism, the second option wasn't doable. So essentially the Mexican Government at the time was embracing dollarization, which historically turned out to be a paving stone for instituting NAFTA.

Q: What was your impression of the banking system?

SANDERSON: Fragile, corrupt, manipulated, unprofessional.

Q: And who got loans depended on who they were.

SANDERSON: Absolutely.

If you were a good PRI guy or PRI girl you could got along. If you were a member of the opposition you better forget about it. Very highly politicized. And if you were an average rancher, let's say, with your five or six cows, you weren't going to get a loan to expand. Hence the drive to get that visa, go to the United States, make money, send it home and develop a source of alternative financing, enabling small business growth. It was wonderfully complex and went right to the heart of the human motivation to insure sustainability by any means necessary. So if your credit at the bank is closed, well get into the cattle pen, solicit a visa and if you're turned down you come back later and if

you're turned down you come back six months later, because your odds playing that game are still higher than going to the bank.

Q: Yeah. Ooh. Well, were the ties with the drug business, were they -- if it wasn't called money laundering at the time was this becoming a major source of finance or was it still in its infancy?

SANDERSON: No, I think absolutely, it was also a major, major problem. Because as it turned out, some of the biggest Mexican banks were essentially owned by narcotrafficking organizations. That emerged just a few years later after consistent studies of the banking structures and interrelationships and so on. It emerged that a lot of Mexico's largest banks were out and out owned by the narcos. And smaller ones essentially were in thrall to them because of the way that a banking network works. Smaller banks depend on large banks for their liquidity too. So if you're a smaller bank and you're going to refuse to do business with the big boys you're not going to do business very long, particularly not in the Mexican economy in the 1985/'87 period. Because there wasn't enough alternative sources of liquidity to be able to support a junior grade bank independently. So yeah, turned out that that whole thing was there, just right under the surface. And the digging had started around '83, '84, and was continuing when I was there. And around '88, '89 it sort of exploded into a banking scandal in Mexico.

Q: Well, when there was this years -- I really don't know the dates -- but there was this tremendous loan crisis that hit Mexico, Brazil, I mean hit all of Latin America. Was that in this time or did that come later in the -

SANDERSON: It was already starting in this time period. Basically around 1984 the big American private banks who, at political urging, had extended private lines of credit in Latin America, started having those loans come due and they weren't being paid in full, which of course had tremendous implications for our banking stability and the capacity of US businesses to access finance. This became a highly political question, and reached the boiling point sort of in '88, '89. Actually that was an issue that I was following in my assignment after Mexico when I was in INR (Intelligence and Research Division): was whether Latin American countries actually would renege on their debts? Which ones would be most likely to? And what would be the impact on the American banking industry if they did renege? And of course Mexico was right behind Brazil in terms of being the biggest bandit in those days in Latin America.

Q: We'll pick that up again shortly. You left Guadalajara in '87 How'd you feel about the Foreign Service?

SANDERSON: I was pretty convinced that I wanted to stay, but I was also pretty convinced they were going to throw me out (laughs).

Q: Why? Did you feel sort of the oddball or, or what?

SANDERSON: Well, I think I mentioned that I didn't feel at home doing visas.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: Well, my first visa chief didn't feel at home with me either. And he was pretty determined to flush me out. And the very first EER that he ever wrote for me -

Q: Efficiency report.

SANDERSON: Yes, that's right, Employee Efficiency Report, was very negative. And it was thanks to Irwin Rubenstein that it didn't have a really terrible effect on my future career. Because I'm a fighter. And when I read what my immediate supervisor had written my first impression was to use my suicide box, such that it cut my own throat -

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: -- by denouncing him in the roundest possible terms.

Q: The suicide box is where you are allowed to comment on what the person says. The reason it's called suicide box is that almost anything you put in sounds so damn self-serving that if you do that it actually acts against you rather than for you.

SANDERSON: Absolutely, and I was well on the road to cutting my own throat. Fortunately, as I told you, Irwin always took a strong interest in his junior officers. And he had seen what I was proposing to write. So he called me up to his office and said, you know, "You're free to do whatever you want. You have to do what you think is best for you. But let me give you some advice. This is not going to help you. I have to write my section; it's going in here next. Mine is going to completely contradict what has been written already. Leave it up to me. I recommend that you just write something short and neutral. Focus on what you want to do with your next assignment, rather than what this report has to say. And keep in mind that you'll be getting another report, which will be written by me from your economic work" because he had already told me I was going to be moved. But that's why I say that when I left in '87 I had a feeling that I liked what I was seeing of the Foreign Service, but that I wasn't 100% sure if the Foreign Service liked what it was seeing of me. Because particularly in that visa thing, I mean the big complaint about me was that I don't take discipline very well. I don't like to be ordered and told what to do. And that's absolutely true. If I wanted to take orders I would have joined the Military.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: My dad had been a professional Military guy for years. He loved the Military. He wanted me to get into ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) and go be a Military person. I had a lot of insight into my own character and I knew I wouldn't do very well with that. So that's why I say I left -- also I felt frustrated when I left Mexico because in my mind I was being unjustly yanked back to Washington because I had wanted another overseas assignment. And actually Irwin fought for me to get another

overseas assignment and he even called the Ambassador in Mexico City who weighed in to get me in another overseas assignment. But Washington trumped them and insisted that I had to come back to take the job in Intelligence and Research Division, INR. So I also left Mexico with a lot of bad feelings about that because I convinced myself in my own mind, "See, they want to be rid of me so they're bringing me back to Washington so it'd be cheaper when they fire me!" (laughs).

Q: Somebody's thinking there is much more thought behind assignments than there really is, you know. Since I, having been a personnel officer, it's like oh, my God, I've got a slot to fill. So and so's to put her/him in there and that's kind of the basic thought.

SANDERSON: But, and I agree because I understand perfectly well it's how systems work. But I have to say that somehow for me I seem always to have escaped that. I always seem to have had a more personal connection with assignments. Like even in this instance when I was a little nobody they actually called me, my counselor called me to say, "Look, INR has asked specifically for you because they're looking for a particular profile and you meet it. They need somebody with financial analysis experience, because this position, which is Regional Economist for Latin America, is going to spend a lot of time doing debt analysis and you fit that profile perfectly." You know, and it was all eminently clear, eminently logical and I was still pumped full of resentment. And convinced they were going to fire me (laughs). So just gives you the insight into my psychology.

Q: Now I spent nine years in the Balkans and so -- it's a good Balkan temperament. There's something -- there's something behind why did they say and why did they do that.

SANDERSON: Exactly. Exactly. And that's when I came up with it's so much cheaper to fire me if I'm already in Washington. Then I felt like I understood.

Q: OK, well let's take you to this position in the INR, which as you say, makes evident sense when one looks at it from a, a personnel point of view. You did this from '87 to when?

SANDERSON: '89.

Q: OK, let's talk about your impression of INR at the time and then we'll talk about your job.

SANDERSON: Actually, coming into INR one of the things that depressed me was Department gossip. Because according to Department lore, INR was a dumping ground for substandard officers and people who were on their way out. So it wasn't seen as a very prestigious place to go at all.

Q: No, no, you're right. I put in some time at INR and, you know, when you consider it, INR outside of the building has a tremendous reputation. But inside of the building, you know, I mean you're supposed to think there rather than act, which is what desks do.

SANDERSON: Mm-hmm. But I also think that there's an element of jealousy. I mean I developed that theory pretty early on when I was in this assignment. Because you know yourself when you're working here in a department, it's all about clearances and what I call dog tracks.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: My presence is noted because I forced the drafting officer to insert a comma on this line before I would put my signature. Well in INR, you're above all of that fray. I mean you are an independent force. All of the information flows to you. It's left to you to put an intellectual filter on that, draw conclusions, never make recommendations, but draw conclusions that can be suggestive of recommendations for policymakers and you don't run around getting clearances.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: Your boss chops off on it and then it goes and it gets in the Book.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: Because it's good enough. If it makes that cut it gets in the Book and by God, once you're in the Secretary's Morning Summary (aka the Book), you're read all over town, including at the White House.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: So I developed early on this idea that people talked INR down within the building because they're actually jealous of the independence factor.

Q: I think that's a very valid thing. Plus the fact they come back to you're actually thinking -- I mean there's -- there is something within the Foreign Service that it doesn't -- it sort of -- what's the problem of the day? What are we going to do.

SANDERSON: Firefighting. Firefighting.

Q: It's firefighting. Yes. You pick up the paper and you -- and what's on the front page of <u>*The Washington Post*</u> *or* <u>*The New York Times*</u> *sets your agenda for the day.*

SANDERSON: Right.

Q: You know, lots of exceptions, but this is it. And INR is -- sort of looks back, plus the fact it probably is the most rational of the, you might say the whole think tank business. Including, I'm talking about the CIA, in that it's one thing that is tied to policy immediately, rather than just sort of thinking about, you know, whether Patagonia or

something, you know, it's kind of what are we going to do about Patagonia, but somebody is looking at it from almost a higher view than a desk.

SANDERSON: Absolutely. After all of my bad feelings about coming back here, I mean within the first two or three weeks I was loving the job at INR, because for me a lot of it was about predicting those headlines, feeding those headlines, giving the word to the decision makers before the crisis happened. That's what it was about for me. So I loved having all this massive information flowing in. I mean I had all of Latin America, so the embassies from every country, all of that reporting coming in, all the public source reporting. And I loved it. I loved feeling that I was shifting through that looking for the flash points, looking for where it was going to pop, looking for where it was going to blow, figuring out why it was going to blow, figuring out was there anything we could do to prevent that blow, if not what could we do to mitigate that blow? I loved it because it was to me very hands on, even though, you know, you're out there. And I loved going to inter-agency meetings. I want to tell you a funny story about that.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: Fairly early on, because I went -- of course I went to a lot of inter-agency meetings, because as you know, in the CIA they may have country-specific analysts, particularly for the large countries like Mexico and Brazil and Argentina, and I had everybody. So I used to go to a lot of inter-agency meetings. And I was both stunned and flattered. I might have been in INR about four or five months and I went to a meeting over at the agency. And it was with their deputy director. And during the meeting I was making a presentation and the meetings that were there, as you probably recall, were always led by CIA analysts. Well, I was making a presentation and then their guy was making a presentation. And the deputy director stopped their guy and said, "In the future, I want Melissa to lead all of these meetings." He said, "I think she's got what we need to hear and I want her to set the agenda and lead these meetings." And everybody in the room, as you can imagine, I mean DIA, CIA, FBI, all those guys are just like, "This little girl from INR? INR is going to be leading our meetings?" And I did. I lead those particular coordination meetings from then on, until I left INR.

Q: OK, let's talk about what you were up to. First place, what was the problem and how'd you go about it?

SANDERSON: Well, when I first got there the big overarching issue was the question that we talked about before, the question of reneging on the foreign debt, what the implications would be for the American banking sector and what could be done to prevent that from happening, particularly faced with very aggressive political regimes in Brazil and Argentina that essentially were adopting the position of we're going to renege on the debt and you can't stop us. And at the same time we had Jeffrey Sachs, an American economist who essentially was a social revolutionarian, one to encourage governments to renege on their debt.

Q: I mean this is sort of a '60s philosophy or something or

SANDERSON: Yeah, kind of a power to the people thing. A whole -- his whole perspective was kind of, you know, this is a way in which industrialized countries are holding less developed countries hostage through financial levers. And a government can't responsibly allow that to happen. But at the same time, failing to take into account the consequences. Because in the few cases where countries did partially refuse to pay their debt, what were the consequences? Almost immediate massive unemployment as private investors pulled out of the country, almost immediate deflationary cycle, almost immediate devaluation of their indigenous currencies, almost immediate declaration as a pariah state impacting all their ability to collect aid from different organizations. So the advice that was being given to them was contrary to their interests, but very attractive to their populous instinct. Particularly in Argentina. And secondarily in Brazil. Brazil at the time was of course vying with Mexico for the position of dominant country on the continent. And to the extent that Mexico was seen as too close to the U.S., Brazil was taking a position of hey, we're geographically far and politically far. So -

Q: And they were also -- they're going through this silk production period or whatever you want to call it, protectionist -

SANDERSON: Yes. Absolutely. And it was all part and parcel of that as well. And then a byproduct of that question became the emphasis within the intelligence community on setting up means whereby we could actually try to track the flow of suspect funds. So this was tracking money related to narcotics trafficking usually, almost predominantly. It segued later after I was gone into terrorism. It got into also things like suspect individuals who weren't necessarily narcotics traffickers, but who were doing something funny and moving large sums of money around. And while I was in INR the Panama Crisis also came up. And I have to say that as far as I know, to this day I'm the only person in the analytical community who wrote a paper saying do not impose sanctions because it will not get you what you want. What I had already seen with General Noriega was he didn't have assets in Panama. He converted everything into gold and literally he had barges full of gold traveling from country to country where he was converting the gold into national currencies and depositing those in banks. The guy was actually being advised by some very sophisticated money launderers. So I argued that imposing sanctions on Panama is not going to cut off General Noriega's currency flow, but it will destroy the Panamanian economy, which was 100% dollarized.

Q: Mm-hmm.

SANDERSON: So in my analysis I said you're going to wind up with a military option anyway because you're not going to get rid of General Noriega financially. You're just not. The result was I was sent to Panama to do a second study substantiating or debunking my first study by having the opportunity to speak directly to the Panamanian bank structure. So that involved getting a completely illegitimate visa from the government in exile, which of course was the government we recognized. And I should have been stopped at the airport. And if I had had more experience, if I wasn't just a little second tour officer, I would have been suspicious as to why I wasn't stopped at the

airport when I arrived at Panama City. But I didn't know any better and I wasn't stopped. So I thought hunky-dory. I had a girlfriend working at the Panama Embassy at the time and I went to stay with her at her apartment. She was working in the econ section. And so she helped me, you know, introduced me to different contacts and so forth. And one of these contacts worked in a bank, a big Panamanian bank. I met him for breakfast. And we talked, exchanged information, and at the end of the breakfast he said, "You know, there's someone who would really like to meet you to discuss this issue too."

And I'm like, "Oh? Well, you know, I have to --"

He's like, "It won't take long. I can just zip you over very quickly, we can talk for 30 minutes and I'll drop you back at the embassy." Now again, keep in mind, I'm a little second tour officer. And in Panama at the time in hindsight clearly I should have said no. But what I said to myself was, "This guy is a well-known embassy contact, he works with the embassy all the time. What could be bad about this?" So I get into his car. Off we go. And it isn't even 15 minutes and I can tell I've made a bad decision because we're now entering a part of the city that's off limits to embassy personnel. I'm seeing a lot of General Noriega's goons with their great big AK-47s leaning on their hips strolling about. And I'm like, "Um, you know, I just remembered that um I actually had this meeting at the embassy, um, but I completely forgot, so if you wouldn't mind just turning around and just dropping me at the embassy that would be so much appreciated and we can do this meeting later." And he's like, "Oh no, it's all right. We're almost there. And I'm like, "Um," -- and remember, there's no cell phones. So he pulls up and he turns left into this little alley behind some big building. And there's a whole lot of General Noriega's troops standing around here and I'm like this is so not good. The guy jumps out of his car, runs around, opens my door and I hear one of the soldiers saluting him. So I see him saluting him and then, you know, speaking respectfully to him and I'm like oh, this can't be good. I'm not getting out of the car.

And then he's like, "OK, get out of the car." And I'm like, "Uh," and I'm looking at all these soldiers and I'm thinking, "Might as well get out of the car, this is a stupid play. I have to get out of the car. They'll drag me out of the car."

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: So I got out of the car. And we walked up this -- up another little side alley. When we emerged, there was the beautiful view of the bay there in Panama. And I instantly know where I am. This is what we were at the time calling the Flamingo Palace, General Noriega's headquarters. And I'm like, "Oh, I have to put the line in the sand now; I cannot go into this building." So as casually as possible while babbling about the view, I stroll to the edge of the dock area and wrap my arm around one of the stanchions. And the guy comes after me and he says, "We have to go in now." And I'm like, "Look, I'm telling you, I have nothing to say to anybody in that building and I promise you that no one in this building wants to talk to me because I am a little insignificant nobody. I'm just a little economic analyst and I don't know anything about anything."

And he's like, "But what -- we have to go in and we have to have a meeting."

I said, "I'm telling you, I'm not going in there, because I have nothing to say and I'm not the right person to talk to."

So he looks at me for a few minutes. He says, "Well, wait here." I'm thinking you betcha. He goes into the pink palace and I wait and it seems like I wait forever. And he comes back out and he comes over and he says, "Really, I have to insist. You have to go in. Somebody wants to meet you." While he's been gone I've been considering the drop down to the water and my odds of survival seemed better jumping into the dirty polluted water and hoping that I won't break all of my limbs than if I go into that building. I figured out right away, they must have been waiting for a messenger and I'm not it! (laughs) And I figure if I go in there and I confront General Noriega with no message, he'll shoot me! If I'm lucky. And he'll torture me if I'm not. So I'm like no, not going in the building. They can kill me out here in the broad daylight.

So I told the guy, "Look, I don't have anything to say. I don't what else I can tell you. I am not who you're looking for. I am a little economic analyst. I have no messages. I have no contacts. I'm not the right person. Somebody else must be coming." He goes back in. And this time honestly I'm just about ready to crawl over the rail and just throw myself in the water. He comes back and out says, "Are you sure?"

I said, "Oh yes, I'm so, so sure. I'm so, so, so sure I'm not the person you want."

He says, "Well, all right," and walks me back to the car, drops me off at the embassy.

You never saw a girl fly up the steps like her tail was on fire, bursting into the DCM's (Deputy Chief of Mission) office. I mean I didn't even stop by his secretary's desk. I just opened the door and went in. And the DCM to his great credit took one look at my face and chased everybody out he'd been having a meeting with and said, "What happened?" And I told him and he said, "Come with me." And we went straight into the ambassador's office. And he was telling the story and the ambassador was going bonkers! Bon-kers! And I thought is he angry with me? It's not my fault! And of course he wasn't angry with me; he was angry that apparently there was some kind of a thing running on the side here that he had not been briefed on. And I'm like uh, none of this is my fault, but I'm glad to be alive (laughs). So that was one of my big adventures in the Foreign Service.

Q: Well, I'm just trying to get behind this. Did you feel that the ambassador thought there may be some kind of a secret message coming from maybe the CIA? Because he had been very close to the CIA at one point. I mean do you have a feeling that this might have been -- I mean was this sort of the assumption?

SANDERSON: Well remember, this was also the time that we had Iran-Contra going on. And I was so glad that I was not involved in that particular briefing circle. But there was -- there was a lot of, of side deals being done in diplomacy at that time. And as it later turned out, the message was coming out of INR. It wasn't coming out of the CIA; it was

coming out of INR. And they had been planning to send somebody, a political officer. And the front office hadn't been informed that I was going when I was going. Otherwise they probably would have canceled my trip. But it was a thing that was being run out of INR. That was Mort Abramowitz and Dick Clark. Dick Clark was PDAS (Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary) at the time and Mort was in charge. So actually when I got back to Washington Dick was very, very kind and called me into his office and apologized for all the stress that I had faced and said I'm sorry we didn't know you were going or we wouldn't have let you go. But it did turn out that there seems to have been something that was going on that the ambassador had not been informed of, and certainly that the little econ staff of INR were not informed of. But that turned out to be one of my big adventures in the Foreign Service, when I almost met and probably would have gotten killed by General Noriega (laughs).

Q: Oh yeah, at least you would have been in a beautiful setting.

SANDERSON: Oh, gorgeous setting to get shot. Absolutely. And my analysis was substantiated by historical developments. We imposed sanctions, they ruined the Panamanian economy, they did not chase out General Noriega, and we had to send in troops.

Q: Well, this is -- you know, again and again one looks at sanctions and they never hit the top people.

SANDERSON: It's because the top people always have their resources outside.

Q: Yeah. I mean, you know, what's the point of being the top person if you can't get everything you want anyway? I mean this is -

SANDERSON: Exactly.

Q: OK, you're examining essentially the debt situation of these major powers, particularly Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico. What are you looking at that CIA isn't looking at or -- I mean what is -- do you have a different approach than they have or what?

SANDERSON: I think that's the nice thing about the analytical community is it's so highly individual. Because it goes to each individual's background, each individual's way of conducting an analysis. So I don't know. I mean essentially everybody has access to the same vast pool of information. But part of it is instinct. It's just like, you know, when I was trading stocks as an investment broker, a lot of it is instinct because you have all this factual knowledge available to you, but you interpret it in a way, but it's also something just tells you what's the way to go. And it's the same thing in INR. Petrodollars are a great example of that. I mean all three countries that we're talking about -- Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico -- were petroleum countries. But until that middle and late '80s period, that wasn't as huge a factor. And all of a sudden, you know, the Arab cartel comes together and begins to leverage pricing, driving it up, bringing together

producers in a huge worldwide cartel, and leading to what we now call petrodollar economies. Petrodollars are what kept the Latin American countries from having to default to their loans. Early on I had talked about the potential of the petroleum industry. I didn't call it petrodollars or anything of the sort, and I forget who invented the term petrodollars, but talking about the fact that that was an industry that could have a substantial role in recuperating the entire countries in question. And if American banks would be patient and renegotiate some elements of the loans, it could be a way to stretch out the payments but get everything back in the end. So it's, it's how you see things and how you feel about them. That's the value of having a large intelligence community because it gives policymakers different points of view on the same question and thereby implicitly different courses of action from which to choose.

Q: Well, when you're talking about economics there really aren't any secrets. This is not -- is -- I mean, you know, the CIA supposedly has these agents and all that. But I would take it that this would not be a major factor.

SANDERSON: No, because everybody has access to all the information. I mean when you're in INR you get special clearances and so forth that allow you to see everything that's produced from all sources. So it's all source reporting, you know, NSA (National Security Agency), CIA, everybody, all source reporting. So it's a level playing field in that respect. It comes back to out of this massive flood of information, what is it that strikes you and causes you to start following a certain thread. And it's your instincts that tell you after, you know, a couple hours whether that thread is the right one to stay on or not because the longer you follow the thread the more information clumps on to it. And you can develop a viable theory on any thread, but the question is is it the right viable theory? And that's where instinct comes into play. And you've either got the instinct or you don't. There's no way of telling that in advance.

Q: Well, what about say, Bank of America, Chase Manhattan, other major banks that are involved in this. Were you privy to what they were thinking?

SANDERSON: No. Because that sort of interaction was not encouraged directly. Every once in a while there would be like, you know, big seminars or something that we could go and take part in as observers and hear those opinions expressed. But in terms of, for instance, would I be authorized to pick up the phone and call an analyst at Bank of America? No.

Q: Do you think this is -- is this good or is it bad?

SANDERSON: I think it's good because the objective is to try to have an independent analysis and you don't necessarily want to be bought into the bank's analysis. Because the banks have their own channels to the policymakers. Their point of view is already being heard. The idea of having the intelligence community doing the analysis, based on all those available factors and information is to give that alternative approach. So if you buy into the banker's point of view, where's the independence?

Q: Yeah. Well, by the time you'd left there, on your leaving where stood things? What were we doing?

SANDERSON: Well, let's see. We were invading Panama. We were selectively negotiating some of our largest debts in order to extend the payment time. We were facing the dollar crisis in terms of what the petrodollar people were doing because they were deliberately trying to undercut the value of the U.S. dollar as a world financial standard and replace it with a new instrument that would no longer be called petrodollars, but would be called something else. Petrofunds, perhaps. So we were facing a period of inflation and devaluation of the dollar that was provoked by the arrival on the scene of the petrodollars. So it was kind of funny that we transferred the source of the instability because the American banking network remained fragile. I just love that what's going on today in part traces its roots all the way back to this period of the '80s. We had transferred the source of instability and fragilization from the external debt market. We've largely defused that ticking time bomb. But then it moved to the petroleum arena and became a much more global problem because what we had before was largely regional. So in a sense the problem became exacerbated even though it became over time less political.

Q: I mean after the Panama business, was there a diminution in the use of the theory of having sanctions or?

SANDERSON: No, not at all. Because somebody somewhere -- as you know, politicians love sanctions, because -

Q: Yeah. Don't stand there, don't -- do something.

SANDERSON: -- it makes a headline -- right. We're out there, we put sanctions on this country, blah, blah, blah. Look how -- what is it now, near 50 years we've had sanctions on Cuba. Cuba's still there!

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: The poor people are still suffering, but Cuba's still there.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: But it's a wonderful headline for the newspapers, you know? "U.S. Closes Down Panamanian Market." Ooh-la-la.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: So no, unfortunately -- and it might have been a minority opinion anyway. Almost without exception all other analytical sources argued in favor of sanctions as a quick fix. Their argument was based on the Panama Canal, that if you impose sanctions and you don't allow shipping through the Panama Canal, which the

Panamanian Government had only recently gotten access to that funding, that you would be able to strangle Noriega. And that would have been 100% true if that was where Noriega was getting his money from, but it wasn't. Right? He was getting his money from narcotics traffickers. So, you know, cutting off the revenue from the canal itself was never going to overthrow Noriega. And the second part of that theory was we'll get the population so worked up that they'll take to the streets and throw Noriega out. Well, an unarmed basically peaceful population confronting a highly organized, well-armed and disciplined group is highly unlikely to be able to throw out the dictator.

Q: Yeah. Yeah.

SANDERSON: No matter how frustrated and angry and hungry they are.

Q: Yeah. Just look at North Korea today.

SANDERSON: Exactly. So I mean, to me, I understood the logic of the opposing analyses, but I just didn't understand it as fundamentally true. And that's where it comes back to which thread do you want to follow. All threads lead to some viable conclusion, but is it the right viable conclusion?

Q: Did you find at INR, was anybody making an effort to get you to switch to Civil Service? Because you know, you had this expertise, which just wasn't available in other Foreign Service people for the most part.

SANDERSON: You know, if they made that approach I've blocked it out of my mind and I honestly don't remember. What I remember about INR was I loved that job. I loved getting up in the morning and getting in early and starting to sort through what was available for the day. I loved the sense of competition. Would I produce a product that was worthy of the Book? How -

Q: The book being the briefing book.

SANDERSON: Yes, the Secretary's Morning Summary, which was commonly called the Book, yes. And if I did, what reactions would that provoke? I loved going, briefing the principals. I did a lot of oral briefing, both within State Department and in other agencies.

Q: Who were the sort of the principals that you'd be dealing with in State Department?

SANDERSON: I frequently briefed the Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs, and also the Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs, and once, once, I got the opportunity to interact with Secretary Shultz, who I found to be such a gentleman. This was on one of my pieces about Latin American debt. I had been off at an inter-agency meeting. And again, God help us, I don't know how we all managed to live before there were cell phones because I was unreachable. I was over at the agency. So when I came back my boss was just about jumping up and down with impatience. And she's like, "You have to go immediately to the seventh floor. We're just going to pass by Secretary

Abramowitz's office, but you've been summoned by the Secretary." And just to give you an example of my state of mind, the first thing I thought of was I'm not dressed well enough to go and see the Secretary of State! I am a girl, after all.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: Number two, I thought, oh, they're going to fire me! They don't like my work!

