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

AMBASSADOR PAMELA HYDE SMITH

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Addendum by Pamela Hyde Smith in August, 2024

INTERVIEW

Q: I would like to ask you, if your name were to be in Wikipedia, how would you give a synopsis of your life? After that we will go back and cover each part of your upbringing and your career, going way back to your birth, education, family background, professional development and such, and then we will go through the details of your work.

SMITH: For the synopsis, let's go chronologically, starting at the beginning. I was born and raised in Washington State, growing up in Olympia and then Tacoma. I was an only child and had a very happy childhood. I went to secondary school at the Annie Wright Seminary, as it was then called, in Tacoma, and after a childhood of skiing, studying, and having many good experiences with friends and family, I went off to college in Massachusetts. I attended Wellesley College, where I majored in art history and graduated in 1967. I then got married for the first time, to Paul White, and we lived in Cambridge and Boston for a few years. Eventually I co-owned and ran a graphic design studio, which I decided after several years wasn't the career for me. There was also trouble with the marriage. I got divorced and in 1975 joined the Foreign Service, which proved to be a wonderful life and career. It was the Cold War and I was most interested in going to Eastern Europe. It was my good fortune to be posted to Romania, where I met Sidney Smith, the man who became my second husband and with whom I had two wonderful children. We served together - he was a U.S. Foreign Service officer also - in Romania, then Washington, then Yugoslavia, Washington, Indonesia, and then Washington again, our children growing up along the way and attending schools in all of these places. My husband was a State Department science attaché and science counselor. I was in USIA (The United States Information Agency) until its merger with the State Department in 1999, when I joined the State Department, and my focus was on public diplomacy, with a regional focus on Southeastern Europe. My husband died very unexpectedly in 1998, when I was posted to London. I continued on there, and then after London I was very fortunate to be asked to be ambassador to Moldova, a position I felt was the pinnacle of my career. I came back after that to teach at Georgetown. I now am retired from the Foreign Service and am continuing to teach at Georgetown while also doing some short-term work as a re-hired annuitant for the State Department Office of Inspections. (Note: see the end of the interview for a 2024 addendum.)

PRIOR TO THE FOREIGN SERVICE

Q: Let's go back to the beginning. Let's go back through the harps and the mist, back to Washington State and your skiing, and let's figure out what turned you into a diplomat. You were an only child. Tell me about what made the genes that produced you. Where did they come from and what did your family consist of?

SMITH: My parents were both from pioneer families that settled in Washington State. Their forebears had come out across the prairies in the latter part of the 1800s. My mother's family was mostly English on one side, and on the other side, very interestingly, her grandmother was Russian, from Alaska, a descendent of people still living there from the time Russia owned Alaska. My mother's grandfather was Swedish. They met in Alaska and settled in Seattle, eventually. My father's forebears were Scottish and English and had settled in New York State. His grandfather came across to Washington State in 1890, and in the latter part of the 1890s made the very wise decision during the Alaska gold rush that it was a better business strategy to sell food to the miners than to mine gold. So he started a grocery company that became the family company.

My father had two brothers who were wonderful uncles to me. One of them had three children who were my first cousins and became like sisters and a brother in many ways, and we are still very close. Like me, my mother was an only child, but there were second cousins on that side, too. We saw a fair bit of all these relatives, and my grandparents were especially important to me. My parents gave me a happy, secure upbringing and many opportunities, and I'm very, very grateful to them. I also want to give them credit for the wonderful sense of integrity that they imparted to me. My father's business was run in the most principled and socially responsible manner possible, and its standards – his standards – influenced me deeply.

Q: English, Russian, Swedish, Scottish...

SMITH: Yes, the cold northern tier.

Q: The kind of mix they used to call the melting pot but they now call the salad, I guess. Is it possible that your grandparents…very unusual for an American, I think, to descend from Russians living in Alaska. Is it possible that your interest in Eastern Europe may have derived from that?

SMITH: Maybe, you never know these things. When I think back on what family myths or stories influenced me, that comes to mind. But perhaps even more, the side of the family that started the grocery company comes to mind because they ended up doing business in Asia in the late 1800s and early 1900s. They developed a kind of triangular arrangement that I have understood to have involved my great-grandfather trading with China, Japan, and down as far south as Singapore. He brought goods from Asia back to the U.S. and then traded them for provisions that went up to Alaska, and then the cycle repeated. There are things in this room that come from those trips. His son, my grandfather, died before I was born, after which my grandmother became a great traveler and a serious painter. Throughout my whole childhood, she went on trips all over the

world and would send back letters, postcards, gifts, and so forth. I am sure that my imagination was kindled by her stories and the image of my grandmother, whom I revered, exploring the world.

Q: Can you remember what your first memory might have been of receiving a gift or an aerogramme or anything like that? Were these directed to the family or were there any personal...

SMITH: Oh, no, there were many sent personally to me. She wrote to all her grandchildren personally and she brought us back, the girls, dolls from each country, in the costumes of the countries. I remember she was on one of the very first trips into the Soviet Union after World War II, when tourists were first allowed in. I think that was around 1951 or 1952, so I was six or seven years old. I do remember hearing about that trip, and I vividly remember receiving the doll she brought me back from Yugoslavia, where she also visited in the immediate post-war period. I was puzzled why the doll, which I still have, was so thin, and I recall my grandmother telling me that the people in Yugoslavia had been almost starving during the war and that she encountered a great deal of tragedy and devastation still evident from World War II.

Q: Many people, thinking back to that time, would think of the Soviet Union as a more unfortunate case than Yugoslavia. Did your grandmother visit any of the closed cities?

SMITH: No, I think she went to the only places that were open, which then were probably just Moscow and Leningrad. Those are the two I remember her talking about.

Q: The showcase, but she was more impressed with the hardships in Yugoslavia?

SMITH: She may have been equally impressed by the Soviet Union, but what she said about the starving people in Yugoslavia really stuck in my mind.

Q: Do you remember which parts of Yugoslavia she visited, now that we are more cognizant of the various parts?

SMITH: Well, because I served there, I am quite cognizant of the parts, but I don't recall where exactly she went. I would like to dig out her letters and postcards. I save such things, so some day I will.

Q: We are on the record here: we are asking you to dig out those letters. That is very fascinating. Now, Swedish? I know that there were Scandinavians in Washington State and in Alaska, I think...

SMITH: My Swedish great-grandfather ended up in Alaska, certainly. On one trip in my early adult life I went back to the village in Sweden where he came from. I had a couple of photographs of the house that he left behind, and I found the house and went to it. The people there, unfortunately, were not any longer of our family but they were quite

fascinated that somebody would bother to come to their little farmhouse. It is on the coast, south of Stockholm, and I have the name of the village in my journal from that trip.

Q: So you have been actively seeking your roots, more than many people?

SMITH: I would like to do a lot more. I would very much like to look into my family history in depth on both sides. (2024 addition: I later worked with a friend who helped me produce a detailed genealogy book.)

Q: Now, a Russian in Alaska. You said there was a triangular trade. Was this established by the New York side?

SMITH: Yes, the Hyde side, which came from New York State and conducted the trading, which is a business that my cousin is continuing in a new form in the fourth generation. The Russian and Swedish great-grandparents were on my mother's side.

Q: Right. Now can we dig a little into that? You mentioned visiting a farmhouse in Sweden. Have you been able to trace the Russian side?

SMITH: No, and we don't even have my great-grandmother's maiden name, so that is going to take some work.

Q: If it is any consolation, we don't have any idea what my paternal grandfather's name was.

SMITH: That is a shame. We do have one necklace with pretty little jewel on it that came from my Russian great-grandmother, and I have given it to one of my daughters. So that is a very treasured memory of her, but I never met her.

Q: You started skiing. But there was something that happened before you started skiing.

SMITH: Well, not much. We all started skiing practically as soon as we could walk. My grandmother on the Hyde side (B.L. Hyde), the painter who did all the traveling, was a rather formidable woman and was one of the first skiers in Washington State. She often took my father and his two brothers up to Mt. Rainier, where they skied – and climbed with animal skins on the bottom of their skis -- when they were six, eight, and ten. That would have been in the early to mid-1920s when skiing was a new activity in the western U.S.

Q: No ski lifts then?

SMITH: No, no ski lifts. From then on, skiing was in the family. I started skiing when I was six with my cousins, who were younger. We went skiing regularly as a family, many weekends throughout my childhood. We rented two little cabins and our grandmother, aunts, uncles, everybody was up on the mountain together. It was a very, very happy family time.

Q: So when you lived in Olympia, you were right there? You were right near Mt. Rainier? Did you find it sometimes without a cloud on top?

SMITH: Yes, but the mountain wasn't "out" quite as often as we would have liked.

Q: Did you ski when there wasn't a cloud?

A: Sure, we skied in everything, including rain.

Q: Do you think there has been an ecological change?

SMITH: Yes, I know there has been. My parents are still alive and when I was visiting them last summer, they expressed an interest in making an excursion to Mt. Rainier. On our drive up we passed by one of the glaciers that I clearly remember seeing as a girl in the 1950s. I can picture myself then, standing on the little bridge that's still there and looking down at the glacier that was almost within touching distance from the bridge. And now only 50 years later the glacier has retreated hundreds of yards away, and you can barely see it. So in my lifetime, the retreat of the glaciers on Mt. Rainier is dramatic and unmistakable.

Q: This is not a court of law, but I will ask the leading question, which would be inadmissible in a court: Why do you think this has happened?

SMITH: I am persuaded that global warming is the existential crisis of our day. I am panic-stricken about it.

Q: I am going to leave a silence on the tape for dramatic effect. That is a very powerful statement.

SMITH: I have children. I worry about their lives and their children's existence because of global warming.

Q: Everybody has an opinion about global warming, but not many of us have really delved into the scientific aspect of it. Have you done any research? Your personal impression is very valid as a witness. You express an extraordinary interest in this, have you....

SMITH: I am not a scientist, so I can't say I have done any real research. But the evidence and studies that I have read for the last 20 years have alerted me to the danger of global warming and have made me an advocate for protection of the environment and a supporter of organizations that do this important work. I am now on the board of The Nature Conservancy's Colorado Chapter, and I have worked on some projects with them to set land aside and protect it forever from development. There are so many things that must be done, and conservation is just one of them. Fortunately, several organizations,

including The Nature Conservancy, are actively engaged on environmental issues and provide a way for individuals to involve themselves in them.

Q: Let's dwell on that for a moment. The Nature Conservancy in Colorado, is there a personal Colorado connection?

SMITH: There is a big Colorado connection, and a whole story behind that connection, but I don't know whether now is the time for it, if we are going chronologically.

Q: Let's get to that later, but while we are on the subject, do you have ideas about the most effective ways to do advocacy?

SMITH: I just joined The Nature Conservancy board, and I hope very much to be involved in the advocacy side of their work, as well as in their international activities. They are starting a major fund-raising campaign and part of attracting support for their activities will be persuading potential donors of the urgency of the dilemma and the need to set land aside in conservation, which is their traditional focus.

There are many other environmental issues, though, that need to be stressed in order to save our planet for future generations. For example, I think that there must be a radical mental change among people in all the developed countries, and some of the developing countries, about the extent of the carbon footprint human beings should make. We each need to take responsibility for the emissions that are causing global warming, in my view, and reduce them dramatically. That will require some life-style changes that will be difficult for many people but are absolutely essential.

Q: Do you think this is best done through legislation?

SMITH: I think the problem of global warming is so urgent that we must use every tool we have. I think legislation is important, and conservation, and new technologies, and better emission standards, but I think personal habits are important too.

Q: Well, you were skiing at the age of six. My gosh, at that same time you were also conscious of your extended family's world travels, their backgrounds. You had a growing consciousness of what it was to be of Swedish, Russian, Scottish, and English stock?

SMITH: Well, yes, but ethnic heritage seemed rather minor. You know how it was with many Americans of our generation and earlier, ethnicity was there in the background but it was not deeply influential because we all saw ourselves primarily as Americans. In any case, I did not feel particularly affected by my ethnic heritage. I was certainly more interested in, and swept up by, the idea of traveling and seeing the world.

Q: Okay, let's expand one step then. You were an individual girl coming from this family. You attended a school that was...

SMITH: I went to public schools through the seventh grade in Olympia. Then we moved to Tacoma and I went to a private Episcopal girls' school that gave me an outstanding education.

Q: Okay. Let's go to the public-school part. You were of a certain background and you were with children of similar background?

SMITH: No, there were many kinds of children in the public schools, which certainly was an asset. I am so grateful to have had that opportunity to know people of, well, not of every stripe, because in Olympia, Washington in the 1950s, the ethnic diversity was very low. But the social and economic diversity was high, and that was an important part of the education.

Q: So, do you have any recollections of the people you frequented, maybe? As a child, friendships have a different aspect than later. Do you recall any of the people you chose to be friends with? Is that going back too far?

SMITH: No. I had some wonderful friends who stayed friends for a long time. I am still in touch with a couple of them, which is wonderful, although we're not in as much touch as I would like.

Q: Did they have the same laundry list that you did? They couldn't have; nobody has as much as you.

SMITH: Maybe not, though my best friend came from a cosmopolitan family. But friendships then revolved around kid activities – school and sports and playing and so forth.

Q: What took the family from Olympia to Tacoma?

SMITH: The family's grocery business had a branch, a canning factory, in Olympia, that my father was helping run. It eventually closed down, and so he moved back to the headquarters of the family business, which was in Tacoma. But, speaking of the kindling of wanderlust, our move kindled some more for me. When the family decided to close the cannery, which had produced very high-quality canned pears and other fruits that were sold nationally, my father decided to go around the U.S. (United States) and inform every client, personally. He had developed friendships with the various buyers all over the U.S. who were his clients, and he must have thought it was the right thing to do to tell them in person that the cannery was closing. So my father and mother and I drove around the U.S. for three months, the summer between my seventh and eighth grade years, and visited all these interesting people all over the country. That was a wonderful trip and we did lots of sightseeing along the way. I'm sure that the idea of enjoying travel was certainly implanted then, as well as by my grandmother's trips.

Q: It sounds extraordinary. He went to see his clients all over the country and you went with. Isn't that a very unusual thing for...?

SMITH: I am not a businessman. He didn't act like it was extraordinary. He acted like it was the right thing to do, so we did it.

Q: Where did you go?

SMITH: We drove south to southern California. Then we drove east across the southern part of the U.S., up the South, all over the Mid Atlantic and New England states, and then back across Chicago and the northern plains.

Q: It's amazing. So you were 11 and 12?

SMITH: I was 12 and 13.

Q: And this is the age of reason, this is when people start...

SMITH: I remember that trip very well.

Q: Did he have clients every ten miles, every 50 miles?

SMITH: No, but in all the big cities.

Q: You say this was a summer trip? The entire summer?

SMITH: Yes, it was a summer trip.

Q: Was it tiresome? Would you date your wanderlust from that, or from before?

SMITH: From before, because my grandmother, my father's mother, was traveling the world way before that; also one uncle had made a three-year trip around the world in lieu of college, plus my great-grandparents had left journals and mementoes of their travels in Asia -- travel just seemed something that was normal.

Q: Did you understand at that age that this was unusual?

SMITH: No.

Q: Did you notice that the children you went to school with were not having these experiences?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: And yet it did not seem unusual?

SMITH: I felt that I was lucky, but I didn't see it as super unusual. We were a fortunate middle-class family, but not in a sophisticated city at the heights of society or anything.

Q: Then we get you to the Annie Wright Seminary in Tacoma where things academically...

SMITH: …Were much more challenging, and the student body was more homogeneous. Some students were boarders, who lived at the school, and came from towns in Alaska, Hawaii, and other nearby states that didn't have high-quality education available. Others were day students, like me, who lived in Tacoma. My mother had gone to the same school, as had my father's mother. The school was founded in the 1880s and is still a very good school. Anyway, it was great for me, and I felt I got an outstanding education. I took Latin and French and all the usual subjects and worked hard in an atmosphere that rewarded academic achievement and ambition, which was stimulating. There were quite a few of us who were on quite a fast track. Out of my class - I think there were 25 of us - we had two students who went to Wellesley, myself and one other girl; three who went to Vassar; one who went to Stanford; one who went to Pomona; and others who went to a number of other good schools. To have a third or half of a graduating class end up at top colleges made it …

Q: Was this middle school and high school?

SMITH: The school starts with kindergarten but I was there from eighth grade through 12th. It is now called the Annie Wright School, and it was and is an Episcopalian school. We had chapel every morning and a weekly religious education course. But otherwise, it offered a typical private school curriculum and formidable teachers.

Q: You said you had all the usual subjects, but with all the talk about curriculum these days, I must ask you what were the usual ones then?

SMITH: Latin, French, English. I remember biology and chemistry, but not physics. Math up to, but for me not including calculus. And history, excellent history. We had art and music and sports all available, too, and extra-curricular activities like the literary magazine, which I edited.

Q: You later went into graphic design temporarily, did this derive from the art courses at that school?

SMITH: No. When I had my graphic design business, I was not a designer, I handled the business side.

Q: English and history - how broad did the training go? Was it like my high school, where we studied Western Europe and obtained only a little bit of awareness of some of the other areas of the world?

SMITH: Yes, I am afraid so, except that we did study ancient civilizations and American history in some depth.

Q: I think you said that the school was fabulous. What was it that intrigued you so much about what you were being taught? Was it the mode of delivery? Was it the theological approach? Was it the material itself, the stories from English and history, or the War of the Roses?

SMITH: I liked being challenged intellectually and motivated to work hard. That was fun, a new kind of school environment, one where succeeding academically was a positive experience. Several of the teachers were very inspirational and, interestingly, from many foreign countries. My favorite English teacher was British, my French teacher was French, my Latin teacher was Czech, and my math teacher was Swedish. Consequently lots of different educational styles and backgrounds were presented to us.

Q: Can you guess, or do you know, what brought these various people to Tacoma?

SMITH: No, I never knew.

Q: The ones not from the U.S., were they first generation?

SMITH: No, they were born overseas and just ended up in Tacoma, Washington, some married to Americans, and some unmarried.

Q: Amazing. Do you find you are still in touch with people from that school, for example the student who went with you to Wellesley?

SMITH: Very sadly, she died. But, yes, I am in touch with some others, two particularly.

Q: Anything else about middle school and high school? Since you skied, were you close enough to Mt. Olympus or Mt. Rainier to go over there at times, or did the academics take over?

SMITH: Oh, no, no, no. I skied throughout high school, primarily with family, on the foothills of Mt. Rainier. I memorized my Latin verbs on the chairlift and did homework on the long drives up to the mountain. Of course there were also young men, eventually, and driving cars, and, you know, growing up as people do. But in the early 1960s, life was, at least in Washington State, very safe. The dangers and the possibilities that are open to young people today were unknown. Drugs were not a part of growing up then and other kinds of experimentation were pretty far in the background.

Q: I guess you could say you had a protected childhood.

SMITH: It didn't seem so at the time because that was just the way life was. But in retrospect and in comparison to childhood today, I feel as though mine was innocent as a result of the mores of the time.

Q: And yet you chose to live a life of adventure.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Do you think this type of background was well suited for an adventuress?

SMITH: Well, adventuress has a connotation that maybe I would not welcome.

Q: I am talking about people discovering different parts of the world.

SMITH: I always felt, especially during middle school and high school, a pull away from Washington State. I loved it there, and I cherish my memories and my time with my family then and now. But it was as though the greater world was calling. When it came time to apply to college, I wanted to explore. My mother had gone to the University of Washington, which is a very fine school, but my father had gone to Dartmouth and one of his brothers had gone to Stanford. I wanted to do something like that. I wanted to go to a new environment. The college counselor at Annie Wright, who was a Wellesley alumna, told me when I discovered Wellesley and thought it looked wonderful that she didn't think it was right for me, or actually she said that I was not right for it, which of course made me want to try as hard as I possibly could to go there.

Q: Was there any resistance in your family to you going to the other end of the continent?

SMITH: Not really. My father, having gone East to college himself, saw it as a normal thing to do. My parents were proud of me when I got into Wellesley. I don't remember them raising any question about it.

Q: You were an only child. They were happy to have you take things in a...

SMITH: Well, I am sure every parent has regrets when their children go away. But when you have a family history of going far away and coming back repeatedly, then I guess absences don't feel permanent. Throughout college I came back every Christmas and every summer, so we didn't let distance get too much in the way. For me, it was very exciting to venture 3,000 miles away from home. I didn't know a single person east of the Rocky Mountains, except for some distant cousins in New York. So it was a great adventure, but I saw that as a desirable thing.

Q: It wasn't an unknown world. You had traveled during the eighth grade.

SMITH: I had that big summer trip with my parents, yes.

Q: So at least you had a visual sense of New England, perhaps.

SMITH: Yes, actually.

Q: You had gone to Dartmouth on that trip, just to see your father's alma mater?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Is there anything else before we get into the big topic of Wellesley? I think we will dwell on that for awhile.

SMITH: It's really okay to go into this much depth about personal history? I mean, it's not boring?

Q: Absolutely, if you don't mind.

SMITH: No, I don't mind.

Q: This is what we want.

SMITH: I sound boring to me. There are not many people in the world who would find somebody else's early life that fascinating, but if this is what this is about, I'm game.

Q: It is actually fascinating. I didn't know this about you.

SMITH: Well, I am sure you have fascinating stories too.

Q: Boys, cars, you can gloss over that if you want to, but just before leaving that period, we do want to get the essence of it. There was wanderlust; there was a pull towards the outside, which became the east coast; there was the trip around the entire country; there was the lure of Europe and Asia.

SMITH: Yes. Another important thing happened between high school and college. My school organized a trip to Europe for graduating seniors, and ten or 12 other girls from the school and I went to Europe for two months that summer, which was a fantastic experience. We had a little bus and an accompanying teacher who was the music teacher at the school and culturally very literate, and we visited a wonderful array of museums, cathedrals, and amazing sites throughout Western Europe.

Q: Was this the summer of 1963?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Okay, Belgium and where else?

SMITH: Belgium, the Netherlands, the U.K. (United Kingdom), France, Italy, Greece, Austria, and Germany.

Q: The whole thing was done by surface, by bus?

SMITH: Yes, mostly. We flew from Rome to Athens, and I think we flew to London. But otherwise, yes, a bus, and a ship for a bit in Greece.

Q: Then this is very important because, among other places, you went to the U.K. and you later went there in your professional life.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Is this analogous to your trip across the U.S.?

SMITH: Yes, somewhat. It was very influential. The trip confirmed that I wanted to see a lot more of Europe, and it whetted my appetite for other places as well.

Q: So it was informative. But it also reinforced the feeling you already had from before. You went with how many others?

SMITH: There were ten or 12 girls and one teacher. And we had a driver who joined us when we arrived.

Q: Imagine being that teacher. I guess you saw the things you would see on….

SMITH: The great sites, yes. It was sort of a "grand tour," not in terms of luxury, but in terms of seeing the highlights of Paris and Rome and Florence, etc.

Q: And your teacher had informed herself….

SMITH: Yes. I don't know whether she had done this kind of thing before; maybe so, because it was all arranged intelligently, staying in pensions and small hotels, and each day we saw significant things. It was wonderful.

Q: If you were in a pension or small hotel, did the impression that you were living in that place rather than just ….

SMITH: No, we were tourists. We didn't stay anywhere more than a few days. We had little adventures along the way, but the main thing was to see the great sights of the great cities of Europe.

Q: I guess London stood out. Was it all equal?

SMITH: No, it wasn't all equal. I suppose my most vivid memories are of some sights in France and Italy and Greece, actually. But London was wonderful, too. Actually, it was all great, but in different ways.

Q: Wow. I am thinking back to your ancestors and that they were all from Europe. Did you feel more at home, to yourself, some places than others? Did you feel Greece was as much home to you as…

SMITH: I wish I could say yes, but no. It was all so new. And coming from the far West, even though I had been around the U.S. on that trip I described, I felt like I was on another planet in Europe. I was just soaking up the antiquity, the sophistication, and the artistic and cultural richness. We went to the opera; we did a thousand things I had never done before.

Q: Now, if we do the math, between 1963, the end of the war 1945…

SMITH: I turned 18 on that trip.

Q: Yes. We are not yet 20 years after World War II. When I visited Europe sometime after that, in Bratislava, for example, you could see buildings temporarily propped up from 1945 and still there in 1967, when I was there. Did you feel, in middle Europe, especially where there had been this cataclysm of Germany, looking back did you…

SMITH: We were not in the devastated parts of Germany. In Austria, I don't remember war devastation. I remember that there certainly was not much of a tourist infrastructure in most of Europe, and I remember that there was a fair amount of poverty and poor sanitation. There was a different standard of personal hygiene than I was used to. But the war damage did not resonate with me except in England, where our teacher-guide made sure that we went to Coventry and saw the aftermath of the bombing of the cathedral. That was the only place that I recall having a palpable experience with war damage. What I am trying to convey is that the Europe that we saw in 1963 was a very, very much more old-fashioned Europe than the Europe that tourists see today, or even than tourists saw in the 1970s. Tourism was not happening on the scale that came later.

Q: The countries were not as cosmopolitan at that time as they are now.

SMITH: Yes. And few people spoke English.

Q: When I was talking about WWII, I wasn't really thinking that much of the physical damage as the mental and emotional cataclysm people had been through. I had certain reactions to that in the 1960s, when I was there. You were seeing museums, cathedrals and you, who have lived in Europe so much in your professional life, tell us how you saw it as different back then. I think you were saying that each country had a more distinct identity. What is different between the 1960s and the Europe that you saw later in life?

SMITH: It is easier to think about how I was different than how Europe was different. I was such a babe in the woods on that first trip, that I don't know that I can answer the question intelligently.

Q: Maybe even surface things like, there was no EU (European Union) at that time, you had to change currency at every border, and you had to have a visa and all this. To me, when changing money and going through a border and having your visa stamped, you feel like you are in another world. Much more than you do today.