Q: Sure, the Secretary of State -

SANDERSON: Is personally going to fire little old second tour me because they don't like my work.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: This is what I say, you should get into my personal psychology. So you know, she grabs me up, we rush up to our front office, you know, and I think she might have been a little disgruntled because Mort (the Assistant Secretary for INR) took me in hand himself and up we went to the seventh floor. First time that I'm up there in the Secretary's sanctum. And I remember we went into the outer office and Mort went up to the Secretary's assistant and said, you know, "This is Melissa Sanderson from my analytical group and the Secretary has asked to see her."

And she was very kind. She said, "Oh yes, he's with the King of Jordan right now, but please take a seat."

And I'm thinking, "He's with the King of Jordan. He's talking to the King of Jordan! And after he's talking to the King of Jordan he's going to talk to me!" I'm sitting here just completely bumfuzzled (laughs). I'm practically vibrating I'm so nervous. And the door opens. And I leap to my feet and out they come. And you know, I'm shaking hand with the King of Jordan and the Secretary and, you know, I'm just sort of trying to blend into the wallpaper (laughs). And so off they go past me. And darn, if the King of Jordan didn't look over and smile. I was like, "Wow, a king smiled at me! Ha!"

So the Secretary comes back into the room and sends Mort away. And to me he says, "Won't you come in?"

And I'm like, "Ah!" So in I go. And he must have been able to tell that I was just paralyzed with fright and I would have been totally useless to him. So he was like, "Please have a seat." And we sat down in the grouping by the fireplace. And he said, "Would you like something to drink? Would you like a little coffee or something? So I ask for a Coke, and he calls his assistant in and says, "Melissa will have a Coke."

I thought, "He knows my name!"

And he got a cup of coffee and he let me sip my Coke for a couple of minutes and then he said, "I read your piece in the Book this morning and I found it intriguing. And I just wanted to go over a few of the factors that were underlying your analysis so I can well understand why you reached the conclusion that you did." And we started to have this conversation, just a couple of economists chatting away, you know. What about this? What about that? But did you consider this? Yes, I did, but I rejected it because of this. And he must have talked to me a good 20 or 25 minutes. And at the end he said, "Well, I really appreciate that you took the time to come up and go over this with me." He said, "I found it very enlightening and I would just like to say that I always read your work very closely."

I was like, "Ah!" and I shook his hand and ran out and I was just on cloud nine. And of course there's a reason that I to this day consider Secretary Shultz to have been one of our greatest leaders ever. He's such a good human being.

Q: Almost all the people I interview he's considered, when you put the full balance, to be the top Secretary of State.

SANDERSON: Absolutely, because he was brilliant but he was also human. You know, it's like he never forgot that he was also a professor and he knew how to deal with you.

Q: Mm-hmm.

SANDERSON: And he wasn't condescending to you. I mean later I worked on the seventh floor and had other experiences, but he was just so human. I went home that night and I told my Mom, "I talked to the Secretary of State today." My Mom was like, "Wow!" And that what I felt like today. Wow! Things that you don't forget.

Q: Oh, absolutely not.

SANDERSON: So see how that job that I thought at the beginning was going to be so despicable and lowly and unimportant and uninteresting turned out to be one of the best that I had. I mean I had so much independence, so much freedom to think, and so much access to policymakers. You know, who are actually genuinely interested in what I had to say. I mean, you don't get that in your average position in the Department.

Q: Well, were you replaced by somebody who had sort of your credentials or the equivalent to your credentials?

SANDERSON: No, not at all.

Q: Basically you were really unique, weren't you?

SANDERSON: Yeah.

Q: I mean this is the thing, that people in the Foreign Service come from a tremendous variety of backgrounds but the point is if they're good at something then they move -- after two years they move on, which is sort of a weakness in the system. But it could have gotten stale if you were kept too long there.

SANDERSON: Absolutely, yeah. No, that's one of the things I loved most about the Foreign Service, having to learn new things every two, three years, new languages, new job skills, new country skills.

Q: Yes.

SANDERSON: Civil Service would never have been for me.

Q: No. No.

SANDERSON: I couldn't see myself working 20 years living in Washington, you know. Just not my character.

Q: No, well that's why I think we're all in the business.

SANDERSON: Yep.

Q: What did you do, this is '89?

SANDERSON: Yes. Well, I was supposed to go to the Economic Bureau to the Department of Maritime Affairs because, you know, my CDO, my career development officer, advised me that, you know, OK, this is where you need to get to your econ chop because you've done your visas, you've checked that. INR is kind of amorphous. You need a clear economic chop because I was an economic officer still at the time. So I was like OK, whatever. I said, "Why can't I go to monetary affairs?" And -- because of course again, talking about department gossip, I mean monetary affairs was then and probably still is considered one of the prestige offices of the economic division. And I thought, "Hello? Banker? Banking analysis? Et cetera? Monetary affairs?" But I was outgunned. There there were officers who were a lot more senior than I. And I didn't know -- actually I shouldn't say I didn't know then because actually I never got good at it. I was about to say I didn't know then how to play the game and draw in these people that I had been briefing, you know, to get me a good job. I never did get good at that. But I've managed without it, so there you go.

So anyway, I was paneled to an assignment to Maritime Affairs. And I had been down there doing a handover sort of part time when I was still in INR because otherwise there was going to be this big gap and I would come in cold. So I was going down and spending an hour or two a day in Maritime Affairs. Basically at my lunchtime and my evening time to do a live handover. And one day, again I was off in an inter-agency meeting. I came back and there was a little yellow message slip on my desk. And it said, "Call So and So in T." And this is how ignorant I was. I didn't even know what T was.

I was like, “What in heck does this mean? Call this guy in T.” So I thought yeah, well whatever. So I called back and the secretary that answered said, “Office of the Undersecretary of Science Arms Control and Technology.” And I was like, oh, Undersecretary. So I said, “Oh, well this is me and I have this message from this person and I am returning the call.” So I get put through. And this was when Reginald Bartholomew was Undersecretary in T. And I was talking to his number two. And he says, “Would you mind coming upstairs tomorrow morning for a little chat?” So I set the time and I went to my boss who was also my friend and I said, “Debbie, something odd just happened.” And I was telling her all this and she was like, “They’re going to interview you. You’re -- you might be offered a position on the seventh floor.” And I said, “But I already have a job.” And said, “That’s completely irrelevant. You might be offered a job on the seventh floor.”

And I said, “Oh, OK.” And I made sure to wear nice clothing the next day.

Q: Your power suit.

SANDERSON: Exactly, you know, black pinstripes, the whole bit.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: So I went upstairs, got in to see him, was having this nice interview. And he was very, very calm, very, very sweet, very, very nice. And we were having this nice conversation. And indeed, he was essentially leading up to would you like to work in our office. And all of a sudden the door that connected his office to Reg Bartholomew’s office bangs open. And of course I didn’t know Reg Bartholomew at the time. So this kind of stocky guy with this big lush head of silver gray hair comes storming into the room, flings a report down on his deputy's desk and starts shouting at the top of his lungs, “Who in the blankety with this blankety blank blank piece of blankety blank blank shit on my blankety blank blank desk!”

And I’m like “Uhhhh OK.” And of course as I got to know Reg later, I mean this was just classic Reg Bartholomew.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: You know, always a big blowup always with lots of blankety blank blanks. You know, lots of F word everything. But that’s how he got rid of his stress and it was never personal. You know, you just sort of sit there and let it blow past you, you know, singe your eyebrows. And then when he was calm he’d talk to me. And basically after shouting and carrying on for a few minutes, you know, the guy said I’ll take care of it and Reg walked back in, started towards his door calmly, turned around, looked at me and his deputy said, “I was going to try to get her to work here,” (laughs). So Reg turned around and gave me the Reg charm offensive. Because that was the other thing that Reg Bartholomew was known for. He could charm the socks off of you. And he just came

right over and he just shook my hand and he just said he would be so pleased if I would accept to work in his office and, you know, "Don't pay any attention to me, I'm just that way, but I'm really a very nice person and I really hope that you'll decide to honor us with your presence." And then off he goes back to his office. And I'm just like wow, buddy, what do I make out of this?

Q: Yeah, diplomatic theater.

SANDERSON: Exactly. And of course I didn't know at the time, you know, Reg turns out to be one of those great figures of the Foreign Service, you know, one of those legendary types that some people detest, some people love. And I was just like OK, I -- what I understand clearly in my tiny little mind is seventh floor jobs are good. seventh floor jobs are more career enhancing than jobs in Maritime Affairs. Therefore, if they offer me a job I'm going to take it. And sure enough, they offered me the job and sure enough I said with pleasure. So then I said but, you know, I am already paneled to an assignment. And he looked at me kind of like my boss had done and he was like, "Oh, don't worry about that. You should plan to report for work here within two weeks." And I'm like, OK. "Fact is, I'll show you your office space right now." And we walked down the hall and he said, "This is going to be your office." My office, which is -- now remember, I'm still a lowly little third tour officer. Just basically tenured, I got tenured and stuff while I was in INR. And here I am, I have an office that looks out right on to the Lincoln Memorial. I have a sofa in my office.

Q: Oh, my God.

SANDERSON: I'm coming from a little windowless cubicle in INR. And I have this beautiful view. And I'm like, "My office? My office!" (laughs). So I could tell right away I'd made the right decision here (laughs).

Q: How long were you in there doing that job?

SANDERSON: As it wound up I only stayed one year. I left in '90.

Q: OK, what was your job?

SANDERSON: I was assigned to work on CoCom (Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls), which was the regime that was controlling high technology transfers. And we were trying to rewrite that regime in order to improve the control base for certain selected technologies while allowing more exchange to help American business sell technology abroad. So that was my principle responsibility, the rewrite of the CoCom regime. And then I was also backup on the super computer regime, which was being run by a very brilliant scientist, Steve Aoki. And I was backup on conventional weapons of mass destruction, which was being run by Chris Dell, who's now an Ambassador. So the whole CFE Treaty, Conventional Forces in Europe. So those were sort of my three areas, one that was mine and two that I helped with. And it was really amazing because that was the way in which I really interacted with the Department. But

once again I was above that whole structure of dog tracks and everything. I mean we would have a meeting and Reg would say I need a paper on this and I need it in three days. So I would go over to the Line, you know, the Secretary's staff that was responsible for providing seventh floor tasking for the building. So I would go up to the Line and I would take my piece of paper with me and I would say Reg wants this, this, and this and he wants it by this date. And they would send out the official tasking. But then I would trot around to Political Military Affairs, to the Economic Section, to INR, and I would talk personally to people and say, "Look, here's what Reg is thinking. Here's what our concerns are." I would host the meetings, sometimes at the Assistant Secretary level, to say OK, this is what we need and this is why and this is where we're going with it. And then I would get that paper in to Reg, we would debate among ourselves, his staff and he. And if he was satisfied he would take it in to the Secretary and by God, it would become policy. And I did that successfully for CoCom so I was able to accompany Reg to Paris.

Q: Because CoCom's headquarters is in Paris, isn't it?

SANDERSON: Yes.

Q: Was.

SANDERSON: Was, yes. So I accompanied him to Paris for the big international meeting, sat behind him, passed him his notes, passed him my thoughts during the meeting. And it was my first experience of those kind of international negotiating sections. And my first experience was with one of our most able negotiators. Watching Reg work was a real education for me on how you do this.

Q: Well, what were the dynamics of, at that level of CoCom? Because, you know, you have American commercial interests wanting to get the stuff out, the Pentagon wanting to keep the stuff in, the French and Germans are ready to sell their grandmothers if they can make a profit -- I'm being facetious here. But, but I think -

SANDERSON: Not too facetious, it's almost true.

Q: How did you find -- I mean were those sort of the dynamics?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely 100%. I mean some of my most contentious meetings were at the Department of Commerce where I still had lots of friends from when I was working essentially for them in Mexico. But now I was in their view an enemy, because you've absolutely characterized it correctly. The State Department straddled that line between hostile camps and we were charged with trying to find the acceptable way forward because we wanted to help U.S. business, but we also had serious security concerns even pre-terrorism days. I mean -

Q: The Cray Computer was a big thing, wasn't it, at the time?

SANDERSON: That was part of our super computer control regime. CoCom had split off a separate computer control regime that was being freshly negotiated and CoCom was doing computer -- standard computer technology control, semi-conductor control, telecommunication control. So Reg went to this meeting in CoCom with a very complex and difficult mandate, because internally what we'd finally agreed upon was we would try to go more robustly to a system of secondary licensing, by which we meant that we would allow the U.S. companies to sell the computer technology, for instance. Two countries whose governments were willing to sign an agreement saying that they would guarantee no resale of the technology and no access to the technology by certain countries of concern, which of course would have thereby forced them to take on the burden of enforcement that we were trying to shed because it was extremely costly and extremely controversial. That was the heart of our negotiating position at CoCom at that meeting, was to get that agreement. And essentially we came home with that agreement. It had an unanticipated burden for us though because the Political Military Department, they had a whole office that was dealing with licensing questions. And suddenly they had a lot more licenses to process a lot more quickly. But as usual, particularly in the Department, resources didn't flow to where the demand was. So you had the same staff with the same lack of money now trying to do 20 times the work in half the time, because as part of what we offered we said we're going to be a lot quicker on our stuff. So instead of taking six months to a year to license we'll have all licensing done in six weeks, you know. And of course that was one of our big fights in the building, because the Assistant Secretary for PM was like, "Are you nuts? Are you nuts? We're going to do that how?" Well, as usual, practical considerations, as you know, are frequently brushed aside in the interest of policy. So it was left to PM to struggle with how that was going to be made to work and they became the subject of a lot of criticism for the next several years, because it couldn't work. It was not workable. It was an unrealistic objective. But it was a great negotiation, watching the back and forth (laughs).

Q: Well, there are certain events that sort of -- in fields that one becomes aware of, and there was that super silent propeller with Toshiba. Was it Toshiba or

SANDERSON: Yes, and that was

Q: That Sweden had passed on to the Soviets because they were still the Soviets, although they didn't have long to go.

SANDERSON: Exactly.

Q: And when did that happen?

SANDERSON: That was a violation of the new CoCom regime that we negotiated. And the Swedes got into substantial difficulty because they were signatory to the license control measures. So yeah, that was a violation of the new CoCom regime.

Q: Well I mean, that must have had an affect on all of you.

SANDERSON: Oh God, we had a big debate at The White House that the Secretary got called to essentially demonstrating that the regime was too porous, that we needed to walk it back, that you know, we couldn't be handing this kind of technology to the enemy. I mean in an over simplistic kind of a way sometimes in T we used to say Pentagon's position was if you give the Soviet's a screwdriver they will construct a nuclear bomb. And Commerce's position was if we don't sell them the screwdrivers ourselves then somebody else will and they'll still construct a nuclear bomb. And while simplistic, it does capture the essence of the argument. How far could we safely go? I mean nowadays everything is sold everywhere, and that was exactly the slippery slope that the Pentagon and the defense analysts had predicted.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: I mean that was their analysis and they were correct, that once you put a little crack in the dam you can't stop the flood water from breaking it wide open.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: But fortunately it coincided with the death of the Soviet Union. But I mean, Reg at the time was working on in my opinion most of the things that mattered, because we had a very brilliant man that was working on all the nuclear issues, Jim Timbe. I mean everything that was sort of pre-terrorism was under Reg. And he was the right guy for it because Reg Bartholomew had been ambassador in Beirut when our barracks got blown up there. And Reg never forgot that terrorism already existed. And Reg was out there fighting terrorism before it became chic to fight terrorism. So he was a hard sell himself on this question of how much to open the dyke. And it was a lot of pressure from The White House because our economy was going through a big shock because of all the developments with petroleum producers forming their alliances, devaluating our dollar. We had unemployment because we were coming off a period of economic depression that had happened right there around the late '80s. Compared to what we have now it's not depression, let's just say a slow down, and we needed an economic stimulus. Businesses needed to be able to sell. So you know, essentially it was a White House decision in the end because agencies couldn't reach agreement. And three position papers went forward and, as usual, State Department position was the middle position and it was huge debate at the White House about this. And finally they accepted the State Department position. I mean the Secretary did a lot of heavy lifting on that one. Was Reg satisfied in his heart? Probably not. I mean Reg was one of the famous Cold War warriors. But he did his job and he went forward and he sold that treaty. And it was beautiful to behold (laughs).

Q: Well, I'm looking at the time and I guess we better stop at this point.

SANDERSON: Yeah, unfortunately.

Q: So we'll pick this up in '90 when you left -

SANDERSON: Let me tell you really quickly about the leaving part, because it was supposed to be a two-year assignment and after the first year I looked at myself and I didn't like what I saw. I had become a complete and total workaholic. Nothing compared to Reg Bartholomew. Reg was in at the office at like, 5:30 in the morning and left at midnight. But I was doing my part because I was in at, you know, seven and left at midnight.

Q: Mm-hmm.

SANDERSON: But worse than that, worse than being a workaholic, worse than having heart palpitations, which I was doing, worse than having migraine headaches, which I was getting, I was afraid that I was turning into a classic sort of Department snob, you know? The kind of person who says I have the weight of the whole entire world on my shoulders because I'm in this position and by God, kiss my butt.

Q: Yeah, absolutely.

SANDERSON: You know?

Q: We know the type. It happens. I mean, you -- I mean there is an awful lot of responsibility on very few people.

SANDERSON: Exactly. And I mean I was still young and everything. But I looked at myself and I said, "I don't like what I seem to be turning into." And so I went to Reg and I said, "Reg, you know I love working with you. I admire you tremendously, but I need to get out."

And he said, "Don't be foolish. You're applying for a job at the NSC (National Security Council) and after that the sky's the limit. You know, you're on the fast escalator to the top."

And I said, "And I appreciate that you put me there, I really do. I appreciate that tremendously. But it's not what I want. I don't want to be ambassador in five years or in 10 years, probably never." I said, "I'm not sure that's what I want in my life. But I know that right now I need to go. And I want to go overseas, so I'll take the first thing that's available, but I need to leave." And actually my old boss, Mort Abramowitz, who of course was a very good friend of Reg's, wanted me in Turkey in the worst possible way to do some political military stuff in Turkey. And I wanted to go to Turkey.

Q: Sure.

SANDERSON: But the system -- this is one of the very few times the system gave me the traditional kick in the butt -- the system had already programmed a tandem couple. And so the slot that Mort wanted me for was part of that tandem assignment.

Q: Mm-hmm.

SANDERSON: And HR (Human Resources) bucked back and said, "You can't have her. What are we going to do with this tandem? We'll then have to find a spot for two people. It's easier to find a spot for her." So that's how I wound up going to Canada.

Q: So you went to -

SANDERSON: Ottawa.

Q: Ottawa. So and this was 1990.

SANDERSON: Yes.

Q: All right. And I want to put here at the end, when we talk the next time we didn't talk about the events of December -- November, December of 1989 and how that hit you. You know, I mean just sort of the feeling I'm trying to capture of the mood and all that.

SANDERSON: OK.

Q: Great. Today is the 8th of June with Melissa Sanderson. Melissa, we left at 1990. You were off to Canada. But I had put at the end, how did the -- we hadn't really discussed the almost cataclysmic events of 1989 and leading up to it when sort of Eastern Europe came out of its change and the Soviet Union was changing. And you were doing what?

SANDERSON: Arms Control Science and Technology I was working on the CoCom Treaty.

Q: OK, now did this have much affect on you all or did you straight line project it, say oh my God, what are we doing, or what?

SANDERSON: Oh no, absolutely not. Fact is that's why we were rewriting the CoCom regime, because we recognized the need to revise some of the Cold War restrictions and to provide a means by which economic trade with the former Eastern Bloc could be liberalized. And we were at the same time taking in a close look at all of the regime governing atomic issues and missile control regime and super computer control regime. The whole package was under extensive review with the objective of being able to open ourselves to commerce with these states.

Q: Well, while you were doing this are you looking over your shoulder? Here you are going about doing something that you all have been doing for 50 years or so and all of a sudden, you know, there's a lot of noise of, well essentially the Bloc breaking up. did that -- did you hear the noise or do anything about it or did it have much affect?

SANDERSON: Oh no, absolutely. And the fact is it made the whole debate about revising these various mechanisms very divisive because there were strong and experienced elements essentially saying that we're heading into a much more chaotic

period and we need stronger controls, not looser and fewer, but stronger and more controls. And another group that was saying no, that's an old-line hawkish position, we need to support the economic development in countries in order to give them alternative industries other than military on which to rely. So you know, structurally within the administration, I mean you had elements like the Department of Commerce obviously pushing for fewer restrictions, fewer controls. The Pentagon was divided among itself with some offices saying stronger controls, others saying more open flow. State Department, same thing, heavily divided between different factions. EB, Economic Bureau, obviously going along with Commerce. And PM, Political-Military, tending to go with stronger elements in the Pentagon. So it was actually an extremely divisive period.

Q: Where did you fall?

SANDERSON: Well, you know, my background had always been in economics and finance and I tended to say that you have to give peace a chance, you know. You have to at least assume some degree of good will. And most importantly you have to use economics as a means by which to co-opt your former enemy. So if you're going to strangle them economically you're going to guarantee that they're not going to make any progress towards your position. But if you at least extend some economic carrots you can say I've done what I can do to bring these people to our side of the fence. So I came down on the side of the so-called liberals.

Q: Well, was there any particular -- you left -- when did you leave in 1990?

SANDERSON: I think it was around July, July or August.

Q: So there had been -- the Berlin Wall had fallen. Was there any particular movement in these negotiations or was everybody sort of waiting for the dust to settle?

SANDERSON: No, actually I mean, there was some surprising forward leaning reactions from the Russian Federation, particularly on the atomic side in terms of the inspection regimes.

Q: It was the Soviets in 1990.

SANDERSON: Yes. But already we were thinking of it in terms of the Russian Federation as a core body and outlying satellite states as potentially separate nations. And the discussions had always been driven by that core Russian Federation element. And so it was an interesting development that within that core element there were some fresh proposals opening the door for broadening the inspection regime, that we took -- those of us that took the liberal view -- that we took as good leading signs.

Q: Well, in a way was it -- I know you wanted to move on, but was it kind of -- did you have a hankering maybe to see how this thing is going to come out?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. And as it worked out in future assignments I wound up coming back to these issues.

Q: OK, you're off to Canada.

SANDERSON: Yes, Ottawa.

Q: And what are you doing in Ottawa?

SANDERSON: I'm going to be the domestic political reporting officer. And that principally meant following the question of separatism.

Q: I think, was it during the '70s when it was really -- how strong was the separatism thing in 1990?

SANDERSON: It actually was still extremely strong. The Canadians had had one referendum in 1988, the Meech Lake referendum. And that had resulted in the so called Meech Lake Accords in which the country as a whole decided to examine the question of separatism, sovereignty, integration, culturalism, multiculturalism, et cetera. And so as a aftershock from these Meech Lake Accords, in '89 the separatist movement had slowed considerably. But by 1990 the Parti du (Party of) Quebecois had begun to reenergize itself and to once again agitate for another national referendum on separation and sovereignty. So we were looking at Meech Lake Two and worrying about the possible consequences obviously, especially for the United States, of a fragmenting Canada, but also for the Canadians themselves. I mean after all, they're sort of a bulwark between us and a disintegrating Soviet Union. We certainly don't want a disintegrating Canada at the same time.

Q: Yeah. Well, who was the ambassador at the time?

SANDERSON: Actually, we had -- I had two different ambassadors there and at the moment I'll be darned if I can remember either of their names.

Q: Were they particularly -- was it sort of you doing your thing and they weren't great players or not or?

SANDERSON: Oh no, absolutely not. Fact is the first ambassador that I had there was only there for six months. He was already departing basically as I was coming. And then we had a political appointee ambassador, who was actually extremely active and extremely connected to the White House. And you know yourself that that's not always the case with all political appointees.

Q: Yeah. Well, did you find -- you know sometimes the Canadians -- not sometimes. Absolutely always the Canadians get annoyed. We take them for granted and we think we understand them. And they are a different breed of cat. Did you find that you had to go

through either mental gymnastics or something to understand the Canadians, I mean outside of just kind of what you thought you knew about them?

SANDERSON: Well, the nice thing for me is I never thought I knew a darn thing about Canadians because frankly I had not given Canada much thought and I think that that's very typical of most Americans. Hence, it's very justifiable for Canadians to think that they're taken for granted, because they are. They're just that big thing up there in the frozen north. For me personally the neuralgic point was in English speaking Canada - their absolute conviction that Americans are culturally imperialistic. And of course the examples used where you broadcast your television shows and your video stations across our boarder, you're trying to colonize our culture with your Americanness. And the thing that I found ironic about that was, at least when I was there, there was the vibrant Canadian television industry that was producing a lot of its own really wonderful programs with a truly Canadian nature, largely featuring Toronto, the Good, versus, in quotes "New York, the Bad," featuring Vancouver, the Beautiful versus, quote "Seattle, the Ugly." So that was already underway. And I used to have some fairly heated discussions with English-speaking Canadian friends about their oversensitivity to the American presence, because they were frequently using the analogy of Mexico. "Oh, we wish we all spoke Spanish. Then at least we would know who we were." And that was ironically one of the points of jealousy between the English-speaking Canadians and the Quebecers as well. And one of the most ferocious arguments. "They don't even speak English. They don't belong here. Let them go someplace else," because there was a large segment of the English-speaking population which was perfectly willing to let Quebec go.

Q: Mm-hmm.

SANDERSON: And it was necessary to point out to them the possible negative consequences of their attitude to try to calm down the situation in the run up to this national referendum on Canada with Quebec or Canada sans Quebec. And at the same time the Canadian Government itself was developing an interesting strategy to calm down the French-speaking Canadians. They came up with a concept that, "You want to go? Go. But guess what? You get to take your share of the national debt with you." And of course since Quebec had benefited from the structures, the dams, the power plants, et cetera, they had a big share of national debt to go out with (laughs). That when the government in Ottawa began circulating this logic that hit hard too with a lot of Quebecers who before had been thumping their chest and shouting about sovereignty. But you know the problem with Canada has not been solved. I mean what I always find ironic is the license plate from Quebec: "Je me souviens."

Q: Yes. On the Quebec one. "We remember."

SANDERSON: Mm-hmm. All the way back to the Plains of Abraham and the so-called treachery of the English, which was actually just a clever military strategy.

Q: Sure -

SANDERSON: But the French were sitting on a mountain and they thought they were invulnerable and the English climbed the mountain (laughs).