SMITH: Yes, certainly there was that. I remember, also, there were a lot of people we met or saw who hadn't met Americans before. This is much less common now. I can cover these issues better when we talk later about a much bigger trip that I took in 1972-73, at an older enough age that I was more aware of differences.

Q: I think even Mark Twain talked about the hygiene differences. That seems to be a difference that …

SMITH: It was such a stupid little thing, but for a 17-year-old, it was memorable.

Q: Was this the case in all European countries?

SMITH: No, more in southern Europe than in northern Europe, but it didn't stop me from loving everywhere I went.

Q: So you had this discovery after your senior year of high school, you went back to Tacoma and, from there, across the country.

SMITH: Yes, my parents went with me to college and settled me in, and then I was on my own.

Q: Did you all fit in one car?

SMITH: Oh, no, we flew. And I was cowed by Wellesley at first. Many students were much more sophisticated than I, and more intellectual. The intellectual challenge that I got from my high school had been formative but suddenly seemed small-bore in comparison to girls who had attended famous East Coast prep schools.

Q: When I asked about what aspect of school most interested you, you said the challenge of it. Was it like mountain climbing, in that you just enjoyed the process of acquiring, remembering, and retaining knowledge?

SMITH: No. That was an element, but the knowledge itself was the exciting part. I guess I talked about the process because, when I was in public school, I remember feeling that I had to hide my curiosity a little bit. It wasn't "cool," you know, to be a good student and ambitious, at least for girls. But when I got to Annie Wright, being curious and intellectually ambitious were the "cool" things to be. It was an environment that enabled me to be what I wanted to be. Wellesley was even more stimulating in that respect.

Q: Any comment on the so-called anti-intellectual strain in American thought, about which books have been written?

SMITH: Yes, and I assign my students at Georgetown to read some of those books. Anti-intellectualism is certainly with us, regrettably. I guess most of us have experienced it at one time or another and it's troubling, isn't it?

Q: It is to me. Do you feel that this has grown, diminished, or stayed steady? And why in God's name does it exist? Why would it be a virtue to be ignorant? I have never understood that.

SMITH: I really don't understand it either. But I think that we have in our population a lot of people who have not had outstanding educations and who feel a bit threatened, maybe, if they can't compete with intellectuals. They also may feel understandably uncomfortable with other people acting superior and telling them what to do and think.

Q: So, forgive me, but this is interesting to me. Do you agree with the other thing that is sometimes said about the American public -- that Americans are distrustful of authority? You say that they don't like to be told what to do....

SMITH: Yes, because a lot of the people who are suspicious of intellectuals are suspicious, or used to be anyway, of the East Coast "mafia." Not the gangster mafia, but the East Coast intellectual elite that was perceived to have been running the country for a long time. A lot of people in the West where I grew up saw all those Easterners as hoity-toity intellectual types who were in charge, and remote, and, therefore, to be distrusted.

Q: So you betrayed those people by going to Boston?

SMITH: When I decided to move to the other side of the country, in some ways I suppose I did. What's funny is that I think of myself as partly from the East Coast and partly from the West Coast, which is now true. I certainly find that people on the two coasts, at least the ones I spend time with, talk about and interest themselves in quite different issues and pursuits.

Q: So you are very anguished in...

SMITH: No, not at all. It doesn't bother me in the slightest. In fact, I enjoy the differences and would never want to give up one coast for the other.

Q: Now, leaping ahead, you were the owner, or you created a graphic arts studio; you majored in art history. You know the question I am about to ask, don't you? Did you get to know any people at Wellesley who are now well known?

SMITH: No, unfortunately. Hillary Clinton, if that is who you mean, was two classes behind me. I met her when she was First Lady and we talked about this a bit. We had different academic paths at Wellesley and we were in different dorms. We probably never had a class together, although we were there for two years at the same time. And, Madeleine Albright, if that might also be who you mean, was quite a bit before me at Wellesley, so I didn't cross paths with her. And Diane Sawyer was in my class, but I didn't….

Q: You were the class of '67, I was the class of '68, and things were happening at that time.

SMITH: They certainly were!

Q: You ended up as an art history major, but if you had a typical liberal arts background, you had two years of dabbling or looking around. Were you affected by the politics that were going on in the U.S. at that time?

SMITH: Not so much in the beginning, because I arrived at Wellesley in 1963. All the major turmoil of the 1960s started happening a couple of years after that, and came to its height in the late 1960s, really. In any case, Wellesley was a bit of a protected environment in the early part of the decade, although not nearly as protected as that awful movie - which was set in the 1950s, not the 1960s - made it seem to be. The movie made it seem as though Wellesley was just a finishing school! Wellesley had been and certainly was in the 1960s a brainy, stimulating, wonderful place and not like that movie made it appear. I have even repressed the name of the movie by now [Mona Lisa Smile]. Anyway, as the 1960s went forward toward the end of my time at Wellesley, yes, I became very aware of what was going on at Berkeley, and the civil rights movement, the Vietnam protests, and so forth. Wellesley had people getting on buses and going to participate in some of the civil rights activities. I was not one of them, but I thought it was great that people were trying to change injustices.

Q: At that time there was a spectrum of protest activity, and you approved of those who were doing it but you chose not to do it?

SMITH: Yes, it was more my political-science friends who were on the buses, but I thought fine, go for it.

Q: So you now have become an activist on the environment. You had a consciousness at that time about why your friends were engaged in civil rights activities. Did you see that the use that you were put on the planet for was something else other than being…

SMITH: Yes. I was not politically active then, not very much at all. In fact, the main thing that happened to me politically during college was that I turned from just accepting the moderate Republican background that I grew up with in my family, and I switched political parties and became a Democrat. I had questioned a lot of "givens" during high school, but college was the first time that I was thinking about alternate ways of approaching the big political issues of the day.

Q: Did Wellesley lead you to that?

SMITH: It certainly wasn't Wellesley as an institution. I think it was what I learned in the political science and economics courses I took. I learned a lot, read a lot, knew a lot more people, and stayed up late as everybody in college does, talking about the meaning of life with people from all different backgrounds.

Q: Especially in your sophomore year?

SMITH: Yes, I suppose so.

Q: Why did that happen in your sophomore year? I have a theory.

SMITH: What's your theory?

Q: I think you go to college with great illusions as freshmen. You have great expectations, and it takes a year to become familiar with the environment. The second year, you have extreme disillusionment because you know there is a long time left to go yet before you will be doing anything. I think they call it the sophomore slump; the sheen of the newness of the freshman year has worn off and the awareness of all that you must get to before starting your life is discouraging; it is no longer romantic. But we are interviewing you, not me.

Now, Wellesley is not that far from Boston. Was it a different world than Boston?

SMITH: Not completely. Wellesley is a suburb of Boston, and one of the attractions of Wellesley for me was its proximity to Boston. I loved the idea of being near a big, vibrant, multi-university city, and I spent many wonderful times in Boston. As an art history major, I was in town often writing papers, sitting in front of paintings at the Museum of Fine Arts, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, or the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard. And Wellesley had a bus service so we could go to the Boston Symphony Orchestra dress rehearsals, virtually for free. I remember going on Thursday nights for one dollar.

Q: So you weren't just in a room of books, you really were getting into the metropolis nearby, when you went to Wellesley. Your classmates were doing the same?

SMITH: Some were, and some weren't; it varied. One thing that I think was quite different then from now, is that the Ivy League schools were still all male. So there was a lot of social back and forth with Cambridge, particularly, where Harvard and MIT were. Wellesley students who had boyfriends, or dates, or whatever, were always going into town to see their men friends. Young men were coming out to Wellesley as well. In fact, there was a kind of giant mixer going on among all the Seven Sisters and the Ivy League schools, with people going back and forth to each other's campuses for dating. Now that the Ivy League schools are coed, there is a different dynamic.

Q: Did the colleges themselves facilitate this?

SMITH: Yes, they put on mixers and so forth.

Q: This was part of an intellectual education, a social opening, and it appears to me you made the best of it.

SMITH: I am not sure that I made the best of the academic offerings, because there was so much other exploring to be done. I should have studied harder than I did. I studied pretty hard, but on the weekends I tended not to.

Q: The purpose of the weekend was to be in Cambridge?

SMITH: Or at Dartmouth. Freshman year I met a young man on a ski slope in Stowe, Vermont whom I started dating. He was at Dartmouth, and I spent a lot of time going up there on the weekends.

Q: What year?

SMITH: Well, he was a year older than I was. He graduated in 1966 and we got married after I graduated in 1967. After Dartmouth he studied architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Q: So there is a detail here. You did marry the guy you met on the ski slope. Let's get you through Wellesley first. You majored in art history....

SMITH: With a minor in English.

Q: At what point did you see, with some clarity, that that was your major?

SMITH: Pretty early on. I took the introductory art history course my freshman year, and I loved it. There was an absolutely inspiring professor who taught the introductory course. But it's embarrassing that I did not have any career ideas. In 1963, many young women, even ambitious young women, didn't imagine that they would have careers. Nevertheless many of my friends figured out their career paths and ended up going to graduate school. I don't know what I thought I was going to do. I must have thought I was going to learn all this wonderful material that would enrich me for the rest of my life, but I wasn't actually going to work. I just went through Wellesley for the fun of the learning, with no professional objective in mind.

Q: What about the orders that young men received? We were ordered to go and learn everything, and not to think about how this would lead to a career.

SMITH: This idea must have rubbed off on me, somehow.

Q: I am not sure this was unique to young women. It was unique maybe to the 50s and 60s -- don't worry, just learn everything. And it did cause some trauma for some of us, certainly for me, that later when it came time to..... But you just said something that's a little different; you're saying you assumed you would not work.

SMITH: Yes. My mother didn't work outside the home, and neither of my grandmothers did either, although the traveling one was a serious painter. She sold some of her

paintings, but otherwise none of my female relatives earned money. My childhood model was that women stayed at home.

Q: You accepted this without difficulty?

SMITH: I simply didn't think about it, which is mortifying, but I have to admit it is true.

Q: It may have lightened the load and allowed you to learn things more based on your interest.

SMITH: I don't know, but one of my best friends went immediately into law school and two others went into other graduate schools, planning to be teachers or professors. I really don't know what I thought I was going to be.

Q: A little bit later, we will figure out how you came to your work, and how you broke out of a paradigm. Do you think this happened while you were an undergraduate, I mean, emotionally; or did it happen later by necessity?

SMITH: It happened later by necessity, and by happenstance, and by serendipity, and all kinds of things that I can't take much credit for. But the time at Wellesley, anyway, I liked very much. Some people look back on women's schools and think, "ugh." But for me, Wellesley was a very, very stimulating environment, with fine professors and mind-expanding courses. In addition to the courses in my major and minor, I made myself take, or I was made to take, subjects that I wouldn't have otherwise explored, and that was all to the good.

Q: Was graduate school ever a factor?

SMITH: I wanted to be out in the world after college, and I was not attracted to graduate school, particularly. I guess when so many of my friends ended up going to graduate school, I thought maybe I would do that later, but I was just not quite ready to do it immediately. The Dartmouth man I mentioned and I were planning to marry and that became the focus for the future. He was in graduate school, and one person in a young couple being in graduate school seemed like enough.

Q: Well, that finishes this session. But first let's get you graduated and off the ski slope with one Paul White in 1965.

SMITH: We met in 1964, my freshman year.

Q: Meanwhile, you were discovering Boston. There are many jokes about art history majors I guess, if you listen to Car Talk. They poke a lot of fun at art history majors as people who evidently haven't given thought as to how to turn it into a career; they kid them a lot. But you feel that it served as a general liberal arts education, correct?

SMITH: Very much so. It's a very pleasant route into history, for one thing, and I liked that a lot. I wasn't in art history only for the beauty and the delectation. The social and political history that comes along with the history of painting and architecture is fascinating. I don't know what they say in Car Talk, but I acquired a broad cultural history and did eventually figure out how to use it.

In addition to the insights that it provided into history, I think that the study of art history, like the study of music and literature, connects people with the highest thoughts and creative achievements of humankind and is, therefore, an enormously enriching and educating experience. The arts enable transcendent experiences, in a way, and have certainly informed the entire rest of my life.

Q: So, what did things look like in June 1967?

SMITH: Well, I was going to get married the next month, so that was my focus. I had dated the young man I met in Stowe, Paul White, through most, but not all, of college. I had a couple of other boyfriends, too, and Paul and I broke up my junior year. I then had a serious romance with a man in New York City, which was quite a wonderful experience. Anyway, Paul White and I were married the summer of 1967. He had traveled a lot, had been at school in Switzerland before college, and had been in Brazil for a summer with the American Field Service. He spoke several languages, and for our honeymoon he wanted to go to Portugal, because of speaking Portuguese, and to Switzerland to show me where he had been at school. I wanted to go to London, so we went to those three places and had a marvelous time. That was my second foray into Europe.

Q: What did you think was going to be the result of being a graduate of Wellesley and being married to a young man who had traveled a lot? What did you think was going to be your fate for the next 20, 30 years, at that time? What were you expecting? What was his profession, I should ask?

SMITH: After Dartmouth, he went directly into the Harvard School of Design, into architecture. He planned to be an architect, but he decided after the second year to leave Harvard and become a painter. At first that seemed okay. Later it didn't seem okay, and that's a whole personal story. Anyway, what I thought was going to happen to me was still quite vague.

Q: You had said that you were assuming you would not work. Did that change in anyway?

SMITH: It changed immediately when we got back from that wonderful trip to Europe. It became apparent that somehow or other we were going to have to eat. His parents were very generous about providing for the cost of the graduate school, and they helped us a bit with housing. Anyway, I started looking for a job and ended up working in Cambridge in a clothing store, just sort of accidentally. It was what was available. I didn't like it, and so I found a job a couple of months later at an avant-garde home

furnishings store called Design Research, which had a strong architectural profile. Ben Thompson, the architect, founded it, and used it to bring cutting-edge Scandinavian design to the marketplace.

Q: I probably saw you there.

SMITH: I was only there for a little less than two years.

Q: Okay, it looked like you were going through a transition period while your husband was studying to become an architect but did not finish his training. Maybe we should leave the story with an element of suspense. We can get to the sequel, maybe next week, if you are willing.

[The next week] Q: In our last episode, we had you in Cambridge, Massachusetts working in a store while your husband was at the Harvard School of Design. Can we go forward from that time?

SMITH: Sure, I think I will go rather quickly over this period. I ended up as store manager at Design Research but after about a year in that role, I realized I really didn't want to stay in retail. I was hired to be the business representative of a start-up graphic design company, which was fascinating, despite my lack of specific background in the field. After a year, one of the designers and I bought the company from the man who started it, and we continued it as our own business. It was very interesting to be two young women in 1969 running a business, because it was quite a new venture for young women to do such things.

Q: This was at Cambridge also?

SMITH: It was, by then, in Boston but our clients were both in Cambridge and in Boston.

Q: Was it in Back Bay?

SMITH: No, by then my husband and I owned a house in the South End. My designer partner and I ran the business out of that house, and the work was interesting and reasonably lucrative. But, to tell you the truth, after a few years the business and sales end of the work stopped appealing to me. I probably would have felt differently if I had been a designer, but I felt as though my work wasn't making any positive difference, and that people were going to buy plenty of "stuff" without me knocking myself out to encourage them to buy more. I wanted to do something that had a little more lasting meaning.

I eventually sold my half of the business to my partner. During my last year in the business my then husband and I planned ahead for a major trip, saved a lot of money, and then with that and the money from the sale of the company, we went to Europe for a year.

We bought a Volkswagen bus, traveled around to major and minor cultural sites, and camped all over.

Q: With a smokestack?

SMITH: It wasn't quite as much the hippie wagon you might picture. But we were living basically a very nomadic life and went most everywhere in Western and Eastern Europe and North Africa. We traveled as far east as the Soviet Union, driving there from Hungary and then out to Finland, and as far south as the Sahara in Morocco.

Q: In 1969 or '70?

SMITH: This was 1972-73, a full year. We started in September and drove south, and spent January driving across North Africa, Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. We took a ferry to Sicily and came up in the spring through Italy and Greece. Our itinerary enabled us to see northern Europe in the summer and the Mediterranean in the winter. It was fantastic. However, I made two important decisions on that trip. First, although my husband and I did not disagree about what to see – we saw all the great museums, churches, palaces, and sights of every country in our extensive itinerary – nevertheless living in such cramped conditions came to clarify, to me anyway, that this was not a marriage that could last.

On that trip I also decided I wanted to join the Foreign Service, and that decision came about in an interesting way. We had a good friend whose parents were in the Foreign Service and stationed in Munich. They were very kind and invited us to dinner when we passed through Bavaria. I confided to them that I didn't know what to do with my life, I hadn't wished to stay in the advertising and graphic design business, I had an art history degree that I didn't know how to use, and I wanted to do something interesting and valuable. And they said, "Well, clearly, you should join USIA and become a cultural attaché." And I said, "What is USIA?" So they explained that USIA handled American public diplomacy – cultural, academic, and information/press work overseas under the policy umbrella of the State Department. I had one of those instant moments of recognition and certainty. I knew they were right, and that I would aim for that path as soon as I got back to the U.S.

JOINING THE FOREIGN SERVICE
Q: Since this is an historic moment, when was it, what month, what year?

SMITH: It had to have been sometime in the spring of 1973. I kept a journal, so I could figure it out.

Q: Was your friend a USIS (U.S. Information Service, the overseas name for USIA) officer?

SMITH: No, but he had been in the Foreign Service for a long time. The couple knew me, and what the possibilities were. It was enormous good fortune that they guided me to

what turned out to be an excellent decision. I went back to Boston and started studying for the Foreign Service exam on my own, basically. (Aspiring USIA and State Department officers took the same exam.) While studying, I also worked for Amnesty International, extending their reach into New England.

Q: Many young people nowadays would ask what you studied, because when they ask this question now, there is no clear answer. What does one study?

SMITH: This was so long ago I am not sure that my experience is pertinent for today. I tried to review the college courses that I thought were relevant, like economics, political science, and history. I tried to read up-to-date books on foreign affairs. My mother had a friend who was married to an ambassador, a career ambassador, who happened to be in BEX (the Board of Examiners for the Foreign Service) at the time. He advised me to start reading every single article in The New York Times.

Q: That used to be my advice to people. So, let that be on the record: Read The New York Times.

SMITH: Well, I read it exhaustively for the six months or so that I had to prepare, reading everything except for the sports and society sections, even reading the business section. It would take me until Wednesday to get through Sunday, and then I would catch up and absorb the rest of the week as it went along. This was useful because The Times provided so much background that I felt I really got full picture of each issue.

Q: Having been in BEX myself recently, I would say that today, in 2007, the same advice would be valid. Okay, so that takes you through 1973.

SMITH: I took the exam in 1974. I got in, much to my amazement, and joined in 1975.

Q: Any classmates that you think of fondly?

SMITH: Yes, absolutely. I am still very much in touch with Alice LeMaistre, who was in my class, and in fact I am about to go on a big trip to India with her. I am still in touch, a bit, with Ray Orley who is in Albuquerque. I guess that's it, although, of course, sometimes I cross paths with others.

Q: Alice and I have worked together. We will get to that later, I guess. So, back in 1975 when things were different and USIA was an independent organization, what was the size of your class, what type of training did you have?

SMITH: There were a bit more than 20 of us in the USIA class, and we were the first class in history that had more women than men. I think we had maybe one more woman than we had men; we were also pretty diverse. There was racial diversity as well as gender balance, and so we felt very modern and very excited. The training was excellent. I remember it was several months long and we participated in the State Department's A-100 course for part of the time.

Many liberal friends from my Cambridge-Boston days thought that I had sold out by joining the U.S. Government. This was, you know, just at the end of the Vietnam era, and working for the government was not the first thing that a lot of my peers thought of doing. But to me, it seemed like that was the very reason to be in government, to be part of this generation of the 1960s that was embracing change and wanting all elements of society to be represented by, and to be in, the government. So, perhaps presumptuously, perhaps quixotically, some of us felt ourselves to be a force for good.

Q: We had similar but different preoccupations in my class a bit later. Do you think that the sense of seeing a possibility for change in government was premeditated, or did that come along during the training?

SMITH: No, it came along not from training, but during training. Some of us in the entry class who were in favor of reexamining and changing the status quo found each other and found that we felt similarly.

I would add that I certainly came into government service wanting to serve my country and to do something meaningful. I loved the idea of combining that with travel and with drawing on my arts background. I was, at that point, and partly because of that seminal conversation in Munich with the parents of my friend, picturing myself as becoming a cultural attaché. That was my aspiration, my highest goal, and it seemed to fit with USIA's (U.S. Information Agency) mandate and my background.

I would also say that in the mid-1970s, cultural work was one of the realms – together with consular, personnel and other kinds of administrative work – for which women Foreign Service Officers were thought suitable. Most political and economic officers were men. During the 1970s, however, attitudes changed and more opportunities opened up for ambitious women officers. For myself, I did become a cultural attaché and loved the work, but my own aspirations evolved and I eventually came to want to do more. But when I first came into Foreign Service, I was intent upon the cultural attaché role.

Q: Again, this is about you and not me, but I came in with the exact same motivation, and I have never been a cultural attaché, and I have never worked for USIA. In your case, did they have a thing called the IO/CAO (Information Officer/Cultural Affairs Officer) exercise in the '70s?

SMITH: I don't remember.

Q: Did your training give you equal amounts of CAO (Cultural Affairs Officer, or cultural attaché) and IO (Information Officer, or press attaché) training?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: And you had no doubt that the CAO part was the part that interested you?

SMITH: Right.

Q: Okay. Do you remember the day you were given an envelope with the name of a city in it?

SMITH: Oh, yes, absolutely! You mean where I was going on my first post?

Q: Yes.

SMITH: Well, we weren't just given an envelope; we had some choice, just as Foreign Service officers do now. We were given a list of available posts at our entry level, as happens now, and we were supposed to rank-order our preferences. I most of all wanted to go to Eastern Europe. It was the height of the Cold War, and I saw myself as entering government service to be in the thick of important matters of policy. Fortunately for me, there were not very many people who felt the same pull to venture behind the Iron Curtain. In fact, there was just one other person in the class, Jeremy Curtin, who is still in the State Department, who wanted to go to Eastern Europe. There were two available Warsaw Pact posts on the list, Warsaw and Bucharest, and we didn't literally flip a coin, but it was as if we did. He ended up going to Warsaw, and I to Bucharest. And I was thrilled about it.

Q: Those were tough times in Bucharest, very tough times.

SMITH: The times became tougher in the 1980s than they were in the 1970s. But the 1970s were still tough throughout the Warsaw Pact.

Q: Jeremy stayed in that area and went to Finland, I think, and he became sort of a Baltic specialist, with some exceptions. So, okay, now you were living temporarily in Washington, I guess.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: We are now in 1975?

SMITH: Yes, '75. And the training went into 1976. Of course, once I got the assignment, I was slated to go into Romanian language training, which I did at FSI (the Foreign Service Institute).

Q: At romantic Rosslyn, Virginia.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: That was a six-month period, I guess.

SMITH: Yes, it was. I went to post in the summer of 1976.

Q: Just before we get you to post, you were living in Washington. No doubt you had seen Washington, but maybe had not lived in it before?

SMITH: That is correct.

Q: Do you remember your impressions of Washington in 1976?

SMITH: I guess I was so excited about being in the Foreign Service that the whole experience of being with the class and then throwing myself into language training were my main focus. I did not partake massively in Washington's offerings, regrettably. I remember it was still close enough to the Kennedy period that people were still making that joke of his about Washington: it had all the charm of the North and the efficiency of the South. There was some truth that Washington was still like that in the 1970s.

Q: This was before the construction of the building bearing his name, I think.

SMITH: No, the Kennedy Center had just been built, and the era of great performing arts groups coming to Washington was beginning. Many of the great museums were well established, however, and, for an art history major, that was wonderful. But, no, I probably wasn't paying quite enough attention to Washington as a city.

Q: Perhaps you knew you'd later have a chance to do that. So, you learned Romanian, which is a romance language. Not the most difficult language in the world, but did the language training come naturally?

SMITH: I had studied French and had had four years of Latin; of course, both were very helpful. I am not a brilliant language student, but my tested language aptitude surprised me by being high and, with study, adequate fluency eventually came, although I wish it had come more easily. I was in a class with a couple of other people, one of whom was my boss-to-be, and fortunately I kept pace.

Q: So, you got truncated State Department training, including a little bit of Consular training, a little bit of other disciplines, and you said you had extensive CAO and IO training at the old USIA building. Are we on Massachusetts Avenue at that time, or Pennsylvania Avenue?

SMITH: We were on Pennsylvania Avenue, 1776 for sure, and I believe 1750 was added just after that period.

Q: So were you learning mainly the theory as opposed to the practice?

SMITH: Not really. In addition to theoretical sessions, we had exercises that showed us how to work video cameras, for example. The training went from the practical to the conceptual.

POSTING AS JUNIOR OFFICER/ASSISTANT CULTURAL ATTACHÉ IN BUCHAREST

Q: So, off you went to Bucharest in 1976?

SMITH: Yes, I was a JOT (Junior Officer Trainee), and the post put me almost exclusively on the cultural side of public diplomacy. I first filled an empty assistant cultural affairs officer's slot and worked with the exchange programs. I also worked as the deputy to the American Center director. We had a very nice, freestanding American Cultural Center in Bucharest.

In addition to talking about the work, I would like to say a few things about Romania at that time. Each country in the Warsaw Pact, of course, was distinct; but in some ways, Romania was more distinct than others, and not because it was the only one with a romance language. Romania was the one country in the Warsaw Pact that publicly criticized the Soviets for the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia; this meant that to U.S. eyes, Romania was playing a maverick role within the Warsaw Pact. Romania, also, in part to keep a certain tense distance from Moscow, had friendlier relations with China than the other Warsaw Pact countries did. The United States was quite interested in seeing the anomalous nature of Romania's position in the Warsaw Pact stay as anomalous as possible.

I'll add that life for diplomats in communist Romania had its hardships. We were isolated, followed, bugged, and deprived of many comforts. The Romanian people had to subsist on whatever produce and dairy products couldn't be sold as exports, and diplomats had access to occasional meat and other products in a dismal "diplomatic store." We Americans were lucky: every few months a "support flight" would arrive from one of our PXs in Germany, full of familiar food.

Q: Did Romania not have friendlier relations with Israel than the other Warsaw Pact countries?

SMITH: I think it did. The evidence that I remember is that every once in awhile, oranges would come on the market, which was, of course, a great luxury, and they were from Israel.

Q: So it seemed, or maybe you were told, that there was a quid pro quo - the United States was interested in Romania. Ceauşescu, I guess, was both stepping on the gas and the clutch in terms of doing what he needed to do in order to pass muster in the Warsaw Pact but maintaining a certain independence.

SMITH: A certain independence, yes.

Q: I think he did not allow Soviet deployment of nuclear weapons on Romanian territory. What did you make of this? As you grew to know the country, did you think Ceauşescu was being opportunistic? In retrospect, he looks like a pretty bad guy.

SMITH: Yes, although the aspect of his policy that sought independence from the Soviet Union was of interest to the U.S. and certainly seemed to me to be worth encouraging.

The side of our policy that I saw the most closely, however, was our educational and cultural exchanges. With Romania, as with other countries in the Warsaw Pact, we had an elaborate bilateral exchange agreement: a treaty that specified exactly how many scholars and cultural activities would go back and forth between the two countries, at what level, in which subjects, and funded by whom. This agreement was renegotiated every couple of years, which was a laborious and difficult job. We were always pushing the Romanians, as we were in the other countries where we had these agreements, to accept more exchanges. And they were always quite hesitant about increased interaction. Their goals, principally, were to get their scientists to the U.S., and our goals were to get our humanities scholars to Romania.

Q: Do you feel, looking back on it, that the embassy or USIS (United States Information Service) had the primary sway over the selection of candidates? The local government did have an agenda, you just said so, and the U.S. agenda was not identical. Where did you meet in the middle? Was there any tug-of-war?

SMITH: Oh yes, there was a constant tug-of-war.

Q: Let's go into that.

SMITH: We always wanted the candidates to be chosen based on merit and open competition, and that was one of the principal arenas for tugs-of-war. The Romanian government never allowed open, merit-based selection, of course. We insisted on it as much as we possibly could, knowing that some of the people chosen were going to be chosen by the Romanian side and have marching orders from them. But not everyone fell into that category.

Q: There was no commission, I guess. Was selection done by….

SMITH: Fulbright Commission, you mean?

Q: Yes.

SMITH: Oh, no. Not in Romania.

Q: The selection was nominally done by your section?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: With recommendations from the Romanian government? Did the government provide you candidates, sort of the first cut, so to speak?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Did you feel that you had the final say over who was selected in the final analysis? I am asking because this is an issue certainly for that period, not only in Warsaw Pact countries, but also in Africa and other regions where the governments would say, "we will give you the candidates." There would always be a back-and-forth.

SMITH: Well, there was certainly a back-and-forth, and sometimes they won, sometimes we won. We always insisted, however, upon academic merit and English language ability, or the scholars or participants in the programs just couldn't make it at an American university. In contrast to the academic exchange programs, for the professional exchange program called the International Visitor Program, we would supply interpreters, and so language ability was not a problem.

Q: Do you remember roughly the size of the program, in terms of numbers of people back and forth?

SMITH: It was in the teens and twenties in each direction annually. The program was not huge on either side.

I had considerable responsibility for the Americans coming to Romania, although there was a senior cultural attaché who was ultimately responsible and whom I was helping. The American scholars were doing fascinating projects all over the country, mostly in the arts and humanities and in topics that we were interested in and that the Romanians were comfortable with, modern political history not being one of them. But American scholars were conducting studies in linguistics, in music, in poetry, and in more ancient, more distant history. Some of them were teaching English. They were a great group, intrepid in many ways because they had to live in circumstances that were more like the Peace Corps than like the typical university experience in the First World.

Q: Did they have pretty much freedom of movement? They were out in Transylvania, and places like that?

SMITH: Yes, they were.

Q: We don't know the degree that the Romanian government may have been scrutinizing them, but they were not prohibited from moving around?

SMITH: No, but there were certain areas like military enclaves where they were not supposed to go, where none of us was supposed to go. But in Romania, except those prohibited areas, they and we could go where we wanted, and we did. We drove all over the country, went up to painted the monasteries in the north, saw the sights and the Carpathians, and enjoyed the Black Sea beaches, all of which was wonderful.

Q: How many cities in Romania benefited from having American Fulbrighters?

SMITH: We only had people in Bucharest and Cluj at that time. We might have had somebody in Braşov when I was there, as well; I don't remember. And we had people who had projects, but didn't live, in Costanza, as I recall.

Q: The town on the Black Sea?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: This is why we joined the Foreign Service.

SMITH: Yes, oh absolutely. It was so exciting. I felt as though just being there was a political act of defiance against repressive communism, because we looked and acted so different from people there. I remember that simply walking out of my apartment building in the morning would elicit stares and comments. It was as though by being present personally and operating our programs we were keeping the windows open between their closed society and the West.

Q: This is a delicate balancing act. After Ceauşescu's fall, Romania and its repressive nature became a little bit better known. People who hadn't been observing it before that but who read of the collapse of the regime would think, "Ah, those who interacted closely with the Americans might have been compromised, might have had difficulties in their lives."

SMITH: Yes, it was very delicate indeed, and very, very few Romanians would dare to come to an American house for an event. Some would get official permission to go to ambassadorial receptions marking, say, the Fourth of July or the conclusion of our treaty negotiations on the education, cultural and scientific exchange agreements; but the whole time I was there, I was never invited to a Romanian house.

Q: Do you think the Fulbrighters had greater access?

SMITH: Absolutely, yes. But, still, it was not easy for them either.

Q: What was your sense of what you were seeing and what you were hearing, in terms of how contrived this might have been? I am sure you were in close touch with some of the Fulbright professors. They were meeting students and the students were saying things in class. In any university, you suppose that the comment of a student originates with the student. In a repressive system, is it possible that there were things going on in that class to gauge the intentions of the professor? Were there students put into that class?

SMITH: Probably. We always thought so. But that didn't make it not worth doing, because not everybody was like that. Even those students who might have been put into classrooms for a nefarious purpose might have still been affected positively by contact with someone from the outside. And I felt it wasn't only the Fulbright Program that was providing these kinds of benefits. We had an English teaching program that I was quite involved with, and we worked on it with the British Council. We had a cooperative

arrangement with the Council, so we weren't counterproductively competing with each other. Together we would run workshops for teachers of English. Although the teachers had been chosen and trusted by the Romanian government to have contact with us and were, therefore, probably ideologically "safe" in the government's eyes at least on the surface, I felt as though when we ran our workshops we were presenting them with ideas, and opportunities, and texts of stories, and history and novels and so forth, that they wouldn't otherwise have had, and that were, I am sure, extremely influential.

Q: So you kept the windows open?

SMITH: We felt as though we did, yes.

Q: Any sense of the numbers? You had Fulbright professors and scholars, I suppose, maybe in equal numbers, more or less?

SMITH: I don't remember the specifics but I'd guess we had eight or ten of each in an academic year.

Q: It would be the professors, I guess, who would have had more contact with the public than the scholars?

SMITH: Oh, not necessarily. Some of the classes were very small. The professors were not necessarily addressing 400 people in a lecture hall. Some of these people were teaching tiny classes on, say, American literature.

Q: We weren't concerned with the numbers of people; we were concerned with the quality of the exchange.

SMITH: We wanted the numbers to be higher, but the regime was not always eager to let us fulfill our desires.

Q: If the regime was as repressive as it is reputed to be now, why did they allow this to happen?

SMITH: It was the only way they could get their scientists to the U.S. And if every single one of those scientists was a spy, the exchange still was worth it for the United States. I don't believe that the spying was a major danger to us. I believe that some of the Romanian scholars were meant to spy, and many of them probably tried to find out things. But I think that most of them came back flabbergasted and favorably impressed with how open – and prosperous – our society was then (and still is). And the fact is, most of the material that they were supposed to spy on and pick up, they could probably just get off the shelf in any public library.

Q: After this, I will tell you about a certain person whom I had as an IV (International Visitor), who took pictures a lot; it's a funny story.

SMITH: We were not supposed to take pictures in a lot of places in Romania.

Q: No, this was an IV in the U.S.

SMITH: So, he probably thought taking pictures was really illicit.

Q: He would take pictures of people, but there would be these interesting backgrounds behind the people - electricity plants, and such. It was very funny. Do you feel - this is a softball question, I guess - or do you think you have evidence, that there was a ripple effect? Since the numbers were not great, and since people's minds were opened, even those who were sent on a mission, could you sense Romanian society opening up despite the system?

SMITH: At the time, we were engaged in a valiant effort whose effectiveness was uncertain. Certainly in the 1980s, Ceauşescu cracked down further. I think the 1980s were worse for Romania than the 1970s, because that's when all those horrifying stories about the orphanages came out, and when Ceauşescu was bleeding the country dry to pay off the national debt in his misguided attempt to restructure the economy. And so perhaps the long-term effects of our programs didn't emerge until the collapse of communism, beginning with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. I believe we had to have had a positive effect long-term, but I can't say that I was sure of that when I was there.

Q: Looking back at it?

SMITH: Looking back at it, I definitely think we had an effect. Certainly we demonstrated that American culture and society were every bit as "fine" as what was pouring into Romania from the Soviet Union – and much more innovative. By being friendly and "good people," we certainly contradicted Soviet propaganda that painted Americans as evil. And we kept the windows open to the West in a country that had considered itself part of Europe since its tenure as the farthest eastern reach of the Roman Empire.

Q: Any anecdotes or adventures associated with your tour? Your tour in Bucharest was two, three years?

SMITH: It was a little less than two years, and there were a couple of definite adventures. Well, it was not an "adventure," but the most important thing about that assignment for me was that by that time I was separated from my first husband and on the way to getting a divorce. I met Sidney Smith, another Foreign Service Officer at our embassy in Bucharest, with whom I fell in love and came back to the United States to marry. He was the science attaché at our embassy and was on loan from the National Science Foundation in that position. We used to joke that we were the only two American diplomats who thought that Bucharest at that time was a lovely, romantic city. Everybody else thought it was quite grim. But we had a marvelous time.

Q: Wonderful. You didn't have to report to anybody, I guess, because of the nationality?

SMITH: No, fortunately there were no problems on that plane. (Explanation: in communist countries, single Foreign Service Officers were required to report romances to our security officers, and we were advised to "date in NATO" to prevent security breaches.). I'll admit it was unusual to conduct a romance under the beady eyes of the Securitate (the Romanian Secret Police), which watched and listened to everything we did.

Q: Maybe it made their job more interesting.

SMITH: Well, we figured that if this was new to them that was their problem, not ours.

Q: I guess everybody knew there was the Securitate. Did you sense it? Did you see it?

SMITH: Oh, yes. There were "guards" posted outside my apartment 24/7 (twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week). But I used to take them tea and cookies, figuring that it was better….

Q: Why alienate them?

SMITH: Yes, why not have them, you know, be comfortable and protect me if they were going to be there all the time.

Q: We have heard stories about people saying things in the privacy of their homes, like wouldn't it be nice if there were a plant in that corner…

SMITH: I have heard those stories, but I don't have any myself.

Q: That was mostly the Soviet Union, I guess.

SMITH: Although we always assumed….

Q: Right, okay. I was in a similar situation once and I decided I had nothing to hide, so I was not going to start now. Let me ask, did this alter your behavior in any way knowing that you were…?

SMITH: No, you get used to it after awhile. You certainly know that you're not going to talk about anything classified outside of certain rooms in the embassy. But you shouldn't do this anyway, so there were no fundamental changes from doing what you were supposed to do.

Q: With the restrictions on Romanians more than on you, did you feel that you were able to make Romanian friends? And if so, did you know what you were dealing with?

SMITH: It was very hard to make Romanian friends, real friends, outside the embassy. But, inside the embassy, we had wonderful Foreign Service National employees,

Romanians, who worked with us. I am still in touch with several of them, and very much valued their friendship and guidance there.

Q: Have they shared with you their feelings as things changed in their country in the years after you left?

SMITH: Interestingly, the ones that I am still in touch with have all left. They all left Romania as soon as they could, while it was still communist. Two are in the U.S. and one is in Vienna.

The other significant thing that happened during the Bucharest assignment, and this, I suppose, was an adventure in a terrible way, was that there was a very severe earthquake in Bucharest in the spring of 1977. It registered 7.5 on the Richter scale. It struck outside of Bucharest, but it affected Bucharest drastically. As I recall, more than 1500 people died, many buildings collapsed, and thousands were injured; it was just horrible. My husband to-be, being the science attaché, was deeply involved in delivering an impressive amount of U.S. earthquake assistance in terms of medicines, construction advice, seismic devices, and all manner of aid. He was in constant contact with Romanian scientists, engineers, and government officials, whom he probably knew better than almost anybody in the embassy except the ambassador, who was a fantastic ambassador, I might add, Harry Barnes.

Q: Was the Romanian government happy to receive this assistance?

SMITH: I believe they were. The earthquake was so devastating, and the U.S. offered very fast and very capable help. We brought over some outstanding earthquake experts. I remember meeting some of them who were very knowledgeable. They advised about aftershocks and all the construction implications of rebuilding, and they studied the fault lines and advised about the seismological implications of the quake. It was a gratifying experience to see U.S. assistance deployed so effectively in such a crisis.

Q: Once again, to squeeze the juice out of it, think of the IV program, the international visitors program, which I guess you must have worked on?

SMITH: I was actually not working on that personally as much as the Fulbright Program.

Q: You saw it from down the hall, perhaps?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Did the numbers increase? Did the Embassy bring alumni of the program in to debrief them?

SMITH: Yes, and that was always hard. They were always very reluctant to come, and they were probably being told to be reluctant.

Q: Aside from being a charming city because of your personal circumstances, what else …? There's an opera house there, a museum?

SMITH: Oh, yes.

Q: What did you get involved with outside of your work?

SMITH: The theater was the most interesting form of the arts in Bucharest at that time, as was true in many countries in Eastern Europe during the Cold War, because there is no permanent record of what is said in a theater. Comments from the stage happened only in the moment and, therefore, the envelope could be pushed more in theater than in literature, where there is a published record. Furthermore, there were some brilliant Romanian directors -- Liviu Ciulei comes to mind -- who were working in Bucharest at that time. Although my Romanian was not perfect, I was able to go to the theater and understand enough to know what was going on. So that was very exciting. Romania's directors and stage designers were so creative. They could make astounding spectacles and very evocative sets out of nothing, out of the lids of tin cans or whatever.

Q: Again, with hindsight, was there an agenda of the playwrights and the directors?

SMITH: Yes. The good ones who were pushing the envelope were trying to object to the repressive regime, but in very subtle ways.

Q: Plausible deniability?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Were the audiences very receptive to this?

SMITH: Very receptive.

Q: Were the audiences an elite, or do you think they represented a broad cross section?

SMITH: I don't think they were so much a political elite as an intellectual elite. They were the educated people, for the most part. This was a phenomenon that I remember, certainly, in Bucharest; and I don't remember whether it was happening in Cluj or in any of the other cities. I think it was probably more Bucharest-based.

Q: So, a lot was said but not written?

SMITH: Yes, things were said quickly on stage.

Q: Having to do with humor, understatement?

SMITH: Yes, jokes about the regime or the leaders, but always deniable.

Q: Was the regime too stupid to know what was happening?

SMITH: Some of the censors were thought to be intellectually challenged. And on our side, we were also pushing the envelope. I remember at the American Cultural Center we put on the movie, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, which had just come out. I had seen it in the States and loved it for all the obvious reasons. But when I saw it in Bucharest through the eyes of the audience there, I realized, in addition to its other messages, it was a play about repression and about control over free thinking. This had an enormous impact in a closed society.

Q: Do you think the audiences saw the nurse who restrained Jack Nicholson to be evocative of their own government?

SMITH: Yes. I could just feel that in the air.

Q: Was there excitement when the American Indian picked up the sink and tossed it out the window?

SMITH: Absolutely.

Q: Did you ever meet Ceauşescu or any other….

SMITH: No, though I saw him once across the street from our Cultural Center.

I should mention that we hosted the American Ballet Theatre in Bucharest, and they presented a couple of very modern pieces that were far from the classic Russian tradition. That was highly provocative in its way. I remember accompanying the American company backstage, where the Romanian set people and directors and costume and lighting technicians were talking to the Americans, and there was a feeling of such excitement on the part of the Romanians. They were using several different languages to communicate; French, German, and Italian were all shooting back and forth. People didn't speak so much English then as they do now.

Q: As you are describing this, Ambassador, I am getting goose flesh because this is what we know was happening in Eastern Europe, again in retrospect, that was so positive.

SMITH: Yes, and Judith Jamison also came to Bucharest when I was there. She was with Alvin Ailey, and few Romanians had ever seen a tall, magnificent African American woman. She danced with great force and she blew everyone away.

Q: Again, do you think these cultural exchange performances reached a wide audience?

SMITH: Yes, they played at the Opera House to packed audiences.

Q: Wow! And everyone wanted a ticket?

SMITH: Absolutely.

Q: Fantastic. Were there also publications, now regrettably terminated, from the U.S. Government?

SMITH: Yes. We had an excellent magazine that was translated into Romanian.

Q: Were those hot commodities and read by multiple readers?

SMITH: Yes, all the things you heard about America Illustrated in the USSR and its sister publications throughout the Warsaw Pact were true.

Q: These were excerpts from American periodicals that were put together?

SMITH: Yes. I had a lot more to do with that in Belgrade, which we will get to soon.

Q: Okay then, let's move on. Earlier in talking about your art history education, you used the word humankind, and you used the word transcendent. This is intriguing. Talk to me a little bit about U.S. national interests and the interests of the human race. Where do they meet when you are doing public diplomacy? Does that question make sense? You were paid by the U.S. taxpayer to go out to foreign countries and to represent the United States. But your training gave you an appreciation for values that transcend any nationality, I think. Did you conjure, at any point, what you were doing with foreign audiences when you were representing American culture or universal culture? Were you mindful that there was always an American content in what you did?

SMITH: Well, certainly. Without American content, our activities wouldn't have been a product of our government, nor should they have been paid for by the taxpayers. But that doesn't mean, because the arts we presented were American, that they didn't also have universal messages or resonance. I certainly thought that the best of what we did was both American and universal, and connected us, therefore, with people in other cultures on a very profound level.

Q: Then let me ask you. You studied art history, which I think was world art history, or perhaps mainly European art history; how did this prepare you to present American culture? American culture is a creature of pretty recent origin, 200 years. As an art historian, you were studying things from different countries from different times.

SMITH: Yes, but I studied American art, architecture, and sculpture along with everything else. Furthermore, in high school and at Wellesley I had a very good basic liberal arts education that also covered history, literature and, to an extent, the performing arts. So, although one can always be better prepared, I felt reasonably well prepared to represent our culture and society.

Q: You said a minute ago that what you were doing transcended national differences?

SMITH: Yes, as the best of any culture can do. I am not saying that we have a corner on that market.

Q: Okay, we are getting to two years in Bucharest, but let's return for a moment to your childhood and what you said about integrity. Why does this notion of integrity emerge as such an important aspect of your life, a week after we discussed your childhood?

SMITH: It has simply been a guiding force in my life. I think that most of us who are proud of public service feel that we have conducted our duties, I am sure you would agree, with integrity; we know we have not gone out and lied for our country, but we have kept true to our convictions. I felt that I had a good grounding in integrity, thanks to my parents.

Q: That was, in fact, the obsession of my JOT class. Every single one of the 24 of us did not know that all the others came in with the same question: what do we do if they should ever ask us to lie for them? Someone, not myself, was bold enough to ask Alex, our trainer, what do we do at that time? We had a most interesting discussion on that topic. Alex was marvelous in instructing us how to keep our integrity and do the work, and how these two factors need not conflict. It is a long tangent.

SMITH: My students at Georgetown often want to talk about that, too, and rightly so. I do tell them that in my thirty years in the Foreign Service, it never happened that I was asked to lie, so the worry about this issue proved to be disproportionate to the reality. A more important question, really, is what to do when you're asked to advance a policy with which you disagree.

POSTING IN THE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE OF USIA IN WASHINGTON

Q: If I remember, because this is very informative, our trainer said there are three things you can do. You can ensure that you are not sent to a part of the world where you do not agree with what the U.S. Government is doing; you can seek to change things by being part of the system; or you can resign. We were all extremely relieved when we realized that there were these options. Okay, so now we are at 1981?

SMITH: No. I came back from Romania in late 1977 and went to work in the Office of Congressional and Public Liaison, which handled public outreach in the U.S. for USIA (the U.S. Information Agency). I stayed there a year and then had three wonderful years as John Reinhardt's special assistant. He was the Director of USIA and an outstanding person. I was very lucky to have the chance to work with him.

Q: Well, that's three years, and although it was not overseas, these were the golden years of USIA, I think.

SMITH: Some people would say that the Edward R. Murrow years were the most golden for USIA, but it was very beneficial for the agency to have a leader in John Reinhardt who was from within USIA. In fact, Director Reinhardt was USIA's only director who was not a political appointee from the outside. He served during the Carter

Administration, and the main thing that was happening within USIA then was that in 1978 CU (the Cultural Bureau), which had been in the State Department, was merged into USIA. The merged result was, for a while, called the U.S. International Communication Agency, and there was a great deal of complicated bureaucratic wrangling having to do with that merger. In retrospect, it was nothing like the wrangling that happened in 1999 with the merger of USIA with the State Department, but there was plenty of difficulty nonetheless.

Q: That was more of a burial than a wrangling, I guess, in 1999. In 1978, there was even the matter of changing the letterhead, which I think was a major logistics challenge. So, you were there at that time?

SMITH: Yes. Many of the decisions about the merger had been made by the time I got into the Director's office. I think the new name, USICA, was already with us, for example, because I remember hearing the stories about the difficulty of finding a new name that suited everyone. But I was not actually part of that process; I came later and was tasked with helping Director Reinhardt make the decisions work, figuring out the implementation of new systems, and so forth.

Q: Now, is it not very unusual for a first-tour officer to go straight up to be the special assistant to the Agency Director? Those of us who know you, know you are an extremely talented and effective person. Was this evident to the leadership of USIA?

SMITH: I always thought Director Reinhardt took a great gamble on me. Yes, I was very junior. The person who had been in the job before me, Cynthia Miller, whom you may know, was two grades more senior than I. But it was a time when the Agency, as a whole, was trying to downgrade positions, or at least trying not to have senior people capture all the best jobs. So maybe Director Reinhardt felt that the front office would set a good example by having somebody more junior come in.

Q: You were interviewed, I guess.

SMITH: Yes. Speechwriting for the Director had been assigned to the public liaison office, where I worked, and I wrote several speeches for Director Reinhardt. So we got to know each other that way.

Q: Tell us about John Reinhardt, for those of us who never met him.

SMITH: I thought he was brilliant and kindly at the same time, and he had exceptional political instincts. I know he had nothing but the very best intentions, and he revived the professionalism and esprit de corps of USIA. He was a serious, experienced, professional public diplomat at the helm of the Agency in a very tricky time. I think people may have expected him to win more battles with the White House than it was reasonable to expect. But looking back on it, I don't recall what those battles would have been – I don't remember any failures.

Q: You said it was a tricky time, because of the merger?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Were there outside pressures from Congress, the White House, or anything that added other aspects to the equation?

SMITH: The main problem that I recall was that many of the people in CU did not want to be merged with USIA at all and did not want to leave the hallowed halls of Main State and come over to USIA, which they thought of as exile. On the flip side of that coin, I remember a USIA friend commenting on the eccentricity of some of the people who did come over from CU, saying, "Gee, we now look just like the bar scene in Star Wars."

Q: What an unforgettable scene! It is not the same individuals, but there is now, still, tremendous resistance on the part of going the other direction.

SMITH: Exactly. Anyway, some of those CU people, however eccentric they may have been, were repositories of enormous knowledge about how to conduct negotiations with the Soviets, how to program major arts performances, and how to run academic exchanges. There was far more talent than there were difficulties. That's what made it a complicated bureaucratic challenge: USIA needed the merger to work, we needed CU's expertise.

Q: You are referring to civil servants, I think.

SMITH: Yes, because even though in Washington CU had been lodged in Main State and the rest of public diplomacy was in USIA, overseas USIA officers conducted both entity's programs.

Q: So the cultural challenge was more for civil servants than for Foreign Service Officers?

SMITH: Yes, the merger was all about Washington. It wasn't a field problem.

Q: So we weren't yet dealing with the type of wrangling that occurred in the late 1990s where we were talking about life and death for the Agency? This was really a matter of adapting to a new place to have an office.

SMITH: No, it was more than that. I think conceptually there were people in CU who were still very caught up in what Senator Fulbright was concerned about, and that was the preservation of an arm's-length relationship between CU's programs and what some people, including Senator Fulbright, felt was a propaganda entity in USIA. He and others wanted to protect the educational and cultural exchanges from being associated with the advocacy side of public diplomacy.

Q: Right. Those of us involved in the business were very conscious of this distinction. Overseas, do you think people even noticed the difference between a cultural attaché and other fully fledged members of the U.S. embassy? Some of us knew that the cultural attaché came from an independent agency, USIA, while the political officer came from the State Department.

SMITH: Yes, but do remember that the information officer overseas came from the U.S. Information Agency, too. So, did foreign publics during USIA's days feel friendlier with the cultural attaché (or cultural affairs officer) than the press attaché (or information officer)? No, I don't think so. Did they distinguish between them and the other officers of the embassy? A bit, yes. I think the USIA officers, particularly where we had free-standing cultural centers and USIA officers were located in the cultural centers, were seen as being not quite so much the voice of the administration as the rest of the embassy was. USIA officers were, however, every bit as "fully fledged" as State Department officers, having come into the Foreign Service through the same exam system and being expected to abide by the same standards and rules.