Q: Sure, yeah. Wolf went up there and knocked off -- got knocked off himself, but he got Montcalm at the same time. So but you know.

SANDERSON: Exactly. I call that clever military strategy.

Q: Yeah. Yeah, sure. I mean -

SANDERSON: But the Quebecers call it treachery and that's what they're really remembering. Not so much the military defeat, but the underlying perception of treachery. And that's a very important distinction to remember. Because that is the basis of the underlying malaise between the Quebecers and the English-speaking Canadians. Both sides believe the other engaged in treachery. And that makes it pretty hard to get along.

Q: Well, also too, I mean if we're looking at, at movies, particularly French-Canadian movies, you know, they picked up I think probably -- what I consider almost a bad habit, and that is an intellectual class of the French. You know, a bunch of academics and all sitting and sniping away and thinking that they're so much better than everyone else and all that and trying to put down other people. And it's not very pretty. And -- but it seems to be a fairly -- I mean you know, it seems to be pretty well developed. How did you find that?

SANDERSON: Oh, it was absolutely present when I was there. And Jean Chrétien is the best possible example of this attitude because he -- I mean you're also talking about a French-speaking Canadian here. I mean Jean Chrétien, he's a Quebecer. But members of the Parti du Quebecois regarded him as a traitor, as a betrayer, as a quisling. And it goes exactly to this whole point because what Jean Chrétien believed -- because I got to know him very well at the time because among my other assignments was get to know these little minority parties, particularly those folks from the Liberal Party. So I became great friends with Jean Chrétien and his whole so-called kitchen cabinet, who later all became ministers of government.

Q: He was a Liberal. He was not part of the Parti Quebecois.

SANDERSON: No, exactly. And that was one of the reasons that he was regarded by the elements of the Parti Quebecois as a traitor, as a betrayer, because instead of bringing his considerable personality and political clout to the cause of separatism and becoming a member and/or leader of the Parti Quebecois, he was advocating the United Canada, a United Canada in which Quebec's value would be better recognized, in which Quebec's contributions would be better appreciated, but nonetheless a United Canada. And many, many ordinary Quebecois people also excoriated Chrétien. It took a lot of courage for him to be the Liberal leader at that time.

Q: Well, how as an American going out -- I mean your assignment of course is to go out and meet these people -- how did you find yourself received by the various parties?

SANDERSON: Quebecers loved Americans because they were confident that we would support their separatism because they felt, "Hey, we've got the dam, that means we have the electricity. The Americans need what we've got. And the Americans traditionally support independence movements. After all, they fought for their own freedom. They can sympathize with us." They loved us. They loved us much more than many English-speaking Canadians did because they weren't so confused about us. But you know, I mean most places that I went, particularly the further north, you know, up to the Yukon and Northwest Territories, and in Vancouver and parts up north there in British Columbia, Americans were very well liked. Fact is in Alberta we had a kind of semi-separatist movement that said, you know what? Let those Quebecers go and when the country disintegrates we want to become a state of the US.

Q: Yeah, and we've got oil and come on.

SANDERSON: Exactly, take us. We want to be taken. And poor little Saskatchewan that didn't have much to offer was like, "Oh, us too! Us too! We want to be a state!"

Q: Well, I understand too that, was it New Brunswick, I mean their ties are really to Boston. I mean they're Red Socks fans and, and you know, I mean they were different breed of cat than the Quebecers.

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. I mean there really isn't today either, I don't think, and there certainly wasn't then such a thing as a monolithic Canada. Because although they talk about multiculturalism, they haven't done a good job of integrating those diverse elements. So you know you have a strong Irish, Scottish group that sits in the east there on the Rocky Coast and fishes and prides themselves on their traditional fisherman's independence. Then you have the Quebecers, who obviously are distinct and special. Then you have this group of westerners from Alberta and Saskatchewan who have that classic western independence and are kind of like we don't care what the heck y'all are doing. Do whatever you want. Then in the northwest territories, they're up there on the edge of the ice, on the edge of the world and their attention is focused mostly towards at that time the Soviet Union. And their concern is we need a strong military element. We need the Americans to protect us. We need that military shield. They have British Columbia going, "You know what? We don't need any of these people. We're looking towards Asia and we've got a big Asian population. We've got trade routes. We can be independent tomorrow because we're economically viable. So let all those idiots back east do their thing." The essence of so-called Canadianism as Americans encounter it is to be found right there in the province of Ontario, which suffers from the same complex of a place as Washington D.C. does. Ontarians tend to think that what they think in Ontario is what everyone in Canada should be thinking.

Q: Sort of an inside the beltway type -

SANDERSON: Absolutely.

Q: But also, isn't there in Canada still around Ontario area, I mean this is where a good number of the loyalists ended up after the revolution.

SANDERSON: Yeah, it's where we chased those Redcoats.

Q: Yeah. And so, you know, they have their own take on the United States.

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. That's where all these resentments and cultural misunderstandings arise is mostly right there from the problems of Ontario. They're the most conflicted, they're the most -- I hesitate to say the word jealous because jealous implies that you want to be the other, and they don't want to be Americans. But there is a kind of envy, you know. That would a better adjective.

Q: Well, you know, I've heard people say that the definition of a Canadian is they're not

SANDERSON: Not an American. Exactly.

Q: That, and if the elephant rolls over the, the mouse, Canada, gets squashed.

SANDERSON: Exactly.

Q: You must have had to develop a sort of a personal repertoire of sort of sizing up who you were talking to and present a sympathetic face to. I would think it would be a difficult country to deal with. I mean it's not that simple for a Foreign Service officer.

SANDERSON: It's not. Because you have to have that sympathy while at the same time remain steadfast in your allegiance to your own country. But you know you can say that about any country aside from just Canada. For me personally it was a particularly interesting dilemma because of my personal family background that we talked about earlier, the Irish English blend. And that Irish revolutionary strain in my blood, you know, absolutely despised the fact that the Canadians were still following the Queen. As a matter of fact, the Queen made a visit to Canada while we were there and I was hard pressed to persuade my mother to go and see the Queen, because she literally said, "My father," -- my grandfather -- "was spinning in his grave that I would even go and look at the Queen!" But I eventually convinced her because it was such a historic moment.

Q: Yeah. I have a cousin by marriage who ended up in Halifax, but he was in Vancouver and he took his new wife to a movie theater and all of a sudden they played "God Save the Queen" and everybody stood up. And he was, "What the hell is this," you know? This isn't what you do in Vancouver.

SANDERSON: Exactly. That's what I mean -- there's a multitude of Canadas. There's not a Canada.

Q: Well, OK. We have a number of issues. What were sort of the issues you had to deal with and what was our stance? I'm talking about the time you were there.

SANDERSON: Oh, the central issue was the question of separatism because at that time there was serious concern that Canada really would fragment with resulting economic and political consequences for ourselves. And so our primary policy interest was a united solid Canada and how can we get them through this second referendum and avert Quebec separatism, while at the same time not alienating any of the Quebecers. Because we did want the electricity; we do need that for our East Coast and particularly New York State needed that electricity supply. So we were trying to walk that thin line. And of course because of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and a very oddly timed decision by the Canadian Government to downsize unitarily its own military, our secondary issue with Canada at that time was providing them with a military shield.

Q: Was this when they adopted one uniform and all that?

SANDERSON: They'd already done that, but this was a period when they had significant budgetary problems. And they had to really sharply cut government spending and in a move that at that time one would never have seen in America, they turned on the military. And they closed overseas bases and they released from service all kinds of uniformed officers and they essentially said they wanted to move toward a posture of having no standing military whatsoever. And we were kind of like OK uh, you have to have some military.

Q: And it was kind of like well, we don't have to worry because you'll take care of the problem.

SANDERSON: Well that was exactly the position because here we already had the missile shield in place and they were perfectly willing to allow us to have forward basing in Yukon and the Northwest territories and in exchange essentially their position was we're going to save a ton of money because we don't have any military anymore.

Q: One forgets, but at the end of World War II I think the Canadians had the third largest navy in the world.

SANDERSON: Exactly.

Q: Next to the British and the Americans and the Japanese had been wiped out, but the Canadians had a significant navy.

SANDERSON: Exactly, and they had been hollowing that out progressively. And on a political level they were absolutely ready to completely eliminate the military and say it's time for world peace so the union isn't going to disintegrate, look at all the money we're going to save, and that's what we're going to do.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: So that was a big concern for us.

Q: I'm sure it is. Later it's turned into the same sort of our piece of the action as the peacekeeping.

SANDERSON: Yes.

Q: Which of course is now turned into a lot more than just wandering up and down a border area. It's being shot at. But at one point it seemed a fairly benign way of exerting ones' influence.

SANDERSON: And it wasn't even that. It was carving out a niche distinct from the United States. The United States is the warrior nation. We Canadians are the peacemakers and peacekeepers. That's our Canadian identity; that's what we do. We make peace, not war. And that was one of the big motivations. But also they were harkening back to the foundation of the United Nations, because you know they were like, that's one of our great contributions. We helped to do this. This was us. The United Nations is Canada. And they were like the United Nations needs its peacekeeping capacity to make itself more effective in the modern world. It's incumbent upon we Canadians to step forward. We're going to assume this burden to support this organization which we created. So there were all kinds of complex motivations going on at that time involving on one extreme hand an attitude of so let the United States take over being the world's policemen and they can start by policing our skies and our terrain and keeping us safe. And then we'll use that money to carve out our space in the world and everybody will stop saying Canadians are just second class Americans. They'll say Canadians are the peacemakers. So there's all kinds of stuff going on.

Q: Well, I would think one of the things would you, speaking of political officers, would have to be very careful about, and that is to develop plans for what if. If, you know, because all you needed was to say America's plan z for if Quebec goes and here it is spelled out and all that. I mean that would set up all sorts of rumbles. I mean obviously somebody had to be thinking about this, but you almost couldn't think out loud.

SANDERSON: Absolutely, you're absolutely right, there were contingency conversations ongoing all the time. You know, what is the effect on Ottawa which would be essentially left as a nucleus, if the United States fell in with demands from other provinces to acquire statehood. You know, there was a lot of talk about the old boundary definitions and, you know, at one point the United States was on the other side of Alberta, and Alberta was down further and we arbitrarily drew a line and why can't we redraw that line. The Alberta question was what was really interesting.

Q: Really?

SANDERSON: Yes. There was a lot of interest in that whole Alberta thing and some folks said well, we don't need Saskatchewan so, you know, Ontario could keep Saskatchewan and you know, Alberta could come our way and Ontario can keep all those little eastern places too and so we would wind up with a Canada that kind of stretched north and then came down south running along the U.S. border stopping at what is Alberta and Alberta would become one of us. And then just the other side of Alberta you would have an independent British Columbia and bang in the middle you would have the independent Quebecers. And that implied by necessity that the Yukon and Northwest Territories would become independent territories as well. That was where there was a real debate because the concern was it'd be very easy for Russia to reach across that very tiny little Bering Strait and acquire those two and have a foothold on the North American continent. So there was actually a great concern about what would happen in this worst case catastrophic scenario to the Yukon and Northwest Territories because United States wouldn't have any projection capacity to take the wrong states. We didn't want to get another Hawaii, slash, Puerto Rico situation. But on the other side, we couldn't leave them vulnerable to being acquired by Russia. So some parts were taken as a given. Oh yeah, British Columbia's going to be on its own, it's going to trade with Asia and we'll trade with them. And you know, and we'll have a Canada that's skinny and looks like this and you know, there was a worst-case scenario debate.

Q: Well, I assume that the political parties were pretty open to you, weren't they?

SANDERSON: Oh yes, I usually am the harmless female of the species.

Q: So you could just go and look wide-eyed and say what are you up to or?

SANDERSON: Essentially. I was the official embassy representative to the Parti Quebecois and fact is that's why the Department had given me French language instruction. And it was really kind of funny, at the time I was virtually the only French-speaking person in our embassy. So even if we got a phone call about a visa question or something in French it got routed to my extension so I could deal with it.

Q: Good God.

SANDERSON: Yeah, it was very, very interesting at that time. I mean obviously it's changed, but -

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: -- but back then that was really the way it was. We didn't want to give the impression by having too many French speakers that we were somehow helping the Quebecers to advance their cause.

Q: So this is a bit on purpose. I mean there was no great drive to get more French speakers in there, because that would have been felt to be more supportive of the -

SANDERSON: Absolutely, and we didn't want to send any signal that could be misconstrued. So we had one lowly little junior officer in the political section who was the French-speaking person and that same lowly little person was the interface with the Parti Quebecois, and for that matter, with the opposition members, i.e. principally the Liberals.

Q: Well, what was your reading on the Parti Quebecois?

SANDERSON: I didn't find them to be particularly effective, either in rallying a sharply divided population or in explaining the national benefits of their position, either for the United States or for themselves. Because particularly with the economics background, I mean I was inclined to pose troublesome questions, you know, such as aside from your beautiful dam, what is it that you think that you're going to subsist on? I mean yes, you have agriculture, but the United States is already very flush with agriculture. And at that time we also had significant trade impediments to agricultural products coming in. So I'm like you're going to do what to feed your population? Because as compared to Canadians you have a fairly dense population so you're going to survive doing what?

Q: Had the Church collapsed in Quebec at that point or was it still a power?

SANDERSON: The Church was still powerful at that time and part of its collapse eventually evolved around this whole separatist issue. They were already less politically effective than they had been in the past. What we were seeing was the rise of secular politics rather than church-based politics.

Q: The birth rate was going way down and the churches weren't getting attendance -

SANDERSON: Exactly.

Q: It was a very significant thing that happened in a relatively short time.

SANDERSON: Oh yeah, there was a lot of debate while I was there about the so-called crisis of faith. And actually we were having the same phenomenon in the United States around the same time. It was even more than the demographic shifts; it was a philosophical shift because both countries, regardless of linguistic elements both countries were as Catholics entering into an era of skepticism, an era in which one says the Pope is a human being after all, how infallible can he be? An era in which increasingly vocal feminists were saying my body, my rules, my decisions. Nobody else gets to tell me what to do. And all of these factors were contributing to a decline in the influence and prestige of the church, in both a political and a social sense. There's a sense, particularly in Canada, particularly among Quebecers that the church was still existing in some past time and wasn't sufficiently cognizance of real problems and real difficulties.

Q: Well, the things that are troubling our church now and also in Europe, you know, sort of the scandals of pedophilia among the priests, but also the nastiness towards unwed

mothers and all that. I mean it really was, you know, pretty barbaric. Was that at all an issue coming up or not?

SANDERSON: Just in terms of looking at Canada, absolutely. Because the so-called Right to Life campaign was very virulent and very evident there. I'm Catholic myself and, you know, you couldn't go into the Catholic Church in Ottawa that I was attending without passing all these big posters of aborted fetuses and, you know, signs screaming about, you know, the right to life and the priest should be preaching about, you know, it's murder, it's murder. And that whole campaign at that time is part of what polarized and drove away a large segment, particularly of intelligent and independent minded young women. I became a part of it at that time of that crowd that says my body, my decision (laughs).

Q: You know, for particularly for someone who's been raped....

SANDERSON: Yeah. You know, this was the classic pro-choice counterargument, you know. You have a woman who's been raped and impregnated. Why should she be forced to carry that child to term? Because someone somewhere says that the fetus' rights are more important than hers? Well, that reduces her to a brood cow. Hello? She's already a fully grown, fully formed thinking existing being versus this other thing. So it's always been a hot debate.

Q: Now, it -- when Canada was having all sorts of -- going through a real crisis of identity. You were there how longs?

SANDERSON: Three years, '90 to '93.

Q: How did things work out?

SANDERSON: The biggest shocker came right at the very end of my tenure there, because we had the national elections. And not only was Brian Mulroney's Tory Party beaten, it was eviscerated! It was crushed! It went from an absolute majority to three seats. And Jean Chrétien's Liberals had an unprecedented triumph.

Q: Well OK, you're a political officer. How were we calling this before it happened?

SANDERSON: The Embassy at the time was actually very open to the opinions of insignificant political junior officers. We had a really good political counselor, deputy political counselor, and Ambassador. And everyone was reading the same signs. So it wasn't just me in touch with the Liberals saying hey, these guys have got the ear of the public. It was our guys who were doing the work with the Tories also saying these guys are out of step. Brian Mulroney is not listening to the public. There's a disaster looming. So we had foreseen a defeat for the Tories, but we were talking about power sharing agreements, you know, that the Liberals would gain a slight edge and the Tories would hang on. No one foresaw this. This was unprecedented. And everybody woke up the morning and went, "Huh? What happened?"

Q: OK, what'd you do? You're sitting in the Embassy, it comes in. You go to your typewriter and start coming up with a new scenario nobody had thought about?

SANDERSON: Well, the most interesting thing was that everyone had taken extremely seriously that this particular junior officer was the point person for the Liberals. So when we had this sudden reversal of fortune, yours truly was the person who knew Jean Chrétien personally and all the kitchen cabinet personnel, all of whom were being named to high ministerial positions. So it wound up being me that got the honor of taking the Ambassador to introduce him to these people that he had met, but essentially didn't really know.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: So that was very funny. And in typical State Department fashion, you know, the timing of the system is much more important than any other reality. This would have been the moment to have extended me in Ottawa for six months or so.

Q: Of course.

SANDERSON: And instead I was pushed out the door and they were left to figure it out for themselves after just some brusque introductions. So they wound up with no one who knew the Liberals and even after I went to Spain, which was my next assignment, I was still getting emails for a long time from my Canadian friends basically going, "Where did you go?"

Q: Well, we went through something of this. I've talked to people, this goes way back to 1945 in England and Great Britain when everybody knew the Churchill Government and the only person who really had any real contact with the Labor Movement was their labor officer there who knew all these people and all of a sudden all their contacts were off and here's the labor officer. You can imagine how important the labor officer was in 1945 in London.

SANDERSON: Yeah, exactly.

Q: And all of a sudden he later became the Ambassador to South Korea and did very well. His name escapes me. But I mean, it is -- these things happen.

SANDERSON: Yeah. But I guess my essential point here is that it's sad that the system structurally has so little flexibility built into it. Because when the Ambassador wanted me to stay but the system was absolutely inflexible: no, she's already programmed for departure, she has to depart, she's departing, period. Regardless of the fact that Canada was where I was actually needed for another six months.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: Spain was not going to die if I didn't show up for another six months.

Q: No, no, no.

SANDERSON: But structurally, absolutely impossible.

Q: And it's really sad that the -- how did you find, I mean sort of at your level the tremendous ties, complicated ties between Canadian Government organs and American Government organs along the border and in Washington and Ottawa? You know, I mean everybody, you know, you had civil servants dealing with each other for years and then you have these Foreign Service officers who are running around pretending to deal with relations. Did you find this a problem?

SANDERSON: Not in the kind of work that I was doing, but I think that particularly our military guys who are already doing a lot of the cross border issues found it to be much more of an issue. What I did notice just as a person was that actually along the border there was frequently a lot of institutional bribery. Not just between Ontario and the United States, but even at the Alberta frontier. There was a lot of institutional bribery where the different services would give different citizens hard times. And just to prove that we're not, you know, just here as pretty faces.

Q: Around that time my wife's family came from a village up in Northern Vermont. And I remember we went to a play at the Derby line where I think we were on the Canadian side but in the little theater. You walked over the end the men's room was on the American side, you know, it was -

SANDERSON: Exactly. And there were several situations like that. And I think that that's why maybe the folks at that time at the border crossings became a little more rigid, you know, in defining whose turf is where. And to be fair, that was also the start of our concern about the sort of massive entry of illegal immigrants into the United States through Canada. And it was -

Q: Canadians had a more liberal Immigration policy.

SANDERSON: Well, actually they were trying desperately to attract a labor force because Canada had then, and to a certain extent still has now, one of the more interesting demographic problems in the world. Incredibly large country, not enough people to exploit the possibilities. And that was actually why they had a much more liberal immigration policy, they were trying to attract workers, kind of like the Australians do, to build their economic capacity. But the problem for them in that was they were being exploited because then everyone would say," Oh, I can get one of those Canadian visas and then I'll go to America! And I'll be an American!" And it just made the Canadians crazy because they're like, "No, we want you to come be Canadians." And people were like, "We want to be Americans," (laughs).

Q: Did you find that the Parti Quebecois was in a way losing ground in Quebec because of the immigration, because you know, if you're a Yugoslav going to Canada to -- I mean are you going to learn French or English? What the hell is this French stuff?

SANDERSON: Well, Quebec had already essentially set up its own immigration policy with a marked official preference for French speakers. So they didn't want French-speaking Africans of course. And that also was made public. I mean they were perfectly blunt about it, you know, French-speaking Africans not welcome. But you know, French-speaking others, i.e. whites, extremely white and we will give you preferential treatment and we will make sure that you get a job and we will help you find a house. Because they wanted to further augment their population weight in the run up to this referendum.

Q: What about -- 1993 you left?

SANDERSON: Mm-hmm.

Q: What'd you do? You went to where?

SANDERSON: Madrid.

Q: As what?

SANDERSON: Labor Counselor and telecommunications officer.

Q: Uh-huh.

SANDERSON: Which was kind of funny because I had bid on that assignment while I was in Ottawa filling a political officer slot, but still coned -- still denominated as an economic officer. So I wanted to bid on political positions in Madrid and the system wouldn't allow me to do so because I couldn't do an out of cone bid. So that's why I wound up with labor and telecommunications because, as you know, labor is one of those things that sort of straddles political and economic and telecommunications was firmly in the economic portfolio. So I bid on that and got that position. And then after I'd already been assigned, my so-called conal change came through and I was officially a political officer. So then I was a political officer doing an out of cone economic assignment (laughs).

Q: Well, by this time in the early '90s labor had sort of gone out of fashion, hadn't it?

SANDERSON: Oh, completely. It was kind of a dumping ground.

Q: And during the '50s, '60s it was big stuff. And the labor unions were selecting people. And I mean it was very important. We had people who became ambassadors with the labor background. But labor had kind of lost its clout politically then.

SANDERSON: It had, except Spain was an interesting exception because they had the largest labor union in Europe. But the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations) was still refusing to recognize this labor union because of its communist antecedents. They were still on the books as rabid communists. And one of the fun things, and one of my big achievements while I was in Madrid was convincing the AFL-CIO to enter into discussions with the Spanish Labor Union and eventually allow that Spanish Labor Union back into the World Organization of Labor Unions. So that was one of my biggest triumphs while I was there.

Every other item in my portfolio was much more frustrating. I mean we were trying to open the Spanish telecommunications section to competition and we were trying to get American companies to buy into partnerships and the Spanish were not having it. And we were trying to open up their transportation sector in the aviation industry. We were trying to break down cabotage. We were trying to get partnerships. But the Spanish weren't having any of it (laughs).

Q: Well, telecommunications in a lot of European places, you know, if you want to make a long distance call -- I remember this goes back to when I was in Italy, but say, "Oh, you want to call the United States? I know somebody in the PTT (Push to Talk) who can get you a line." You know, I mean, you know, you had to have connections in order to

SANDERSON: Get connections.

Q: -- to get connected. You know, it -- it was sort of -- well, it was very much a closed buddy-buddy system, wasn't it?

SANDERSON: Very much so. And you could tell the importance of the telecommunications ministry in Madrid because its Ministry was larger than the defense ministry and better located in a marvelous old palace with rambling halls, you know, big murals and everything. This was a very, very significant Ministry. Great for them, terrible for us. Because as I said, their answer was just no to everything. We're like you must, you must! And they're like, "No, we mustn't," (laughs).

Q: Well, also it was meant for the Spanish public too. I mean I assume you had to wait months to get a telephone.

SANDERSON: If you didn't happen to get fortunate enough to get a house where they had left a phone, absolutely. And it didn't matter if you were an embassy employee or not, you just would be phoneless. Which in hindsight, you know, has its advantages (laughs).

Q: It has its advantages. I was thinking, you know, before I went to Italy I rented a little furnished apartment while I was studying Italian and I walked down to a little office and they connected a phone within a day. Now, in Italy this would have taken all sorts of connections and six months.

SANDERSON: Oh yeah. No, but the Spanish are much more highly organized. I mean it's another Latino society and all that, but they're much more highly organized than the Italians are. And they had to be because ironically, I mean I'm leaving Canada where I was following separatist issues and I'm going to Spain where they have significant separatist issues and where they even have, unlike the Canadians, an indigenous terrorist movement. Yes, of course the Parti Quebecois at one point had its military wing and there were people killed. But by the time I was in Canada in 1990 it was totally a political movement and they weren't assassinating people. Unlike in Spain, you know, where you have Basques, Galecians and of course Cataluna (Barcelona). And these guys want to be free and they don't make any bones about it and they're willing to die for their freedom. And so that was kind of ironic and it has also forced the Spanish to be much more organized than the Greeks and Italians because any lapse in organization is a weakness that will be exploited by your separatist elements who were ready to kill you to leave. So it was an interesting time to be there. In a lot of ways. I mean it was -- the other thing that was interesting was the connection, the personal connection that developed between President Clinton and the King and Mrs. Clinton and the Queen. I mean a genuine friendship grew up. And we had a disproportionate amount of presidential and first lady visits because of that friendship.

Q: Now both the King and Clinton were Georgetown graduates weren't they?

SANDERSON: Yes, that was part of the basis of that friendship - although of course they were there at different times.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: And I had actually met President Clinton -- I forgot to mention this -- in Canada. One of the significant things that happened while I was in Canada was the very famous meeting between President Clinton and Gorbachev, which took place in Vancouver. Kind of a secret meeting brokered by the Canadians. And like a lot of embassy staff I had been sent out there to beef up the consulate staff and so I was out there for that visit. And it was my first opportunity to meet President Clinton right after his election. And boy, did I blow it big time. Not in any professional sense, but on a personal level. Because I had voted for President Clinton and I voted for him specifically on the healthcare issue, which is a logical one for me because of personal family circumstances. And so at the end of his visit, you know, they said OK, all you guys, you worked on the visit, you go out to the airport, you'll have a chance to shake the president's hand. And so I practiced my speech in my head while I'm waiting in line and I just had like three or four lines, you know, I wanted to say, "It's an honor to meet you, Mr. President. Congratulations on your victory. I voted for you for healthcare reform. Please make sure that you realize healthcare reform." I had my little four sentences, I kept repeating them in my head. He's coming down the line and I can see him coming, I can see him coming. Lord, that man got in front of me, all of my sentences flew out of my head and I turned into a gibbering idiot. And he wasn't the first president that I had ever met! I mean I had met Ronald Reagan, you know? And I had met George Bush!

Father, senior. But I have to tell you, Bill Clinton did, and probably still does have, tremendous sexual appeal. And this young woman just went all to pieces.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: And just sort of stood there with a limp hand gibbering. Di-di-di-di-di-di. How humiliating.

Q: Ohh.