Q: So you think this difference was a matter both of the temperament and the professional approach of USIA officers, and also the physical existence of separate buildings?

SMITH: Yes. Now we are getting beyond just talking about Bucharest or John Reinhardt's office, we are talking about USIA as a whole. I think that one of the important and good things that USIA did – in addition to advocacy -- was speak both for the entire U.S. government and also for U.S. society as a whole; USIA represented all the main aspects of our society, whereas the traditional State Department diplomat was representing the U.S. administration in power at that time. That is quite a big difference, and it undercuts, in my view, some of the concern that Senator Fulbright and others had about CU joining USIA; it also explains certain problems that many of us felt regarding the idea of USIA joining the State Department.

I should add that a large part of the mission of public diplomacy was and is to reach the *people* of foreign countries, not just the governments. State Department political and economic officers and others interact primarily with the governments.

Q: For those who resisted this move of CU into USIA, did they not get it? You'd think that these people involved in cultural exchange would want the independence.

SMITH: Yes, you would, but I think that their concern was that they did not want to be associated with USIA's advocacy mandate. They may have liked the independence, but I think that some of the CU people liked more the prestige of being associated with the State Department, an old line, big agency that everyone has heard of. Whereas with USIA you had to explain what it was, as most Americans had not heard of it. This produced a set of very ambivalent feelings.

Q: There was something about the C Street entrance of the State Department that was ennobling. Well, this is not a leading question, Ambassador. It is not meant to incriminate you, but what do you think was lost in 1999 when this independent agency USIA ceased to exist?

SMITH: Oh, well, many things. I think maybe we should get to that when we get to that period.

Q: Okay, let's do that. Let's relive a little bit more about your three years with John Reinhardt. What do you think you were able to accomplish during those three years?

SMITH: Well, I hope I was able to help him run his office well and accomplish his objectives in the Agency. There were only two assistants, a political appointee and I, plus a very talented office management specialist in the front office and, of course, a deputy director and his assistant, and two other secretaries. It was, by today's standards, an extremely small front office operation, so we were all doing a bit of everything.

I know what the experience gave to me, which I guess I can feel a little more comfortable describing: an insight into how the whole U.S. government, or at least the foreign affairs apparatus, operated. It was rare, and extremely valuable, for such a junior officer to be involved in USIA's relations with the State Department, the White House, the NSC (National Security Council), and so forth, which occurred because, of course, the Director attended meetings and passed papers back and forth among all these entities.

Q: Was there any particular theme or agenda during those three years other than the creation of USICA (U.S. International Communication Agency)? Was there an effort to expand the resources? Was there an effort to concentrate on Eastern Europe?

SMITH: The biggest foreign policy event of the time certainly was the taking of the American embassy hostages in Iran. John Reinhardt was Director when that happened, and we had, I recall, four USIA officers among those taken. He was very engaged in trying to help that horrible situation get resolved, and that was a cloud over all of us during the year plus that they were hostages.

I also remember being duty officer during the time when our embassy in Islamabad was taken over by radicals. Do you remember that?

Q: Torched, I believe.

SMITH: I remember rushing into the OPS (Operations) center in USIA, to find that the embassy staffers in Islamabad had by then made it to the communications center on the roof of the embassy and were sending out messages that we were receiving in almost real time. These were FLASH messages talking about how the heat was coming up through the floors, getting hotter and hotter. I remember calling Director Reinhardt about this crisis as it was unfolding. It was horrifying.

Q: Horrifying and difficult to do anything, I think, from Washington except observe it. So, troubled times and then a major election and a shift in White House…

SMITH: Yes, and that is worth talking about because I stayed in the front office. The incoming Reagan administration asked Director Reinhardt to leave, even though he was a career officer. Many of us had hoped he would be asked to stay for the transition. I don't know if he had hoped that. In any case, he was not asked to stay and there was a very long period before Charles Wick, Reagan's appointee to direct USIA, appeared. During that interregnum period, Jock Shirley, who had recently moved into a newly created position as the Agency's Counselor, became Acting Director. He asked me to stay, and I was the only assistant in the front office for six months, until Wick came in. I never worked so hard in my life, until I became an ambassador.

Q: I guess not, that is amazing.

SMITH: It was pretty much around the clock, but it was really quite fun also. It was very challenging, however, when Director Wick came in and needed to be briefed for his confirmation hearings; there was a very great deal of ground to cover.

Q: And you were responsible for doing the briefing book?

SMITH: Yes, there were briefing books and a many people came in to talk to him. It was quite a difficult process.

Q: I sense an ellipsis there, unsaid things. Anything you are willing to….

SMITH: Well, let's just say that Mr. Wick's familiarity with foreign policy and foreign relations, understandably enough given his background, was quite different from that which John Reinhardt had command of from his long experience.

Q: So, you have expressed before, at the time you went into USIA, the sense that some of your friends might not have chosen this as something that their good friend Pamela would do. But once you were in that situation, you had no doubt that you could improve the situation by being there?

SMITH: Well, I retained my ideals and beliefs to a large extent, and I have to admit that it would have been difficult for me to square them with working in Mr. Wick's office. It happened that circumstances were very much in my favor, however. I had, during those years, married Sidney Smith, the man I met in Bucharest, and in 1981 I was pregnant with our first child. It was quite obvious from how advanced the pregnancy was that I was not going to be staying in Mr. Wick's office. So I was just there for the run-up to his confirmation, and then I was gone. By then, my husband and I had managed to get ourselves assigned to Belgrade. So, after a couple of months of leave to give birth, I started Serbo-Croatian language training, which incidentally was far more difficult than Romanian, and we were off the next spring to Belgrade.

Q: What a conveniently timed pregnancy.

SMITH: Yes, it certainly was. My daughter Catherine was born in 1981.

Q: I am sure you did yeoman's work in making Director Wick as well prepared as possible for his hearings. Then we went into a new period. That is another story. For me, it would have been a great relief to go into Serbo-Croatian training, at the time. So, you were out of the frying pan where you had been for four years - as a speechwriter and doing a lot of different things, during the creation of USICA, and up until the briefing of Charles Wick. When he was sworn in, were you already off at FSI?

SMITH: No, I believe I left the week he took office. I remember he gave an introductory talk at VOA (Voice of America) and credited me for something I hadn't done and wouldn't have done. I was quite embarrassed, but I was on my way out, which was just as well all around. He deserved the opportunity to choose his own assistant, after all.

Q: Oh, I see. So he indeed came in with his own people?

SMITH: He chose career people through the normal process, and he had some political people working for him as well.

Q: The person of Charles Wick is a long chapter in the history of USIA.

SMITH: He was there a long time, all eight years of Reagan's presidency. The first five years of that period I really had very little contact because I was in language training for one of those years, and then I was cultural attaché (CAO, cultural affairs officer) in Belgrade for four years. He was not interested in Yugoslavia, at least so far as we could ascertain.

POSTING AS CULTURAL ATTACHÉ IN BELGRADE
Q: Belgrade 1980-84?

SMITH: 1982 to 1986.

Q: When it was Yugoslavia?

SMITH: Yes, this was before Milošević, and before the wars of the 1990s. For people interested in the East-West dynamic as we were -- I mean East-West in terms of U.S.-Soviet -- and for people who had served in places like Bucharest, and for my late husband who had spent a lot of time in the Soviet Union, pre-Milošević Yugoslavia was almost like France. Not really, but it was quite liberal and open and even somewhat prosperous and, of course, Yugoslavia was not in the Warsaw Pact. Tito had stood up to Stalin, and there was a communist government, but it was a considerably more humane communist government than those in the Warsaw Pact. Then, furthermore, Tito had just died in 1980. Thus we lived in Yugoslavia before Milošević and after Tito, during a

unique period when there was a rotating presidency in Yugoslavia and a very much looser governmental hand on things than had occurred either before, and certainly, after.

Q: So this rotating presidency had to do with placating the different regions of the country?

SMITH: Yes. There would be a Slovene in charge, and then a Croat, and then a Serb, and then a Macedonian, a Bosnian, a Montenegrin, and then back to the beginning.

Q: With some frictions. Did you have any inkling at the time, of the horrors that were to come later?

SMITH: No, as a matter of fact. I suppose I should be embarrassed about that, but I'm not. Most of us at the embassy in the first half of the 1980s felt that the ethnic hatreds of the past were in the process of being transcended, and I still believe that that was true at that time. And I firmly believe that Milošević demagogued the Serbian parts of the country into reviving, rekindling those hatreds, but until that happened, the old animosities were on their way into oblivion. I knew lots of people, granted educated people, who just didn't care about ethnic or religious differences and were willing to lay to rest brutal memories from World War II and from the more distant past. There were Serbs married to Croats, and Bosnians married to Macedonians, and families that went back and forth among the regions and republics of Yugoslavia.

There was very lively cultural interchange among the republics and, yes, there were tensions and difficulties, but they were not as important as the intellectual vibrancy that they provided. Nor as important as the fact that Yugoslavia, unlike any of the other communist countries, did have its doors and windows open. Its citizens could travel outside the country, and certainly people from the rest of Europe came to the coast and other parts of Yugoslavia on vacation. In fact, on that big trip I took in 1972-73, we were all over Yugoslavia, just driving where we pleased, in stark contrast to the strict permissions and restrictions we suffered under while traveling in the Soviet Union.

Q: Milošević whipped up the Serbian frenzy. Was all the rest of it a reaction to that, do you believe? In other words, didn't the other ethnicities harbor mutual hatred, so that it wasn't just Serbs hating others?

SMITH: The atrocities that the Serbs perpetrated in trying to take over and quail other ethnicities certainly gave rise to hatreds. To be fair, there was a considerable amount of demagoguery and butchery perpetrated by Croatia, also, much but not all of it in response to Serbian provocation. The Bosnians were pretty much trampled. I don't recall the Bosnian Muslims initiating demagoguery or atrocities, though they certainly suffered plenty at the hands of the Bosnian Serbs. The people of Kosovo also suffered from Serbian atrocities, while Macedonia barely managed to escape the worst.

I had and still have a number of friends who are Serbs. It is difficult to talk about these issues with them because people who lived through those wartime tragedies in Serbia did

not have access to accurate information about what was going on. The media were completely controlled by the Milošević regime, and consequently many people in Serbia today still don't believe that the atrocities that happened, really happened, or that Serbia bears responsibility.

Q: In Serbia and the other Yugoslav republics that are now states, were there branch posts in the 1980s?

SMITH: Yes, there were. As cultural attaché for the country, I traveled to all of them. In addition to our offices and Cultural Center in Belgrade (Serbia), we had USIS posts and American officers in Ljubljana (Slovenia), in Sarajevo (Bosnia-Herzegovina), in Zagreb (Croatia), in Skopje (Macedonia), and in what was then called Titograd (Montenegro) and is now called Podgorica. And as I was leaving, we also opened a small office in Priština (Kosovo).

Q: So a vast empire, and you were the CAO, correct?

SMITH: Yes, and we had a very large program of educational and cultural exchanges that was outstanding. One of the reasons we had such a large program was because we cared about Yugoslavia and hoped it would stay more liberal than other communist countries and ideally become an ever more liberal and open model. But we also had a big program because the USIA budget for exchanges in Eastern Europe and the USSR was all of a piece and internally fungible, and many of the USIS posts in Warsaw Pact countries that had access to that large budget couldn't spend the money. This was because the governments of their host countries wouldn't, at the last minute, let somebody or other travel to the U.S., or wouldn't let some American arrive, or the governments would impose unforeseen restrictions on one or another of our U.S. cultural activities. When this happened the money meant for Moscow or East Berlin or Budapest would pour into Yugoslavia at the end of the fiscal year. As a result we typically had 50 Fulbrighters traveling between the U.S. and Yugoslavia each way each year, 70 IVs (international visitors) annually at the height of the program, a set of vibrant cultural exchange activities, and a huge, really terrific English teaching program. We had a very talented Foreign Service National colleague who ran that program, which trained English teachers all over the country, and she is now a famous novelist. We had exhibits; we had a separate cultural center in downtown Belgrade, a stone's throw from the university. So, it was really exciting.

Q: At that time, were you noting the ethnic differences? Was there an attempt to equalize or make it proportional between who benefited from the exchanges, Serbs, Croats and so on?

SMITH: Oh, yes. We had a bilateral Fulbright commission in Yugoslavia. It was the only communist country where we had a Fulbright commission, and I was chair of it much of the time during our four years in country. Sometimes, the PAO (Public Affairs Officer) took the chairmanship, but when he did, I still sat on the commission and was the main liaison with it from the embassy. There was representation on the commission, on

the Yugoslav side, from different republics. On the basis of population, we tried to divide up the grants among the republics in a fair way, while still trying to keep our hands on the concept of academic merit.

Q: That is for the Fulbright program. Likewise, IV?

SMITH: Yes, to an extent. We weren't rigid about it, but we tried to have a good balance of grantees from all the republics.

Q: Did the Yugoslav government give you free rein in choosing?

SMITH: For the IV program, we didn't have free rein, but we had far freer rein than in Romania. For the Fulbright program, what we did was significant. We did succeed in running open competitions, and we did make our decisions about candidates on the basis of their merit – their academic achievements, English language scores, and leadership abilities -- and this was a radical concept. The Fulbright program did many wonderful things, but chief among them, at least in Yugoslavia in those years, was to demonstrate that you can have a fine program that isn't run on political connections and corruption and seniority, but that is run fairly and is based on pure merit.

While we are on the Fulbright program, I just want to say that probably the most enlightened person on the Yugoslav side of the Fulbright commission was a Slovene named Boris Frlec who, after the breakup of Yugoslavia, became foreign minister of Slovenia when it achieved independence. We also had some communist bureaucrats on the commission, and it was sometimes a struggle working with them. But there were also open-minded people among them, and we were lucky in several of the commission staffers.

Q: There are those who become nostalgic about Tito as the glue who held the country together. Is that just a myth?

SMITH: Well, he had been dead for two years by the time we got there. Yugoslavs did not feel particularly warm and nostalgic about him in the immediate aftermath of his passing. I think that those feelings arose during the Milošević period when anything would have been better than what was going on. Before Milošević came along, Tito was thought of as being somewhat heavy-handed and brutal. On the other hand, he was on our side during WWII. Let us not forget that it was the Partisans who delayed the Nazis on their way to Stalingrad, thus helping assure the crucial Soviet victory there. So the Serbs, you see, have a ferocity that is quite useful when it is on your side.

Q: The Croats, am I mistaken in thinking that they were….

SMITH: On the side of the Nazis, or at least the majority was.

Q: Yes, and in the 1980s they were co-existing with people who fought on the opposite side.

SMITH: Those hatreds and memories fueled the fire that Milošević set.

Q: I am pausing for effect. That is a powerful statement. You talked a moment ago about the Fulbright program becoming a model of a program that could work, not by corruption or connections, but through meritocracy. Do you think that this was something new when you were CAO?

SMITH: That was the way that we had established that program before I arrived. I didn't establish it that way; I just kept it going that way. But I could see from how the Yugoslav scholars, both the successful applicants and the disappointed applicants, reacted to the competition, that it was a radical thing we were doing.

Q: So you think it was easier to use merit as a standard in Yugoslavia than it was in Romania?

SMITH: Yes, we insisted on it and the Yugoslav government let us run it that way.

Q: Do you think the Yugoslav government was noticing that this might, God forbid, open up thought? Did they care? Did they resist? Did this pass unnoticed, do you think?

SMITH: They resisted because they always had their special candidates whom they would prefer to get grants. But somehow or other we managed to keep the program going with open competition and selection of the best candidates. We put a lot of money, time, and effort into our programs with Yugoslavia. I could talk, if you would like, about some of the cultural programs that were also magnificent. But despite all of it, the horrors of the Milošević period happened anyway. We were providing all these wonderful exchanges, and we were keeping the doors and the windows of thought open, and fostering intellectual intercourse, and all of that; but it didn't stop disaster. So, you have to say, was it worth it? Would it have been worse if we hadn't done what we did? It is impossible to know.

Q: Well, now that things are being patched up in that part of the world, do you think that - this is sort of a softball question - your programs may have, in some way, helped the healing process later?

SMITH: I certainly hope so. And some of the talented people associated with our programs are still there. But, frankly, an awful lot of talented people left Yugoslavia during or right after the Milošević regime. They found other options and they wanted out, and got out. Now, it may happen that they will go back when it becomes attractive. Some, I am sure, already have returned to those parts of former Yugoslavia that are now prospering, and there certainly are such parts. Croatia and Slovenia are doing very well indeed. Macedonia is doing quite well.

Q: Kosovo, not so well.

SMITH: Serbia and Kosovo still have huge issues to get over, and Bosnia remains fraught with problems.

Q: Well, it sounds like it was a magnificent four years.

SMITH: It was. My husband was the science attaché at the embassy so, between us, we knew all the most interesting people in the country. It was marvelous. We traveled everywhere. I had learned the language well. And we had two young children; our second daughter, Marian, was born (in Vienna) during our Belgrade assignment. It was a great time.

Q: At the next session I would like to learn more about some of the things that happened during that period. Now that you look back at it, it was four wonderful years followed by a period of horror in that country. The people you had touched, many of them had left, what do you feel about that? Do you feel that this was an ephemeral experience? Are you satisfied with the traces that your work left behind? Did events erode the good work that you did?

SMITH: I feel that it is one of those cases where you can't expect everything of public diplomacy. We were knocking ourselves out to do wonderful things, and we did do wonderful things. But other elements had to be in place that were not in place for the public diplomacy work to have its full impact. I don't know what we should have been doing differently because I had already left when Milošević rose to power. It seems, in retrospect, that alarm bells should have sounded about this dreadful person and his potential for mass murder, but somehow they didn't and so Europe and the United States were not active enough, early enough, exerting influence against his regime.

Q: Not noticing what was happening?

SMITH: Yes. It was a long time before the United States got actively involved. The Europeans took the lead, and we seemed to be saying, perhaps rightly so, "go ahead, it is your backyard." Germany recognized Croatia precipitously, and a spiral of events then occurred. It wasn't until Madeleine Albright was Secretary of State that the United States intervened. Because she had lived in Yugoslavia as a child when her diplomat father was posted there, she was able to bring a personal understanding of the Balkans to bear on the formation of U.S. policy. As far as I have understood it, she was instrumental in persuading President Clinton and others that the United States had to take a much more assertive role against Milošević.

Q: Do you think it was a mistake for Germany to recognize Croatia at that time? Or do you think that Germany regrets or regretted….

SMITH: I don't know what Germany feels about it. That is actually a very interesting question, and I wish I knew the answer. At the time, I certainly remember thinking that recognition at that moment was a mistake. I am sure there are other perspectives, however.

Q: There is so much to talk about Yugoslavia that, if you agree, I would like to spend a good part of our next session on that. I don't want to leave Yugoslavia just yet.

SMITH: Okay. I don't feel as though I have more than one or two other things to say, however. But we can certainly go back to it. I do want to mention that I handled a lot of wonderful cultural presentations in Yugoslavia. For example, during that time we brought in the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, which Rostropovich was conducting. This was the first time that he had performed in a communist country since he had left the Soviet Union. So his presence in Belgrade was a politically significant, as well as artistically significant, event. Whenever a major orchestra travels, it is, as you probably know, a thousand nightmares rolled into one - the instruments, the temperature, the hotel, the practice rooms, the acoustics, the sponsors, the seating, everything. But the result of all the effort was magnificent. We also hosted Leonard Bernstein, who came under private auspices to Zagreb, and we gave a reception for him at our consulate there after a magnificent concert that he conducted. Additionally, the Actors Theater of Louisville performed under U.S. sponsorship, and some notable jazz musicians came to Yugoslavia, and we hosted the outstanding Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. I remember controversy with the Yugoslav government about them.

Q: They wanted there to be a conductor?

SMITH: They definitely wanted there to be a conductor. The communist government really hated the idea that anything could prosper without a chief.

Q: That is fascinating. So that performance, in itself, was a great demonstration. Did the Yugoslav government find a single flaw in the performance that they attributed to a lack of a conductor?

SMITH: No. The orchestra was so brilliant that the people who had been skeptical about it had no way or reason to complain. Anyway, on the performing arts side, it was a very big treat for me to get to work with some of these world-class groups.

Q: Who paid to get the Los Angles Philharmonic there? It couldn't have been USIA.

SMITH: They were on a private tour. They had commercial performances in Greece and in Vienna, and three days in between. And there we were, right on the road.

Q: Did you have anything to do with getting them off the trail between Greece and Vienna? Did you, the CAO, convince the Los Angeles Philharmonic…?

SMITH: Yes, there were negotiations involving the embassy, USIA, the State Department and the orchestra. To make the performance work, we in the embassy had to raise money and our ambassador got involved in finding sponsors. It was a real made-out-of-thin-air event. It was great.

Q: Interesting, fantastic. Bernstein came with what ensemble?

SMITH: He conducted the Croatian Orchestra, so he was just on his own. He was only in Zagreb for a couple of days. It was so interesting to see him after that performance. I had never seen a maestro in the aftermath of conducting an orchestra before, and Bernstein was the maestro of maestros. He was drenched in sweat and voraciously consuming everything in sight, drinking multiple glasses of scotch and eating several plates of food. He had a magnetism; everyone in the room was drawn to him. He was standing at a fireplace in our consul's house, holding court like a king. He was a very charismatic figure.

Q: At that time in Yugoslavia, there were no inhibitions at all? The people could attend an American reception?

SMITH: Right. Those inhibitions didn't apply in Yugoslavia, only in the Warsaw Pact countries. In any case he was a rock star.

Q: As he was in Germany. In that period, he also conducted opera in Germany, and people adored him.

SMITH: He had real panache in addition to being a brilliant conductor, composer, and musician and, technically, you know, at the top of anyone's game. He also had a presence, a way about him that was unforgettable.

Q: Thinking back to that reception in Zagreb with Leonard Bernstein, did you feel that you had hit a home-run?

SMITH: Yes. There were many home-runs throughout that whole time in Yugoslavia. That was the pinnacle time for me in fulfilling my desire to be a cultural attaché. The work was politically significant because of East-West tensions. Culturally, there were so many opportunities. Professionally, I got to run very complicated, big programs and take on lots of responsibility. It was wonderful.

Q: Pinnacle is a good place to begin to close a chapter. Tell me a little something about the Americans and the FSNs (Foreign Service National employees), and how they worked together. You had, I guess, quite a large staff if you take the entire country.

SMITH: We did, yes. I had some very talented people working with me and the embassy had great people overall. USIS had the separate cultural center in Belgrade, plus a press operation, the cultural and educational exchanges operation, and one American officer in each capital of Yugoslavia's constituent republics as well as several American officers in Belgrade.

Q: Did the locally employed staff, as we call them now, did they have history as a bit in their mouths? Did they feel that they were playing a very important role because

Yugoslavia was going through some changes and they were introducing a benign outside influence?

SMITH: Yes. I got the sense that we got the best people imaginable to work with us. They loved working with us, or so it seemed. And they felt that they were accomplishing very significant things, not only for the United States but also for Yugoslavia.

Q: The ideas for very significant programs, did they come sometimes from American officers, sometimes from FSNs?

SMITH: Yes, absolutely. I mentioned the woman who ran the English teaching program, who became a famous novelist. And there was another extremely talented person who worked closely with me on our performing arts programs. She is now a senior official at the Soros Foundation running programs in the former Yugoslavia. Both of those colleagues, and many others, were first-rate, and both of those two, particularly, would always have innovative ideas, and I was always open to them.

Q: What about your branch officers in these six branches?

SMITH: There were six republics, so we had five branch posts outside of Belgrade, and then Kosovo – which was then an autonomous province of Serbia – eventually became the sixth branch.

Q: Do you feel that your American colleagues had that same openness to the ideas of the locally employed staff as you did?

SMITH: Well, some did, some didn't. They had varying degrees of ability and insight, as is normal. Many of the officers at the branch posts were quite junior, and I always felt it was a little bit unfair to assign somebody all by himself or herself to a branch post without a consulate if they were just on their first or second tour. How are they going to learn what they are expected to do if they don't have anybody around to talk to about it? So it was important for us in the capital to get out to the branch posts often. We probably didn't get out there often enough, but in addition to traveling there, we would bring the branch officers in to Belgrade twice a year for consultations and conferences.

Q: Did you feel you were in a mentoring situation yourself and able to guide the junior officers to get the best out of them? I mean, they were at a distance and you couldn't see them every day. They were a bit removed.

SMITH: I probably should have been more of a mentor than I was, but I was not that much senior to them. I was in a stretch position. I had actually bid on the ACAO (Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer) job, but then there was suddenly an opening in the CAO position. I think I was one or two grades junior to the grade I was supposed to be for the CAO job, so I was more of an equal or first among equals vis-à-vis the branch officers. Fortunately I was promoted while in Belgrade, which regularized the ranking somewhat.

Q: Having been in the front office for almost four years, I am guessing that this unexpected rise did not intimidate you?

SMITH: No, I was all for it. And I'll add that this demanding job was possible for me with two babies thanks to outstanding household help, which I was fortunate to have throughout my career.

The other thing I wanted to mention was that the Chernobyl nuclear plant meltdown occurred when we were in Yugoslavia, the last spring of our tour there. My husband, being science attaché, understood a lot about what was going on before others did. He was in touch with Yugoslav scientists and learned from them that the main radioactive cloud moved towards Scandinavia, but that there was another, smaller cloud that drifted south and was heading toward Yugoslavia. So he and the ambassador and others put in place all kinds of measures to protect the American community. When the radioactive cloud was bearing down on us, he and I decided that I should put the kids in the car and drive to the coast. I have a vivid memory of driving our two babies and his 13-year-old son from his previous marriage across the mountains and wilds of Yugoslavia all night long, with the radioactive clouds coming toward us, and rain pouring down on us. My husband thought the mountains along the coast would be able to stop the cloud, making the western side of the mountains safer.

Q: Did that turn out to be correct?

SMITH: Yes, but of course we didn't know at the time, radioactivity being such a pernicious thing, an invisible threat. (Later note: I confirmed that this theory *was* correct when I visited in 2008.) Once on the coast we didn't spend a lot of time outdoors, but we did spend a week or ten days at the gorgeous, absolutely empty, resort called Sveti Stefan, on an island off Montenegro's Adriatic coast. It's now, I believe, being made into an ultra luxurious Aman resort. At the time, it offered high luxury, Yugoslav style. It was lovely, a little fishing village converted to a five-star hotel. And we just stayed there waiting out the radioactive cloud, the nanny and the kids and I. It seemed like Thomas Mann's Magic Mountain, in a way.

Q: This could be disinformation, but I was in Denmark at the time. I was told that the cloud went over Scandinavia, but that some weather pattern prevented the cloud from descending until it reached Italy. That was what we and maybe Yugoslavia were told, but I don't know.

SMITH: I thought it was Swedish scientists who first figured out the cloud's existence and trajectory.

Q: I think it was, or Finnish maybe.

SMITH: And I heard that people didn't drink milk or eat vegetables in northern Europe for a long time after Chernobyl. We certainly avoided them in Yugoslavia for quite some

time. It was very scary. The other thing I remember about it is that as soon as we heard that the catastrophe at Chernobyl had happened, my husband, who knew the Soviet Union well, predicted in a Country Team meeting that this was the beginning of the end for the Soviet Union. Everybody, including me, thought that he was off-base, but he was right. Chernobyl was one of the seminal factors triggering the Soviet demise. The regime couldn't handle the scientific and health implications and couldn't keep the news under a lid, and the Soviet population had to face the fact that the regime was ineffective and untrustworthy. Chernobyl was a turning point too big for a totalitarian government to cope with, and I guess my husband understood that that would cause them to unravel, as it did. (Later note: Gorbachev also said that Chernobyl was the beginning of the end of the Soviet Union.)

Q: This was spring of 1986 or '87?

SMITH: 1986.

Q: Amazing that he had that insight. And in Denmark, by the way, which is the European headquarters of the World Health Organization, the Soviets were out in front giving briefings for the first time ever, wanting to convince people that they were really sharing information. It took them a few days; they didn't do it immediately. But this was part of their own public affairs strategy to convince Danes and northern Europeans that they were being very open about what was happening.

SMITH: Were they being open, though?

Q: They were, but with a fatal time lag. It was a fascinating time. And two years later who would have thought? Only your husband.

SMITH: Gorbachev was new in his job at that time, so we didn't know what he had in him, yet.

Q: Right. Shevardnadze and Baker were having a nice time together. They liked each other, I think.

SMITH: That happened a little bit later.

Q: Yes, the following year.

SMITH: So, we covered some ground but we have so much more to go.

Q: I hope so. Again, I have unlimited endurance. This is very fascinating. Do you have anything to add about your posting in Yugoslavia?

SMITH: Yes. You are very kind to be so generous with your time. During my tour there, then Vice President George H.W. Bush and Mrs. Bush visited Yugoslavia for several days, a long visit. It was the first VIP visit I'd worked on, and I ended up being

Mrs. Bush's control officer (the embassy staffer who accompanies the VIP everywhere and makes sure everything works according to plan). It was a successful visit but not without drama – Mrs. Bush's chief of staff developed appendicitis and was rushed to the military hospital for emergency surgery. I had to help the staffer and Mrs. Bush, who visited her often, understand what was going on. My Serbo-Croatian was good, but medical terms weren't in my vocabulary. In any case, everything turned out well.

In addition, you asked earlier about U.S. publications during the Cold War. America Illustrated was a very successful, sought-after magazine we published and distributed in the Soviet Union. In Yugoslavia, we produced a version of it called Pregled (Overview), which was quite popular, and we distributed the scholarly publication Problems of Communism. We also supported the publication in Serbo-Croatian of Yugoslavia's first textbook of American history.

Q: This is now September 29, and this is the end of the second interview.

[A week later] Q: This is Daniel Whitman interviewing Ambassador Pamela Smith on October 5, Washington, DC. This is our third interview. In the previous ones we talked about your training, your education, and we got you through Yugoslavia.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Where you were PAO in Belgrade?

SMITH: I was CAO.

POSTING AS DESK OFFICER FOR THE TWO GERMANIES AT USIA IN WASHINGTON

Q: CAO, pardon me. Okay. Let's continue from that point.

SMITH: From Yugoslavia, in the summer of 1986, we came back to Washington. My first job in Washington was as desk officer in USIA for the two Germanys, for only one year. Of course, Germany was still divided at that point. We had a lot of programs in West Germany, and we were trying to make an impact in East Germany as well. We just had one desk officer for the two countries.

Before leaving Yugoslavia I visited both East Berlin, where Cynthia Miller was PAO, and Bonn, then still the capital, where Terry Catherman was PAO. The stop in East Berlin was interesting because I was one of the many people who got hung up at Checkpoint Charlie. I was going from East Berlin to West Berlin, and the East German police were playing what, apparently, was a typical game of not wanting to let American diplomats get across easily. But I had been well briefed by Cynthia and the embassy. I did what I was supposed to do, which was to hold up my passport page showing my photo and data at the window of the car but not give it over to the East German police. The driver of the embassy car, as I recall, seemed to be more sympathetic with the police than with my plight.

Q: Let me ask one thing. I am familiar with the problem of going from West to East, but you said you were hung up on going East to West.

SMITH: Yes. I think it was simply harassment at the hands of the East German police, just to make life difficult for American diplomats. It happened, apparently, frequently. We sat there in the car for three hours, I think; it was a standoff, to see who was going to give in. Fortunately, they finally gave in.

Q: Now, you were saying your driver was not helpful to you?

SMITH: No, not particularly. I imagine that he was not working only for us.

Q: Understood. He was officially working for what was then called USIS, or what did they call them in Eastern Europe?

SMITH: In the Warsaw Pact we called ourselves the Press and Culture section of the embassy. Our section in East Berlin was so small that the driver may have just been an embassy driver. I don't remember if the motor pools were merged or not. In any case, he was on the U.S. government payroll but may also have been on the East German payroll, which happened in those times and places; and there was nothing we could do about it. We just always had to be cognizant.

Q: So, Cynthia was back in the office in East Berlin….

SMITH: Yes. And, of course, this was before cell phones.

Q: Before we get into the drama of this moment, tell me about Cynthia's staff. Was she the only American in East Berlin in Press and Culture?

SMITH: I think she had a deputy. There was one other American, and I think there were a couple of locally engaged staff, as well. I was already friends with Cynthia, and in fact, I stayed with her during that visit. So, it was really her activities that made by far the greatest impression on me. She was doing an excellent job in a difficult environment. Rozanne Ridgway was ambassador, and she was also doing an excellent job in that difficult environment.

Q: Now, back to the difficulty of the moment. There you were for three hours.

SMITH: That's really all. I just sat there. It was tense, very tense, but no one physically harmed me or anything.

Q: What broke the logjam?

SMITH: I don't know. The East Germans finally just got tired of it, I guess. Or maybe they were just waiting to see if I would cave in, and since I wasn't caving…

Q: Caving in meant what? Handing over the passport?

SMITH: Handing over the passport, begging and pleading, going back to the embassy, I don't know what they wanted.

Q: So they had a fine time, and you didn't.

SMITH: No, no.

Q: Very interesting. So, 1986?

SMITH: This was in the spring of 1986, yes, and then that summer we came back to Washington. I started my job as desk officer and it was quite a busy job. Charles Wick was still director of the Agency and he traveled frequently to West Germany, and particularly to West Berlin, where he was deeply engaged in trying to make something out of RIAS (Radio In The American Sector). He wanted to start up a television operation to parallel the radio operation, so there were ongoing negotiations about that. He made frequent trips, and my life in that job seemed to be consumed by organizing his travels, his briefing books, his briefings, and all the attendant negotiations. Unfortunately, not much came of it.

Q: As desk officer, you traveled to Germany with Charles Wick?

SMITH: No, I did not go with him.

Q: You did the briefing books. Okay. Nothing came of it, meaning no TV?

SMITH: I don't recall if there was eventually a TV operation. It was after my time as desk officer, and I don't think RIAS-TV had much of an impact, if it existed at all. I am afraid I have sort of lost that thread at this point.

Q: Tell me about RIAS, Voice of America, RFE (Radio Free Europe), RL (Radio Liberty); were you engaged in just RIAS?

SMITH: During my time as desk officer, there were protracted negotiations on a number of the radio activities. A lot has been written about the surrogate radios, namely Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, whose objective was to substitute for the free local press in countries that did not have a free press. That mandate was very different from the Voice of America's mandate, which is to be an international news organization. RIAS was more like Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty and was beaming news into East Berlin from West Berlin.

Charles Wick was also trying to get U.S. government television into hotel rooms in Europe, and negotiations on that effort were proceeding in Western Europe at that time. The effort to get our television into hotel rooms in Europe was, I believe, misguided.

That is not to say, however, that Mr. Wick's idea of using television as a tool of public diplomacy was not a good one. I think it was. And his WorldNet initiative particularly, and perhaps exclusively, was a good idea although a very expensive one. WorldNet offered a press conference format that enabled overseas journalists to have direct access to American newsmakers in real time, which was highly innovative and very technologically complex in the mid-1980s.

Q: Now WorldNet is supplanted by DVCs (digital video conferences), I think, much more cheaply.

SMITH: Yes, but DVCs are not broadcast quality, so that remains a problem, although probably a problem that will be fixed as technology matures.

Q: I remember in 1986, I believe, an interview with Charles Wick and David Brinkley on a Sunday morning show. Brinkley asked Wick about the size of the audience of WorldNet, and Wick said two billion, I remember very clearly. Brinkley was quite nonplussed, asked him to repeat that number, and passed to the next question. Do you think that two billion might be an exaggeration?

SMITH: I didn't follow the numbers. Two billion seems almost impossible to believe. But, if Wick had somebody do the math and if clips of moments on WorldNet made it on to local television news in lots of countries, especially populous countries like India, say, then I suppose maybe two billion was possible. You would need to ask somebody who is more of an expert.

Q: If I remember, the first use of WorldNet was during the Grenada operation. That was the first time WorldNet was used for an interview, which as you said, because of its technology, would have been broadcast quality. As the desk officer some thousand miles away, you've said that it may have been overreaching to expect WorldNet to appeal globally.

SMITH: Yes, I think it depended entirely on the political and news environment in the country in question. In Germany, WorldNet wasn't a big draw because the Germans were very technologically proficient. Furthermore, they had a lot of correspondents for German television as well as print media in the United States, so they were not lacking in access to American newsmakers. I took somewhat of a dim view of WorldNet when I was desk officer for Germany. But later, by the time I got to Indonesia as press attaché in the early 1990's, Wick was no longer in the job. WorldNet continued to exist, however, and in Indonesia, it was a very useful tool because the Indonesians didn't have advanced technology, and hardly any journalists in Washington at that time. They really valued being able to ask questions from Jakarta directly to newsmakers in Washington. So I became more positive about WorldNet from that experience, although difficulties over time-zone changes and technical challenges continued to plague us.

Q: Would you say generally that in the Third World, or developing countries, there was more hunger for…?

SMITH: That is what it seemed to me from my experience.

POSTING IN THE BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE, USIA IN WASHINGTON

Q: So, you are on the German desk for one year?

SMITH: Yes, for one year. Then I went into an almost four-year assignment in academic exchanges. I worked in what is now called the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, which was in USIA then, but the structure was very much the same as today. I spent a year being Branch Chief for the European office of the academic exchange programs. Then I became deputy director of USIA's worldwide academic exchange programs. Those were four extremely interesting years, which made me -- even more than I had been in Romania and Yugoslavia running these programs on the ground -- a supporter and advocate for long-term academic exchanges. Most of my work was with the Fulbright program. I even had the good fortune of meeting Senator Fulbright, and in fact I was invited to his wedding reception when he married Harriet Meyer, now Harriet Meyer Fulbright. That was an unforgettable experience. Senator Fulbright was one of those rare individuals who effortlessly attracted everyone's attention. He was like a fireplace; you know how it is, when you are in a room with a fireplace, everyone is always looking at the fire. He was like that, a magnetic personality. Everyone paid him the honor due him at this late stage in his life for all his accomplishments, but he also had a personal presence that was something very special.

Q: Let's dwell on Senator Fulbright for a moment. He's a major figure in his vision and in his success in funding international exchanges, particularly, you said, the Fulbright and Humphrey programs. What other programs were administered out of your office?

SMITH: In the academic exchange bureau, overall, there were the Humphrey programs, International Visitor programs, English teaching, American Studies, and other smaller exchange programs. But the Fulbright exchange program was, and still is, the preeminent one.

Q: And the law that funded the program for his name, Fulbright …

SMITH: There are two important laws. The Fulbright Act of 1946 which he, as a very young senator, got passed by having the clever idea of (a) using proceeds from the sale of surplus war materials to pay for exchanges, and (b) according to rumor, bringing this bill up late at night when not too many other congressmen or senators were present. The legislation therefore went through quickly, but then the program became such a big success that Congress eventually decided that it wanted to appropriate funds to support it. Thus came about the second big piece of exchanges legislation, the Fulbright-Hayes Act of 1961.

Q: For the reader of this, please explain the difference between the Fulbright Act and the Fulbright-Hayes Act.

SMITH: The Fulbright Act was the one that started using surplus war material sales for funding. So if, say, Italy owed the United States money from one of these sales, but had soft currency, weak currency at the time, instead of having the Italian lira payment come to the United States and be exchanged for dollars and not be worth very much, it was used in Italy to fund the expenses of American scholars who went to Italy on Fulbright grants. The payments also could fund the travel of Italian scholars coming to the United States, and then universities in the U.S. would chip in and cover their local expenses.

Q: And as the program matured, and as European currencies became stronger, I think that the tradition began of the German government and other governments contributing funds of their own to augment the program.

SMITH: Yes. Eventually, and certainly by the time I was desk officer for the two Germanys, since we are using that example, the West German government was contributing more money than the United States to the Fulbright program. The West Germans felt that the program had high value. By then we had a Fulbright commission and we were running the program binationally there, as well as in many other countries that we considered allies and friends.

Q: A couple of questions that I will just throw out about Senator Fulbright's motivation. He is remembered for his role opposing the Vietnam War, he is remembered as a senator from a southern state, and he is remembered as the person who created this visionary program. How did he come up with this idea? It is really extraordinary.

SMITH: He talked about it as having been borne of his own experience as a Rhodes Scholar. He grew up in Arkansas, had never traveled much, had never been out of the United States, but was chosen for a Rhodes scholarship and went to Oxford. This was, of course, way before World War II (WWII). That exchange experience had a profound impact on him. Then, also, he talked about how the horrific tragedies of WWII needed to be prevented from recurring in the future. I believe his concept, as I understood it and as has been widely written about, was that more understanding between cultures -- and particularly the exchange of intellectually serious people who might shape other people's opinions -- would be a means to the end that he really sought, which was to prevent future war.

Q: To what extent was he successful in doing that? That is an unfair question, but I ask so many.

SMITH: Most people who know anything about the program or about academic exchange programs feel from their observations that these programs accomplish most of Senator Fulbright's goals for the people participating and for the people whom they influence. Of course, obviously, since we still have war with us in the world today, academic exchanges are not delivering world peace definitively. But it is impossible to measure how people's views change. As has been often said, no cash register rings when somebody gets an idea or changes their mind. So I don't think that we can prove an

effect, but we certainly believe that enhanced "mutual understanding" benefits both sides of an academic or cultural exchange.

I do remember when I was posted to London, I arrived just as Admiral William Crowe was leaving as ambassador. He was a man, after all, who had been chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had seen everything in the world of war and defense, and had been President Clinton's first ambassador to the United Kingdom. He was a man of very wide government and international experience. When he left London, he said what he had valued most in his time there was his interaction with the Fulbright exchange program, which I thought was a fantastic thing to hear someone like that say. So it isn't just myself and people who have worked on the Fulbright program or who have been scholars in the program who value it, it's people who look down on it from a very great height of experience.

Q: You met Senator Fulbright one time or maybe a few times. Do you believe that he sensed that his mission was successful? What do you believe were his own perceptions of this effort that bore his name and made him famous?

SMITH: My impression was that he was very proud of the program, but I don't recall him talking about its impact. It is certain that he wanted the program to continue, because it was through his efforts, even after he left the Senate, that attention remained on that program in the Senate. There were also people in the Senate in those days, and we are talking about the 1980s and even into the 1990s, who had been participants in the Fulbright program – Patrick Moynihan, for example. I don't think there are any former Fulbright participants in Congress now; I could be wrong. But for quite awhile, there have not been Fulbright alumni in Congress, and perhaps that's the reason that support for the program declined. It's not that Congressmen are not in favor of it, it's just that it doesn't get the visibility or the large amounts of funding that it ought to have.

Q: I don't know how the exact dollar tallies go, but the dollar's real purchasing power, I think, is in decline because of the rising cost of airfare and other exchange program expenses.

SMITH: That is my impression as well. It was certainly an uphill battle when I was in the U.K. (United Kingdom) to keep the costs level. We did a lot of private sector fund-raising in order to supplement the rather modest U.S. and U.K. government funding that went into the program. I do recall something that Harriet Fulbright has said in the last couple of years: "When you look at funding for this program in relation not just to other public diplomacy or diplomacy budgets, but to budgets across the U.S. Government, you have to think about it in terms of how it stacks up with what the Pentagon is spending." She has done research that shows that one day in Iraq costs the U.S. government the same as ten years of the Fulbright program worldwide.

Q: We pause for dramatic effect. That is quite a powerful statement. They used to say that one dollar spent on exchanges was roughly worth ten dollars of conflict. But I think it may be a much greater proportion than that.

SMITH: Yes, I would think so. And, also, one dollar spent by the U.S. government on exchanges attracts a great deal more funding from other governments, from participating universities, and from the wonderful network of volunteers who help foreign scholars and international visitors experience the United States; overseas, the same thing happens, with many entities participating in hosting our scholars.

Q: Are we saying we advocate that this program should continue…

SMITH: Absolutely. My first year in the academic exchange office was spent as branch chief for Europe, and this was Europe both East and West. After that year - that would have been the fall of 1988 - I took a trip to Eastern Europe. We were re-negotiating our exchange agreements with Hungary, what was then Czechoslovakia, and I participated in those negotiations and then I also went to Poland. We didn't have to have a formal exchange agreement with Poland. The Polish government was a little bit more willing than the other Warsaw Pact countries to let the exchange programs run without fixed rules. Anyway, in Poland the effects of *perestroika* were way more evident than anywhere else in the Warsaw Pact. I came back to Washington with the idea that we ought to set up the first Fulbright commission in Eastern Europe (outside of Yugoslavia) in Poland, in order to promote further interchange, to break down the barriers between the Warsaw Pact and the rest of the world. Fortunately, USIA, and eventually the State Department, agreed with this proposal. We negotiated and established the first Fulbright commission in the Warsaw Pact, by which time the Warsaw Pact was almost ready to collapse.

Q: One year later.

SMITH: But, nevertheless, it was our significant salvo.

Q: Was Charles Wick giving personal attention to this?

SMITH: Well, I went in the fall of 1988, at the time of the presidential election, so I think by the time the negotiations came to pass, we were into the first Bush administration. President H.W. Bush, 41, was interested in exchanges. I remember that very clearly because when I went on to the deputy director position in the worldwide academic exchange office, I ended up negotiating an agreement with the Soviet Union that President Bush signed with Gorbachev. It must have been 1990, when Gorbachev came to Washington.

Q: So this was a deliverable during a summit?

SMITH: Yes. It was called the Thousand-Thousand Program, and it was an undergraduate exchange program that persisted quite a long time.

Q: A couple of other questions, in either order that you want. There was a Fulbright Commission in Germany, and if you remember when it was started, because that was value added to a bilateral…

SMITH: The commissions definitely were very much value-added. I talked earlier about the Fulbright commission in Yugoslavia. Since I had had experience with it, I knew that we could have a commission in a communist country. That is one of the reasons why I proposed a commission for Poland.

In an allied country like Germany, the Fulbright commission was a very strong and important nexus of academic work between the two countries and of course the commission concerned itself mainly with the Fulbright program. But then there were other things that it would do to promote scholarly interchange. We had, as well, a very active Fulbright commission in Spain; the Spanish government had then (I don't know if it still has) a provision that required a small but significant percentage of government revenue be directed to support charity, which was defined to include culture and education. Some Spanish leaders chose to direct those funds to international exchanges, and they would put this money into the Fulbright commission to administer, which was a huge benefit.

Q: I remember because I was in Madrid in the early 1990s, and I remember the commission. There was a great imbalance in our favor, meaning that the Spanish government put much more money into the program than we did.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: I think that that was the case in Germany, also. Is it very evident why they did this? Did they see the same value in sending German and Spanish students to the U.S. as we did?

SMITH: They must have, because their funding was so generous. The same thing happened in Japan. The Japanese government and Japanese Fulbright alumni together gave more money to the Fulbright program than we did for a long time. I think that these contributing governments saw the value of Fulbright commissions being binational, including experts from both sides, both officials and private sector academics and people who had deep knowledge about academic exchange. They also saw the commissions as being very capable, and the commissions were. Every once in awhile there was a weak one, but for the most part these commissions had extremely good track records of running fair, open competitions for the scholarships, selecting outstanding candidates, and placing them in top universities. Of course there were many partners and many associations needed to do this, but the commissions were the center of getting the exchanges work done, and people appreciated that expertise and wanted to tap into it.

Q: This worked, I think, marvelously in Western Europe and later in Eastern Europe. Later, there was controversy that I don't think you were involved in: Should there be commissions in countries such as the ones in Africa? I don't know what the track record

is in this hemisphere. And there was a controversy over whether we would lose control, would a bureaucracy be created that would then take on its own life. There was a commission in South Africa, but it later was removed because of some problems they had. Do you believe that a commission is desirable in most countries, or most large countries? Since you created the one in Poland, looking back would you feel that it would always be advantageous to have a commission?

SMITH: No. I think the academic exchange program has to be a certain size or it doesn't make sense to go through everything that a commission entails. There must be meetings of the board, there must be notable people on the board, and they must be briefed. There has to be a fairly hefty program for all that to be justifiable.

Furthermore, the partner country has to want a commission and want to demonstrate that it wants it by putting some kind of serious funding into it. Germany, Japan, Spain, etc. are contributing more than the United States. Many countries - France, the U.K. - put an equal or roughly equal amount in. But even countries like, in my case, Yugoslavia, that didn't contribute an equal amount in hard currency, did contribute something quite substantial, usually in-kind support or local currency. The Yugoslav side made sure that the American scholars had housing and they would pay their local stipends, and also they would pay the airfare for their own scholars. There has to be some tangible participation on the part of the other country to justify, in my view, and I think in most people's views, having a commission.

Of course you do give up some measure of control when there is a bi-national commission. One side doesn't control the program. It becomes a mutual venture of mutual interest and benefit. That's one of the values of it, so there must be trust and a desire to cooperate between the two governments.

Q: Cataclysmic things were about to happen in Eastern Europe. Would it make sense to trace the progress of the commission in Poland, or would events overtake…

SMITH: There were some fits and starts in the beginning, but the commission in Poland eventually got up and running and worked quite well. The cataclysmic events you refer to, undoubtedly, are the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. There was, let us not forget, another cataclysmic event going on in those years, and that was Tiananmen Square. We had a number of Fulbrighters in China, and I remember from my time in the academic exchanges office that that we needed to do a great deal to make sure that they were not caught in the crossfire and that there were no negative repercussions for the Chinese scholars who were in the U.S. So there was quite a bit of concern and activity on that front.

Q: June 1989, I believe. Now that is a huge cataclysm. What happened to the program in China? Were people sent home?

SMITH: We did have to send some of the Americans home, but the Chinese scholars in the U.S. did not go back to China, as I recall.

Another thing I worked on very hard during that period, interestingly enough, was being the Washington backstop for negotiations to establish a Fulbright commission in Indonesia. This was before I had the faintest clue that I would later serve in Indonesia. But because I had worked on commissions and had negotiated exchange agreements, I was the point person in Washington for the negotiations with Indonesia. I actually wrote the U.S. version of that exchange agreement, which became quite funny later when I had to implement it; we will get to that.

Q: You had one year in the academic exchanges office for Europe, and then three years as the deputy for all exchanges for the world. People say that the international visitors program, created in the late 1940s, was created in order to bring Germany back into the community of democracies. You weren't there at that time, but since you were involved with Germany, was this part of the inspiration behind exchanges in general, with Germany as a focus country?

SMITH: I know that we did a great deal of public diplomacy work in the years immediately after WWII in Germany. There were America Houses, there were U.S. advisers in publishing, journalism, academia, all over the place, working on democracy-building in ways that probably would bear lessons for us today. Except maybe not, because Germany was already so sophisticated and had such a well-educated population that the same things that were done there probably wouldn't work in a place with a far lower literacy rate. In any case, I know that a great deal was done, and that exchanges certainly were an important part of the mix.

The IV program was not in my domain when I was in the academic exchanges office. We handled the academic programs like Fulbright and others; there was another office for international visitors within the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. I certainly paid attention to what they were doing, as you do to a sister office, and another wonderful program, but I wasn't running it.

Q: Just a parting shot on exchanges. When the European Union (EU) was set up after WWII, it became very active and eventually created the Erasmus scholarships, possibly in imitation of the Fulbright program, I don't know. Do you consider Erasmus to be a very nice imitation that we welcome, or do you consider it a rival program?