SANDERSON: So moving forward to Spain, we had a political appointee ambassador in Spain as well. And again, for some reason my memory is not working today.

Q: Gardner, was it?

SANDERSON: Yes! Ambassador Gardner!

Q: Yeah, because he was my ambassador in Italy.

SANDERSON: Yes! Yes! You remember what he was like. Very absent minded professor sort of a guy. And never seemed quite sure what the DCM's name was or the political counselor's name, but took a shine to me for some Godforsaken reason. And so yours truly wound up being, you know, either the deputy control officer or the control officer for these presidential and first lady visits because the ambassador liked me. And he was like, "Oh, I know, let's get Melissa to do this." I was practically the only person in the embassy whose name he remembered (laughs). It drove my superiors, my bosses absolutely crazy. But I'm like what am I supposed to do? The ambassador says do this. Which gave me a tremendous opportunity, you know, to meet the Clintons and also at one point to meet Mr. and Mrs. Gore when he was vice president. And it was -- for a young officer it was a wonderful, terrific experience and certainly taught me everything I needed to know about organization and coordination (laughs).

Q: Well, what were the issues with Spain at the time?

SANDERSON: We were already at that point beginning discussions about a new security structure for Europe, what would later be called Expanded NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). We were also already looking at the concept of an expanded European Union to reinforce the integrity of the military structure with economic mechanisms. And there was a lot of discussion between Bill Clinton and the king on these issues, getting guidance on how this could be sold to the Western Europeans in a way that wouldn't stink too badly. We had significant and neuralgic economic issues with Spain that largely involved the inability of American companies to penetrate very lucrative markets because in a certain sense Spain was the gateway to broader Europe. And so these cabotage issues were particularly key.

Q: Could you explain what that is?

SANDERSON: Cabotage is just a phrase that means let's say that you take an international flight, you're on Delta and you fly into Madrid. Cabotage is a process which prevents Delta from flying on to take you to Seville or to take you to Pamplona and forces you instead to transfer to a Spanish flagged carrier to guarantee that those routes were being only and exclusively used for the national flight carrier. And it was a big problem with all of Europe and we had made a strategic decision in Europe that we were going to try to break cabotage in the Spanish market and therefore we would be able to break it throughout the European Union. So there was a lot of neuralgia around that whole issue and it frequently rose all the way to the level of the Heads of State. And we did eventually break the cabotage issue in Spain so it worked out. And the terrorism issue in Spain was from the Spanish side one of the big ones that they would raise with us because they wanted broader and better coordination with Americans and our help on the intelligence side in identifying and capturing terrorist elements before they could strike in Madrid. Those were about the three big things.

Q: What was the atmosphere at the embassy with Gardner? He's somewhat of a controversial figure, but extremely bright.

SANDERSON: Oh yeah, obviously I liked him, because he liked me. But yeah, it wasn't a happy time institutionally. I remember somebody telling me once that the embassy of Madrid had never had as many visit by the inspectors general as they did while Ambassador Gardner was in charge. I remember one thing he did that really kind of got a lot of people's goat. He converted the conference room into a movie theater so that he could have first run screenings of American films for the Spanish Glitterati. And that left the embassy without a conference room. That prompted one of those visits from the inspectors. There were all kinds of allegations and resentments. And I mean, you have to be fair, I used to wonder myself why the ambassador didn't make a bigger effort to remember his senior staff.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: It was quite clear that he didn't remember their names.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: And I'm like this is your political counselor. The political counselor in Madrid is not an insignificant person. The economic counselor in Madrid is not an insignificant person. How can the U.S. ambassador not even remember their names? And one thing that he did also that was extremely controversial, when the political counselor had to leave early, he didn't curtail per se, he was plucked for an ambassadorial slot of his own -- and we had a very able deputy political counselor who naturally expected to get the nod to get the ad interim political counselor. And instead the ambassador plucked the consul general and named him political counselor because he liked the guy because the consul general had written a murder mystery and so he was a literary man and the

ambassador liked him because he was a literary man. So you know, those kind of decisions and that kind of behavior was making the embassy a very unhappy place.

Q: Was Mrs. Gardner at all a factor during that time or not?

SANDERSON: Oh yeah, she was a big factor. She was another contributor to the unhappiness in the embassy. I notice some people had the habit of calling her the Queen or, you know, Madame Ambassador because in many senses she was much more demanding than the ambassador himself. She seemed to have a very set impression in her mind of what her, her privileges should be. And she was not shy in demanding those privileges.

Q: Well, how did you find the Spanish -- well, the Spaniards, particularly the political class that you were dealing with?

SANDERSON: Oh, I loved them to death. I understood them extremely well. We would go out late at night and have wine and tapas and talk about particularly terrorism, because Madrid at the time, I mean, had suffered serious bombings and -

Q: Was terrorism pretty well confined to the Basques and Catalan?

SANDERSON: At that time, yeah. The Galician Independence Movement was sort of there, but they didn't have the armed element that the Basques did and the Catalonians. But politicians from Madrid were very much fixated on that and they very much supported President Gutierrez's decision to get tougher and to really send the security services after these organizations. And you know, I was there just at the end of my tenure in '96 when that big scandal broke in Spain about torturing terrorists and some people had obviously been tortured to death and there was a whole explosion about that. And it cost Gutierrez his election. And yet, among the political class there really was very strong support for that decision because it was felt that stronger measures were needed and that the security services had to be given the tools that they needed and the authorities that they needed to put an end to these terrorist organizations. And of course it's ironic, you know, that was 1996. Here we are today in 2010 and even in the United States we're confronting that same question: how far are we willing to go in order to protect our people? You know torture in Guantanamo. Good thing? Bad thing? Should we support that? Should we be against that? The Spanish were confronting this question, you know, 14 years ago.

Q: I mean Franco was gone and the -

SANDERSON: Franco was gone and well buried, yeah. People were very happy with the king and queen, they were very, very popular and the young prince and princess, very, very popular. They would go out to nightclubs. This of course is before the marriages. They would go out to nightclubs and I was several times at a club and one or the other of them would come in and just start dancing and everybody would dance with them. And there was really a sense of, you know, our royal family kind of thing.

Q: Mm-hmm.

SANDERSON: You know, we're so glad to have you back.

Q: Yeah. Well, the -- you were there until what, '96?

SANDERSON: '96.

Q: Then what happened?

SANDERSON: Oh. Then I got brought back to Washington for Polish language training in preparation for my next assignment, which was going to be as deputy political military counselor in Warsaw. And the objective there was to integrate Poland into NATO as quickly and efficiently as possible. So I did my language training. The most interesting thing about that year of '96 to '97 is that I wound up leaving the program, because it's supposed to be a year of Polish language training. I wound up leaving in the ninth month because I was asked to go back to Madrid in order to help prepare the NATO Summit for President Clinton since he was going in Madrid at that summit to officially announce our intentions to expand NATO and bring in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. And so he was going to lay the foundation for that. And so I was asked to go back and help prepare his visit.

Q: Ah. There was quite a controversy about should we open this up or not. I mean part of it was well, if you do this you're going to annoy the Russians, annoy -- piss them off I think is probably the non-diplomatic term.

SANDERSON: Absolutely.

Q: And would they be real members? I would think Poland would be particularly crucial. But anyway, I mean were you picking up before you went -- how did you feel about this opening to the east?

SANDERSON: Remember when we were talking about when I was still on the seventh floor back here and I said that I was going to be dropped back into that same debate in a later assignment. This is the assignment to which I was referring. And my opinion had not changed in the sense that I still believed that we needed to extend the hand of friendship, we still needed to extend economic opportunities, we needed to try to bring Russia peacefully into the so-called Family of Nations, et cetera. But at the same time, it seemed to me from a security perspective that it was only sensible to extend the borders of NATO to push that forward. And several things were going to happen along with that that weren't broadly talked about but were actually extremely crucial, because in addition to expanding NATO we were going to once again rewrite the nuclear regime. We were going once again to rewrite the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, CFE, which was the area that I had experience in it. We were going to expand our terrorism cooperation with Russia. In other words, to essentially compensate for expanding our frontier

westward in their viewpoint, we were going to extend them certain compensations via these other mechanisms. So it was a whole complex bundle of things that went into the president's visit to Madrid at the NATO Summit and a lot of sidebar discussions with Russians at that summit to preview for them that it's not a unilateral move. It's not the United States because that's who it was seen as. It's not the United States pushing its European boundary right up to your border. We want to respect your security concerns as well and we're prepared to do that through changes to these other mechanisms. And it was accepted by the Russians to go forward with a dialogue with the understanding that everything would have to finish at the same time. So in other words, we couldn't conclude NATO expansion until we had concluded CFE, until we had concluded the Nuclear Treaty, et cetera. So it meant a whole ton of work for every single element of the U.S. Government that touched in any way, shape, or form on these issues. The Pentagon was scrambling, the embassy in Warsaw, Military Cooperation Office in Warsaw expanded six-fold with experts being rushed in from all over the world because, among other things, we had to revamp the physical structure of the Polish Military. We had to bring them up to world-class standards. We had to make them NATO compatible. We had to junk all of their old Soviet stuff: the tanks, the planes, the guns. Most importantly, we had to retrain officers. Lot of generals lost their jobs. The Polish President had a lot of courage, because basically he took the ax to the military structure and got rid of the top heavy Soviet Generals, promoted lots of the younger officers, brought in a new structure, and turned it over to the United States to train. And we rushed trainers in to install that new mentality. We put in a non-com structure. They had not had professional -

Q: This really was the weakest element of the Soviet Military system.

SANDERSON: Absolutely.

Q: Which they knew. I interviewed Admiral Crowe, had a chief of the Soviet General staff over who said your real strength is in your -- I mean you went to these facilities, said your strength is in the knock down.

SANDERSON: Absolutely.

Q: Having served in a military myself as an enlisted man I knew the sergeants ran the business.

SANDERSON: Absolutely. And in war after war, I mean, the sad truth is that when our officers were wiped out in the field that's what kept the thing going, the sergeants and corporals, you know.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: Being able to have the authority to give an order and have the training and experience to know what order to give so that everything didn't grind to a haul because the lieutenant or the captain got shot in the head.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: So we were doing all of this, and plus which we were also changing the entire legislative base of how he military ran in Poland, because we had to bring them fully under civilian control. That meant we had to change almost every existing law relating to the military. We had to institute new political structures within the government. We had to train those elements as to what their command and control responsibilities were, where their limits lay. We had to train the president's office. So it was really a very exciting assignment. I loved it to death. And you know, you got up every morning just filled with energy and you worked until ungodly hours of the night, because there was so much to do, so little time, and you really had a sense that you were working on a historic event.

Q: Were you working with Polish Military?

SANDERSON: Absolutely.

Q: I mean you have to have known that the Baltics for political reasons in the United States were going to come in and that's really what would get the Soviets -- or Russians -- up in arms. How did we deal with that after that?

SANDERSON: Actually, that was foreseen indeed and was already a sore point, but they were particularly upset about Poland for two reasons. And this is why it was important that the whole thing was presented as a package deal. The Russians absolutely were not going to accept basing of NATO troops within a certain buffer distance on Polish soil. And under no circumstances whatsoever were they going to allow placement of nuclear weapons in Poland. They had already made the red lines perfectly clear.

Q: Well, that would -- I would think that would be relatively easy for us to accept.

SANDERSON: Absolutely it was not easy for us to accept. Because there was a very strong cadre that absolutely wanted to place nuclear missiles in Poland.

Q: Why?

SANDERSON: To reduce our overhead costs for having to maintain heavy intercontinental ballistic missiles. Those things are tremendously expensive, they're very hard to maintain in good shape. They have tremendous replacement costs. It's much better to go with a regional nuclear strike. It also allows greater precision. You get a greater kill for the dollar, so to speak.

So there was a lot of support for nuclear basing in Poland. It was one of those issues that we had to beat down on our own side. And it was about -- it was about a year into my assignment in Warsaw, as a matter of fact, that I was requested by the CFE, Conventional Forces in Europe, delegation in Vienna to come and reinforce that delegation. Because in Vienna we were negotiating the new terms of the CFE Treaty and they needed someone

who could serve as a Polish expert and express the sensitivities within our delegation, the Poles would react to these proposals in which way. And we brought in a Russian expert as well to reinforce the delegation who could say but the Russians are going to react this way, so that we knew how to structure ourselves. And the delegation at that time was being headed by General Greg Govan, GGG. And the United States Government was immensely fortunate that that who was heading the CFE Delegation because General Govan was himself a Russian expert and had a very deep understanding of the mentality, had lots of friends, including the Russian Head of Delegation sitting across the table from us was old friend, slash, opponent. And he brought together this team. So Washington detached me from Poland and sent me to Vienna to take part in the CFE talks. And again, you know, that was up at all hours trying to figure out how we could move this issue forward. Because as I say, the Russians were on a buffer zone. We obviously didn't want a buffer zone. The Russians wanted certain kinds of limitations on equipment that would be given to Poland. We obviously didn't want those limitations. And most particularly they didn't want us, for instance, giving attack fighters to the Polish Air Force. They didn't want us giving certain kinds of land-based weapons to the Poles. They didn't want us to provide certain kinds of training to the Poles. There was a very long list of things that Russia wanted to make sure that Poland would not get out of NATO expansion, which would have essentially hollowed NATO expansion into nothing. And of course it didn't want any NATO bases. And that is actually the one that we eventually conceded. I mean there are no NATO basing sites in Poland. But we stood fast on the attack planes, we stood fast on the weaponry, we stood fast on the training, et cetera, et cetera. But it was a long back and forth and it was still unresolved when everyone had to pull up stakes and head for Istanbul where we were supposed to have the CFE Treaty signing. And we didn't have closure on Poland. We had chief closure on Czech Republic and Hungary, much less important high profile issues. And at the very last minute the Russian Delegation came in to the CFE talks trying to link the Baltics. Well, they said essentially we'll give you everything you want in Poland, but you have to guarantee us that the Balts will never be allowed into NATO. This is why I'm coming back to your point. And they threw this on the table literally at the 11th hour. I mean President Clinton was already on the plane and coming to Istanbul to sign the treaty, you know, in two days time. And we had everybody negotiating this. We had the Secretary of State at the table. I mean we had everybody negotiating this. And the Russians were just not giving ground. And it came down to President Clinton negotiating personally. And Putin got what Putin needed, because what the Russians had been hiding from us in the discussions all the way up to the presidential level was that Putin wanted the capacity to fight the War on Terrorism in Georgia without U.S. interference and squawking. And nobody had the authority to give that and Putin and the Russians knew it. And so they just kept that card back. They only showed the Baltics and then they were willing to give the Baltics in exchange for Georgia. And we got closure at like, two in the morning on the CFE Treaty. And then you can just imagine, everybody explodes. You know, you've got people running around typing the changes, you've got the linguists verifying that the changes are linguistically correct and say precisely what was agreed and last minute changes on hyphens and commas. And meanwhile, I'm downstairs, I'm anxiously waiting for the document. I'm in charge of placement. I have got the room organized, I have got the presents wrapped and organized, I have got the two pens, you know, I have got spare pens, I have got flags

on the table, and I have got everything I need except that darn document! I don't have a document! And the heads of state literally start arriving, there's still no document. And of course the U.S. Delegation has to produce the document! And you know, I get the word that Putin is heading toward the conference room and the document comes rushing in through another door. And we're trying very hard to look very calm while placing the two copies of each document at each Head of State, which involved in some cases leaning past the Head of State already sitting to place the documents. And we got everything on the table just in the nick of time as Bill Clinton came in. And he was dead on time for that one. You know how notorious he was for always being late. No, he was dead on time for that one. I thought I was going to pass out from stress (laughs). But we got it signed, we got the deal done, CFE was done, nuclear was done, now all we had to do was finish NATO. And so back to Poland, certification for the three countries by a mixed delegation of NATO states that all necessary preparations, legislative, civilian, and military were complete. And then we could move to -

Q: I mean this is a huge stack of papers. To join the club of NATO you had to do all sorts of political and economic things as well as military.

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. We had to essentially rewrite all of the legislation, the governing, the military structure of Poland in its relation to civil authorities. We had to rewrite all of the legislation governing procurement for the Polish Military and we had to rewrite everything. And that's why I say that their President showed a lot of courage. Because while his population was completely behind him, his military structure was not necessarily completely behind him, because these changes were not universally popular, particularly to middle-aged officers who were at that point very concerned about their career prospects as they watched younger officers being pulled up and over them because they had better mentalities. We were being extremely selective. I mean there was a lot of psych screening that was going on, lot of determinations being made, you know, regarding mental flexibility, regarding philosophical allegiances, et cetera. And it was very, very sensitive. And the president could have been killed at any time. So everyone admired his courage. He was a young progressive forward-thinking president. And so, you know, we bring everything to the table at Istanbul, the second big NATO Summit, everything got done at the last second like I was saying. But we did it. That historic moment came through, we expanded NATO. We already previewed the arrival of the Baltics as well into the NATO family. And the irony to this on a personal level to me is President Clinton then flew to Poland, which of course as the biggest new member, had been selected for the President to personally congratulate the Polish people, and Warsaw went crazy and I wasn't there to see it. Because of course I was still in Istanbul (laughs).

Q: Oh. Oh.

SANDERSON: But Warsaw went crazy. Thee has never been an American president who was welcomed and loved the way that Bill Clinton was welcomed and loved. The Polish people genuinely felt that they now were guaranteed their freedom. And they also felt that the United States had made up for betraying them in the past. Because the Polish people who had been alive during the Yalta Conference and really felt that Roosevelt had

betrayed Poland and had sold them to the Russians. And they felt that Bill Clinton had redeemed that moment. So it's just -- it's so incredible. It's truly a historic event, a historic moment. That's one of those things that I look back on in my career and I say wow, I played a part in that.

Q: Well then did you go back to Poland?

SANDERSON: Yeah, I went back to Poland to finish my assignment (laughs). I was there another eight months.

Q: What were you doing?

SANDERSON: Aftermath. Basically aftermath. Just making sure that the kinks were starting to work out of things.

Q: Oh. Particularly in the Polish Military were you sort of keeping an eye on these middle-aged officers?

SANDERSON: Yeah, that was a concern for quite a few years afterwards until they could work their way out in retirement. And a lot of them got postings to smaller places and so forth. They were taking out the command structure.

Q: Yeah. Well, this of course is one of the, the problems of any military. I mean the Soviets or Russians when they move their troops back had a hell of a time. There were no barracks for them to go to and they have this huge officer overhead.

SANDERSON: Yeah.

Q: And the military, I think we still have problems with their military in that the enlisted older soldiers are pretty nasty to the young recruits. I mean it's not a -- it's not a very healthy environment.

SANDERSON: No, it's not at all. And we had had a lot of that in the Polish structure -

Q: I'm sure you did.

SANDERSON: -- that we encountered when I got there in '97. But when I left in 2000 it was already a different place. And the Poles as a nation were already looking forward to their next milestone entry into the European Union to guarantee their economic viability because they felt that at that point they had obtained security. Because basically their attitude was now that we're in NATO the United States will protect us.

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: You know, if the United States has to bomb Russia; they'll save us this time, we're in NATO. But then they wanted that economic guarantee as well. And again,

they looked strongly towards the United States to make that happen, because the Europeans weren't eager. The general perception was they were going to be flooded by unemployed low-class Polish workers, you know, stealing jobs. Particularly this was the German perspective because the Germans were still struggling after having integrated East Germany -

Q: Now this is the so-called Polish plumber.

SANDERSON: Exactly, exactly. And so the Poles knew that themselves and they knew that it would only happen if the United States forced it to happen. And so they were already looking towards us to get them into the European Union as well. So the ball kind of shifted a little bit in my last eight months from the almost exclusive focus on the political military aspects into the economic arena. That shift was already going on.

Q: How did you find other delegates, like Germans, British, French delegates? I take it the French were playing the full role, or were they by this time?

SANDERSON: No, absolutely. The French were within the NATO context. They were also jockeying against the Germans for essentially the position of secure military power and the one who was going to define the European structure within NATO. Because it was from the French side that the idea came that there should be a Euro force, you know, that would be part of NATO but have a chain of command distinct from NATO. And you know, they were proposing to have their own indigenous European structure that would be under the American command. And so there was some tension with the French because I mean the whole point of NATO is it's a unified command. And it came under us because that's the way it was for us. I mean after World War II we were the ones standing. And you guys wanted to be protected and we were protecting you, but it's going to be on our terms, unified command and control American style. And the French Military had evolved itself to the point where it felt that no, we need to have a separate European identity and oh, by the way, we'll head it. And of course the Germans weren't happy with that. But here's a -- at least at that time there was still a lingering European psychosis about the whole vision of having Germans in charge. Because it worked so well last time! So no, not the Germans! You know. And of course the British, as always, are a little bit off to the side and so, you know, essentially the French were moving in to the military power vacuum with a message that has resonance for Europeans, you know, our continent, our rules, our way. You know, and the Americans can help us if they want to, but if they don't want to go along with us then they don't have to either. And so that was definitely going on at the time. And as we were coming down to the closing moments we had some difficulties with the French because of those parochial jealousies. You know, "Here comes the celebrity American president. Now he's going to fix everything." But the reality is Putin wasn't going to talk to anyone else seriously. He wasn't running after the French going, "Gosh, let me negotiate in secret with you." I'm sorry, you know. He was waiting for Bill. That's just the way it goes. He wanted to talk to the military and political leader. And that was Bill Clinton. It wasn't the French; it wasn't the Germans; it wasn't the British. It was the Americans.

Q: Well then you left in 2000.

SANDERSON: Yes.

Q: Wither?

SANDERSON: El Salvador, to fight drugs and thugs.

Q: Oh my goodness. How long were you there?

SANDERSON: Only one year. That was my shortest ever assignment.

Q: What were you doing?

SANDERSON: I had the dual title of deputy political counselor and head of the international narcotics and law enforcement division. And it was that second thing that I was principally doing. I was doing so-called drugs and thugs.

Q: What was the situation there, from your point of view?

SANDERSON: We had a considerable problem with El Salvador at that time in terms of being a transit country for drugs headed to the US. They had very porous, albeit small port and they had large and porous land borders. They had tremendous internal corruption. They had an untrained, unprofessional police force. They had a very porous banking system, very easy for money laundering. I had a lot of fun in El Salvador. I mean I was only there, as I say, for a year. But I had a lot of fun, and did some important work. We opened the anti-money laundering center where we were able to significantly cut back on money laundering and I started a program to train the El Salvadoran border police, took them up for instance to Miami and showed them how we do port security and took them to some of the borders in Texas where I could show them how we do border security on the land side. I instituted the first dog-sniffing program for airport and port security, set up the training facilities so they could train more dogs and more handlers, jumped out of airplanes with a flame thrower burning up marijuana fields. I had a blast with that job. I really did.

Q: Was the government pretty well thoroughly corrupted by drugs?

SANDERSON: No. And that was a saving grace because we were looking at the Colombian model. I mean that at that exact same time we were literally fighting to save the country of Colombia. El Salvador was not nearly as far gone but there was significant Colombian influence and penetration. And there was corruption, yes. But the Colombians were largely dominating by fear. The Colombians had the habit of just killing any Salvadorans that got in the way, politicians, military police, whoever. You had to have a lot of courage to be the head of the Salvadoran drug police unit at the time. And fortunately we did. We had very good Salvadorans on the drug police side and on the money laundering side. Men of great courage, and the inspector general of the police and

the attorney general of the country were incredibly brave as well. In that sense we had good partners to work with and we had very sharp DEA and US military units. Because of course I was coordinating with both DEA and our Military guys. And we were -- we were rocking and rolling. We were really going at it.

Q: Well one of the complaints about the DEA, particularly earlier on, was that they acted like policemen on the beat or something. I mean they were not playing the supportive role. They'd often be too active. How did you find it?

SANDERSON: I never had that experience.

Q: I assume this is probably experience in training over a period of time.

SANDERSON: Well, I found the DEA guys, not just in El Salvador but even before that in Mexico, to be very open to cooperation as long as you weren't approaching them as if you were their superior in some way. I mean what they were resisting was having to take orders from the State Department or take orders from the Military, because I mean, they had the lead presidential mandate for fighting drug trafficking. And they wanted that mandate to be recognized and honored. But if you were approaching them in the spirit of saying OK, you know, I have this six-million dollar budget and I have the capacity to provide this, this, and this, which would complement what you're doing, they were very, very open and very, very cooperative and extremely active in El Salvador. Oh, they had a good sourcing network in El Salvador.

Q: Was it basically Colombian stuff coming through El Salvador?

SANDERSON: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Were there drug cartels growing up in El Salvador?

SANDERSON: Yeah, there were five operating when I was there. I mean essentially two of them were broken up by DEA so they were down to three indigenous organizations. And one of those got wiped out in a war with Colombians. So by the time I left there were only two Salvadoran organizations left. But it was -- it was definitely an interesting time.

Q: Well, did you feel under threat yourself.

SANDERSON: No. But then there's enough of the cowgirl in me that I wouldn't necessarily (laughs). I mean I was careful. If I was going out at night I always went with someone else. I made sure to vary my route all the time. I did have a camera installed outside of my house and I would check that before pulling out in the morning. In the evening I would frequently drive by my house to be able to survey the neighborhood before pulling in, et cetera. I mean I took what I considered to be normal precautions. No. I didn't particularly feel threatened.

Q: Well then where'd you go in 2001?

SANDERSON: Actually before we get there, it's important to know that the reason I left in 2001, we had -- that was the time right at the end of 2000 into 2001, we had one of the largest earthquakes ever in Central America. It was 8.3 on the Richter scale in El Salvador. And later, the National Geographic Center told us that what had happened was that just offshore from El Salvador the whole tectonic plate where it rubbed against the North America continent had sheered off and dropped a foot, which in geological terms was absolutely unprecedented. This was what caused this massive earthquake with aftershocks in the range of six and seven that were ongoing for over six weeks. And we had massive national devastation. Aside from the direct damage caused by the earthquake we had tremendous landslides. Whole mountain slides came down on top of villages that had been built where they probably never should have been. The intercontinental highway was completely severed just outside of San Salvador by a combination of rock and mudslides. And that essentially cut Salvador off from any land communication with anything north, particularly the United States. So all assistance had to be airlifted in. The U.S. Military responded extremely quickly setting up field hospitals and rotating flights, bringing in earth moving equipment, sniffing dogs for survivors, medical teams, et cetera.