SMITH: In my view, the more exchanges the better. Academic exchange is an activity in which one doesn't want to have an exclusive contract. I believe that Fulbright was inspired by Rhodes. And perhaps Fulbright, having established a two-way exchange format - Rhodes, after all, was only a one-way exchange, with everybody going to the U.K., and no one going the other way - presented a model that others thought useful to adopt. Certainly since the establishment of the Fulbright program there have been many, many imitators and many - the Erasmus program included - that are better funded than the Fulbright program is now. Far more Europeans participate in the Erasmus program than Americans participate in the Fulbright program. But one can't say anything but good about more academic exchanges happening.

Q: Let's proceed, if you want, to the next episode. Does that get us to Indonesia?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Four years in exchanges, anything to add on to that?

SMITH: No, I don't think so. Except that maybe I should say that working in the Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau (ECA) put me in touch with a lot of very talented civil servants. There were not very many Foreign Service officers in ECA. It was, in a way, a cultural exchange just going to the office because there are big differences between the experiences of civil service and Foreign Service officers. I was able to hire a couple of fantastic civil service colleagues, and also to benefit from the expertise of people who had been doing exchanges work for a very long time.

Q: Was Roz Swenson one of them?

SMITH: She was just coming in to ECA at that time from EU. I did not hire her, no.

Q: Let's dwell for a moment on this. There is a lot of discussion about the culture of Foreign Service and civil service employees working together. There are many different perceptions about whether we have a classless society or a classed society. You've just said some flattering things about civil servants. Can you develop that thought in any way?

SMITH: Sometimes there were tensions in USIA – which persist here and there in the State Department – because some jobs in some offices at the senior levels were reserved for Foreign Service officers (FSOs). Based on my experience, I think that those jobs ought to be reserved for Foreign Service officers because firsthand experience overseas provides a definite, even crucial benefit to work that is so field-based. The need for FSOs is not imperative for many of the exchanges jobs that exist, but it is imperative for some at the decision-making level. Probably some civil service people feel some resentment over this perspective, but it seems to me that if you work in a foreign affairs agency, it is a given that people who have had overseas experience are going to be required in a lot of the senior positions.

Q: The Foreign Service offers the perspective of having lived and worked in those environments. What would you say the civil service provides?

SMITH: Well, certainly long-term expertise. The academic exchange programs, especially, are very complicated. They are guided by all kinds of legislation, regulations, and procedures, perhaps too many, and somebody coming in like me for two or even three years is not going to be up to speed on them all. The civil service people who work for longer stretches at the same job will have that expertise. Also, they will have, in the same way that our local employees at embassies will have, contacts and knowledge in the academic community of the United States. They will know which universities are

particularly welcoming to foreign students, or which have fantastic programs in bio-medical engineering, if that's what somebody from overseas wants. These are areas of substantive expertise that Foreign Service people generally do not have.

Q: So, theoretically at least, this should work, bringing both sides to the equation.

SMITH: Yes, and in my experience it pretty much does work. I have very little patience for inter-office rivalries and have tried to transcend them whenever possible.

POSTING AS PRESS ATTACHÉ IN JAKARTA
Q: Great. Well, okay, after the four years…

SMITH: So, in 1990 and 1991 my late husband and I were bidding on our next assignments. As I might have said, he joined the State Department after his stint at the National Science Foundation; he was a science officer. It happened at that juncture that there were no places in the world that had openings at the right levels in public diplomacy and science at the same time. The best prospects for us both in a lot of respects turned out to be in Indonesia.

Q: Does the science attaché work out of the economic section?

SMITH: Yes. He actually held a science counselor position in Jakarta, a little step up, and in a big country. There was a press attaché, or IO, job and a cultural attaché, or CAO, job opening a bit later in USIS in Jakarta. So we decided that he would bid on the science counselor position, which he got, fortunately, and that I would take a year of leave-without-pay in Indonesia and then bid on both of the USIS jobs, with the hope that I would get one of them.

Q: We are now…

SMITH: Summer of 1991.

Q: Tell me about tandem assignments, at that time. I know it may be a mere administrative thing, but a lot of attention is given nowadays…

SMITH: And it was then, too. When two diplomats formed what is called a "tandem couple," did the foreign affairs system work for them? For us, basically it did. That year of leave-without-pay was the only time that either of us had to give up anything professionally. USIA was, to its great credit, very helpful to tandems, much more helpful than the State Department was, I have to say. The personnel system in USIA always tried to make things work for their employees. They did not bend any rules; they just spent the time and the attention to counsel me so I could figure out how to make this and other assignments work the best.

Q: When you went into the year of leave-without-pay, were you assured that you'd have a job? Were taking your chances?

SMITH: No, it was a gamble when my husband was bidding. I was taking my chances. USIA required bidding on jobs a whole year before the State Department did because we always required language training, and the State Department didn't require it for science officers. USIA funded almost a year of language training for me, and that sequential difference helped us make our assignments work. I can't remember the exact timing; I may have already had my future job assignment when we went to Jakarta, but just barely. I remember for sure that my husband bid on his job before I could bid on or know about mine.

I was the right grade for both of the USIS jobs on offer, which certainly helped, and I bid on both. This was kind of interesting, at least interesting to me: I had entered the Foreign Service thinking I would be a cultural attaché. I had been a cultural attaché and loved it. I had then worked for four years in academic exchanges. Obviously, then, I was going to bid on the cultural attaché job, and probably be a pretty strong candidate for it. But meanwhile, something told me that now was the time for a change, and here was this other opportunity, this press attaché job. If I ever wanted to become a PAO and supervise both these functions, which was what I saw all the public diplomacy stars doing, I would have to have done IO work. So I held my breath, gritted my teeth, leap-frogged my comfort-zone, and bid on, and got, the IO or press attaché job. I went into it thinking, well, I've got to get this over with, and it will be good for me later, but it's certainly not going to be as wonderful as being cultural attaché. But then it turned out that I loved press work, and it was actually in some ways more interesting and gratifying than the cultural side.

Q: Did you state a preference when you bid? You bid on both positions?

SMITH: Yes, I bid on both and stated a preference for the IO job.

Before I became IO, however, I had the period of leave-without-pay. Miraculously, and luckily for me, the executive director of the Fulbright commission, who was an American, resigned suddenly. I leapt at this opportunity and was selected for the position, which was a boon; that job actually lasted fifteen months. It was fascinating to see the Fulbright program from this new perspective. Having written the U.S.-Indonesia Fulbright agreement in my former job, I felt as though, now in Jakarta, I was sitting across the desk from myself.

Another interesting challenge resulted from an incident during my time in Washington where there was a large embezzlement of Fulbright funds from the commission in Thailand. The Thai accountant had embezzled tens of thousands of dollars, and I, in Washington, had written a cable to all Fulbright commission countries instructing them how to guard their funds and implement fiscal controls so that embezzlement could never happen again. But then, once I was leading the commission in Jakarta, I had to implement my own cable, which I remember thinking was really going to be onerous because my procedures had been so strict.

We had a wonderful Fulbright program in Indonesia, and the most interesting part was meeting the American and Indonesian scholars and really getting to know a bit of what they were doing. The commission staff was excellent as well. I enjoyed the position a lot.

Q: What types of fields were the scholars into? I think from Washington there was a desire to get Americans into the humanities, into American studies, and sometimes on the other side, people wanted technology. In the case of Indonesia, what were the fields that seemed to be most in demand?

SMITH: Well, that polarity was certainly true with our Fulbright and other exchange programs in Cold War days in the Soviet sphere. And I guess that polarity was somewhat true elsewhere. In Indonesia, the Americans coming in generally wanted to study Indonesia's very exotic and interesting culture and history. I remember one scholar from Yale was studying the navigation system of the Bugis mariners of Sulawesi, who were still able to navigate just by observing the tides and the stars. Fascinating. We also, as part of the program, had professors who came to Indonesia to teach American studies -- history, literature, political science, and related fields. The Indonesians going to the U.S., yes, some of them were in the hard sciences, but there was also longstanding Indonesian interest in American economics and political science. The Indonesians sent scholars at all three levels, that is, graduate students, postgraduate researchers, and teaching professors.

Q: In your previous overseas assignment, your husband, as a science attaché, was very cognizant of the Chernobyl incident. What took his attention in Indonesia? What were the issues on the scientific side?

SMITH: We had scientific cooperation programs with Indonesia and I remember him running joint activities that involved a number of U.S. government agencies, especially the U.S. Geological Survey. They were studying the ring of fire, all of Indonesia's volcanic and earthquake activity, and they were developing remote sensing technology to monitor environmental problems including illegal logging and coral reef degradation. My husband also worked on programs involving sophisticated nuclear and information technology research activities in Bandung, a university city I remember him visiting often. He handled much of this scientific cooperation between the two countries with Mr. Habibi, who was then minister of science and later became president of Indonesia after Suharto. Because of Habibi's rising power and interest in science, these responsibilities required a great deal of attention.

Q: Talk about investing in someone who later became important, there's a tremendous example. So, you shifted gears after 15 months. I take it you were learning some Indonesian language?

SMITH: Oh, yes, the language. I went to a university in Indonesia and scrambled to learn Indonesian before taking over the IO job, because any press attaché must have good

language skills. You've got to be able to understand television, read the newspapers, give statements in the language, and chat with journalists.

Q: Did USIA fund this?

SMITH: Yes, it did. That was another wonderful thing about USIA, they didn't make everybody go to FSI (the Foreign Service Institute, in Arlington, Virginia). If there was a good reason to study overseas or at another institution (and in my case the good reason was that I was with my family overseas because of my husband's assignment), USIA would let you do it, presuming the cost didn't exceed what it would have been at FSI. And certainly in Indonesia, the cost-savings were substantial. I had very good Indonesian language training at Atmajaya University, and also tutoring from the USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) teachers at the embassy. It was a double-barreled approach.

Q: Yes, even in Washington, USIA would sometimes fund study in private institutions.

SMITH: Yes, if for some reason you couldn't start at the same time as the FSI course.

Anyway, I took over the IO job having had almost no press attaché experience or training. It was a little nerve-wracking for the ambassador, but he gave me a chance. He required that I came in and read all the political section's cables for a long time before the job started.

The ambassador was Bob Barry, and he and his wife and I have stayed friends. They were also friends of my late husband. He was an outstanding ambassador and taught me a lot about how to deal with the press, because he was willing to give public speeches and be quite open with the press.

Q: Based on previous experience, what is it about the relationship between the ambassador and an IO that works?

SMITH: There must be a very close bond of trust. In many cases, the IO or press attaché is actually closer to the ambassador than the public affairs officer is. Public affairs officers are running a big operation that includes all the exchange activity. The press attaché is worrying about what the U.S. government is going to say, every hour of every day, and about U.S. policies. Typically, the only two people in an embassy who are authorized to be the spokespeople to the press are the ambassador and the press attaché. Sometimes, if a post is a small operation and there isn't a press attaché, the spokesperson will be the public affairs officer. But, in a post with a big enough staff to have both a PAO and an IO/press attaché, it is usually the press attaché who talks to the press. (Later note: eventually certain other officers were authorized to speak with the press.)

Q: Did you find it easy to come to an agreement or modus operandi with the ambassador on who was going to do what? You implied that he mentored you in the very beginning.

SMITH: Yes, and as I said, I felt that I learned a lot from him about being a press officer. I was also lucky to be living in Jakarta before I took on the IO job, so I was able to watch my predecessor at work. USIS was also headed by a very fine PAO, Wes Stewart, who had been a press officer himself, and I had good local staff. But certainly the demands on the press office, when I was press attaché, were suddenly greater than they had been before, for a couple of reasons.

I will start with the fact that the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) forum meeting was in Jakarta in 1994. Whenever there is a big international meeting that the president of the United States attends, there is a lot of press work involved, and an enormous amount of preparation. The terrible thing about regularly scheduled summits is that there is a whole year to plan for them, so work expands accordingly, and you have to get everything right. There are multiple White House advance teams. It was especially challenging in Indonesia because the country had very shaky telecommunications infrastructure at that point. To get the feeds, the satellite hookups, the facilities, and everything required for the American press who would come with the president, was a nightmare. I spent a year working on and worrying about that summit. It came off beautifully, but it took up a year.

Then, at the summit, another kind of nightmare happened. East Timor was still part of Indonesia at that time, and the East Timorese wanted to bring world attention to their plight and their interest in separating from Indonesia. A group of East Timorese separatists worked up a scheme to invade our embassy. About 25 East Timorese scaled the embassy wall and conducted a sit-in in the courtyard of our embassy at the time that President Clinton was in town. They knew that the eyes of the world were on Jakarta then. Along with the president came 200 journalists from the White House press corps. This is the press attaché's worst nightmare: a high-visibility crisis at the same moment when you're supposed to be dealing with something else important, *and* while you're under observation from your ultimate bosses. The upshot was that the White House, the State Department, and our ambassador decided that the sit-in ought not detract from the important business of APEC and President Clinton's visit, so giving out information about it should be kept to the lowest possible level, meaning me. Consequently I abandoned APEC and sat for two days and nights in the embassy answering the phones, giving interviews, and putting out information about the East Timorese sit-in.

Q: Does this mean that you were authorized to wing it, to give information as you saw fit without clearance?

SMITH: Yes, although I had guidelines that the ambassador and I worked out and I was in close touch with him. He believed that we should give out as much information as we could without endangering the private negotiations that were going on between us, the Red Cross, the Timorese, and the Indonesian government about what was going to happen to these people.

Q: In fact, was the press corps very distracted by the sit-in?

SMITH: Of course. Sit-ins inside embassy compounds are not a common thing, and this one lasted days. There were banners, one of the Timorese people got sick, and the media wanted to know what we were feeding them, whether we were giving them medical attention, and what the U.S. government thought about East Timorese independence. We covered the whole gamut. After all, there were 200 high-powered journalists from the U.S. in town, and a thousand or two others from the rest of the APEC countries and the world. While in Jakarta, they all wanted to feature local color stories, so they were all over the sit-in.

Q: Well, that is quite a challenge. And you had to do this, you are saying, pretty much solo because the …

SMITH: Because everybody else was over at the conference dealing with the APEC discussions and agreements.

Q: And yet, some or most of the press was more interested in the story you were handling.

SMITH: They are capable of being interested in several things at once, and certainly they deluged us with questions. I spent 18 hours constantly on the phone each day during the crisis. It certainly proved to be the right strategy to be open and forthcoming with the press, because a flood of stories resulted from all those phone calls, and none of them criticized the U.S. for its handling of the demonstrators or the crisis. In fact, we got quite a lot of positive press out of it, a lesson I kept with me for the future.

Q: East Timor later became a country. Do you think that this episode was key in that process?

SMITH: No, it was a blip, really, although important at the time. It was quite a bit later that East Timor became an independent country. The sit-in certainly showed the depth of passion that people felt in Timor about wanting independence, but I don't think it was really a precursor to independence.

Q: Since you were working 24/7 on that story, and you had intended to be helping with the press at the APEC summit, who was doing that? You couldn't do both.

SMITH: Well, I had great USIS colleagues and people we had brought in from neighboring posts to help us, and we were in touch by phone. In any case, as is often true, the planning and the setting up is the most onerous part of VIP visits. By the time the visit happens, if you've planned right everything just clicks into place. I think President Clinton was in town for four days and three nights, a very long time. But it all went smoothly. The APEC leaders went up to Bogor and held part of their meeting there. The press arrangements went fine. Meanwhile I remember writing press statements, outlining what we were going to say about the East Timorese, and faxing them to our APEC control room, knowing that Secretary Christopher or the ambassador, or both, were at the other end of the fax waiting to approve my talking points. Because I had to

be sure that I was saying the right thing, we would agree on broad parameters, and then I would wing it within those boundaries.

Q: Did you get a speedy response from the Secretary of State?

SMITH: Yes, because the sit-in was so controversial, and so immediate, and so much press attention was focused on it.

Q: So you were drawn away from what you thought was going to be your main work during that period. The Clinton visit was three or four days; did the conference itself go beyond three or four days?

SMITH: No. He was there for the whole time and participated fully. The sit-in crisis eventually was resolved, and I ended up back at the APEC site toward the end of the summit. Because of all the drama and the difficulty in making the arrangements for the White House press corps, the White House press staff very kindly arranged a private meeting for my family and me with President and Mrs. Clinton as a thank you. It was exciting and wonderful; we still have photographs from that meeting.

Q: The interviewer will now say that you did a fantastic job.

SMITH: Everything came out well.

Q: Well, that is high adrenaline, and then you came off the high slopes of this crisis.

SMITH: There were many other interesting things going on during my tour as press attaché. For example, a very serious and complex trade dispute arose where we had to develop a press strategy and make frequent statements to the press, trying to help the local population understand the U.S. position, which was not immediately understandable or appealing.

I also faced a difficult case when an American military employee of our little embassy post office was discovered to have been bringing drugs into Indonesia, in essence through the diplomatic pouch. This was of course terrible. People were outraged in Indonesia, and rightly so; so were we. We had to explain why diplomatic immunity meant that the employee could not be tried in Indonesia, but we also promised he would be sent back to the U.S. and tried in the U.S. military system. Fortunately, the trial proved the employee guilty, and he was convicted. Because he had been caught red-handed, it seemed as though he would be convicted, but no press attaché can promise that, and the case took a lot of time and a lot of explaining.

The most important local issue that arose during my time as press attaché, however, was the Suharto government's crackdown on the Indonesian press. This was a serious move against press freedom, and the United States came out in full support of the beleaguered journalists and the principles they were trying to uphold. Indonesian journalists were being jailed, their newspapers were being shut down, and there were very brutal

suppression tactics going on, although no deaths or physical violence. I felt I was on the ramparts in defense of these journalists, many of whom I had gotten to know in the course of my work.

Q: What did Suharto feel was the threat represented to him by the press?

SMITH: Suharto was running an authoritarian regime, and he didn't like the idea of opposition figures getting press play, and he didn't like the idea of the corruption activities of his cronies being uncovered. There were all kinds of secrets that he preferred to keep. The Indonesian press was trying to print the truth in their good, serious but not particularly confrontational way. It's a non-confrontational society. But one magazine and one newspaper – Tempo and Kompas -- did go after the tough stories, and they got shut down.

Q: To what extent do you think that the embassy, or you personally, were able to assist the press in this tense atmosphere?

SMITH: By our public statements, by going to visit the newspapers that were being shut down, and, where possible, by visiting the journalists in jail, I'm sure we were helpful. We certainly made it impossible for the regime to think that they could get away with this crackdown without protest and visibility.

Q: Were other embassies working with you on this? Or was it mainly the U.S. Embassy?

SMITH: I believe there were other embassies involved. I think the British were vocal on this, and perhaps the Germans. I shouldn't speak for them, though; I recall more what we did.

Q: Did you ever feel that if there was trouble for journalists and you were on their side, there was trouble for you as well?

SMITH: No. I felt that diplomatic immunity would protect me, physically. But it is always dangerous for a diplomat to take a very critical public stance vis-à-vis a host government. But we didn't hesitate; we did what we thought was right.

Q: And you had the full support of the ambassador?

SMITH: Absolutely.

Q: I may be off by two countries and twenty years, but the movie The Year of Living Dangerously, is that….

SMITH: Ah, that's Indonesia. It was set almost thirty years before our assignment there, before and during the changeover between Sukarno and Suharto. A great deal of violence against people of Chinese descent in the mid-1960s was sparked by anti-communist purges. Hundreds of thousands were killed.

Q: Yes, in the movie there's a lot of violence depicted. You are saying that the press crackdown you worked against was a gentler thing because there was more international attention given to it?

SMITH: Maybe, but there is an undercurrent of violence in Indonesia, or there was before and during the Suharto regime. Part of it in our time there resulted from the tension provoked by the repression perpetrated by the regime. I always had the feeling that violence could erupt at any moment because a lid was being clamped down on society. But the Indonesian people, both individually and collectively, have a very non-confrontational cultural style – usually.

Q: Well, you visited some journalists in prison, you supported them publicly. Toward the end of your tour, did conditions improve for them? Did you get to see any journalists who came out of jail?

SMITH: Yes. As a matter of fact, when I left post I remember there was a farewell party for me and many journalists came. There was an outpouring of thanks. By then the crisis had eased somewhat but people were still concerned about it. It was sometime thereafter the Suharto regime fell.

Q: Do you think that the best approach for helping the press, or helping victims of repressive regimes, is to give a lot of attention to the situation?

SMITH: Yes. As I mentioned long ago when we were covering my life before the Foreign Service, in the year I was studying for the Foreign Service exam I was also working as the New England coordinator for Amnesty International, starting the first office for Amnesty in New England. In that capacity I organized support groups for Amnesty on college campuses and symposia on political imprisonment. Maybe that is what introduced me to the idea that when the eyes of the world are on a repressive regime, it is almost always better for the people suffering repression than for them to be ignored.

Q: Would you say this is the major lesson that you learned as IO in Indonesia?

SMITH: It was certainly a big one. The other insight is likely only interesting to public diplomacy officers who are debating whether to concentrate on cultural and educational exchange work or on press and information work. The big realization that came to my attention in Jakarta was the difference in pace and timing of the two kinds of work. When you are handling educational exchange work you are thinking about next academic year, and the academic year after that. The candidates' selection and placement unfold over a very long time-horizon, and you hope 10 or 20 years later the exchange will benefit everybody involved. When you are doing press work, what's important is what's going at that minute. If a journalist calls you with a question and you don't know the answer, you better get back to him within the hour because later is not good enough.

Q: I think you thrived with the adrenaline of that situation.

SMITH: Yes. I didn't expect it, but I turned out to enjoy it quite a lot. But I also enjoyed being in Indonesia – such a collection of exotic cultures, so different from other places I'd been! I learned the language well, so we could travel widely throughout the archipelago; we also used this posting as a jumping off point for exploring Asia. Our girls were in middle school at the excellent Jakarta International School, and my husband's younger son joined us for two years of high school there.

Q: So these were two halves of the public diplomacy whole, the CAO and the IO experience? It is kind of unique to the American system that we use the same individuals to do both.

POSTING AT THE INFORMATION BUREAU OF USIA IN WASHINGTON
SMITH: Yes. However, it is excellent preparation for becoming a public affairs officer later, when you need to understand and supervise both sides of public diplomacy.

We left Indonesia in 1995 and went back to Washington. I was very fortunate to have been chosen to be an office director in the Information Bureau of USIA, which previously had been called the Programs or P Bureau. There was a radical downsizing going on, and P became a leaner, meaner entity called the I (or Information) Bureau. As readers familiar with public diplomacy will know, during the 1990s after the collapse of communism and the fall of the Soviet Union, there was a massively wrong-headed feeling in Washington that because we won the Cold War we didn't need to conduct much public diplomacy anymore. USIA's budget, consequently, was cut and cut and then cut some more; we lost funding and people and support throughout the 1990s.

The Information Bureau was one result of those cuts. As head of the I Bureau, Barry Fulton led a forced but very enlightened downsizing of the Programs Bureau, retooling it into a new, smaller entity using modern, non-hierarchical management techniques to try to get as much as possible out of what we had left. When I walked into this, much but not all of the work already had been done. I worked under Barry and oversaw the Office of Geographic Liaison, which had 110 people and a mandate to write and compile the materials that went into what was originally the Wireless File (which became the Washington File while I was there); run the information resource center operation; and run part of the speaker program.

The rest of the speaker program was run by a sister office, and Judy Shapiro became its leader at the same time I came into the I Bureau. We were pragmatic and collegial about making our operations efficient, and it was satisfying to deconflict some of the overlap that had unproductively absorbed our predecessors.

Q: And the I Bureau got the vice-presidential Hammer Award on the wall near the elevator on the 6th floor. I believe this bureau got exceptional recognition by the Executive Branch, by the White House, because of its successful transformation and downsizing. Do I have this correct? Do you believe that the general feeling that the Cold

War was won and resources could therefore diminish was wrong? But you believe that the I Bureau adaptation was as good as it could have been?

SMITH: Well, this particular adaptation was quite enlightened and quite successful, and we thoroughly appreciated White House recognition and felt that we were forerunners in Vice President Gore's reinvention of government. That doesn't mean, however, that I was happy with the severe funding cuts that vitiated public diplomacy.

It was especially absorbing during the two years I was in the I Bureau, 1995-97, that that was just when the worldwide web was first becoming an important feature of modern communications. During that time, therefore, we tasked ourselves with figuring out how to make the web work for U.S. government public diplomacy. We designed the first government websites for overseas audiences, and we figured out how to make all U.S. government foreign policy-related speeches and public materials available electronically, in real time, for our embassies overseas. I recall using my experience at press attaché in Jakarta to guide the process: I knew that organizing U.S. government materials by subject rather than source would be most helpful to our embassies.

Q: This later became NewsInfo, but I guess that was later.

SMITH: Yes, the I Bureau was the progenitor of such products.

Q: Again, trying to get the most out of this. The wrong-headedness of saying we won the Cold War and therefore we can pull back, I think in retrospect anybody would agree that that was a mistake. Do you think that these cuts reflected U.S. public opinion? Or did they come from the legislative branch of government? Was it the executive? Did everybody fall into this intellectual error?

SMITH: I think almost everybody who didn't know public diplomacy well fell into that error. I think the people who did know public diplomacy well understood that all along we weren't conducting public diplomacy just to counter the Soviets. There was a lot more to public diplomacy than that, and after all, we engaged in public diplomacy all over the world. We were trying to be, and we were being, the face of the United States, both of our government and our society. We were trying to build long-term relationships with our friends, and with people who were undecided. We were trying to explain ourselves and reach out to people who were in countries that played adversarial roles vis-à-vis the United States. So public diplomacy wasn't just about the U.S. versus the Soviet Union, ever.

Q: So who made this mistake? Do you think it was the Congress?

SMITH: Well, there was a lot of energy behind Jesse Helms' attack on USAID and USIA, and also the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA). He wanted to see, as I understood it, a paring down of the government bureaucracy that had been set up, in his view, to deal with the Soviet threat. The way I heard it, and you know one should never speak for someone else, was that he was most unhappy with and on the attack

against USAID. But USAID had a very energetic director and USIA, unfortunately, did not stand up and fight this threat with the same vigor and effectiveness as USAID. The result was that USAID did not get merged with the State Department, and USIA did, as did ACDA.