I was the deputy on the crisis relief team because I had already all the contacts in the Salvadoran Military and the police and our military, et cetera. So you know, we went into full emergency mode working day and night dispatching, digging, et cetera. It's actually why I'm still phobic about earthquakes today. But it was really an incredible team effort. And the good news story is that Salvador emerged a better and more modern country than it had been before. The San Salvador that I lived in was essentially just like a little pueblo. I mean right downtown you still had dirt streets with sewage running down the middle of them. And after the earthquake, thanks to dedicated US assistance, San Salvador became a beautiful modern city. I mean all the streets were paved -- not with gold, but with regular paving. And you know, sewage was installed, and electricity that worked. The standard of living was greatly increased. So out of that tragedy -- and it was a terrible tragedy -- the country emerged stronger and better. And it was a great success story for the United States and did so, so much to cement a good relationship with a country where our relationship had been so-so because, you know, the government had felt that we had supported the rebels and we weren't trustworthy and of course we had a difficult situation with the drugs, you know. We were of the impression they weren't doing enough to stop it and, you know, they welcomed our assistance but they didn't welcome our criticism. So the earthquake really helped us change that relationship and bring it forward in a very positive way. So I think it's important to mention that.

Q: Well, where were you when the plate dropped a foot?

SANDERSON: I was actually -- it was a Saturday and I was in a hardware store and I distinctly remember that there was a very, very odd sound, almost like an old time sonic boom that I can remember from being a little girl. And almost simultaneously there was a galvanized steel roof on this hardware store and the roof literally started to wave as if it were an ocean wave up and down rippling. And then of course the whole place started to

fall in upon itself and everybody stampeded out in the street. And trust me, I think we would have been better off in the building because the entire street was rippling like an ocean wave and cars being tossed everywhere and electric poles were coming down and roofs were falling and buildings were coming over. I honestly did think for a second of just turning around and going back to the building, taking my chances with the chainsaws falling off of the shelves. And then it was totally eerie. Everything just stopped and it was this incredible silence and no movement at all. And I grabbed my driver and jumped in the car, my car fortunately not having been tossed on its head and I said, "Drive like hell," because I was on one mountain and we had to get down through a valley and up the side of another mountain to get back to my house. And I knew everybody in town was going to try to do the exact same thing, get across to wherever their houses were before the next earthquake hit. And we did. We drove like hell and we made it through the valley and up the other side just before the next earthquake hit. And then I turned my driver loose and I sent my maid away. She had been at my house for a half day on Saturday. I said, "Go home to your families, find out what's happening." My place came through pretty well. I mean, you know, the house itself was structurally sound. I didn't have to evacuate it or anything. But of course the dining room and the kitchen were just a mass of broken glass and a real hazard to even try to get through. But my maid, and I will always love her for this, had kept her head completely, had stuffed my cats into their carriers and had them sitting out in the garden safely. And I was just like -- she was just a wonderful woman, because that what I was worried about, was my cats, that they were in the house and the house would collapse or the glass would cut them ribbons or something. And they were safe in the garden. But that's where I was. I remember it real well (laughs).

Q: Oh boy. How did the embassy -- who was the ambassador?

SANDERSON: Rose Likins.

Q: And I assume it responded well to -

SANDERSON: Yeah, actually we organized very, very quickly and we were very fortunate because the embassy itself had been built -- it was a new embassy and it had been built to anti-earthquake standards. It was built on giant roller balls. And the embassy just sort of shifted, rocked with the quake, but sustained no damage. The USAID (United States Agency for International Development) building, on the other hand, that had not yet been rebuilt had some structural damage, particularly in the elevators and the walls on the outside and wound up having to be evacuated. But the embassy swung into action pretty quickly. In our emergency action plan we had had a earthquake contingency response because of course we knew we were living in earthquake land, and team members knew what they were supposed to do and people got going. It was very impressive. Very impressive.

Q: You left El Salvador and where did you go?

SANDERSON: Russia.

Q: Before moving on to Moscow, we should talk a bit about what was done at the embassy regarding our earthquake relief and rebuilding efforts and all, because I don't think we covered that very much. Today is the 14th of December, 2011 with Mel Sanderson, Melissa Sanderson. And this is about a fourth session. First place Mel, since this is by telephone, where are you? I'm calling from Washington, from Arlington actually. Where are you?

SANDERSON: I'm actually in New Bern, North Carolina right now with my friend Sharon.

Q: Ah, very good. All right. When we left the last time, you were talking about El Salvador. You were there from when to when?

SANDERSON: I was there from -- let me think -- July of 2000 until about October of 2001.

Q: All right. You had this very bad earthquake, I mean probably the biggest one we've had in a long time anywhere, isn't it?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. The whole continental shelf where the plates grind together dropped six inches, which in geological terms is a mammoth event.

Q: All right. Well, you mentioned various things, but I wonder if you could go into some detail of what sort of things that the embassy was doing after the earthquake.

SANDERSON: Sure thing. We set up an emergency response center to coordinate internal embassy activities for the relief, as well as aid coming from the United States and particularly from Washington. So we were fortunate because at the embassy, in addition to a large USAID (United States Agency for International Development) presence, we also had a large U.S. Military presence. And that enabled us to very quickly mobilize particularly U.S. Military disaster relief resources. And we coordinated the arrival of a very large field hospital. It came in the form of a huge air filled tent, quite solid, and military doctors. And we had military staff come down in large numbers to help dig through rubble and coordinate air lifts with the Salvadoran Military. Some of the, the victims that required specialized help we air lifted to the United States to hospitals in Florida. And we had through DEA and other law enforcement agencies great cooperation and good relations with Salvadoran police and search and rescue authorities. And we had firefighting teams come down from the U.S. and we had search and rescue specialists come down from the U.S. We had the Army Corps of Engineers come down because the earthquake was so bad it had caused basically the whole side of the mountain to come down in a huge mudslide and completely destroy the intracoastal highway. So it was impossible for anybody to drive into Salvador from the U.S. side, and likewise was impossible for anyone coming from anywhere further down in Latin America to drive up to the United States because the highway was completely cut for several miles by this mountain slide. And the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers came up with big earth moving

equipment, which they flew in on the big air transport carriers and began the work of trying to clear a passageway through there so that it would be possible to restore movement. And it actually was a very terrible event in human terms. I mean whole entire villages were either flattened by the quake initially and/or were buried, in some cases in 20, 30, 40 feet of mud because it started raining and then areas that had already been destabilized in the first quake began shifting in the aftershocks, because we were having aftershocks that were around seven in magnitude. And you know, even up to a week after the initial earthquake we had new damage going on because these places had become unstable and then let go. And fortunately, a lot of the villagers in those cases had been evacuated already and had kept the death toll from mounting too severely. But large parts of San Salvador, the capital city, were flattened and it, it was certainly the biggest disaster that El Salvador had ever seen. So we had a full court press. As I said, the U.S. Military was absolutely outstanding. They had terrific police cooperation. U.S. firefighters were down there helping. And of course all the embassy staff were on 24/7 to do anything possible, whether it was going out in the field and helping, you know, with the rescue efforts directly, or whether it was staffing the emergency resource center and response teams to use our contacts to facilitate cooperation between the incoming U.S. services and the folks on the ground in Salvador. Of course not everybody speaks English. So the embassy's linguistic capabilities were very much stretched to the limit and people really rose to the occasion.

Q: Well, what were your responsibilities?

SANDERSON: Well, because at the time I was the head of the -- you know, what we call drugs and thugs, the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Office. I had excellent contacts on the Salvadoran side with police officials as well as government officials, and I was also Deputy Political Counselor, so I had the two hats and so I had a very broad range of contacts in both of those areas. And on the embassy side I had excellent working relationships with military and with DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency). And so I was, I was the coordinator for incoming Military assistance and making sure that they got put together with the right partners, both within the embassy and within the Salvadoran government. So I was that sort of multi-pronged bridge facilitating the partnerships.

Q: What happened to the embassy itself?

SANDERSON: Actually, everyone was really, really pleased. Because of course the embassy was a newish embassy at the time, it had only been opened a couple of years. And it had been built to earthquake standards. The embassy itself held up extremely well. The USAID building had a few more problems than the embassy building did. We had some structural issues in the USAID building, some foundation cracks and so forth that had to be addressed pretty quickly. So we weren't actually using the USAID building fully during the crisis. But the embassy itself had been built on rollers to that it would rock and roll as the earth moved. And at that time it was like a pretty new technology, and everybody was really pleased at the way it worked because there was very little damage in the embassy building itself.

Q: Did the embassy serve as a refugee point or something for homeless people?

SANDERSON: No, not precisely. But on the embassy grounds near the helipad we had a medical evacuation point set up so that if we had Salvadorans that needed, as I mentioned, evacuation to the United States that was streamlined through the embassy compound.

Q: Did this earthquake stop or encourage any of the -- you still were in the, sort of the aftermath of the war that had been going on there. Did that have any affect on anything that was happening?

SANDERSON: Well, it's certainly true that at that time the political structure was still fairly sharply divided and not fully cooperative on a day-to-day basis. I certainly can say that what we saw during the emergency was -- all of that was laid absolutely aside and everyone pitched in regardless of political affiliation and regardless of questions about who would get credit for what. I think that longer term, yeah, I think it may have helped. I do think it may have helped. I think that some of those sentiments that arose during the crisis days may have carried over and helped smooth the way for a deeper and longer lasting political transition to a more lasting democratic form of government. I do think that could be the case.

Q: What about the life of El Salvador? The city itself, everything must have stopped, didn't it? Or was there anything going on?

SANDERSON: It was absolutely amazing because there was actually quite a beehive of activity going on as, you know, people began dealing with their own houses and walls that have tumbled down and, you know, looking to secure personal possessions and make sure that their areas were secure. There was actually quite a, quite a beehive of activity. And grocery stores reopened as soon as they could, particularly because people needed bottled water. And we of course were flying in bottled water as part of our relief effort. And some of that, you know, was given to the stores as distribution to the population as well. So there, there actually was quite a bit of activity, obviously nothing like you would characterize normal activity, but there was quite a bit of activity. And one of the benefits to El Salvador as a country is essentially the entire capital city of San Salvador was rebuilt by the United States as a result of this earthquake. When I first went there you still had right in the capital city a lot of places that had dirt roads with, you know, sewage running right down the middle of them. And after the earthquake, San Salvador was recognizably the capital city of the country. I mean the roads were paved, we had nice shopping centers, homes had been rebuilt in a nicer way. The whole heart of the country in that sense was definitely built back better. It was one of the great tributes to American can-do power.

Q: You left -- you left there when after the -- how long after the earthquake?

SANDERSON: Oh my, let me think. The earthquake was in December of -- no, November of 2000. So almost a year later. It was almost a year later when I left.

Q: By that time had economic and political life sort of gone back I won't say to normal, but had adjusted to things?

SANDERSON: Yeah, I mean there was definitely a recognizable rhythm to things. And of course the overarching priority was still dealing with particularly rural populations that had been displaced and left homeless and so forth and there was an ongoing coordinated assistance effort. USAID really stepped up in a huge way on that and the World Food Organization and World Health Organization were also very deeply implicated to make sure that, you know, we didn't wind up with epidemic diseases and so forth. So the government was very much focused on the rebuilding effort, particularly the rural rebuilding effort and security because it was evident, you know, fairly early on that while everyone was, you know, distracted by this terrible human tragedy it was a great opportunity for the bad guys. So you know, there was also a good cooperation on the security front. But yeah, I mean things were definitely getting back to normal. And many Salvadorans actually saw their businesses grow substantially, as we saw with this disaster, because they were able to supply necessary goods. You know, anything in the building trade, cement, wood, roof tiles, plumbing, all of those things really flourished and were sort of the leading edge of what you might say would be economic recovery for the country.

Q: You'd had responsibility for the drug problem. What happened to that?

SANDERSON: You know, most of the ongoing programs were I wouldn't say put on hold, but certainly were not the number one priority at that time. It was quite clear, for instance, that we weren't going to have to worry about the land passage of drugs, because the intracoastal highway was still cut off. So there was actually increased surveillance on either side of us in Nicaragua and Guatemala because the two logical alternatives for the traffic would be either via the sea or air. And if I remember correctly, there was particularly in Guatemala a sharp increase in interdiction efforts at the airport as these guys tried to work around Salvador.

Q: Was there much in the way of sea smuggling or -

SANDERSON: Oh yeah, absolutely. That was the glory days of the so-called "Cigar Boat Smugglers." And for relatively small loads, compared to the cargo smugglers, a trend which was just starting up. So you'd have whole containers that needed to be closely inspected, because they either had a suspicious origin or a suspicious destination or an interesting cargo. Frequently you would find that they had drugs packed in with coffee. So if you had a whole container of coffee, you know, destined for Miami or whatever, that container needed special scrutiny. And we were very active in starting up the port inspection projects in Salvador, both for land ports and seaports, and introducing two cooperative programs using sophisticated scanning equipment for the ports that could really detect very quickly if a cargo should be opened or not. And we also did a really good job in up-linking the transit documents so that it made it much more clear that you were dealing with a legitimate shipper, for instance, you know, from Honduras and

because that shipper had already been verified that made it a lot less necessary to inspect the cargo en route. And therefore it made it nicer for the shipper because it caused fewer delays, made it easier for the shipping company because they had a pre-certified shipper and their cargos weren't going to be stopped. It also made it easier for the buyer, because they would get their product faster. So it was around that time that we introduced the precertification program, and that turned out to be very popular as well as highly effective.

Q: Well, then when you left would you say the drug business was back in -- had been hurt or was flourishing or what?

SANDERSON: Well, in Salvadoran terms it had been hurt, because of course we did have a lot of growing fields for marijuana and stuff because there were a lot of very isolated rural areas, and a lot of those were hard hit by the earthquake because they tended to be near the foot of mountains and a lot of those mountains came down. So there actually was decreased indigenous production in Salvador as a consequence of the earthquake. And there was a substantial decrease in transiting as well, because again the normal means were no longer available and so alternative supply routes were set up. So yeah, it was no thanks to me, but there was definitely a decrease in narcotics activity.

Q: What was the estimate of how many people were killed?

SANDERSON: Oh Lord, I don't even remember anymore, but it was tens of thousands, it was huge. Huge. And some just would never be known because whole villages were wiped away. So there was literally nobody to tell you if so and so had been home and the children and so forth, because I mean there was just nobody left. And so then you had people from neighboring villages who would say well, maybe there were, you know, 600 people that lived in that village. But you didn't know if that meant 600 people had been killed there or some people were off on travel, maybe somebody was in the hospital. But it was, it was huge.

Q: Well, where did you go after you left there?

SANDERSON: I actually went to Moscow as the Deputy Minister Counselor for Science, Technology and Arms Control.

Q: You were there from when to when?

SANDERSON: From 2001 to 2003.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

SANDERSON: David Johnson, he's career diplomat.

Q: Where were you located? You know, there's been this back and forth about an embassy there for a long time. How did things stand at the time?

SANDERSON: Oh yeah, we were in the so-called "new embassy" in the compound. It was an interesting structure because the first several floors of that building could only be used by unclassified groups. So you know, we had USAID in there. We had a couple of other agencies in there that only dealt with unclassified matters. And then the remaining floors above were all secure areas. So you had coded badges and elevator codes and so forth. And you didn't have any Russian nationals working on the secure floors. So for instance, the Political Section Russian FSNs (Foreign Service National) were all on the lower levels, the unclassified Econ FSNs, et cetera. Everybody was down on those levels. And then it was Americans only in the skiff areas.

Q: This of course is the aftermath of the extensive placements by the KGB (Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security)) of listening devices in the building of the new embassy.

SANDERSON: Oh absolutely. I mean there was debate, if I recall at one point, about whether to just tear down the structure and start over again. And then the decision was made that no, you know, that was extremely costly and there was a way to work around it by making it unclassified only and then having absolutely no one but the Army Corps of Engineers work on the remaining part of the building. And that was how we were able to ensure that that would be a secure zone.

Q: What was your section like. I mean how big was it?

SANDERSON: Well, let me think now. Debbie was in charge. That was my girlfriend, Debbie Linde. She was the Minister Counselor. Then there was me, then there was Penny Sachez who was attached to our staff from DOD (Department of Defense). Then we had Ellen Germain and two other people. So we had six officers and we had a couple of rotational experts in from Washington. So it was -- the staff was eight total, but six on permanent assignment and two rotational.

Q: What were your major concerns, you yourself?

SANDERSON: Me, I was dealing with two parts of our efforts over there. And the first was our program for providing alternative economic employment to Russian scientists who previously had been doing weapons of mass destruction research. And secondly, the environmental programs. I also did some site inspection visits because the office also was part of that effort of making sure that all treaty matters were being fully complied with. But I did a lot with environmental stuff, taking a look at whether the pipelines that were being built were going to cut off the reindeer migration paths, for instance. And I got to visit Chukotka at the extreme tip of Russia right across from Alaska to take a look at conflicts between fishing fleets. Because ordinarily that might have been strictly in Econ, but it was also an issue for us because sometimes Russian fishing fleets have more than one mission at a time. And while I was up there I also got to meet with Russian scientists to talk about the health of the Russian Tundra and I met with aboriginal leaders and talked about reindeer herds and livelihoods and traditional lifestyles and I met with the

governor and talked about the provincial economy and why governors should have more power and the Kremlin should have less. Does that sound like a famous debate? (laughs)

Q: Well, you know, I kind of wonder, I mean this is interesting, but I mean was this just to get information or were we trying to get the Russians to do more and these various things?

SANDERSON: It was largely trying to get the Russians to do more because you know, when you have large polluted areas of Russia inevitably you have problems in the atmosphere, you have problems in the water, you have problems in soil that transfers to other countries through agricultural products or through prevailing winds or through fish. So we were actually trying to get the Russians to pay more attention to environmental issues in order to improve global welfare.

Q: Well, how are the Russians responding to -

SANDERSON: (laughs) Oh, you know them. They don't like anybody implying that anything is less than perfect -

Q: Yes.

SANDERSON: -- in their great mother country. So it was actually an interesting time to be in Russia because we had just finished one of our little tit for tat exercises where they threw out some of our diplomats and we threw out some of theirs. And as a matter fact that was how I got my position. It opened up very unexpectedly because my predecessor was PNGed (Persona Non Grata) from Russia. So it was a really interesting time to be there. I mean of course I was followed everywhere by the KGB. And they made no bones about it. They were very obvious. It's part of their psychological tactics. And part of your briefing before you go to Embassy Moscow is you're briefed that this kind of thing is going to happen and you're told if you don't think that you can deal with being under constant surveillance we'll give you another assignment, you just shouldn't go there. And a lot of people did leave the embassy each year, because once they got there they found that they really couldn't take that. But it didn't bother me. I would just -- I would be like oh yeah, there they are (laughs). They're not going to find anything interesting from me, I'm going to buy some souvenirs (laughs).

Q: Well, I've talked to people who've been in that and they say actually it wasn't bad because they knew if they had a blow-out of a tire or something like that they could -- usually help would be on its way.

SANDERSON: Well, sometimes. That actually is a false perception because that's only true sometimes. I actually was on the Metro in Moscow one time and just by coincidence a colleague got on the same car on the train, a colleague from the embassy. And this was an African American colleague and there were some skinhead types in that car. And they started hassling our guy. And you could tell who his two shadowers were, but they didn't do a thing to step in and help him out. Fortunately, when we got off -- he was getting off

at the next station -- there was a cop right there on the platform, so the skinheads didn't follow him off. But yeah, most of the time they wouldn't help you because even though they were supposed to be obvious they weren't supposed to interact with you. They were just supposed to be there to try to, you know, make you nervous.

Q: How would you say relations were between the United States and Russia at the time?

SANDERSON: Kind of tense. We were going through one of those periods where Putin was trying to put his hand on a lot of things and very much a Russian patriot, very much determined that, you know, the great Mother Russia will rise from the ashes. And therefore, making a lot of difficulties in relations across the spectrum. We were trying to deal with Russia-Iran, Russia-Pakistan, Russia-Kyoto Accords, which of course is a very timely topic today, Russian trade barriers, corruption in Russia that was affecting U.S. businesses. And basically, you know, Russia didn't want to hear about any of those things. It was kind of like they wanted to go their own way. But I'll tell you something very important about Russia. 9/11 happened very shortly after I got there. The fact is I was actually in Tver because when I first was transferred to Russia I did a direct transfer from El Salvador to Russia, and the Department decided that that would be fine because I already spoke Polish and so they felt if they put me a intensive Russian class in a domestic environment that I could, you know, pick up the Russian based on my Polish language. So when I first got to Russia I was sent to the town of Tver, which at one point in Russia's history had actually been the capital of Russia. It's not very far from Moscow, maybe it was -- I think it was like an hour and fifteen minute drive. And I was staying with a family there in their apartment and going to language classes at the institute during the day and then coming home to speak Russian with my family at night. And that's where I was on 9/11. I was in Tver. And I had just walked in the door of our family apartment and the mother of the family, Nadia, she met me at the door and she, she just started hugging me. And she was like, you know, "Oh my God, oh my God."

I said, "What happened?"

And she replied, "Come and see."

And it was on the TV in their living room and it was the first plane strike. And while I was watching that the actual, the second plane strike happened. And I just remember sitting on the couch with tears streaming down my face and her sitting beside me holding me and rocking me. And her husband Vitali came home and sat down with me and their daughter came in and Nadia went and fixed food and drink and we all sat in front of the TV and basically cried together and just couldn't believe it. And the real point that I wanted to make in this story is that Russia was the first country in the world to try to send help to the United States. They had their planes full of food and firefighters and rescue workers in the air less than an hour and a half after the attack, and they were already on the way when Washington made its decision that we just weren't going to let anybody, no matter who, not the British, not anybody, that we didn't want -- that we weren't in a position to accept help at that particular time. But it's important for everybody to know that Russia was the first. And Russians piled the embassy walls with flowers and prayers

and they stood outside the embassy with their candles lit, singing and crying and praying for America. And that's something that most Americans don't know.

Q: Yes, that's very moving. It is an aspect that sort of has been neglected.

SANDERSON: Well, of course Russia has suffered its own terrible terrorist attack, some of which took place when I was in Moscow. Among the ones that stick in my mind was the bombing of one theater and the hostage taking at another theater and the bombing of a school. All of those things took place while I was there because of the Chechnyan conflict. And so Russians understand what it is to suffer the death of innocent people in terrorist attacks. And that's why they just reached out so instantly and so wholeheartedly, because they really could understand, maybe more than a lot of other nations in the world, what it was that we were going through that terrible day. And I always tell everybody that because, you know, political relations ebb and flow, but that was absolutely a great day in Russian-American relations when they reacted the way that they did when they, they came out for us and stood by us. And it had a long-term impact as well. It really improved our dialogue on issues like anti-terrorism. It really got the Russians looking at believing in what we had told them about interconnectivity. And the Russians turned out to be very helpful to us in identifying al-Qaeda, because there were connections that they knew about into Chechnya. So that was, it was really something. And of course for me on the personal level, I mean I couldn't get a phone call out, you know, to my family because all the phone lines were just jammed. And I did finally get a phone call through to the embassy to ask what should I do, do you want me to stand pat, do you want me to come to the embassy, what do you want me to do? And of course, you know, literally nobody knew. So you I was told just stand pat. And so, you know, I froze in place and stayed with my family in Tver.

Q: Well, as you traveled about off to the provinces what was -- you know, Moscow's Moscow, I mean it's a major center. But the provinces in Russia, there's a tremendous divide, isn't there?

SANDERSON: Oh, Russia is absolutely two countries. And those two countries are the urban zones of Moscow and St. Petersburg, versus the rest of the country. The former is the modern, beautiful Russia, the Russia that Putin and others want us to see. And then there's the real Russia, the rural reality. I mean, you take my family in Tver, it's a great example. Vitali was an ex-military officer; he'd been in the Air Force. And so they had by Russian standards a large apartment on an upper floor in a building, and probably at one point it was really, really luxurious. But when I was there the electricity was off more often than it was on, and often there was no hot water as a result, and that meant no heat either. The cities, including Moscow, are heated by hot water pumped through these massive pipes above the ground. And by the way, every year throughout the country thousands of Russians die because they get intoxicated and they fall against these pipes and they're scalded to death. I mean that's how hot they are. But in Tver a lot of times the pumps were broken, so the hot water could not be circulated. I remember sleeping under, you know, six blankets that my family basically piled on top of me. And believe me, once you went to bed you didn't get up. You were just like, "Hey bladder, you have to hold

it!" because you're not getting out, it's too cold! Because there was no hot water, every morning Nadia had to get up and boil water on a little brazier in the kitchen because the electricity only works certain hours. And so she had to get up and boil water on a little brazier in the kitchen in this apartment that was on the twelfth floor of a fourteen-story building. So think of all the little coal braziers in that building. So when Vitali got up, he got the first bath, he would have hot water. And then I got second bath and so I would have some hot water. And then after she would cook the breakfast she would heat more water so she could have her bath. And I saw even, you know, even more primitive than that in some places up in the Urals. It was really remarkable. People were living in places that had plywood on the roofs and the windows because they hadn't received any building materials in, you know, 40 years. So the buildings were falling down. The roads were abysmal. There's definitely the first world Russia of Moscow and St. Petersburg, and then there's the third world Russia where most Russians live. And the further away you get from the capital the worse off you are. You get to Yekaterinburg, which is a big city, and you're -- it's like being in -- well, it's like being in San Salvador before the earthquake. You've got places where the sewage pipes are broken and you've got sewage running down roads. It's remarkable. It's the Russia that the authorities don't want anybody to see.

Q: Were you getting from your conversations or anything a feeling that there was I mean a sense of loss because of all the Stans and all, which had belonged to the Soviet Empire and now they were gone? Or was there a feeling of almost relief that we're rid of these people? Give me a feel for the situation.

SANDERSON: You know, it's an interesting question because Russians are, even in little villages, intensely political creatures. And also intensely patriotic, which is something that they have in common with Americans. And again, it's something that we don't necessarily think of. Most of my Russian friends, you know, I had friends that I went to their dachas on the weekend, the country places when the weather was good. This is a Russian phenomenon. Everybody flees the city for the countryside. Russians themselves joke that all Russians are peasants at heart. They're not really comfortable living in the cities. And once the snow gets low enough to make it possible to get to the countryside people start going every weekend to their country place. And their country place could be a two-room shack, but the point is it's out in the countryside and they're breathing the clean air and they grow their own vegetables and they fish in the streams and they walk for hours through the woods collecting mushrooms and stuff. And that's where you have your most interesting conversations with people is in these little villages and in the dachas. And in those conversations the Russians I've met, the ordinary Russians, were kind of like, you know, "We never wanted all of that anyway. That's not what Russia is. Russia's our mother and Russia is our place, and we are so proud to have been born here in Russia. But we don't understand why our leaders wanted to run out and grab all these other places. They're not Russia and we don't need them! They're not Russia!" And so it's good that they are their own free people again, because they are who they are and we are Russians. So there was a very sharp division between the, the -- what the political class would say, you know, about oh well, political evolution and, you know, radical liberalism and stuff, and what between average Russians who would say "That never did

make any sense anyway. Those people aren't us. Those Uzbeks, they're not Russians. These Kazaks, they're not Russians. So why should they have to be inside of our country? They should go live in their own country, we are Russians." So it was always a very interesting topic of conversation.

Q: Yes. Did you get into conversations about the political structure of -- concern about -- well, this is during the period of Yeltsin, isn't it?

SANDERSON: No, actually it's just at the end of Yeltsin and then Putin came in in his first presidency right toward the end of my tour there.

Q: How were they viewing him?

SANDERSON: Putin was very, very much admired. He was regarded as a brilliant, young, forceful leader dedicated to restoring Mother Russia to the prestige and respect that she deserved. Very much viewed as a religious man, at least at that time, his principle advisor was actually an orthodox priest. They had grown up together and that particular orthodox priest could change Putin's mind overnight. If he really said no to something Putin would change course. So he was regarded as a man who listens to the voice of God, a real patriot, a man who would fight for Mother Russia, a Russian who was proud to be Russian. There was of course some tension from the fact that he's a St. Petersburger, and of course there's that long standing traditional rivalry between Moscow and St. Petersburg. But by and large, at that time everyone was very pro-Putin.

Q: All of you at the embassy, you personally, but wither? Was there an effort on the part of the Americans at the embassy not to sort of boast about American or, you know, as a matter of triumphalism or anything? I mean was this of concern to us?

SANDERSON: Oh yeah, absolutely. You know, it was never considered to be in the best interest of the United States or in the best interest of world peace for that matter to gloat over the downfall of Russia or to make Russia feel small or poor. As a matter of fact, there was a concerted effort to do otherwise, to, show Russia that it still mattered, to treat it respectfully, to try to engage with Russia as a partner and try to draw them into a whole host of global issues so that we could get past the old Cold War animosities without making Russia feel that it was being imposed upon. Because certainly the Russians had made it clear already that they weren't going to be imposed upon by anybody. They had those sensitivities and they were wearing them on their sleeves effectively speaking. And our policy was to do everything that we could to not make Russia feel small or poor or anything else.

Q: In your conversations and all did China come up as a factor?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. The Russians are very aware every minute of every day that they have a very complicated neighborhood. They worry about the Chinese, they worry about Poland, they worried about Iran, they worried about their incredibly large Muslim population and feeling that they didn't really have a good handle on that. They

worried about NATO (North American Treaty Organization) Forces stationed in Poland. They worried about being overrun by China. Russians are a very historically minded people, and they will tell you that, you know, Russia has at moments in its history been overcome by some of its neighbors, but Russia has always remained Russia. And they're very, very proud of that. That sooner or later Russia always emerges stronger than before and Russia always remains Russia. But yeah, they for sure are constantly looking over each shoulder and overhead waiting for the next enemy to encroach.

Q: Well, why would Poland be much of a factor?

SANDERSON: Well, you know, at that time NATO expansion was still relatively new and it was an ongoing process. And you know, during the first round of NATO expansion, which included Poland, Czech Republic, and Hungary, NATO decided to base some aircrafts and so forth in Poland. And at that time when I was in Russia, Poland was also gaining entry to the European Union. And so increasingly Russians were seeing historical Western European enemies sitting right on the doorstep inside the Polish borders. And it was making them very wary of Poland emerging as an Eastern European power. And of course there was a point in Russian history, you know, when the Polish empire was stronger than the Russians and Poland overran Russia, and the Poles subjugated Russia for something like 25, 35 years. So again, Russians are highly historical creatures. And what they're seeing -- what they were seeing at that time at least is that with the help of Western Europe Poland was being put into a position where once again it could potentially threaten to dominate Russia. So they were keeping a close eye on all of those linkages.

Q: Was there any concern about a new Germany being a threat?

SANDERSON: No, the Russians weren't particularly worried about Germany. They watched with great interest the dynamics inside of the EU (European Union). And at least some of my friends seemed to find it kind of amusing that everybody within the EU was so hyper about Germany and intent on keeping Germany down.

Q: What about the Near East and all? I mean all the problems there.

SANDERSON: Well, of course that was a time when Russia was still very heavily engaged with Pakistan and also with Iran. And it was one of the sort of neuralgic points in Russian-U.S. relations that despite, despite Russias assistance to us at 9/11 we felt that Russia was also maintaining ties to state-sponsored terrorism. And particularly in the area of weapons of mass destruction we were deeply concerned that Russia was helping Iran to develop its nuclear program. And Pakistan as well, but of course particularly Iran. So that was definitely an issue in our relationship.

Q: Well, did you find that the people you talked to were siding with sort of the Palestinian side, although many of the Israelis now are of Russian origin?

SANDERSON: Yeah. I mean there's quite a few Russian Jews in Israel. And probably in large part because of that, Russian people didn't talk a lot about the Israel-Palestine thing. They didn't seem to see the analogy, either on one side or the other, of a people sort of fighting to be free that would have possibly raised some sentiments within Russian hearts. Because they view themselves as a people fighting to be free. Folks that I talked to in terms of Middle East, their interests were Afghanistan of course, because Russians still rankle at that whole Afghanistan debacle. Iran, Iraq, because the Russians were watching very closely the sort of rubbing against each other of Iran and Iraq. Russians were successfully playing with Syria to try to drive that Iran-Iraq problem in a direction they wanted it to go. So I mean their principle zones of engagement were those areas much more so than directly the Israeli-Palestine thing.

Q: Well, turning to your, your job focus, what were we doing to keep Soviet scientists from mucking around with the Near East in chemical and nuclear weapons?

SANDERSON: The U.S. had a really interesting program where we would actually provide funding for alternative research. So let's as a concrete example say that some scientists who used to be at weapons centers would then be working at the University of Moscow and maybe doing research on genetic mutations to make food supplies more sustainable in a drought instead of working on genetic mutations that would be related to biological weapons. Or conversely, you know, for scientists that might have been working on chemical weapons, we would be working cooperatively with U.S. and Russian companies in providing funding to give those scientists jobs working to improve, for example, the nature of gasoline in order to make it more fuel efficient in cars and reduce emissions. A lot of research that goes on in Russia under this kind of program winds up in the private sector around the world, improving life for people. And of course it's not well advertised, but it's actually a very successful program.

Q: Well, were we seeing a significant siphoning off of some of the talent toward Iran or Pakistan or elsewhere?

SANDERSON: Several Russian scientists had already made a decision to go in that direction before the official end of the Cold War, so certainly we were aware that there was a body of scientific expertise in those sort of countries that essentially had fled the Soviet Union before the collapse of the union. And of course, being that our relationships are what they are with those countries in question we didn't have very good means to access those scientists.

Q: Well, what about on the environmental side? Were we able to do anything -- I don't have my maps with me, but is it the Caspian Sea. What was happening there?

SANDERSON: You know, the Russian Caspian Sea Fleet from the old Soviet Union days had essentially just been sailed into harbor and abandoned. So what we had was a lot of former military ships that were not only leaking fuel into the Caspian, but also in some cases from the submarine fleet radioactive materials. And so we had a very extensive effort underway to decommission properly the naval fleet of the Caspian Sea

and then also a massive clean-up effort, a multinational clean-up effort to try to deal with the elements that had already deposited. And we cooperated with the Russian Fisheries Ministry to set limits in those areas and put in place monitors right on the fishing vessels by which the catch could be monitored for radiation. On shore we were doing something very similar. We had radiation monitors in a lot of the markets. Even in Moscow we had things where they were right at the entrance to the market and as the trucks loaded with produce would come in they would drive through these scanners. And if, you know, anything redlined that truck would be pulled aside and its load examined case-by-case to detect where the contamination was and those supplies would be destroyed. We had, for instance, in the city of Moscow a really successful environmental intervention. One of Russia's largest nuclear facilities is right in the heart of Moscow and it's an older facility and there were quite a few concerns that it was beginning to leak into the ground water of the city. Contamination had been detected in about a 20-mile radius around, and of course these are all apartment buildings. They were talking about tens of thousands of city inhabitants. And we were able to do a very good remediation project to clean up that water and to seal the leakage. So all of those sorts of efforts fell under the environmental rubric. And we had a very active program with Russia, a very cooperative program in that regard.

Q: You know, back in the days of the Cold War we had an exchange program with the Soviet Union in which we sent people to the Soviet Union who specialized in Slavic literature and church art and that sort of thing, and the Soviets were sending their people to our science labs, which made us very nervous. Had there been a -- was there an exchange program going on and was it changing at all?

SANDERSON: We did have an exchange program, it ran in two forms. We had an exchange program for scientists; for instance, Russian scientists might go to a Monsanto laboratory to study what we're doing with plastics to make them more environmentally friendly. And at the same time, an American scientist would be invited to a Russian company or to a Russian university. So we had exchanges of that sort between the private sector and also between university sectors. We were trying on a very, very limited scale some scientific cooperation government-to-government, again working largely on environmental issues. That one was in its infancy when I was there, so I don't know how it's gone. But yeah, we were still having those kinds of exchanges, and of course cultural exchanges. We were doing a lot of cultural exchanges, bringing, you know, Russian ballet groups to the U.S., bringing American musical groups to Russia, et cetera, for the cultural bridge building. It's a very active program.

Q: The Soviets, I'm using the term at the time, had these sort of science cities out way beyond the Urals and all, doing all sorts of stuff. And they were off limits to a lot of citizens in the country and all. I mean were these opening up, and did you get out to these places?

SANDERSON: Yes, the vast majority of them were opening up at least a little bit to outsiders. The Urals are a very funny part of Russia, because they're the borderlands. They're literally standing between the heart of Mother Russia and these outlying

countries whose populations aren't even considered by most Russians to be Russian. So between that and a not very attractive climate we don't have a lot of Russians who naturally would want to gravitate toward the Urals anyway. But importantly, the Russian government had stopped the travel restrictions, so if ordinary Russians wanted to go and look for a job in one of the planned cities in the Urals, they could do so. And foreigners increasingly were able to go there. I mean obviously those were highly programmed. You know, you had to apply months in advance, the dates were set, when you arrived you were met by the officials, they still took your passport away from you so you couldn't go wandering around wherever you wanted, you had to stay with your guide. But yes, you could actually go there. And we were doing inspection visits there. Also in Siberia, same thing; we were able to go to these places. So it was, it was a big step forward. It really was. Because until just a few years before that there was no possibility for any of us to go there, and certainly not for any, you know, Russians to voluntarily go there. If you happened to have studied a necessary skill you might find yourself plunked down there, but yeah, that had pretty much changed.

Q: Well, I would think it would be a tremendous leakage of these cities, these sort of science cities stuck in the middle of nowhere. People want to get back to the cool spots of St. Petersburg and Moscow.

SANDERSON: Not -- actually, you'd be surprised because by and large the housing in the science cities is superior to that which the average person would find in St. Petersburg or Moscow. And by average person I'm including scientists. So they provided better housing, they made sure that, you know, the schools were among the very best. Because of course they were educating the children of the scientists. And you got frequent trips to St. Petersburg or Moscow. So you know, you weren't just stuck out in the hinterlands. You had these deluxe accommodations and high quality schools and frequent trips to the big city where you could shop and spend your money, because of course the salaries were substantially higher. I mean the new Russian policy was to incentivize scientists to stay in these areas because they'd already made such a capital investment building the planned cities. So it was actually kind of interesting. You didn't see people sort of fleeing en mass. Of course the other reality is there's not a lot of alternative demand for scientists because the Russians have concentrated too heavily on building a huge scientific class, you know, that were dedicated to certain kinds of research. It's very hard in any economy, even in the United States economy, to find alternative viable employment for people in this very high category. So it was also a disincentive to leave, because it was like hey, if I leave I really won't be doing anything, so I better stay where at least I can still do some research.

Q: What fields outside of -- what fields did you find that Russian science was particularly adept at?

SANDERSON: They're extremely good at both biological and chemical elements. They've done a lot more in many ways with genetics than Western countries have. And part of that goes back of course to history and wanting to understand the origins of where Russians come from and so forth. But they've done a lot more with genetics, they've

done a lot more with biomedical research, and with combining those two things. The Russian Institute of Longevity is a really interesting place to visit because they're working on cracking the aging code. They want to find a way to stop us from aging. Very interesting research going on there. Same kind of thing with chemical research. Very interested, you know, in changing the way in which chemicals are or are not absorbed, which of course is also related to nutrition. So we used to fund a lot of research for these kinds of chemists working on bio-nutrition issues. But yeah, they have particularly strong skills in those two areas.

Q: Well, I understand -- it may be changing -- but that the Russians have a medical problem in that their death rate is particularly worse than Western Europe, and that their population is not replacing itself. Would you seem concerned there?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. It's the hidden tragedy of Russia. When I was there the average male lifespan was 52 years. And the average female, 55. And essentially the leading causes of death were all alcohol related: depression, shot in the head, frozen to death, drunk driving, liver failure, brain failure -- that's what got Yeltsin, all those years of drinking vodka. As the Russians themselves said, "He pickled his brain." And a lot of that goes to the nature of life in Russia. It's a pretty grim life. Short and grim. You know, most Russians are going to work in jobs that they are not going to like, they are going to live in small, antiquated apartments where the services don't function, where they don't have electricity all the time, where they don't have water all the time, where they don't have heat all the time. Forget about air conditioning. They're going to travel on mass transit with people coughing and hacking all over them. Most Russians don't see doctors regularly, they see herbalists because doctors are extremely expensive and usually not all that good. Everyone dreams of a holiday on the Caspian Sea. About 40% of Russians will actually manage to have their holiday on the Caspian Sea. And there's not a sense that things are likely to get better anytime soon. So there's not a lot of hope either. And then they watch things like, you know, the rise of the criminal class and the brutality of the criminal class and innocent people getting shot and so forth, and it's no better than the place under Stalin. So there's a lot of fatalism, there's a lot of despair, the climate sucks most of the time, the winters are long and dark and brutal. On average, a couple hundred people every year get killed in Moscow just by falling icicles because, you know, heating issues mean that icicles can grow extremely long and then the train passes underneath, the building vibrates, and one of these things falls on you like a sword and it cuts you in half.

Q: Eh!

SANDERSON: Oh yeah. Yeah. It's a real issue when you're taking the Metro like I used to do. You always walk toward the outer edge of the sidewalk. It's better to be splashed by the cars with dirty snow than it is to be impaled by a falling icicle (laughs). So yeah, that's definitely an issue. For whatever reason, fertility is declining among Russian women. There is very high use of birth control. Lots of Russian women simply feel that they don't want to bring children into their world. Women are also marrying substantially older. So yeah, it's definitely an issue. And because Russians are extremely proud of their

Russian character, immigrants are not usually welcome. So it's not as if you're going to refresh your blood through immigration. It's definitely a political, economic issue that the Russian government's starting to pay a lot of attention to, because it threatens to be a real downfall for Russia as a proud, independent place.

Q: I would think that many of the factors that you mentioned are, you know, able to be repaired, I mean better apartments, more electricity, more amenities, that sort of thing. I mean it's not as though this is really a third world. I mean here are people who have sophisticated use of machinery and invention and all. You'd think that they could get a handle on this.

SANDERSON: No, it goes to the stratification of Russian society, very much a have and have-not, very much a small, highly wealthy, highly corrupt, highly centralized oligarchy, and very much a large disenfranchised mass. Statistically speaking, there's plenty of beautiful modern apartments and palatial private homes in both Moscow and St. Petersburg. Basically, they all belong to government officials and/or the heads of quasi-government companies, like the oil company and so forth, or mafia bosses. There are beautiful private schools for their children. There are trips abroad and foreign education for their children. There's second and third homes all over Spain and Italy and Greece where Russians vacation. And I remember in Spain, even when I served there, they used to talk about the Russian invasion. All these Russians would come stampeding over to plop down on the beach and buy up all the best real estate. That's part of Russian realty too. But it's not the realty of the average Russian. And the problem is that because the oligarchs are doing so very, very well, they don't feel any need to worry about the rest of the unwashed masses. It's a real issue. Because you can walk through almost any Moscow neighborhood and see a brand new apartment building and see pictures on TV of how these folks live and they're stepping out of their limousines with the women wearing fur coats and diamonds and rubies and, you know, the men smoothing their lapels with their pinky rings flashing. Because that's not what most Russians get.

Q: Was it a feeling there that you were dealing with a, I won't say a lawless society, but one that could be determined by who knew whom or that sort of thing?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. Even average ordinary Muscovites, for instance, would recognize certain license plates because the powerful in the government and/or their very rich friends all had license plates with special codes on them. And you knew better than to touch that car or if you were a cop you knew better than to try and stop that car. And you know, there were, for instance, horrible crashes all the time in Moscow because these guys would jump into their big fancy limousines and they didn't want to deal with the traffic jams. So they would just pull out headfirst into oncoming traffic and expect every car to just weave out of their way because hey, we're special, we've got a plate, we've got this, we've got that. And sometimes they would crash into each other because, you know, neither side would give way, but lots of times, they'd crash into buses or innocent people because they'd just decide to get out and charge along and the police weren't going to stop them. It's worth your job, your family's future to mess with these guys. So yeah, there was definitely a sense of a sort of lawlessness, a sense that these people don't

have to follow the same rules that I do. But in a sense it was also accepted. Like oh yeah, right, it's the big cheeses, they don't have to follow the rules that I have to follow.

Q: Well, I'm not sure if this is easy to say or you could say it, but what was sort of the attitude among our officers at the embassy towards wither Russia? I mean where is it going?

SANDERSON: You know, there was a lot of discussion about that. Because of the increasing prominence of the mafia, because of the increasing power of the oligarchs and the clear cut tendency of Putin to support both of those structures as at least in his mind a way of revitalizing Russia. And there actually was a lot of talk about that. Was there a risk that Russia would become the lawless Wild East of Europe? You know, what could we do to help stabilize Russia, to encourage our Western European partners to bring Russia closer? You know, what's the long term plan? Can we get Russia into the EU? You know, why not? Can we someday get Russia into NATO, you know? There was a lot of talk about how can we help Russia stabilize itself? Because a lot of the phenomenon that we've been discussing here were also viewed as the byproducts of the breakup of the Soviet Union, because with that absolute control removed relatively suddenly it left the whole society sort of going well, where do we go now? What do we do? What kind of country are we supposed to be? What will we become? And there was a lot of debate about the risks of Russia becoming a rogue state, because a lot of the factors that make rogue states were and are present in Russia. And so there was definitely a lot of conversation of how can we best help Russia to stabilize itself. How can we draw Russia into the international community? How can we make Russia part of organizations that will help it grow in the right, productive way? Yeah, there was definitely a lot of that conversation.

Q: Did you have this type of conversation or was there much cooperation with say, our British-French-Canadian-German colleagues? Or others?

SANDERSON: I didn't have those conversations, no. I didn't actually know a lot of the other diplomats. I knew a lot of Russians and of course I knew our folks.

Q: Was there concern about the departure of many a young Russian girl who was sort of entrapped into this trafficking of women and all that? Was that considered a problem much or not?

SANDERSON: At that time it certainly wasn't. I mean as a matter of fact my language school was in the exact same building as one of those so-called matchmaking institutes.

Q: Ah.

SANDERSON: And the thing that was a lot more worrisome from an official U.S. government perspective at the time was trafficking of girls from the Urals into Russia as prostitutes. I mean it was really scandalous. You would even see like a semi-truck pulled up on the side of a highway and you might think to yourself, "Oh, that truck's broken

down." It wasn't broken down. Inside of it there would be rows of cots with young girls from various Stans and the Urals who were there to service guys who would stop their cars and jump into the truck for, you know, a quick break.

Q: Oh my God.

SANDERSON: Yeah. And that was of much greater policy concern to us than the so-called matchmaking agencies. Because at least those were mostly young women who went voluntarily, who paid a fee, who registered. And yes, they were selling themselves, but by and large, you know, it wasn't that this agency went out and grabbed all the girls, that started a little bit later. I had already left Russia when these agencies started going to parents saying, "Sell us your daughter." When I was there it was still very much a case of these young, well-educated women who could clearly see that they weren't going to go anywhere in Russia. You know, it was hard enough for men to get high profile jobs. It was much rarer for a woman. So if you were an educated young woman you didn't have that much to look forward to in Russia and it was worth your while to scrape together the registration fee and get your professional photographs taken and get into one of these matchmaking things. I actually ran into quite a few American men who were in that building specifically to check out potential future wives.

Q: Well, you mentioned the people you were working with in your particular department. And as I recall, some of them were women. How were American women officials treated in Russia at that time?

SANDERSON: Yeah, absolutely no problem whatsoever. Russians, particularly the government and the kind of Russians that we were interacting with, the educated upper class government, scientists, et cetera, had absolutely no issues whatsoever with women in authority, and took it for granted almost that of course there would be American women in these kinds of positions, because hey, it's America.

Q: You know, back in around '94 or so I spent about three weeks in Kyrgyzstan. And talking to the woman officers there, saying that, you know, social relations with the Kyrgys or the Russians who were Kyrgys was not much fun because it consisted of going to a restaurant with a bottle of vodka and sitting there. I mean did you find -- could you have a more relaxed, enjoyable relationship there?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. I think the difference absolutely was living in Moscow. One of the really great urban centers of the world. I mean I remember my first Christmas in Moscow. I went to the Bolshoi Theater and saw "The Nutcracker." And it was snowing lightly. It was just one of those moments that sticks in your mind as being like a dream come true kind of thing. Like wow, is this me actually sitting in the Bolshoi Ballet watching them do "The Nutcracker"? Like oh my God (laughs). And there were so many art galleries and so many small theater groups. I used to go with Russian friends to -- I'm trying to think what would be an analogy in English. It would be like political satire theater.

Q: Ah yes.

SANDERSON: And, you know, we would go there and take in one of these plays and then go to dinner afterwards and sure, yeah, we would have some vodka too, but we would talk about the play and were they on target, were they off target, were they exaggerated, were they real, you know. Oh, my God, and outdoor art markets. You know, we would go and go just strolling, admiring the beautiful art and then stop for lunch and, you know, then go to the movies afterward. And walking for miles in beautiful old Moscow and just admiring the architecture and then, again, stopping for coffee and sitting and talking. Oh, life in Moscow in many respects, aside from the crappy weather, life in Moscow was great.

Q: Where did you go when you left there?

SANDERSON: I went to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kinshasa.

Q: You left in, this would be 2002 or so?

SANDERSON: 2003. I left Russia in 2003, direct transfer to Kinshasa.

Q: OK. With your winter underwear, I guess.

SANDERSON: Yeah (laughs). Yeah, well you may have noticed this pattern where I go from hot to cold all the time.

Q: When did you go?

SANDERSON: Let's see. I left Moscow in -- let's see, it must have been either April or May of 2003.

Q: OK, by the way, for the transcriber, this is with Mel Sanderson and today is the 20th of December, 2011. So what was your job in Kinshasa?

SANDERSON: I did just want to tell you about Ambassador David Johnson in Moscow before we start with Congo.

Q: Ah-ha. How did you find him?

SANDERSON: Oh, he was awesome. In my opinion he was the perfect man in the perfect place at the perfect time. He had a real understanding of the Russian mentality, and his personal openness and his warm nature were absolutely perfect, both for bringing together all the diverse elements of the embassy and for making headway with the Russians. He was really liked and he had great access.

Q: What was his background?

SANDERSON: He's a professional Foreign Service officer. He had done a couple of tours in Western Europe, and if I remember correctly, also the Far East.

Q: All right. Well then, you're off to the Congo. What was it called by this time? It kept changing names.

SANDERSON: Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Q: OK. And who was the ambassador there?

SANDERSON: When I first arrived it was Aubrey Hooks, but he left about three months after I got there. He had come out and reopened the embassy, because of course we had closed it down during the war. And so Aubrey was sent out along with Jim Swan, who was his DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), and of course who's now ambassador also in Africa. So at the time I arrived it was still a skeleton staff and a no dependents post, because we were still just trying to ramp everything back up.

Q: What was the situation in the Congo in 2003?

SANDERSON: The Congo had been at war since 1998 when a Congolese named Laurent Kabila invaded from Tanzania. Laurent Kabila had been in exile for, oh gosh, almost 20 years for fighting Mobutu. He was Katangan by birth and had been staging his rebel movement for a few years in the mountains in Katanga and actually there was a very famous visit by Che Guevara sent officially by Cuba to help try to train Laurent Kabila's revolutionary force. But apparently, Che found them too (chuckles), too undisciplined to be able to help and left about six or eight months after his arrival. And around that time Mobutu mobilized the military and chased Laurent Kabila and his followers into Tanzania. So in 1998, with the support of Rwanda, Laurent Kabila invaded Congo through Katanga Province. And successfully with an army mostly composed of child soldiers crossed the Congo on foot and captured Kinshasa driving Mobutu out. Then Laurent Kabila was installed as president in 1999, but he was assassinated in 2001. And the country then went back to war -- at first it resembled a Civil War because there were Congolese fighting Congolese. There was a force called the MLC (Movement for the Liberation of the Congo) led by a guy named Jean-Pierre Bemba, which was a proxy army for Ugandan interests. And there was an army called RCD (Rally for Congolese Democracy) loosely led by a guy named Azarias Ruberwa which was a proxy army for the Rwandans. And then Joseph Kabila, who was installed as president following his father's assassination, had the so-called official regular army at his disposal, and roughly speaking the country broke into three parts with the MLC controlling the northern section, and Orientale provinces and the RCD controlling the east (the two Kivu provinces and Maniema). The president controlled the rest of the country (Katanga Province, West and East Kasai, Bandundu, Bas-Congo, and Kinshasa). And this is the war that is frequently called Africa's World War because there were about five million casualties and a total of nine African nations involved before the end.

It was very terrible. And eventually the international community stepped in in 2002 and forced the warring parties to come to peace talks in Sun City in South Africa. Several African nations, including Angola, South Africa, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe were involved. And of course the United States, France, Belgium, Great Britain, and the United Nations. These were the principle players who brought the Congolese elements together, and essentially the international community imposed a transitional government on the Congolese in which power sharing was designed to keep everybody happy over the short term until we could get the country to elections. And so that government was finally negotiated and officially installed in May of 2003. So the situation in Congo when I was arrived was Kinshasa essentially was occupied by three armed camps. One part of the city was Jean-Pierre Bemba's stronghold with about 10,000 troops, even though the United Nations had told everybody they couldn't have more than 5,000. Jean-Pierre had ten. One part of the city was occupied by Azarias Ruberwa and the RCD with 5,000 troops. And the president controlled the high ground with about another 10,000 troops sitting around. And even though a government structure had been laid out and accepted by the Congolese, when I first got there, there was no such thing as a Council of Ministers meeting or a Defense Council meeting or anything else, because all of the guys were convinced that if they actually gathered in one place they'd be killed by their enemy. So we had a kind of détente and embassies reopening and everyone trying to convince the Congolese to keep the peace.

Q: What was your job?