Q: Brian Atwood saved USAID, would you say?

SMITH: Yes. I believe that Helms also wanted to save money. He wasn't just trying to simplify the bureaucracy; he was looking for a peace dividend, a cost savings.

Q: You indicated earlier the money saved was a trivial amount.

SMITH: Yes, the money spent on public diplomacy in the first place was trivial in relation to U.S. budgets for defense and foreign affairs overall, and no money was saved in the end. In fact, it is very costly to make two bureaucracies fit together. And the shotgun marriage that occurred was, in the end, neither a cost savings nor a benefit to public diplomacy.

Q: I guess efficiency was not the motivator, because I think a legislator familiar with the foreign affairs apparatus, as Senator Helms was, might have known that mergers don't increase efficiency. Do you think there was an attitude here of spite?

SMITH: We certainly felt that that was very likely, we being the ones being swallowed. Furthermore, I believe there was some sympathy for Helms' position in the State Department. Madeleine Albright was Secretary and went along with it. Some people say that she was courting Senator Helms, in a way, in order to get his support on all kinds of issues that he was being very difficult about. He was blocking many ambassadorial appointments, using this tactic to try to thwart the Clinton administration. He was also being very difficult on Senate passage of the chemical weapons treaty, and he demanded the reorganization as a quid pro quo. So there were many factors at play between the State Department and Helms who was, let us not forget, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at the time. I don't know all the motivations that the State Department had. In the Information Bureau we had the feeling that Vice President Gore had really applauded what we had accomplished in forging a new approach to foreign affairs that was very modern, very IT-oriented, and used a flat hierarchy. But the I Bureau and its successes preceded the merger and were not strong enough factors to prevent it; or maybe Gore's enthusiasm was not a sufficient counterweight to the engine that was coming down from Capitol Hill against us.

Q: A couple of questions on that. There were playful newspaper articles about the Secretary of State's friendship, so to speak, with Senator Helms. She was in a very difficult position. She was defending a diminishing operation, and I don't know exactly where she stood and maybe nobody does, but she was seeking to defend what she had by yielding something to Senator Helms, I think. And yet the press, at the time, was making more of it than that; they were pointing out instances of actual apparent friendship. Did you follow those pieces in the press?

SMITH: I remember hearing those speculations. It would be hard, really, to imagine a genuine friendship. But difficult times make strange, well, not bedfellows, but collaborators.

Q: You mentioned Gore and his support for what was then called downsizing or rightsizing, I think. But I think you are saying that the need to downsize was not something perhaps that the White House liked, but it was a deal that they made.

SMITH: I'm not sure it was a deal, or a prevailing attitude, or both, but the result was that everything in public diplomacy was being downsized; this wasn't just the Information Bureau. Posts were being cut, exchange programs were being cut, Arts America, our cultural presentation arm, was eliminated completely. There were cuts across the board and we didn't really have a champion on Capitol Hill. There was no big name that I can recall standing up for us, for public diplomacy, for the Fulbright program, and for all these wonderful activities.

Q: Do you think it might have made a lot of difference if there had been a champion?

SMITH: I bet if Senator Fulbright or Senator Moynihan had still been alive, or somebody of that stature, there could have been a different outcome. Public diplomacy must have seemed like low-hanging fruit to the people who wanted to see cuts and efficiencies and who didn't think through the implications or understand the financial calculus.

Q: Well, what have we lost in losing ACDA? In losing USIA? We can talk about this later, if you want.

SMITH: Yes, maybe in the context of the merger itself, which happened when I was in London.

POSTING AS MINISTER-COUNSELOR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS (PAO) IN LONDON
Q: Let's go to the next stage.

SMITH: During my assignment in the I Bureau for the two years 1995-97, my husband decided to retire and I bid on some overseas assignments. My first choice, although there were a couple of other wonderful options, was to be PAO in London, and I was chosen for the job. I started there in 1997, right after Princess Diana died, which was during Prime Minister Blair's first term and President Clinton's second term. Admiral Crowe, as I had mentioned, was just leaving when I arrived and Philip Lader entered as ambassador a couple of weeks later. He was ambassador, in fact, for the whole four years that I was in London. But I do remember the two weeks with Admiral Crowe, which was wonderful. He was an extraordinary ambassador and person.

Q: A lot happened during those four years. You had a personal tragedy, and there were big changes in the agency that had sent you out. Let's begin to talk about that period.

SMITH: The personal tragedy, of course, is the most important thing to me. My husband had a very unexpected heart attack in early 1998 and died instantly. Our girls at that point were 14 and 16 and were in high school at the American School in London. We were utterly devastated.

After reflection I decided to stay on in London, because the standard advice for dealing with such a profound loss is to keep doing whatever you're doing, and not to change anything until you have your bearings again. This turned out to be a good decision, but finding myself a young widow and single parent was very difficult. The loss of my husband colored my time in London completely. I would prefer not to dwell on that further in this context.

There were several important things happening professionally very shortly after my husband's death. In spring 1998 the G-8 summit took place in Birmingham and President Clinton attended. By then I had worked on a presidential visit in Jakarta, so it wasn't quite as daunting this time around, and the London embassy was very experienced in handling high-level visits.

Q: Did President Clinton remember you from Jakarta?

SMITH: No, I don't think so. I hadn't had any personal contact with him in the four intervening years. What was similar to Jakarta was the presence of 200 members of the White House press corps. These were still the days before telecommunications technology had advanced far enough to allow journalists to file stories from anywhere, without technical assistance. Therefore, we had to set up a press center at each of their stops, with phones, uplinks, and feeds for print and television journalists so they could file their reporting instantly. The journalists paid for rental of the equipment and the use of these facilities, but we in the embassy had to have the press centers up and running prior to arrival. It was not until the end of my tour in London, in 2001, that certain tech-savvy journalists began to carry with them the technology that enabled them to file stories from their hotel rooms and forgo the elaborate press centers that we set up for them in advance.

Anyway, on that G-8 visit the president spent time in London as well as at the Birmingham summit, and the summit occurred just when India tested its first nuclear device. That meant there was, again, an unexpected international event intruding upon a summit meeting and making working with the press extremely urgent and sensitive.

Q: It is commonly said that in the rivalry between Pakistan and India, the U.S. is perceived as being on the Indian side. Did you have to deal with that issue? Did that question come up during that summit?

SMITH: Maybe, but I've also heard it's just the opposite. Anyway, Pakistan hadn't yet revealed its nuclear program and, perhaps, didn't have much of one at that point. I

understood that their program was intensified in response to India's developing a nuclear device, more than being contemporaneous.

There were plenty of other questions to deal with too, however. As a matter of fact, President Clinton came repeatedly to the U.K. and involved himself with events in Northern Ireland more than any other issue. He took a personal interest in the Northern Ireland peace process and accomplished a great deal on his own and together with Prime Minister Blair, to help move that process forward. He deserves credit for having played an important role and for bringing in George Mitchell to negotiate between the two sides, which resulted in the Good Friday Accords of 1998. In any case, whenever President Clinton came to the U.K., he would go to Northern Ireland, so we would have to set up a whole press operation there as well.

Q: Although these must have been very discreet talks, I guess there were readouts after the talks, is that correct?

SMITH: There were discreet talks certainly, but there was also a very public effort on President Clinton's part to try to bring some hope and new thinking into the minds of the Northern Ireland people, both Catholic and Protestant. He tried very hard to encourage the two communities to cooperate with each other better. He always gave major public speeches, and he would take walks through public spaces in Northern Ireland. I will never forget that he visited right after the bombing in Omagh; do you remember that? There was a terrorist bombing in a marketplace in Omagh in Northern Ireland that killed twenty-nine people and wounded hundreds; it was just horrible. Many people advised us that because the community was grieving, President Clinton should not intrude on them with a visit. But he had a sense that it would be helpful to go anyway. As he and Prime Minister Blair were walking through the devastated market area, I trailed close behind with the press and I could see that people really loved meeting him. He was able to empathize and also to help people begin to climb out of their morass of despair.

Q: It is said that he did that in Bosnia also, at a later point. When he did this with Prime Minister Blair, do you think that there was a close partnership? He was on Blair's turf, so to speak. Did Blair welcome this?

SMITH: Yes. I think that they were friends as well as professional and political allies. They saw themselves as colleagues, they traded ideas, and I think they became friends. I think Blair genuinely welcomed Clinton's visits. But I will say that there are few if any politicians on the planet who have Clinton's magic with crowds. In a way, Clinton overshadowed Blair when they were together and with a crowd. But I think Blair saw that Clinton's presence had a positive effect. He kept inviting him back, so it seems to have been something that he wanted to see happen.

Q: In your four years, can you remember how many such visits?

SMITH: Clinton made three visits to the U.K. when I was there, each of them quite long, involving both England and Northern Ireland, and he made additional visits before I

arrived. President George W. Bush also visited London late in my term, shortly after he took office.

Q: I seem to remember seeing somewhere that the U.S. Embassy in London gets something like 2,000 VIP visits a year?

SMITH: Oh, heaven's no. Embassy London hosts 17,000 U.S. government visitors a year, many of whom consider themselves VIPs!

Q: How did you do this? I mean, each one expecting some attention - 17,000?

SMITH: We have such a close relationship with the U.K. that almost every branch of the U.S. government that does anything overseas, does it with the U.K. Consequently, representatives of all these branches stop in London on their way to wherever else they are going. So it is not just State Department officials visiting, and not just the White House. We had more visitors from the U.S. government than I think any other embassy in the world. I believe in my time we had over 30 secretary of state visits, dozens of congressional delegations, and many other cabinet-level secretaries coming through.

In most of these visits, the American visitors of any importance wanted to connect with the press. Don't forget, London has a very influential press environment. It's the only place outside of New York and Washington, probably in the entire world, where when you are talking to the press you are talking to a global audience. Britain has Reuters, which is global, BBC, which is global, the Economist, which is global, and the Financial Times, which also is global. Furthermore, many Arabic language-newspapers and television stations have branches in London, because they can say more from London than they can in their home countries, and because it is also an important center for them.

Q: How could a PAO have time to do anything else?

SMITH: Actually, the press did tend to dominate our work. We had a big staff, however, though not big enough in my view. At the time bigger or as big public diplomacy operations existed in Paris and Rome and Madrid, although they didn't have either the global reach of the British press or the number of visitors, although in fairness Paris had quite a few visitors. In any case, we had a very talented British staff in London and in addition to me the American staff consisted of a press attaché, two assistant information officers, a cultural attaché, and an assistant cultural attaché. So the staff was absolutely key. And when there was a presidential visit, we would have colleagues come in from neighboring posts to help us.

Q: You mentioned the presence of Arabic-language media. In subsequent years, positions were developed in the U.S. embassy to deal with the Arab community in the U.K., and also with the Arabic-language press that was based in London. Was this germinating when you were there?

SMITH: Yes. We had a local employee who was from Egypt and was an Arabic speaker. He maintained relations with the Arabic language press. But this was all before 9/11, and so these relations were important but not the main focus for us.

Q: Was the Regional Resource Unit (RRU) in London at that time?

SMITH: RRU, the speakers bureau, had been abolished before I got there.

Q: A great loss; the London equivalent of Africa Regional Services in Paris. Was it basically one FSN?

SMITH: Yes, one or two. I think maybe there also had been an American officer at some early point. The point of RRU was to find Americans resident in Europe who could speak in Europe about subjects relevant to our foreign policy objectives. There was an attempt to replicate that entity in Germany later, but I don't think it ever really germinated, if you will excuse the pun.

Q: So you were in London when USIA ceased to exist in 1999? How did this change your work?

SMITH: The merger was very difficult. We didn't want to see it happen, and we particularly didn't like the way it was imposed. We had to merge our administrative and technology operations with the rest of the embassy. As in most places, the administrative and IT (information technology) competence of USIA was, frankly, miles ahead of the rest of the State Department's. So we felt as though the merger forced us to lose the agility, the speed, and the technological savvy that had been our hallmark. We had been able to do things fast and well, and suddenly we were embedded in a cumbersome bureaucracy that took forever and didn't understand or particularly care about what we were trying to accomplish. In USIA days, if we wanted to give a grant to a speaker to talk about our policy on Bosnia, someone who might be suddenly coming tomorrow, fine, we could do that. But under the State Department systems, we might not be able to get the purchase order written until six months later, and the opportunity would have vanished. This bureaucratic tangle took a very long time to work out and is still not completely resolved.

Q: So, literally, it was from one day to the next. It was October first…

SMITH: Well, there was a long run up and run down, but yes, on October 1, 1999, the changeover occurred. Particularly for some of the local employees who had to change their work procedures or their offices, the change was devastating. People had spent their whole careers working with USIS and loved it. They did not see that any benefit was achieved from this merger. On September 30, the day before the merger went into effect, we had a little gathering, a sort of funeral for USIA, in my office; we were determined not to show this mournful face to our State Department colleagues, however, so on October 1 we invited the whole rest of the embassy over to celebrate our new partnership

and try to get off on the best foot. We wanted to host a public wedding after the private funeral.

Q: Well, this is much more visionary and much more open and compassionate than was the case in many other posts.

SMITH: We had a DCM (deputy chief of mission) who was very enlightened about public diplomacy and who wanted to work with us in all the best ways. There were some other people, particularly on the administrative side, however, who could be very difficult and who saw the absorption of USIA into State as a struggle of win or lose; since the State Department won and USIA lost, some of these administrative types felt we should knuckle under and get with their program. They certainly did not believe they had anything to learn from any USIA systems or practices. But not everybody was like that and, anyway, we had to make the best of it; what else do you do?

Q: There were a few people, I think, who actually gloated. There was a sense of rivalry over resources -- USIA had its own drivers, the PAOs had china assigned them for representational entertaining; people were jealous of really petty things.

SMITH: There were a few very nasty people who did gloat and did grab up what could be grabbed up.

Q: Well, we won't dwell on the negatives and the gloating. It is a huge embassy in London, with a large political section, economic section, all the others -- you had an enlightened and receptive DCM and a few admin people who may not have been quite as enlightened. What about all the others? The political analysts, did they notice, did they care?

SMITH: Yes, there were some officers throughout the embassy with whom we worked very closely, people who were very adept at and interested in working with the press, particularly, who continued to be good colleagues. And I certainly don't want to disparage all the administrative or management people; there were some great ones there too. On the whole, I think that because we had so many VIP visits in London, there was a sense in most quarters in our embassy that what our section was doing really mattered, at least on the press side, and they were very glad that we were there doing it. I don't think there was as much understanding of the exchanges side of our work throughout the embassy; but as I said, Admiral Crowe, when he was ambassador, was certainly very keen on exchanges, especially the Fulbright program.

Q: In some embassies, sections become rivals amongst themselves for IV grants. Was that the case in London?

SMITH: In a good way, yes. We had a lot of excellent participation in the IV program, and I remember running those meetings, and they were real trade-off sessions. Everybody wanted to get IV grants and would argue vehemently for their candidates.

Q: In that sense, they did understand the value of exchanges.

SMITH: Yes. You are right to point that out because I was thinking more of the Fulbright and cultural programs. Certainly on the IV program, yes, we had good cooperation.

Q: What about Fulbright, did non-public diplomacy officers not see it as part of their portfolios?

SMITH: Not so much, and in some ways it wasn't. We could have used a little more support on the Fulbright program, but we did pretty well. The main thing that we wanted support for, of course, was fundraising. With so many American corporations doing business in the U.K. and British corporations doing business in the U.S., there were considerable opportunities for fundraising. With the help of the Fulbright Commission, Admiral Crowe had gotten this off to a good start. He hosted events and the commission encouraged corporations to donate, and these efforts had had considerable success. We continued fundraising under Ambassador Lader, as well, also with considerable success.

Q: What was the fundraising used for? Funding Fulbright grants?

SMITH: Yes. In many cases, corporations would designate a grant for a particular field of study relevant to their business. Of course the competition would have to stay open, but the donor corporation could say that they wanted their grant to be given to somebody in the life sciences, or in engineering, for example. There was no guarantee ever given a corporation, but the donor would hope that the Fulbright grantee would come back home from whichever direction he or she went, whether a Briton going to the U.S. or an American coming to the U.K., and be interested in working with the donor company.

Q: The cultural, economic, and political relations between the U.K. and the U.S. are so close, and performing groups travel in both directions commercially, that all this private-sector interchange must have overshadowed U.S. government efforts… In Yugoslavia and Indonesia, your role was very clear, you had to create and run exchanges. In the U.K. it was different, as exchanges were thriving by themselves. What was the value added, VIP visits aside? What do you think a public affairs section in an enormous embassy like London can add, when there is already a lot of cultural and political and economic exchange happening?

SMITH: What a government does in an environment like that is much more of a drop in a big bucket, but that doesn't make it unimportant. There were times when very high-profile American performing arts groups came to the U.K. under private auspices, but the ambassador would host a reception for the senior people in the group and the patrons who came along, and we would invite British guests. Those were wonderful occasions. Or if there was an American exhibit at the National Gallery in London or one of the other great museums of the U.K., we would participate in the opening reception. Or when very high-profile U.S. speakers were coming on private visits, we would also host them for an event under our auspices. This way, by associating the U.S. government

with the eminent and impressive Americans who were coming to Britain, we got a certain extra bang for the buck.

But our goal wasn't just consorting or being seen with these eminent Americans, but rather having the opportunity to speak with influential British people about the issues of the day that were important to us. I remember a performance in Northern Ireland of an American music group that we were able to help fund, although it was coming privately. We invited leaders from both the Catholic and the Protestant communities and had a little reception in the concert hall. We thus provided one of the only venues, if not the only venue, in which these people could or would talk to each other in any kind of social environment, whether relaxed or unrelaxed.

There were many events happening at the time where the U.S. and the U.K. had shared or, sometimes, competing interests, as there always are. We had quite recent shared memories of the Gulf War, and some continuing tensions over its aftermath, and the U.S. and Britain were working together on bombing and monitoring runs in Iraq. The events in Bosnia and Kosovo were ongoing and very much a shared concern; we were cooperating on the Northern Ireland peace process; there were disputes about genetically modified foods; and virulent trade disputes on access to Heathrow and airline negotiations. With all these issues at play between our countries, and because we are such close partners, it is valuable to have other things to discuss and enjoy together, both officially and unofficially.

Q: Official U.S.-U.K. relations have been very close in recent decades, but British public opinion varies in terms of U.S. policy and U.S. society. During your four years there, what was your observation as the public affairs officer? What was your sense of the public's perception of us?

SMITH: Public opinion was still very positive during the Clinton presidency. In fact, when I was there, we ran a couple of public opinion surveys, and regard for the U.S. was very high and on the rise. During the Monica Lewinsky scandal, we got hundreds of phone calls and letters, and the overwhelming majority of them supported President Clinton. People were fond of Clinton and hoped that this personal problem would not negatively affect his presidency, or U.S.-U.K. relations, or what he was doing overseas.

Q: So they reached out. Did they call the Public Affairs Section?

SMITH: Oh, yes, constantly; we took all the public calls and letters. We had a finger on the pulse of British opinion, a very sensitive finger on the pulse.

Q: Do you believe that the positive expressions on the part of the British public were personally directed at an individual whom they liked, President Clinton? Or did they also hold a favorable opinion of the U.S. system and the U.S. culture?

SMITH: You can't say about the British public, or maybe any public, that there is one across-the-board view. There are many, many views, and there are certainly some people

in Britain who look down on American culture and feel that we are unruly, uncultured upstarts. I don't think you can generalize. I can say that in the messages that we were receiving, there was more positive than negative sentiment overall, by far. Some of those messages were in support of Clinton, politically, some supported him personally, some talked about our country as a whole, or our policies, and a fair number of our callers and letter-writers went back to WWII and spoke fondly about the U.S.-U.K. war effort and collaboration. Many British people also have relatives who married Americans, and many visit our country as tourists. There is so much back-and-forth between our countries, and the British people are not shy about expressing their opinions.

Q: The British Embassy here in Washington has a statue of Churchill in front of it. The front foot is in U.S. territory and the other foot is in British…. I guess that is very much a part of the relationship since Churchill was, in fact, partly American. I don't know if it is premature to recap the London experience. You made a comment about bringing together Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. Would you say this was one of the most meaningful programs that you conducted?

SMITH: Oh, I don't want to take the main credit for that huge effort. I was simply part of supporting President Clinton's determination to help the Northern Irish factions reach accord, which was a major activity for almost all of us at the embassy during his presidency. I think that was one of the most significant issues that the U.S. dealt with in the U.K. during my time there.

Q: If you are willing to personalize the four years, what would you say gave you the most satisfaction, in terms of your own accomplishments? Or were you a total team player and your efforts….

SMITH: It was such a tough time for me personally because of my husband's death, that that's hard to answer. One thing that I might say is that despite that tragedy my daughters and I enormously benefited from living in London, and we used the opportunity of being in such a fantastic city to its fullest. It was, in a way, therapeutic. I went to the theater all the time. I went to the wonderful museums. I traveled. I'm very interested in early medieval architecture, so I explored the countryside with a friend and went to see both the obscure and the greatest Norman and Saxon buildings all over the U.K. There was just so much to do. I went to Ascot and took my daughters every year. I met the Queen in Buckingham Palace. I went to the diplomatic ball she hosted at Windsor Castle. It was an extraordinary experience.

Q: An extraordinary experience for you, and I think for your daughters. Tell me a bit about the experience your daughters had during the four years.

SMITH: They went to high school there, The American School in London, which helped make them into the cosmopolitan adults they are today. They had been very deeply influenced by Indonesia, which broadened their minds wonderfully. Then their time in the U.K. kept that process going, and they truly became global citizens. In addition to getting an excellent education amid an international student body, they traveled with the

school and with me all over Europe. They even played their field hockey matches in Paris and Brussels; I remember them saying, "Oh, Mom, we have to go to Brussels *again*!" London truly provided an enormously influential and enriching time for all of us.

Q: The stresses of family life in the Foreign Service are well known, sometimes adversely affecting children, sometimes beneficially. In your case, you would say that this lifestyle greatly benefited your daughters?

SMITH: Yes, definitely. My husband and I were lucky to go to a lecture in Yugoslavia that a psychiatrist from State MED (medical division) gave when our children were babies. He was Dr. Elmore Rigamer, who later became head of the medical division. The State Department had hired psychiatrists after the Iran hostage events made it clear that the Foreign Service was a psychologically stressful occupation. Dr. Rigamer gave a talk about raising children in the Foreign Service that made a very strong impression on us. His main point was that in order to become properly rooted, children need to return to their home countries every year and reconnect with their larger family circle, their grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and so forth, and with their national identity. So we made a point of following his advice. One way or the other, we got the kids home every year to be with their family and as a result they didn't turn out to be as deracinated as might have otherwise been the case. We also followed his advice and acquired a U.S. home base – the place in Colorado I now enjoy in winters – where we would gather family and use for home-leave and R&R (rest and recuperation from hardship posts).

Q: Thanks to your close attention to this, I think….

SMITH: It wasn't easy to do always, but it made a big difference.

Q: My last question, unless there are more things about the U.K., is about a famous British newspaper headline, I think from the early part of the 20th century: "Europe Disappears Beyond the Fog." There must have been a sense then in the U.K. that the U.K. was a totally different entity than continental Europe. Did you have this sense when you were in U.K.? Your daughters played field hockey in Brussels. Brussels was very accessible, I think. When in the U.K. did you feel connected with continental Europe yourself, and did you feel that English people did?

SMITH: I don't think that we felt closely connected with continental Europe. We felt nearby, we felt able to go and enjoy continental Europe, and we did do so a lot; and I think many people in Britain do the same. But that is different from feeling as if you are an integral part of Europe. I think in the U.K. there has always been a certain sense of distance, a certain skepticism about the allures of continental Europe, and a certain pride in staying somewhat apart from them. That is one of the reasons that it is easier, perhaps, for the U.K. to be a close ally of ours than it is for other countries in continental Europe. The U.S.-U.K. special relationship is about more than just sharing a language and a heritage.

Q: So you think this goes way back in history, and it's a constant, even with the EU becoming so much closer? Since your tour in London I suppose there have been some changes.

SMITH: There was certainly a great deal of debate, when I was in London, among British people about how close they wanted to be to the EU, whether they wanted to be in the monetary union, which of course they have still stayed out of, and whether it was a good thing or a bad thing to be closer or less close to Europe. That's a huge issue for them. The United States' position is that we are happy to be very close allies with Britain, we are happy to have them be closely allied in the European Union, and that these are not mutually exclusive. That seems sensible to me.

Q: Was that a frequent theme?

SMITH: A frequent theme, yes.

Q: Getting to the end of this chapter, any parting remarks on your four years in U.K.?

SMITH: We have not talked much about Ambassador Lader. He put a great deal of effort into being ambassador and was very interested in having a frequent press attention focused on his activities. This did place some burdens on my office and placed demands for results that were beyond what we were always able to provide. So there was a bit of a tug of war between our need to run our programs, our public diplomacy programs, and respond to all the needs for press attention during high-level visits, and then also accommodate the very energetic press interest of the ambassador.

Q: Was the press interest personally focused?

SMITH: A great deal of it was. We fortunately were able to bring on, in succession, two very talented speechwriters, who helped enormously.

Q: Were these positions that you created because of those circumstances?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: This was administratively a very brilliant…

SMITH: Complex, but not unknown. It had been done in Paris once before in a similar circumstance.

Q: Did this in fact lessen the stresses on the public diplomacy mission, to have somebody who could devote full time to the speechwriting effort?

SMITH: Yes, it was crucial.

Q: And did you have to oversee it very closely?

SMITH: Yes, of course. Anytime that any senior U.S. official talks to the press, what is said has got to be on the mind of the responsible public affairs officer. I have remained friends with both of those speechwriters and with most of my public diplomacy colleagues from that time, not least because together we survived some very real challenges.