SANDERSON: I was the Political Counselor. So my job in a nutshell was to try to make as many friends as possible among all the various factions and help keep the peace until they could get to the elections. The elections were originally scheduled for 2004. The power sharing government was only supposed to be in place for a year. And of course, as you know, eventually we did manage to have the elections in 2006.

Q: Well, did the various military forces there -- I mean was there a real desire for compromise and reaching an agreement?

SANDERSON: Absolutely not, no (laughs). Absolutely not. Everyone was only interested in number one, staying alive, and number two, gaining as much personal power as possible and as much personal wealth, and number three, undercutting and making look bad as frequently as possible their multitude of enemies. So there constantly were things happening in the opaque way that is just so Congolese. There would be massacres in Orientale Province and mutual finger-pointing between the governing parties as to who was responsible. Massacres out in the East, same scenario. There were accusations of oh, corruption and everything else running around. So we spent a lot of time fighting fires. And particularly when it came to things like the massacres keeping people from leaving the government entirely and breaking the structure. And that almost happened twice. We almost lost the MLC on the first one and we almost lost the RCD on the second one. And there were a lot of late night negotiations and a lot of conciliation. Bill Swing was in charge of the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission from 2003 to 2006 and he did a Herculean job in keeping his Congolese friendships that he had developed when he was

U.S. ambassador to the Congo. He was really a key figure. And of course Aubrey Hooks, as I mentioned, left three months into my tour and he was replaced by Roger Meece as Ambassador. And Roger also had good friendships because when he came as ambassador it was actually his third time in the Congo. He had come initially as Political Counselor, he was back later as chargé when we closed the embassy. And he and Bill Swing worked so hard, along with everybody else of course, to keep the peace and get the elections organized and get the country back on a more democratic footing.

Q: Well the Congo for years had been almost a domain of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency). At this point was the CIA a factor in trying to put things together?

SANDERSON: No, not at all. It was a State Department initiative. You know, anyone will tell you the Congo's always full of conspiracies. But in the transitional government period the Agency wasn't playing a big role. It was definitely State Department. It was Roger and Bill and me essentially. Because I had the great good fortunate to arrive at that time when everyone was so deeply suspicious of each other. And in an African contact I'm a nice, harmless woman, but I'm a nice, harmless woman who represents a great power. So as I went around town introducing myself to everyone, it began to dawn on people that hey, she's not just talking to me and my guys, she's talking to those guys over there. And so I can ask her to tell them what I want them to know. So pretty soon I was being an intermediary between the different factions and, you know, my house sort of became known as neutral ground because I would have dinner parties inviting leaders of the different factions promising everybody that you can come to my house, you won't be poisoned and you won't be killed (laughs). So they would come talk to each other (giggles).

Q: Well, did you -- I mean obviously this worked. But was this outside of the -- I won't say the traditional tribal -- first place, was this conflict basically tribal?

SANDERSON: No, not at all. It wasn't tribal at all in a classical sense. What prompted the second war was the assassination of Laurent Kabila. And of course to this day it's far from clear who arranged to have the trigger pulled. The actual shooter is well known, President Laurent Kabila was killed by a member of his personal bodyguard. But the question was who put him up to it. And there was all kinds of speculation at the time in 2001. The United States was accused, among others, because Madeline Albright, who was Secretary of State at the time, made no bones about not liking Laurent Kabila. She called him a thug. So there were accusations that the U.S. had had him killed, Rwanda, because Laurent Kabila had just recently thrown out his Rwandan allies to run Congo by himself. And so Rwanda was suspected, Uganda was suspected. President Laurent Kabila, who is now president, Joseph Kabila, was suspected. The Angolans were suspected. But that was the proximate trigger for the fighting. And of course within the president's family, they suspected certain individuals in Eastern Congo who were known to be allies with the Rwandans. So it started with the assassination of the president and then it became a power grab by these other strong men figures who all wanted to wind up President of the Republic.

Q: Well, did you feel you had anything you could hold out to these people, except to play the honest broker or what did you -- what could you work with?

SANDERSON: Well, me personally, I certainly was able to do the honest broker, because I was brutally honest. If I thought that any of the elements were on a good course I told them so, and if I thought they were on a bad course I told them so. But you know, it also was a question of none of these guys knew how to govern. So one of the big things that we had to offer was instructing them on how you govern in a democratic system, how you legitimately can enhance your position vis a vis those of others. How you can work to gain the trust of the population so that when we do have an election you get elected. Those were all very important factors. And obviously each faction wanted to court the favor of different elements of the international community. So I mean over time the Congolese themselves would start to say oh, you know, the United States and France, they like President Kabila. Oh, the Belgians, they like Jean-Pierre Bemba. Oh, the British, they like Azarias Ruberwa. And you know, it's kind of a self-fulfilling prophecy because the international group had set up an organization called the International Committee to Accompany the Transition, which went by its French acronym, CIAT. And CIAT was chaired by Bill Swing because we wanted an independent voice. And so the United Nations was chair of the CIAT. But all the key players were involved and some that weren't quite so key at the time, because membership was the United States, Britain, France, Belgium, Norway, China, Japan, Angola, South Africa, and -- let me see, there's one African country that I'm forgetting -- oh, Zimbabwe. And the CIAT would meet regularly in the United Nations headquarters to discuss how to help the Congolese government move forward. So for instance, if the Defense Committee was running into a blockage over the issue of pay to the soldiers, what the pay rate should be set at and so forth, CIAT would meet and discuss comparable situations in Africa and present a proposal to the Defense Council on what CIAT thought would be reasonable. And same thing for, you know, if there was an issue between the president and the vice presidents. CIAT would meet to develop our policy position and explain to all sides why it was not in their interest to be behaving so aggressively and why they needed to go to elections. That was a frequent mantra, why you need to go to the elections.

Q: Well, was there any mechanism within this international organization to come to a single point of view?

SANDERSON: Oh yeah, the majority always prevailed. There sometimes were quite length debates, but in the end the majority always prevailed. And that was the case when it came to organizing elections as well because the CIAT played an extremely key role in organizing the elections in 2006. You know, the various leading embassies provided advisors to help establish the first independent Congolese electoral body and provided advisors on how to write a constitution, because that was an important step that had to be finished before we could go to elections. The country had no democratically voted constitution. They were still using one that Mobutu had developed back in the late '70s. So the first thing we had to do was help them write a constitution and then have a plebiscite so that the population could vote yay or nay on the proposed constitution. And that of course by itself was a very lengthy process because there was no common point of

view among the Congolese on any key element in the constitution. How long the term should be for the president, how long the term should be for the legislature, how many times could you be reelected, how old did you have to be to be a member of the parliament or to be president, how young, et cetera. No common points of view on any of this whatsoever. What should be the structure of government? Should there be a strong president and a vice president, which is what we had in the transition? Or should we have a parliamentary style with a prime minister and a relatively weak president? My goodness, that debate dragged on for two years. We had the a constitutional vote, the plebiscite on December 18th, 2005. And that finally set the stage for getting to the elections.

Q: Well, how important was the fact that the Congo is sitting on some very valuable mineral wells?

SANDERSON: At the time that was a fairly insignificant factor because we really were very tightly focused on keeping them from going back to war, because tempers were so short and militaries were still very well supplied and provocations were so abundant that there was no sense whatsoever of a capacity at that time for attracting or promoting foreign investment in the country. There were lots of elements, like the Carter Center for instance, that didn't even consider the transitional government to be a legitimate governing body and therefore not capable of entering into contractual agreements. And that was a whole debate that took place in the economic arena about whether or not the transitional government could have that authority or not. So no, from that period there wasn't a lot of reflection about that. Now, on an unofficial level of course that was a very different matter. Everyone was interested, by which I mean the military, the MLC, the RCD, and President Kabila. All those elements needed the money from illegal mineral exploitation in the Eastern Congo, principally the two Kivu provinces and Orientale Province, where there's a lot of gold and various sorts of minerals like the infamous coltan. And these militaries were interested in grabbing hold of lucrative locations and using the local populations as slave labor in the mines. And then the product would be sold in the neighboring countries of Rwanda and Uganda. At one point there was a statistic showing that Uganda was gaining more export revenue from the sale of gold than would have been possible if it had sold every ounce of its own gold reserves. So in other words, demonstratively smuggled gold. And also in Eastern Congo, we had, and still have, the remnants of the Rwandan genocidaires who go by the initials FDLR (Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (Democratic Forces of the Liberation of Rwanda)). Those guys had already established themselves around several lucrative mining areas. And they set the pattern for the Congolese to follow in how you illegally profit from Congo's rich natural resources. So on an official level, in terms of oh, government conduct or CIAT or anything else, the answer's no, the natural resources didn't matter that much. But unofficially, they were actually a absolutely vital source of funding for these warlords to support their armies.

Q: Well, when you're dealing with warlords, each is so threatened by peace, I mean that I would just think that they would have no particular call to come to an agreement.

SANDERSON: I neglected to mention something very important. The United Nations Peacekeeping Mission at that time had 27,000 troops on the ground. Largest United Nations Peacekeeping mission ever mounted. And in addition, the French had just finished a military intervention, a pacification mission in Oriental Province where they sent some crack French troops in to make the peace and essentially separate the combatants and kill anybody who continued to fight back. So in that period, in that transitional period, the Congolese had concrete evidence that the international community was willing and able to intervene militarily, to make the peace and then keep it. So they had a big incentive to go along with this transitional government thing.

Q: Was there any residue of the Cubans in that area at this time?

SANDERSON: No. They had shifted their interest down to Angola long ago. So I guess maybe you could say indirectly from the sense that the Angolans were a Cuban proxy state for a long time and a lot of their political advice to the Congolese would have reflected that Cuban influence. But no, there was no direct influence any longer from them.

Q: I assume we had American military, either attachés or the equivalent involved with your team. What were they saying about the situation?

SANDERSON: Actually, during the transition, the military office and embassy in Kinshasa was very small. We had a lieutenant-colonel and he had a grand total of three people on his staff.

Q: Good God.

SANDERSON: Yeah. So there wasn't a big military presence on the U.S. side or large military engagement. And fact is, to this day there's very little military engagement. We're doing some small training efforts, and that's about it.

Q: Outside of playing the neutral hostess, did you have any other piece of the action?

SANDERSON: You know Stu, there's some people who would tell you that I'm the new Larry Devlin of Congo (laughs).

Q: Ah yes. Of course Larry Devlin was the CIA's tsar in the Congo back in the early days.

SANDERSON: Right, and there's a lot of people, both Congolese and foreign who would tell you that I'm the Larry Devlin of my generation (laughs). Yeah, I mean, you know as I say, I had the advantage of being a woman. So I was not threatening to anyone. I was clearly intelligent, I clearly represented what in Congolese terms is still a major power, the U.S., and that uniquely positioned me to be able to suggest courses of action that were consistent with U.S. policy objectives. And frequently those suggestions were taken on board by the Congolese of all the different sides, because people underestimate the

Congolese all the time; they think they're stupid. They're not stupid. They're sometimes hard to understand, but they're not stupid. And they could recognize these suggestions for the important messages that they were. So lots of the work was done on this informal basis and Ambassador Meese would entertain, I would entertain, we would take people out to lunches and dinners and plant these policy suggestions in these informal ways. Because particularly at this time in Congo, marching into somebody's office and making an official demarche wasn't going to get anything done. But if you could make friends, that was the most important thing. Number one, make friends, and through those friendships you would gain trust and respect. And once you had the trust and the respect, then you could begin to make suggestions and people would actually listen. They wouldn't always do what we hoped they would do, of course, but they would listen and frequently take those suggestions into account.

Q: Well, did you find that I'd say being a woman, but that's only one factor, of being an American, that's another factor, and on, that within sort of this working group of essentially Europeans and all, were they supportive or were there some people or parts of it that, you know, felt you were out of line or worried about your status and all?

SANDERSON: You know, that's a really interesting question and the answer varies issue by issue. Because it fairly quickly became known that I had made friends with some very complicated and hard to reach people that were simply not open to contact with a lot of foreigners, and that includes President Joseph Kabila. He had very pronounced preferences and he would only talk to ambassadors and/or others whom he liked. And it doesn't matter, you could be the Belgian ambassador, if he didn't like you he wouldn't see you. And all the Congolese were like that. So again, it varied country by country. I found that the French ambassador had a lot of respect for what I was able to do, and he and Roger would coordinate on approaches, and a lot of them were approaches through me because I was the person who had those contacts, and nobody else did. The British ambassador at the time I remember, I don't know if he was jealous or not, he was not personally very popular and therefore didn't have great access. And I remember him one time at a British embassy function making the comment to me that well, some of your friends are just evil, vicious, villains and I would never condescend to speak to them. I answered him back. I said, "Well, then it's a darn good thing that I condescend, isn't it? So we can get our messages through." The Belgian ambassador was -- the first ambassador that they had there was not particularly good, and he was replaced in 2004 with a very sharp guy, very well connected. And he and I understood each other very well. We didn't always see eye-to-eye, but we understood each other very well. His overall impression, I think, was that I was maybe too close to the Congolese and therefore not trustworthy. Because I used to -- I served as chargé several times. I was actually chargé between the departure of Ambassador Hooks and the arrival of Ambassador Meece, and I was the one who took Ambassador Meece around and introduced him to everyone, including President Kabila. And the Belgian ambassador I think thought somehow or other I'd gotten too close to the Congolese. So when I would sit in on the CIAT meetings he usually objected to my point of view. But other than that, I didn't find a lot of problems, and none of the problems were based on me being a woman. They were based on oh, we don't like it that she's made friends with these

terrible villains or oh, we don't like her because we think she's gotten too cozy with the Congolese. But gender was never the issue.

Q: How about Washington? I assume obviously you were reporting in, but were you getting -- all of you, I'm talking about our embassy and all -- but giving you your head or were they trying to micromanage this?

SANDERSON: Oh no, not at all. We had a really good team back in, in Washington. Don Yamamoto, who's the current PDAS (Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary) was DAS at that time, before he went out to Ethiopia as Ambassador. And Don was really important and thought that Roger and I were doing God's work. And when Don launched the tripartheid initiative, which was a U.S. brokered mechanism to bring together Rwanda, Uganda, and the Congo to try to work on cross border issues and deeper peace building initiatives, Don was very appreciative of our ability to get the Congolese to the table, and not just any Congolese, but the right ones. Because in the transitional government you had a formal power structure and then you had where the power really lay. And if you didn't understand that and if you didn't know the power brokers you couldn't get anything done. And Don really appreciated that we had made those connections to the people who had the power and were able to bring issues straight to President Kabila or straight to Jean-Pierre Bemba or straight to Azarias Ruberwa and that we ourselves could go and talk to these guys, because we needed that, that cohesiveness to bring that initiative and many others together and make it function. So no, Washington was very aware of and supportive of what was going on. I was told one time by INR that everybody waited breathlessly for my next installment in my cable history of the Congo (laughs).

Q: Well, what then -- there's a book called <u>The Congo Cables</u>. This goes back to the 1960's, but did the missionaries play any role at all? Because they had been all over the place at one time.

SANDERSON: No, not really. It was actually one of the grievances of civil society about the power sharing agreements, because civil society was officially included sort of as a fifth element and actually one of the vice presidents was supposed to be a civil society representative. But coming back to official and unofficial structures, they had official positions but they didn't have any power. And the missionaries were concentrating just on work on the ground trying to help all the war wounded and the child soldiers and there was a lot of good cooperation between faith based organizations and UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), for instance, as well as USAID on setting up locations where child soldiers could be demobilized and receive some psychological evaluation and treatment and then, you know, attempt a reunification between the child soldier and his or her village and ultimately, if possible, his or her family. Didn't always work out of course because the military leaders usually forced the children to do some sort of atrocious act, you know, rape their sister or shoot their father or, you know, burn the village down or something so that the child would have the sense that there's no going back and I might as well continue on this path. So sometimes reconciliation wasn't possible, but the faith-based groups, and particularly in Congo, we have very large

activities by the Mormons and also by the Methodists. For the Catholic church the Jesuits had the deepest penetration. But it would be Methodists next, particularly in Eastern Congo, and then Mormons, particularly in Western Congo. And no pun intended, these guys were really doing the Lord's work, helping out with some of the most difficult issues like child soldiers. But politically, no, they had no role to play.

Q: You know, all the accounts I've had over the years of interviewing people who served in the Congo, slash, Zaire talk about the deterioration of the infrastructure. Was there anything left of the Congo to tie it together anymore or?

SANDERSON: Absolutely not. There had been a natural process of deterioration because Congolese don't seem as a society to understand well the concept of routine maintenance. And that may go back to the colonial period. I'm sure the Belgians didn't encourage them to understand how things operated and therefore no maintenance required, but apart from that of course the war destroyed everything because as in any war each side targeted the infrastructure. So bridges were blown up, or in the case of wooden bridges chopped apart. There never had been a national television or radio network. So the local ones were destroyed. There never had been a real national electrical service, but the transmission lines that had connected the Inga Dam in western Congo, in Bas-Congo Province with the mining zone in the east in Katanga Province had been severed. So infrastructure was and still is a huge issue for the Congo, because when you talk about investments and making better use of Congo's natural resource wealth, the single biggest impediment is the absence of infrastructure.

Q: How was an agreement put together and what did it consist of?

SANDERSON: You mean for the transitional government?

Q: Yeah.

SANDERSON: Well, it was put together by everybody sitting in Sun City for literally nine months bickering among themselves and having a chance to air grievances while international people listened attentively in order to determine what could be possible. And what was eventually decided was we would have a very American model for the transitional government. We keep President Kabila as president. And believe me, that right there was a huge issue. But he had been president going into the war and therefore it was decided that coming out of the war he would retain the presidency. But there would be four vice presidents, one representing the MLC -- that was Jean-Pierre Bemba. And Jean-Pierre Bemba would take over the economic functions of government, so that meant that MLC members and allies took positions like Minister of Economy, Minister of Finance, Minister of Mines. Azarias Ruberwa, RCD, he was Vice President for Security Issues. So the RCD took positions like the Minister of Defense. But the president was awarded the position of Minister of Interior to have some balance there so not all security functions would be held by former enemies. And likewise in the economic arena some of the economic positions were awarded to the president so that again there would be a balance and we could overcome the fear that the president's people would be financially

strangled. Then we had a Vice President for Civil Society Functions. And there was a lot of controversy about that particular individual. The civil society elements themselves said he wasn't one of them and he certainly was a long time friend of the Kabila family and had been a strong supporter of theirs during the war. So there was a lot of talk that the power structure, which had been designed to promote checks and balances tipped in the president's favor because he essentially controlled both the Vice President for Civil Society and the Vice President for Social Affairs. So essentially out of the five power positions President Kabila directly occupied one and controlled two others. And then, as I was saying, within the government, ministries were identified for each of the four groups that I mentioned that each had a vice president. Then within that we had the Council of Ministers, which the president chaired. And so that was supposed to be the executive policy-making body. And a legislative body was set up that essentially didn't have any real power at that time. But a 500-member parliament was established with an upper house, the senate. And the senate had 130 members. And again, seats were allocated based on a power sharing principle. So the president got slightly more than the MLC who got slightly more than the RCD and then civil society and so forth picked up the rear.

Q: Well, was this a concept that came from the Congolese or was it an international group that put it together?

SANDERSON: Oh, it was strictly an international effort. Susan Rice had been deeply involved in that process, the French were instrumental, and many other people as well. It was definitely an international structuring because the Congolese were never going to come to an agreement on their own and in fact, several times walked away from the table and had to be cajoled and bullied back to the talks. So no, it was purely and simply an international vision, a way to get everybody to put the guns down and go back to Kinshasa.

Q: When did this new structure take power?

SANDERSON: The transitional government was seated in April of 2003.

Q: And you were there.

SANDERSON: Not when it first started. I arrived in June of 2003.

Q: Now, you were there how long?

SANDERSON: Three years. Until September of 2006.

Q: So besides this trying to bring parties together and all, did you have other responsibilities?

SANDERSON: Oh yeah, Lord (laughs). Everybody did everything in those days. I mean we were building the embassy back up. So of course I was recruiting junior officers and staff for the Political Section, which went from myself and one person to me and one

midlevel officer and four junior officers and a secretary. The Econ Counselor had to leave early from her assignment, so I wound up doubling as the Economic Counselor. I think I mentioned I served as chargé several times. And we all did a little bit of everything, I mean for example, since the defense attaché's office wasn't that large and that strong at the time I was more involved in military issues that I normally would have been, in taking a look at the relative balance of power between the three combative forces, taking a look at how we could do military reform, which was then and is now a hugely neuralgic issue of trying to achieve true integration among the warring factions. And in addition, find out how to either subdue or incorporate rogue militias, of which there were and still are many in the Congo. Speaking of militia --I always call them petty warlords, militia leaders -- I remember one time when I first got there back in the early part of my tour in 2003, the main problem area of Congo at that time was up in Orientale Province, because that's where people had been seriously massacring each other, in a tribal war between the Hema and the Lendu exacerbated by outside meddling by both Uganda and Rwanda. And as a consequence of that instability and chaos we have several mass murdering petty warlords running around, a guy called Bosco, a guy called Jerome. Of course all these guys call themselves General, General Bosco, General Jerome, General Kakalele, et cetera. And at one point early on I had a call from General Jerome basically saying, "You know what? I'm tired of war. How do I go about integrating my forces and what do I get? How can I avoid being sent to prison for life or being killed or whatever?" And of course what I knew and what he didn't know that I knew was that he had terminal AIDS and probably didn't have more than six to eight months to live anyway. So you know, I took the question to Roger and we took it to Washington and we discussed it with the CIAT, and it was decided that I should tell Jerome that there was a willingness in principle to integrate his men and that he could come to Kinshasa and would be put under house arrest, but you know, no one would hurt him, et cetera, et cetera. And that's eventually what happened. He did come to Kinshasa, we put him under house arrest and essentially UN protection. And his guys became part of the army. And that was important because General Jerome's guys controlled border crossings between Congo and Uganda. And being able to move them out of the way did a lot to improve relations with Uganda. So things like that, I mean sort of like everybody did everything. And mostly what we tried to do was prevent fires and when fires arose put them out as quickly as possible. One good example of that is we had a massacre of Tutsi refugees in a place called Gatumba, which is actually inside of the neighboring country of Burundi. And of course Burundi was a Rwandan controlled state. Initially many people wanted to blame President Kabila for arranging the massacre. In Eastern Congo there is a certain kind of militia that is called Mai-Mai and many people alleged that one of the Mai-Mai controlled by President Kabila had snuck into Burundi and massacred these Tutsis, some of whom were cousins of the RCD head, Azarias Ruberwa. And Azarias left Kinshasa, went to Goma (capital of North Kivu province), which had been the RCD capital during the war, and said, "I'm not coming back. The transition's over. You know, you international folks are letting these guys get away with murdering my people, and I'm not coming back." And Roger and I flew out to Goma to talk to him and reason with him and reassure him and the United Nations sent a big investigation team into Burundi. Bill Swing led it personally. And we managed to convince Azarias to come back to the government. I also remember early on in my tour in Congo when I was doing my country

familiarization. Because of course I didn't see my job as being just to sit in Kinshasa. I visited every one of the 11 provinces and over the course of my three-year tour I didn't just visit the capitals, I got to little villages by riding on the back of bicycles and in little canoes that are called pirogues and went and met tribal chiefs and ordinary people. And I remember one time I went to a village, this was in 2004, late 2004. I went to a very remote village in Maniema Province out in Eastern Congo, where the people are so isolated they spoke neither French nor Swahili, so they had to find somebody who could interpret into their language so that we could communicate. And the very first question I was asked was, "How is the Great Leopard?"

Q: Oh, Mobutu.

SANDERSON: In other words, Mobutu, yes. These guys were so isolated, they didn't even know that Mobutu was gone, that Mobutu had died outside of the country, that Laurent Kabila had come and been president and been killed and that they now had this guy named Joseph Kabila. They knew nothing about this. Which was really what I call one of those Congo moments, when you really have an encounter with exactly how vast that country is and why it is as hard to deal with as it is. One of the other things I remember that was really interesting, again back in 2003 when I was doing familiarization trips I went to Bukavu, which is the capital of South Kivu Province and had been a stronghold for the RCD during the war. And throughout 2003, you know, there was no way to travel to these eastern capitals except on United Nations flights, because they were the only ones who were allowed to fly into these areas. We were still negotiating what amounted to economic reunification with the east and the west. So I flew into Bukavu with the United Nations and met with the governor, a guy named Xavier Chiribanya. And of course Chiribanya, and I knew this about him, was one of the guys that President Kabila suspected of assassinating his father, Laurent; and he had been put in place as Governor by the rebel RCD movement. So I went to see the governor and we had a very good initial meeting and he invited me back for dinner at the official residence that night. I went back for the dinner, and again, this is one of those Congo moments. At that dinner were many infamous guys that during the war were regarded as the enemy, and most importantly, every single man at that table was on what we called "the death list". All these guys had been sentenced to death in absentia by a military court in Kinshasa, a tribunal headed by President Kabila. They'd been sentenced to death for their alleged role in the assassination of Laurent Kabila. And they spent that entire dinner saying we didn't do it, here's why we didn't do it, you know, this guy is my cousin, President Kabila started it, he killed my cousin, etc. My goodness. It was four hours and the Bishop of Bukavu was there. I think he had been asked just in case for some reason the wild American woman pulled out a gun and tried to arrest everybody. I don't know why the bishop was there, but he was.

Q: (laughs)

SANDERSON: And it was really one of those Congo moments where these guys see an opportunity to tell their side of the story and why they didn't deserve to be on this death list. And of course we were very opposed to the whole death list. I mean the whole thing

was so patently illegal, a military tribunal assigning people a death sentence in absentia. But yeah. So I don't know, I give you those as examples as things that I did. Aside from running around and talking to power brokers, I ran around and talked to ordinary people, and tribal leaders too. And I explained to some people that Mobutu was no longer there (laughs).

Q: All right. I'll make my announcement here. Today is the 6th of January 2012 with Mel Sanderson and you are in Wyoming and I am in Virginia, being done by telephone. Now, we left off the last time when you were in the Congo and we said we'd pick it up the next time when things began to settle down and everyone was getting used to the new Congo. How did that work out?

SANDERSON: Well, I think the breakthrough basically came in 2004 when we successfully organized our first Defense Council meeting, because the transitional government established a structure where in addition to the Council of Minister's meetings, which involved every member of the government, we set up three specific councils, one for defense and security, one for economics, and one for social issues. And we really pushed hard to get the Defense Council meeting to happen because it involved the principle actors. And early in 2004 we finally got our first Defense Council meeting together and began to have a real discussion about what to do with the various militia elements that at that time were very numerous. I mean Congo still suffers from militia activities in the east, but in 2004 we still had several militia groups active in Orientale Province in the northern part of the country, as well as in the Kivu provinces. And in fact, at that time the violence was worse in Orientale Province than it was in the Kivu Province.

Q: Could you describe sort of the composition of these militia groups and who they would answer to, if anybody?

SANDERSON: Well yeah, in Orientale Province most of them had initially been organized by both Uganda and Rwanda. But by the time we arrived at this Defense Council meeting in 2004 the groups that were still active in Orientale Province responded to Uganda principally and there were three that were essentially Congolese tribal in nature that had arisen in the war as an effort to defend specific villages or specific tribes from attack. So those were the two sorts of groups that we still had active in Orientale Province. In the Kivus we had, and for that matter still have, former Rwandan Hutu genocidaires who are living in those provinces and prey upon the population. They go by the initials FDLR and there are also several of these indigenous tribal militias, which go generically by the name Mai-Mai. And there were also a couple of militia elements that were offshoots from the former RCD Army and responded to individuals within the Rwandan government. And all of these elements, north to east, were clearly very destabilizing elements. But as I say in 2004 the violence was worse in Orientale Province. So we succeeded in getting the Defense Council meeting together to advance the notion that the best way for Congo to deal with these militia elements, because clearly the Congolese military was incapable of defeating them militarily, would be to integrate them little by little into the army and provide discipline training and try to regularize their

activities. The international community was providing economic and technical assistance for military restructuring of the Congolese military with the objective of downsizing it, as well as providing training. So that was sort of our breakthrough moment, because once we were able to launch that dialogue we were then able to carry it over to the Economic Council Meeting, because as I say there was an economic assistance element. And we were able to carry it over to the Social Council Meeting, because obviously there was a social element as we tried to reduce the size of the Congolese military and therefore integrate people into civilian life. So that key issue was the wedge that broke through everybody's ongoing hostilities and started a system of regular government meetings.

Q: Well, were there you might say outstanding warrants of arrest or something for some of these people which means they'd have nowhere to go except to keep fighting or?

SANDERSON: Not at that time. The ICC (International Criminal Court) had not yet begun to look systematically at the Congo in 2004. The Congolese government had issued some arrest warrants for some of the militia leaders, but it was well understood that the Congolese government lacked capacity, either technical or political, to enforce those warrants. They were largely symbolic. The problem wasn't that so much. The problem for these militia leaders -- well, let me separate out my answer. The problem for the militia leaders who responded to outside direction, like the groups in and around Bunia, who were being directed by Uganda and the groups in the two Kivu provinces, which were being directed by Rwanda, their problem was they had an economic objective of seizing control of places that were rich in resources. In Orientale Province that meant gold as well as control of Lake Albert for the fish that came from the lake. And in the Kivus it meant controlling the areas where coltan was being mined, a very valuable mineral that's used in the production of cell phones and computers. And even in 2004 the international community was very aware of systematic organized smuggling by these militia elements. So that was a big impediment to actually demobilizing them because as part of the demobilization agreements eventually everyone had to agree to be restationed. What we quickly found was that while these militias would become, at least in name, elements of the regular Congolese army, they refused to be re-stationed. They insisted on staying exactly where they were because they weren't going to give up access to the mineral flow. And if we tried to force that issue, of course the whole dialogue would have broken down.

Q: Well, how did you resolve the economic side?

SANDERSON: It largely is still not resolved. The question of illegal exploitation of minerals from the Congo and associated violence against civilians is still one of the most high profile issues plaguing the Congo today and one on which the international community remains very focused. Part of the Dodd-Frank legislation on financial reform, for instance, included provisions regarding trafficking in conflict minerals. And the Securities and Exchange Commission is grappling right now with what sorts of regulations should be introduced to enforce that piece of legislation. And private sector electronic companies are looking very actively at what that's going to be mean for them

in terms of verification and chain of supply measures. So that issue has not been addressed essentially to this day.

Q: Back to the disbanding the militias. Were there a significant number of what we would call boy soldiers or?

SANDERSON: Yeah, everybody including the official Congolese army, every military element engaged in recruitment, so to speak, of child soldiers. Raids on villages by militia and Congolese military were very common during the transitional period of 2003 to 2006. Regular soldiers needed slaves more than they needed more soldiers. Most of these children, boys and girls, were used as porters, for instance, to carry illegal minerals across borders, they were used as sex slaves, they were used to cook and clean. But of course the real tragedy of that is as part of their indoctrination many of these children were forced to commit crimes in their villages. You know, UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) was doing a lot of work with child soldiers and documented just absolutely horrifying stories of young boys who were force to rape their mothers or sisters or, you know, girls who were gang raped in front of their family, et cetera. To make sure that there would be no going back for these children. And that's still an ongoing issue in Congo as well, because the whole idea of reconciliation and reintegration is of course extremely difficult and especially after children were forced to do these things.

Q: I mean this is beyond. But what was being done for the women who were raped? I mean did they become outcasts or was there effort made to reintegrate them into society or what?

SANDERSON: Unfortunately, in Congo rape is still a crime which is held against the woman. So in most circumstances if the husband found out that she had been raped she and her children would be thrown out on the street and left with nothing. And in most cases even her parents would reject her. There's a strong prevailing cultural belief that, you know, somehow or the other she must have asked for it or she wanted it or whatever. There was at that time, and still is today, a tremendous medical institution in the Kivus called Panzi Hospital. It's right outside of the capital of North Kivu. And they do terrific work with fistula surgery, they do some psychological counseling. And particularly in some very recent years there's been a very strong mobilization effort among various NGO's to provide both psychological and family counseling, including to husbands, to try to change the mindset and help the husband accept his wife again. But also to teach women how to be more economically independent so that at least if reconciliation is not possible the women can work together in cooperatives, agricultural cooperatives, fabric and sewing cooperatives, et cetera, to make a living, and to not be either forced into prostitution or simply die of hunger and shame. So over the ensuing years that's become a very high profile issue, particularly in the two Kivu provinces and there is a broad international effort to try and help with that. But what's sad is that the violence itself continues and is mostly perpetrated by the Congolese army, quote unquote, keeping in mind that these militia elements are part of the army.

Q: Boy. I mean were there times you would think how the hell are we ever going to put this thing back together or?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. Sadly, that's what many people think of Congo: too hard, takes too long, too complicated. Congo's a place that can easily reduce you to despair. But you know, there's so many really outstanding people in Congo. The Congolese people are incredible, particularly the women who just sort of keep picking up their various burdens and marching on despite starvation and rape and violence and war and terror. They are very, very admiral people. And that's the main motivator that, you know, fights that sense of despair, because it's so self-evident that the Congolese people deserve so much better than they've been getting. And if they're not going to lay down and give up then why should anybody else?

Q: Prior to the settlement I take it the militias and the armies were being paid by the loot they were getting from their -

SANDERSON: Illegal trafficking, yeah, absolutely. They were profited directly from that.

Q: Well, did you find there were economic interests from the West that were sort of not overly helpful?

SANDERSON: Yeah, absolutely. I mean the United Nations had established in 2004 the so-called group of experts. And they made an annual visit to Congo-Rwanda-Uganda to try to really quantify and identify the participants in the illegal trafficking. Because of course minerals went out one way and then arms came into the Congo in exchange to keep the militias in good fighting form. And several of their reports and classified annexes identified some western companies that certainly appeared to be implicated in this two-way trade and in at least one report the governments of Rwanda and Uganda were also identified as actively participating. I remember one report where President Museveni's sister was named. So yeah, some western companies in various countries and neighboring governments were at least according to those United Nations reports implicated in the trade. And that illustrates one of the reasons why it's so difficult to break it.

Q: Well, was the United Nations as a unit actively engaged in trying to do something or was it sort of being dragged in?

SANDERSON: I think that it depends on what aspect of life in the Congo that you're talking about. You know, despite having the largest numerical peacekeeping mission in the world, the United Nations mission in Congo doesn't have a great track record. When I first got there in 2003 and right up through the middle of 2004 it was a Chapter Six mission, which essentially meant that it didn't have any active peacekeeping authority. And that was why you had a whole series of scandalous incidents that emerged in the international press of United Nations soldiers standing sort of idly leaning on their guns while militia guys raped women and burned down villages right in front of their faces. It

was one of the big ongoing behind the scenes battles in New York to upgrade that mission's authorities to a full Chapter Seven mission.

Q: What's a chapter six and seven?

SANDERSON: Chapter Six is more of an observer mission. UN troops are not authorized to engage "enemy forces." You're not there to protect the civilians. With Chapter Seven the United Nations takes more active responsibility for protecting unarmed civilians from armed aggression. And we did finally get a Chapter Seven authorization from the middle end of 2004 at which point new U.N. member states entered the Congo mission. Those Indian and Pakistanis became important contributory members particularly in Eastern Congo bringing in attack helicopters, on the ground highly trained troops and really began concentrated efforts, particularly against the FDLR, the Rwanda Hutu elements, and tried to push them out of their established zones. And simultaneously, the United Nations began a large repatriation effort to encourage these Rwandan elements to return to Rwanda and of course that was a touchy thing that had to be negotiated by international parties, including the United States directly with the government of Rwanda, because clearly Rwanda wasn't wild about accepting back a bunch of genocidaires. And as part of the repatriation the FDLR elements had to accept to go through the village reconciliation process (gacaca) that Rwanda had put in place. So it was quite complicated. It was sporadically successful, but not sustainable. The UN forces working together with Congolese military would push FDLR forces out of an area and they would drift away up into the forest or the mountains. And they'd be gone for a while. And then as soon as the UN forces moved on to another zone the FDLR guys would filter back in and take over their areas again. So as I say, the UN mission has a very spotty record. I think that you could say that at least during the transitional years the United Nations was more successful as a political element than as a military element. And perhaps that's not surprising. Bill Swing was the Head of the UN Mission during the transitional government. And of course he had been United States ambassador to the Congo and spoke several Congolese tribal languages and is an extremely charismatic man who did a really outstanding job I think in being that bridge between the international community and the Congolese government because both sides trusted him. Both elements felt that they knew him. But he faced a lot of constraints in terms of military success, in large part because the mission was being almost constantly reconstituted. The structuring of the military side changed three times in three years. And of course you always face constraints by member nations themselves because you may have the United Nations mandate in the Congo that says OK, the troops should shoot the enemies to protect the civilians, but what we actually found on the ground was that sometimes they wouldn't act anyway. In one actual instance that occurred at Bukavu, we had a mix of rogue Rwandan military and Congolese Tutsi military move into Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu, and basically start selectively killing those whom they claimed were trying to wipe out the Tutsi people. And the United Nations soldiers leaned on their guns and doing nothing about it because when push came to shove the member state governments didn't authorize their troops to actively engage, which of course would have meant risking their lives. So even though you had the on the ground military commanders saying intervene and you had the head of mission saying intervene, the member state countries were

saying oh no, our guys aren't getting killed for these Congolese people, oh no, no, no. So that's why I say overall the record is spotty, but certainly more successful politically than militarily.

Q: While this was going on what was the U.S. government doing?

SANDERSON: We were actually doing quite a bit. We were very active at the embassy in the day-to-day context, exploring the motivations that were behind activities and encouraging all sides to stay the course. At one point, for instance, the RCD, which was the eastern element, largely identified by Congolese as Tutsi, threatened to leave the government because there was a massacre of Tutsis in a refugee camp in neighboring Burundi at a place called Katumba. And the RCD, everybody from the RCD essentially left Kinshasa and went back to Goma, which had been their wartime capital. And we were extremely close to having the transition break down at that point. That was in 2005. And both the embassy and Washington were extremely active in healing that breach. The Secretary of State called President Kabila to get President Kabila to reassure the RCD people. We at the embassy were in contact with the head of the RCD. We flew out to Goma to talk to them. The U.S. government was also very active in a regional reconciliation initiative, which was started by at the time Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Yamamoto, and it was called the Tripartheid Initiative. It was U.S. funded and we served as the facilitator to bring together government officials from Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, and Congo to try to work out some of these cross border issues with the smuggling, with the soldiers, with raids from Rwanda and Uganda into Congo with refugees being killed in Burundi, et cetera. And that was a 100% U.S. initiative that Washington developed and the embassy supported. We worked hard to get the right Congolese to take part because there was considerable resistance. Particularly in President Kabila's group there was no desire whatsoever to have any discussions with either Rwandans or Ugandans and it took considerable persuading to get them to the table. So we were very active in that way. The USAID budget more than doubled and USAID cooperated very actively in trying to work through NGO's (Non-Government Organizations). The National Democratic Institute guys were there, NDI, and we had several other U.S. NGO's there trying to teach, for instance, members of parliament what is their responsibility, what is their role in a democracy. And also to work with the independent electoral commission to teach them how you prepare for a democratic election, how do you enroll your citizens, how do you set up a database, how do you prepare ballots, et cetera. Significant funding went into that. And of course the U.S. was also the single largest contributing country to the United Nations mission to the Congo. So the U.S. government was very active during the transitional period in engaging with Congo on all fronts.

Q: Well, during all this time you were part of the State Department or you were working for the UN?

SANDERSON: No, I worked for the State Department. I was the Political Counselor at the embassy during the transition, from 2003 to 2006. It might almost sound like we worked for the UN because we had so much daily contact with the UN (laughs).

Q: Ah yes. Well, did you find your UN colleagues were pretty well committed to the cause?

SANDERSON: No, not at all. I was actually -- you probably already have detected this. I was already very disillusioned with the United Nations operation as I saw it on the ground. There were too many conflicting national interests. French citizens, for instance, were almost more busy reporting to Paris than they were to New York. British citizens likewise, South African cities likewise. It was another element that made it very hard for Bill Swing to get anything done with the UN, because everybody seemed to be much more interested in advancing their national interest than concentrating on the official UN agenda in Congo.

Q: Well, what would be national interests in this war torn country? Nobody was going to grab a piece of territory? I mean I think the national interest would be all for getting peace.

SANDERSON: Not really. Most countries already were looking ahead to the elections and making decisions about who among the powerful figures would be most likely to favor their interests post-transition. There was a great deal of maneuvering related to those questions. And as you know, many countries don't have the legal or moral restrictions on directly interfering in internal or political issues that the United States does. So most of the maneuvering is really related to looking toward the elections in 2006 and making sure that whoever was going to win that would be a candidate favorable to their national interests. Because post transition most countries were looking toward the possibility of private sector investments in Congo and the general thought was, you know, if you get in an administration that favors your nation then your companies are more likely to get favored status for all these wonderful investments.

Q: Well, did we have a particular interest there?

SANDERSON: No, not really. I was always a little -- no, I was always a lot disappointed in how poorly the United States seems to understand the strategic value of the Congo. It's not just a question of this very central geographic location, it's a question of the mineral and natural resources that are within the Congo's boundaries. Not just gold and silver and copper, but also uranium, also the so-called rare earth minerals, also forests, also one of Africa's largest rivers. The Congo used to be the breadbasket of Africa because there is rainfall throughout the country somewhere every single day throughout the year, and the growing season is therefore continuous. Congo's an incredible strategic resource and the United States has pretty much failed to see that because we're too focused on oh, it's too big, it's too complicated, it takes too long, it's too hard, who cares. Other countries were much more alert. Even during the transition it was quite clear that the Chinese were already moving actively toward acquiring control of a lot of Congo's heat resources. Japan was intensely interested, France was intensely interested, even Germany was interested. But sometimes I had the sense that our, our folks in Washington just weren't getting it.

Q: Well, did you find yourself conflicted and trying to carry out American policy and -- whatever that was -- and what should be done?

SANDERSON: Not conflicted so much because, I mean, our policy was always in that sense benign. It was much more benign than many of our European colleagues. I mean the Belgians in particular of course who still regarded the Congo as their personal, you know, fiefdom were very highly directive and did very little to mask the connection between their national interest and what they were promoting in Congo. So no, conflicted wouldn't be the wrong word because our policies in that sense were extremely benign. Frustrated, yes. Because the embassy spent a great deal of time sending rather lengthy cables trying to explain to Washington why things were the way they were, what were those motivations, what were individuals after, how could those motivations be turned to a more benign path or to U.S. interests, what is the value of Congo to the U.S. We spent a lot of time sending a lot of cables along those lines. And that was more or less the frustrating part, that it sometimes felt that we might as well be sending them to the great beyond.

Q: Oh boy.

SANDERSON: (laughs)

Q: Well I mean, but all of this work, you did see -- I hate to use the term, I'm an old Vietnam hand -- light at the end of the tunnel? I mean was it aimed toward something?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. The whole objective of the transitional government was to get Congo to its first democratic election in almost 50 years. Because in its entire history Congo had only had one election in 1960. And that elected government did not stand for very long, less than two years. It was overthrown by at the time Sergeant Mobutu. So from the 1960's until mid-1990's we had a dictatorship under Mobutu. And when he was overthrown by Laurent Kabila we had what amounted to a dictatorship by Laurent Kabila until he was assassinated and civil war began in 1998. And so when we set up the transitional government in 2003 the understood objective by all parties was to make those democratic elections happen. And a rather over ambitious time table had been set calling for the elections to be held by 2004. I think that that happened because the folks negotiating the peace agreement in Sun City simply hadn't focused on all the mechanical steps to get to those elections. And one of the most important of those was getting a Congolese constitution that would be voted upon by a popular plebiscite. So in 2004, with the assistance of international experts, the Congolese started working on the terms of reference for their constitution. And the wrangling over that, including really hot button issues like nationality, the right to vote, the rights of provinces versus Kinshasa, et cetera, dragged on until 2005. And finally, on December 18th, 2005 we were able to have that national vote and the population voted in the favor of the proposed constitution, which had been printed in its entirety and circulated to every voting station in the Congo, so more than 60,000 voting stations. It was not a small effort and it was funded entirely by the international community. There were ads on the radio, in the newspapers, on the

few television stations to try to explain to the population the nature and elements of the constitution and why it mattered. So once we had that popular approval of the constitution in December of 2005, the parliament voted to approve it in January 2006. And that was the key moment that set the stage to allow elections to happen. And so from January 2006 until September 2006 there was a virtually single-minded effort by both the Congolese and the international community to put in place the mechanical elements necessary for those elections to happen. So in other words, making sure that citizens were properly registered, making sure that citizens understood where the voting centers were, deciding who was going to print the ballots, who was going to distribute the ballots, how were we going to organize the international observers, how would we organize the national observers, how would the embassy organize their observers. Every single day there were multiple meetings from morning to night trying to hash out problems and overcome obstacles and get those elections done. We had first thought that the elections would take place in July of 2006. And we, we missed that mark just by a little bit. We did hold the elections by August of 2006 and the first round wrapped up on September 6th. The constitution provided for a second round presidential runoff if no one candidate had the decisive majority, and indeed that was the case. So in October of 2006 we had the presidential runoff and it was in that runoff that Joseph Kabila emerged as the elected president of Congo. So that was the big triumph of the transitional government. Many difficult issues were tackled, many difficult dialogues were begun. But the big success was that the election happened and international observers, such as the Carter Center, determined that while there had been some irregularities, the elections were judged to be sufficiently free and fair and the results were officially recognized by the international community. So that was our huge triumph.

Q: All right, you had this election, which was run fairly well considering the difficulties. What was the result?

SANDERSON: After the second round of the presidential elections, President Kabila was recognized as the elected president. We did have some -- how do I want to put it -- some push back from Jean-Pierre Bemba and his MLC forces. He was the guy during the war who was the Ugandan proxy and during the transitional government was the vice president in charge of economics. And he of course was President Kabila's strongest rival in the elections. He wasn't willing to accept defeat. We had some very significant fighting over a limited period of time in Kinshasa, mostly between MLC forces and government army forces before President Kabila's army forces managed to subdue the MLC and allow the president to be installed in December of 2006. We also saw the successful election of 500 members of the National Assembly. And once that body was elected they were able, per the terms of the constitution, to name the senators. So the results of the elections were that we had for the first time in almost 50 years a largely directly elected representative government in congress. The head of the executive branch, the President, was directly elected by the people, both the national parliament and the provincial parliaments were directly elected by the people, while both the senate and the provincial senates were indirectly elected in the sense that the elected members of parliaments named senators. And in the case of the parliaments the provincial assemblies also proposed governors to the president and the president certified those governors. So again,

indirect election. But the ultimate result of the elections was that for the first time in almost 50 years Congo's people had a chance to choose who they wanted to represent them. And that was a pretty satisfying moment. It really was.

Q: Was there any sort of surprise in how the vote went?

SANDERSON: No, not really. It was clear well in advance that it was essentially going to be a two-horse race between Kabila and Bemba. Biggest surprise was the third-place went to a guy named Antoine Gizenga. Mr. Gizenga, who was a little over 80-years-old at the time, had been one of the elected officials way back in the very first government in 1960 and had been a very strong supporter of at that time Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba. And when Lumumba was killed and the country fell apart Antoine Gizenga fled to Kisangani, the capital of the Orientale Province, raised an army, and took over part of Eastern Congo essentially in the name of Patrice Lumumba and saw his political party, which went by the acronym PALU (Parti Lumumbiste Unifie (Unified Lumumbist Party)) as the government in about one-third of Eastern Congo. He governed there until Mobutu's forces overthrew him. And so it was quite surprising that Mr. Gizenga who had not even actively campaigned for office, came in third out of the slate of 33 presidential candidates. And it put him rather naturally in the kingmaker's spot for the second round runoff between Joseph Kabila and Jean-Pierre Bemba. Both men very actively courted Gizenga's support. And eventually Gizenga agreed to support Joseph Kabila in exchange for a political agreement in which his political party, PALU, would be given the prime ministership for essentially the entire five-year presidential term. So Gizenga was the first prime minister under President Kabila's elected government, and then he stepped aside in favor of another PALU party member, Adolphe Muzito, who is still prime minister today.

Q: So what was your role after this? Did you find yourself you might say consulting with the formation of the government and how to run a government all that?

SANDERSON: I actually left the State Department in September 2006 when my Congo tour would have been up and joined Phelps Dodge, the U.S. copper mining company that was opening a mine in the Katanga Province of Congo. And while I continued living in Kinshasa, and for that matter also in Lubumbashi, I was no longer working for the State Department.

Q: Well, let's talk a little bit about the copper company. In your experiences there, what sort of a company was this?

SANDERSON: Phelps Dodge was actually one of the largest private American copper companies. It had its headquarters in Phoenix, Arizona and was a joint effort from the Dodge family, the same guys that produced the car, and a miner by trade by the name of Phelps. They had several mines in the United States, in Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico. They also had mines in Chile and Peru and had just finished negotiating their concessionary contract in Congo to open what was destined to become one of the world's largest mines producing copper and cobalt. They were acquired by Freeport-McMoRan in February of 2007. Freeport-McMoRan Copper and Gold has the world's largest copper

and gold mine in Indonesia, in Grasberg. They bought out Phelps Dodge and acquired all of their other assets. So Freeport now operates everything that used to be Phelps Dodge, including the mine in the Congo. Very interesting project. What they call in the mining industry, as I learned, a green field projects. Meaning that it started from absolutely nothing. There had never been a mine in the Tenke Fungurume area of Katanga before and so Phelps Dodge and then Freeport had to bring everything into the Congo, which meant they had to build the roads, they had to build the bridges in order to get the heavy equipment into the interior of the province, and the company spent not quite 18 months building this mine.

Among many other interesting things is that they were very environmentally conscious. I mean, I remember at one point they contracted with a leading Belgian botanical expert to come and work with our guys on the ground removing one plant at a time of a endangered species that only grows -- in the whole world -- in Katanga Province. And we established a safe preserve for those plants, and we moved one plant at a time to the safe preserve. We moved trees one tree at a time. I mean I was actually very impressed with that. And of course, you know, we had to get the -- and this is basically what they hired me for -- to understand the tribal relationships, the political relationships, and figure out how we were going to adapt our American culture to the Congo and set up a successful business model.

Q: Well, I would assume that you were the economic rival of Union Minière.

SANDERSON: Yeah, today it's called Gécamines. Actually Gécamines is a partner in the project. At the time that the company initially negotiated its contract Gécamines had a 17.5% participation. And that has since increased to 20.0% participation. So actually we're partners more than rivals.

Q: Did you find among you might say the professional mining people almost a change in their attitude toward the Congo?

SANDERSON: Well, I think that one of the concerns that Phelps Dodge had initially in coming into the Congo is the historical nature of the mining business in that country, which unfortunately to a certain extent continues today. There are still quite a few shady deals, some of which have recently hit the press as a matter of fact involving a certain individual of Israeli extraction who's close to people in the Kabila government. There was a Belgian citizen who likewise recently had been exposed by the press as being part of some very shady business dealings, Zimbabweans notoriously, a couple of South Africans. And it's been actually the challenge for first Phelps Dodge and then Freeport because we represent a whole other paradigm, you know, the transparent business model where you pay your taxes accountably, you publish what you pay, you publish what your salaries are, et cetera, et cetera, and it actually in some cases made operational difficulties for Freeport because there are even lots of people in the Congolese government who don't want to do business that way, even today.

Q: Did you have any trouble moving from the State Department to a private concern?

SANDERSON: No, not at all. I mean it's very similar work, very analytical work. I wasn't -- what's the word I'm looking for?

Q: How long did you do this?

SANDERSON: I'm still working for Freeport-McMoRan, but I'm now based in Phoenix since May of 2010.

Q: Well, were you continuing sort of your Congo brief or did you have other briefs?

SANDERSON: Well, from September of 2006 until May of 2010 I was vice president for Africa, so essentially Congo. Then I accepted a promotion to vice president for international affairs and transferred to our headquarters in Phoenix. So now I also look into issues in Peru, Chile, and Indonesia.

Q: Sticking to Africa, were there other areas of interest?

SANDERSON: Well, Phelps Dodge had originally had a copper cable operation in neighboring Zambia, but Freeport divested that in I think it was 2008. So really not much else in Africa except a logistics office in South Africa.

Q: What about Chile? America has a long relationship, sometimes good, sometimes bad with the government of Chile. How did you find them?

SANDERSON: Phelps Dodge and hence Freeport historically have had very good relations with the Chilean governments. When the mine collapsed in 2010, for instance, Freeport sent one of our very advanced rescue teams with sonar equipment and so forth to help rescue the miners. So we've always had a good relationship in Chile, and for that matter Peru as well. We're very fortunate in Peru that -- knock on wood, at least -- we haven't had the indigenous issues that many other foreign mining companies have. We've had good relationships with the indigenous peoples and the local governments in both countries.

Q: In Peru had the Shining Path been a problem?

SANDERSON: Fortunately, they weren't operating extensively in the areas where Phelps Dodge had its mine. There were security concerns because Shining Path was highly mobile. But they never targeted our mines and they never targeted our area.

Q: Well now, I think maybe this is a good place to stop.

SANDERSON: All right. Thanks very much for giving me this chance to take part in the program and spend so much time talking about myself. I loved the Foreign Service and there are many days when I miss it very much, so I was happy to be part of broadening knowledge of who we are and what we do.

End of interview