Q: I think you met them. You helped represent the U.S. in the U.K., which in one sense was easy because of the natural affinity between the countries, and in another sense was very difficult because there are great expectations.

SMITH: Yes, very great expectations. It's hard to be heard over the enormous amount of noise that is generated both by the governments and by the private and public sectors of our two societies. There is just so much happening, and what the U.S. embassy says or does is rarely the most prominent thing…

One thing we did on my watch was reach out frequently to the British press and host events that connected them to U.S. policymakers for off-the-record and background briefings. I gave a series of lunches, inviting a handful of journalists and a visiting senior U.S. official, or one of my senior colleagues in the embassy, and we batted around the news and trends of the day. This proved to be an effective way of getting to know influential opinion-makers and to get the word out about U.S. policy developments.

Q: Your advice to future PAOs who would undertake this enormous venture? Go with the flow? Just take what there is?

SMITH: There is so much to say. The first essential is that the PAO must get to know and earn the trust and respect of the British press. At the same time, I think managing the high-level visits, the ambassador, and the public diplomacy program all at the same time means that the PAO must learn how to juggle.

Q: Learn to juggle. I think that makes a fine bookend to your U.K. experience. We can pick it up next time if there is more to add. So, this is Dan Whitman, interviewing Ambassador Pamela Smith on October 6th. Thank you very much.

Q: Here we are, it is October 13, 2007. Dan Whitman is interviewing Pamela Smith, and it is our fourth session. Ambassador Smith, we were touching on your time in the U.K., and I wanted to find out if there were any additional comments you might have about noteworthy achievements or events that happened during your stay there.

SMITH: I have been thinking about that, and it occurred to me that I became a spokesperson for public diplomacy while I was in London. It happened serendipitously because I got to know several academics and think-tank people in Britain who were thinking and talking and writing about public diplomacy. Public diplomacy was becoming an element of foreign policy that was attracting intellectual and academic attention. I was invited at one point, midway through my tour there, to be on a panel at

the London School of Economics, and to talk about public diplomacy. So I scrambled and put something together and participated. I was also invited to go to Malta, where there is an academy of diplomatic studies funded largely by the Swiss. Thanks to the PAO at our embassy in Valletta, I was invited to participate in a seminar and give a talk on public diplomacy at that academy, which the academy eventually published.

These two activities made me step back and think about public diplomacy in a more conceptual way than I had done before. Until then I had been content with simply being a practitioner, but during my time in the U.K. I found myself turning a bit more into someone who thinks and writes about public diplomacy. That helped prepare me later for the teaching I undertook at Georgetown, where I am still a visiting professor.

Q: Why do you think the U.K. was open to the subject at that time? It is sometimes said that during the INF (intermediate-range nuclear forces) deployments in 1979-80, Margaret Thatcher was quite surprised by the public reaction that opposed the installation of INFs. But we are now about 15 years later, and can you guess…

SMITH: Maybe that event planted a seed, but I think the new interest in public diplomacy on the British side really arose from Tony Blair's prime ministership. Blair was accused by his critics of being a "spinmeister," a politician who cared too much about image and not enough about substance. By his supporters, however, Blair was seen as somebody who put Britain on the map in a new way. He redefined Britain as being a modern, economically powerful, scientifically adept country of the future, not just a relic of the past. I believe the turmoil Blair caused by his attention to Britain's image overseas generated a fair amount of discussion of the overall subject public diplomacy.

Q: Was part of the discussion addressing the dilemma or the possible confusion between being a spinmeister and being a public diplomacy official? Did people question that these functions might overlap?

SMITH: Yes, it was the beginning of a long conversation that we are all still having. What is public diplomacy? What is branding? What should a nation do to exert influence on publics outside of its borders? There were people on all sides of the debate. The British are very gifted intellectually and rhetorically, and so there was, of course, plenty of debate there in conferences and writing. I remember one scholar and pundit in particular named Mark Leonard, working at a think tank associated with Blair's government called the Centre for European Reform, who was doing a lot of innovative thinking and talking on the subject.

Q: The reader who is interested in this topic is encouraged to sign up for Ambassador Smith's course at Georgetown University. But maybe she would be willing to give an encapsulated view of this subject. How would you distinguish between spinning a story for the public versus what you would call public diplomacy? Would you say these are two separate things?

SMITH: Oh, absolutely. Spinning certainly has a very negative connotation, as it brings to mind a politician who is trying to pull the wool over the eyes of his or her audience by making an event or a policy look better than it really is. Public diplomacy, in contract, is meant to tell the straight story and certainly advocate for the position of the government funding the activity, but not distort the reality of the policy or the issue at hand.

Q: When journalists get together, they talk about objectivity, and many of them say objectivity is never perfect or perhaps does not even exist. Did you get into this question when discussing public diplomacy? When you say public diplomacy conveys the straight story, that implies objectivity, and yet you say public diplomacy also advocates. Are there any inherent difficulties in convincing the public of a point of view while also convincing them that you are conveying the objective truth?

SMITH: There is some very interesting writing on the news media and how people obtain their views. Walter Lippmann started writing about public opinion and how it is formed in 1920. I ask my students at Georgetown to read parts of his book. He makes it clear that it is very important to realize that no matter what media you are listening to or watching, what you are getting is selected by the journalists and editors putting the news forward; in the same way politicians and diplomats inevitably select what they put forward, and they have the focus that reflects their backgrounds and their own points of view. So, yes, I agree that pure objectivity is a hard commodity to come by. But as public diplomacy practitioners, we certainly need to strive to tell the truth as we understand it and to advocate honestly for positions that we and our government embrace. I must add that that is hard, of course, when you disagree with your government's policy.

Q: Well, let's pursue that dilemma a little bit. Mindful of young people interested in a career in the Foreign Service, can you discuss the phenomenon of a person being obliged or encouraged to espouse a policy that they personally might disagree with? What happens to a person in those circumstances, and what advice would you give to a younger person considering this dilemma?

SMITH: That is a very big question. First, I think it is important to understand that when you work for your government as a spokesperson, you have to advocate for the government's policies. There is just no getting around it. And sometimes you will be in disagreement with those policies. If the disagreement is an occasional thing, it seems to me that you can advocate for the policy you disagree with and still manage to look yourself in the mirror in the morning. If you harbor a fundamental long-term disagreement about your government's policies, however, your first step is to use the dissent channel (which directs opposing opinions to the secretary of state's office). Then if this fails and you want to look yourself in the mirror in the morning, you pretty much have to resign or find a job, as I did at one point, which is far from the policy arena. In public diplomacy, for example, cultural affairs work builds long-term relationships more than it advocates specific policies. I found myself quite comfortable being in such a position at one point when I was in some disagreement with our policies.

It is inevitable that any thinking person is occasionally going to disagree with his or her government's policies. I found myself sometimes dealing with that situation by explaining and advocating for my government's policies and then saying, "But many people in our country disagree with this view and their perspective is such and such." Then I figured the listeners or the readers could make up their own minds, and I felt that I was being honest in giving both sides of the debate. Now, it's a little harder for ambassadors to do that than people farther down the food chain. But one thing I do tell my students is that one of the wonderful things about our system is that even if you disagree with policies in one administration, it is quite likely that when the next administration comes along there will be a change, and you can find yourself more comfortable.

Q: I must say that I have heard this topic discussed many times, but I have never heard a better articulation of how to survive in one soul than what you have just given. I hope the reader will take note. You were discussing earlier the Lippmann book about forming public opinion, selecting information and searching for the illusive objectivity. There were some studies done in the 1970s and 1980s by media organizations in the U.S. and as I understand it, they learned that the media cannot form public opinion, but they can direct people's attention at a given time to a certain issue. This is what the media seem able to do. If the media are talking about the Middle East, they are unable to influence peoples' opinions, but they are very able to focus peoples' attention on that issue of the Middle East.

SMITH: I am not familiar with that line of thinking, and I wonder whether that view is valid. Think of the different views of an incident in the Middle East that would be formed by one person watching Fox News and another watching Al Jazeera.

I am more familiar with the debate over whether the so-called “CNN effect” influences opinions and policy decisions. That is to say, when the media focus on something, does that focus cause governments to take action because people have responded to the media coverage? From what I read and think, there isn't a clear answer. The catastrophic images of disaster in the Balkans played a role in getting us involved. The catastrophic images of events in Sudan or Rwanda do not seem to be getting us as deeply involved. So it seems that catastrophic images on TV may have an effect, but also may not. The images of the tsunami, I think, had a powerful influence on our vigorous early action to assist people in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. So, I don't know. It is hard to be sure about what results the CNN effect has and doesn't have.

Q: Not to belabor this, but possibly in the case of the Balkans the images were quicker in reaching our TV screens and they were more graphic. In the case of Rwanda and Sudan, it took a longer time to get images on the screen, and yet there is still no reaction.

SMITH: But certainly we've had heart-rending images from Sudan on the screen for several years and nothing is much happening as a result.

Q: There is no clear answer, perhaps, of why the CNN effect sometimes causes changes in behavior and sometimes does not.

SMITH: Maybe one could say that there has to be, accompanying the CNN effect, a clear policy consensus for taking action. Public opinion isn't enough on its own to generate government responses.

Q: While we are still on the topic of the development of your ideas about public diplomacy while in the U.K. and your interaction with British intellectuals on this topic, would you say that the notion of public diplomacy changed in the U.K. while you were there? How do you feel that your own presentations affected the public discussion?

SMITH: I think I was a very small voice among many. I can't take credit for changing British opinion on this subject. I do think that British opinion evolved somewhat during that period, largely because the media were covering the debate in response to public interest in the topic, and also because the British government was taking action in terms of branding and forming the "Cool Britannia" campaign. British thinking about public diplomacy very likely is still evolving, but I am not following the debate there as closely anymore.

Q: When you say debate, that implies that there were two opposing views?

SMITH: No.

Q: You mean the discussion?

SMITH: The discussion, yes. The British have conducted, for a very long time, certain kinds of very active and successful public diplomacy programs, chiefly the work done by the British Council. So they were not newcomers to the enterprise.

Q: Discuss for just a brief moment this strange creature, the British Council, which is sort of private and sort of public, is all over the world, and it is well known in many, many countries. The status that it has in the British Foreign Office is unique, and most countries don't have such a thing.

SMITH: Well, that's not really so. The Alliance Française and the Goethe Institute are two analogous entities and there are others. In any case, what the British, the French, and the Germans have done is peel off, or stand up, their relationship-building activities, many of their exchange programs and their cultural activities, and put them into institutes that are funded by their governments, but as separate creatures from the foreign office or the foreign ministry. Then these countries locate the advocacy or press spokesman role in the foreign ministry or foreign office. Thus they separate, using our terms, the IO or press work from the CAO or cultural work, in most respects.

Q: In what way was this similar or not similar to USIA as an independent function?

SMITH: USIA housed and combined both IO and the CAO work and was not, therefore, similar to the British Council. I also should say that USIA was a freestanding federal agency with its own budget allocation, but it took policy direction from the State Department. The British Council, the Alliance Francaise and the Goethe Institute, I believe, are funded through their foreign offices or foreign ministries. They are incorporated separately from them, however, so it's not quite the same.

Q: We are getting to the completion of your time in the U.K. Any parting comments on things that you observed, or the way in which your stay there affected you? It was a very difficult time with your family situation.

SMITH: Yes, because of having lost my husband it was, for my daughters and myself, a very tough time indeed. As I said earlier, we were grateful to London for being such a busy, interesting place that it helped us through our grief in some respects. My girls had a wonderful time being in high school there, we all came to love the country, made many friends, and I traveled a great deal throughout Britain; so those were all positives.

Q: Did you ever imagine, at the time, some day living in the U.K.?

SMITH: It crossed my mind. I have a first cousin who is married to a British man and lives there, and a dear friend who lives there. So, yes, I guess it's the place I would feel the most comfortable living other than the United States. But I am very happy being back home, and I've had enough experience as an expatriate not to see that as the ideal long-term role for me.

POSTING AS AMBASSADOR TO MOLDOVA

Q: I'm sure Georgetown, and those of us who see you once in a while, are happy you're back home. Let's move on. Remind me of the year when you left London?

SMITH: My tour was finished in summer 2001, so George W. Bush had just become president, and he visited London right before I left.

During the latter part of the year 2000 the State Department started talking to me about an ambassadorship. Earlier in my London tour I had been promoted to Minister-Counselor rank, which is the rank required for most ambassadorships. Evelyn Lieberman was the first Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy after the merger with USIA and she was interested in having more public diplomacy officers considered for ambassadorships. One of her colleagues contacted me to see if I would be interested in being among those put forward for consideration. I said, "Well, yes, heavens, I would be honored and thrilled to be considered!"

I then went through what is - many people have talked about this - a very laborious process filling out forms and making bids. The paperwork for presidentially appointed positions is exceptionally extensive and complex. What was interesting about the process for me, though, other than how exciting the unexpected prospect of being an ambassador was, resulted from the fact that we were in the latter part of 2000. We all remember the

2000 election was unresolved for a very protracted time, with a difficult Supreme Court decision finally settling it. It was a very strange time, particularly to be under consideration for an ambassadorship, because we did not know for quite awhile which party was going to be in charge. The upshot was that my name was put forward while Clinton was still president, and in fact while Gore might still have won the presidency. My papers went to the White House just after Bush was declared president, however, so it was quite a long and unusual process.

Q: You said that you received a phone call. Was this like receiving a phone call saying that you had won the Nobel Prize? Did this come completely by surprise?

SMITH: It came completely by surprise. When I was promoted to Minister-Counselor it crossed my mind that I might try to become an ambassador. I looked at the list of positions that might be open and thought about it, but it didn't seem at all likely until the call came. Even then, the people calling weren't offering me any specific post, they were just exploring whether I would be interested in being considered.

Q: For those who are curious about the process, is it true that some individuals lobby to become ambassadors, and others receive these calls? Many people are mystified by this process.

SMITH: Well, yes, but it's important to make sure that everybody is aware that there is a completely different process for career Foreign Service officers who might become ambassadors than there is for political appointee ambassadors. Readers who are familiar with this debate can skip to the next subject.

It is worth saying that the United States has approximately one-third of its embassies led by political appointees and two-thirds by career Foreign Service officers. The proportions used to be about one-fourth political appointees, but during the Reagan administration the proportions were increased to one-third and the proportions have stayed the same since then. Political appointees are generally close political allies and/or serious funding supporters of whomever is president. Both Republicans and Democrats reward their generous, like-minded political allies with ambassadorships. Very few other countries, if any, operate this way. Other countries consider diplomacy to be a career that requires knowledge and experience.

To be fair, there have been some political appointees who have been absolutely brilliant. John Kenneth Galbraith in India under Kennedy comes to mind; Howard Baker and Walter Mondale, both in Japan, Averell Harriman in Moscow; there are a number of others. Further, some political appointee ambassadors have personal relationships with the president, which can be helpful. But in most cases, people who have not had government experience or international experience over a long career do not bring the qualities to an ambassadorship that are needed. Political appointees are a very difficult burden on the career service, which has to support them and make up for their lack of knowledge and expertise.

It is no help, as well, that the one-third of our ambassadors who are political appointees typically are posted in the more comfortable, high-profile countries. They want to be in Western Europe, some want to be in the Caribbean, or in other safe, desirable, and often English-speaking countries. That leaves ambassadorships for the career Foreign Service officers in the more difficult, obscure, dangerous, and unhealthful postings. And that's very hard, very hard to take.

Q: Is there another difficulty? These safe and comfortable places where political appointees go tend to be countries with a very high policy profile, like the U.K., or France, or even the more important countries in the Caribbean. Political appointees have a longer learning curve than career diplomats because they are not steeped in embassy structure or even policy formulation. Does this make it even more difficult if you are in, say, the Court of St. James's with a person who is almost guaranteed to be a political appointee?

SMITH: There has been one career Foreign Service officer who has been ambassador to the U.K. in well over 200 years.

Q: That really defines it, doesn't it?

SMITH: But some of the political appointees have had long experience in government and have done outstanding jobs. Ambassador Crowe certainly comes to mind in that respect.

I don't know where your question is going but I certainly do want to say that a very strong deputy chief of mission and usually a bevy of aides and other kinds of managers are required to assist a political appointee at a big embassy, far more than are needed for a career diplomat. It is a very expensive and labor-intensive proposition to staff up an inexperienced ambassador to the level that our relations with an important ally require.

Q: I can think of one positive innovation that I can remember. A politically appointed ambassador in a small country, a very nice one, said to his staff, "If you are going to keep using acronyms during our meetings, I am going to make you write memos telling me what they stand for." And that was the end of the use of acronyms in those discussions. It may have actually benefited the discussions to be a little bit less occult.

SMITH: A small benefit, however.

Q: And if everybody in the room is familiar with the acronyms, then using them facilitates communication.

SMITH: Let's get back to the question of how one becomes an ambassador. Actually, I can't talk about the process for political appointees becoming ambassadors. That's controlled by the White House, which informs the State Department to which embassies it wishes to send political appointees, and who those appointees will be; each White House nomination is then deliberated on by the Senate.

But for career FSOs, at least when I went through the process, we had to make a list of five "available" countries that we were interested in and then we wrote a short statement of why we were qualified for each of those five. When I looked at the list of posts available for career officers, I instantly knew that Moldova was my top choice. Having been a USIA officer and not a State Department officer, I knew that I needed and wanted to seek to go somewhere where I was familiar with the language and the culture; my earlier tour in Romania and knowledge of the Romanian language suited me well for neighboring Moldova. That gave me some of the credibility that I would need to be accepted and approved by the cognizant State Department offices, who would naturally first turn to candidates who had come up through the State Department system rather than through the USIA system.

Q: So you received a phone call, not about Moldova, but a call asking if you would like to be considered in general? And then you made a list of five countries.

SMITH: Yes, but there were others in the State Department interested in Moldova. It was a very long time before I got any kind of nod, because there probably were people arguing in favor of other candidates. One of the most nerve-wracking parts of the process, though, was the rumor I heard that maybe the White House would want to put a political appointee into the Moldova position. I had to find out the answer to that question before anything else could go forward. Fortunately in the end, despite the nerve-wracking rumor, Moldova stayed in the category of places for career diplomats, which in retrospect is not too surprising.

Q: Meanwhile, Evelyn Lieberman had been replaced, is that correct?

SMITH: I don't remember when she was replaced, but I believe that she was still in office in the State Department through all the essential parts of this journey of mine, that she supported me, and that her support was crucial.

Q: Do you remember how or when you discovered that the White House was not going to impose a political appointee?

SMITH: It was sometime in the winter of 2001, when I eventually became the State Department's candidate. There was a process to achieve that status, and then I started filling out the forms. But it was strange, in that I couldn't tell anybody about the nomination because when you are in the midst of this process you have to stay mum. Nominations for ambassadorships, even career ones, are ultimately the White House's decision, and the White House doesn't make a final decision until the paperwork is completed. They make sure that you don't have any skeletons in your closet, that there isn't going to be a nanny-gate emerging or something of the sort.

Q: So, in your case, if there was a skeleton, they did not find it.

SMITH: No, there was no skeleton, but if there had been, I'm sure it would have emerged in the extremely thorough vetting that took place. It was an exciting time, but I couldn't share it with anybody.

Q: So in the case of a non-political, career appointee, you must become the State Department's choice, then be submitted to the White House, then get agrément from the host country, and then you must be confirmed by the Senate, is that correct?

SMITH: Yes, that is the sequence. It was not until I was leaving London in the middle of the summer of 2001 that I could even whisper that this nomination was in the works. But by August of that year, the paperwork had been through the White House system and the White House was on board, and so at last I could talk about it. Then it was a matter of scrambling fast to get into the ambassadorial course, brush up my Romanian language skills, and get ready for the Senate confirmation hearings. And that all happened in the shadow of 9/11, because we are talking 2001. That meant there was a lot of momentum behind getting ambassadors out to the field as soon as possible.

Q: I didn't know that. So in your case, the course first and the Senate confirmation later?

SMITH: In my case this all happened simultaneously. The ideal would be less hectic, but there just wasn't time.

Q: So, were you at FSI at 9/11?

SMITH: I was in the Department. The ambassadors' course happened to be meeting in the Department that morning, and all of us ambassadors-to-be were sitting around a conference table when the planes hit the twin towers.

I might say a word about 9/11, because everyone remembers where they were when the attack happened. My own little story entailed getting the news during the ambassadors' training course and eventually being told that we should get out of the State Department building. There had been a rumor that a truck bomb was waiting to detonate at the State Department, but no one really knew if the rumor was true. We didn't know about the alleged truck bomb, but somebody told us all urgently to leave the building. So we went out to the national mall, where crowds of people were milling around. We were out there in time to hear the plane hit the Pentagon across the river. What I remember from the whole morning was how, in a crisis situation – although it was nothing like New York, of course -- there is so much you don't know and can't know. Rumors are flying around and nobody knows what's really happening. It was terrifying and very, very ambiguous. You had to make decisions about what to do with your own safety, on the basis of totally inadequate information.

Q: Being outside could be more dangerous than being inside.

SMITH: Yes, but who knew? At some point, I remember someone who appeared to be a security guard came to the group that I was standing in and said, "You can all go back in the [State Department] building now. You can get your cars out of the garage if you want to." And I thought, well no, I don't care about my car, I'd rather be safe. So, many of us just decided to start walking home, and that's what I did.

Q: As we did too, those of us who were at FSI that day. I also heard the explosion at the Pentagon, but I did not see it.

SMITH: No, I didn't see it either.

Q: There's a famous book in France that says that there was no plane, and every time I have been in France recently, people ask me, "Did you actually see the plane?" I didn't, but I know people who did. Just thought that I would ask.

SMITH: I remember driving by the Pentagon a few days later and seeing the gaping hole on the side of the building.

Q: Right, but you couldn't see parts of the plane, as I remember.

SMITH: No, I don't remember seeing parts of the plane.

Q: I don't doubt that there was a plane.

SMITH: No, I don't either.

Q: Many Europeans doubt it.

SMITH: I don't buy those conspiracy theories at all.

Q: Okay, good. I don't either. It is an issue in France and in some other countries. So, you were in training with other ambassadorial candidates, confirmed and unconfirmed, on that day. What happened in the following weeks? The course now is two weeks?

SMITH: It's a two-week course, affectionately called "charm school." It's quite a good course, and career and political-appointee ambassadors-to-be take it together. I wish it had been longer. Subsequently I had a few short weeks of Romanian language training, while also at the same time having consultations and getting ready for the Senate confirmation hearings. I got a call on a Monday that my hearing was going to be the next day, so I dropped my language class, nearly flew over to the State Department, and spent the afternoon with the office specializing in Moldovan affairs, getting ready.

Q: Some people spend weeks or months preparing.

SMITH: As I say, everything was on a fast track because of 9/11.

Q: I was going to ask if 9/11 affected the actual getting to post. But in your case, it accelerated it?

SMITH: Yes. Fortunately, the office specializing in Moldova and I had already made some preliminary preparations for the hearings. We had been working on a statement, but because of 9/11 I remember significantly rewriting what I wanted to say to talk about how terrorism and this terrible event would shape my role as ambassador.

Q: Was the desk for Moldova a single person?

SMITH: Yes, but there was also an office director and other colleagues who knew about the region.

Q: And so they were helpful to you?

SMITH: Yes, very helpful indeed. In fact, thank goodness for them because if you haven't been through a Senate hearing before, it's hard to know how to prepare. They had long experience, for the State Department as an institution has been through Senate hearings thousands of times. It was extremely helpful to have their expert guidance as well as guidance from the Department's Office of Legislative Affairs.

Q: I think Moldova switched bureaus in the State Department. I think it was in NIS (newly independent states) at one point?

SMITH: Yes, all the countries of the former Soviet Union were handled in their own discrete quasi-bureau, S/NIS, for awhile, but that had already disbanded by the time I arrived on the scene and Moldova was being handled in EUR. EUR was, and still is, the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs.

Q: Okay, so it is now late fall or mid-autumn 2001 and you are packing?

SMITH: Yes. The hearing was fine. It was actually very, very quick and efficient. They did ask me some of the questions that we had anticipated, so the preparation was vital. There were several other ambassadors-designate having their hearings along with mine, which I think was helpful to all of us.

Q: Was Joe Biden there?

SMITH: Yes, actually.

Q: Was he friendly?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Sorry. You were about to say something more about the hearings?

SMITH: Yes, I was going to talk about how intimidating it was. It was just like in the movies, with bright lights focused on you and a person sitting in the corner taking everything down on a funny little machine.

Q: Was this being video taped? Was it on C-Span (Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network)?

SMITH: I don't know, but there were television-like lights.

Q: Maybe they were just lights to scare you.

SMITH: The senators do sit on a raised horseshoe-shaped platform.

Q: Like the priests in the Inquisition. No curveball questions?

SMITH: No curveball questions. Some very good questions, actually, including some I hadn't expected, which was fine. I got to post by mid-November.

Q: That is very quick, isn't it?

SMITH: Yes. But before getting there, Colin Powell, who was then secretary of state, swore me in amidst a large reception in the august Benjamin Franklin room at the Department. It was such an honor, and he was such an admirable secretary.

Q: And you were one of the first, if not the first, ambassadors to Moldova?

SMITH: I was the fourth.

Q: The fourth?

SMITH: I arrived in 2001, and Moldova had become an independent country in 1991, so I had three predecessors. Unfortunately, the very first ambassador, Mary Pendleton, was posted overseas so I didn't have contact with her before my posting, but my immediate predecessor, Rudy Perina, and his predecessor, Todd Stewart, were both very helpful.

Q: I think Rudy is in Armenia right now.

SMITH: He is.

Q: He was going to go temporarily as chargé ad interim. Okay, so what struck you when you first arrived in Moldova?

SMITH: Well, a few words about Moldova at that time because its politics presented a very, very interesting circumstance. Just a few months before I arrived, a communist government had been elected in a free and fair election. I guess that was the only time in history that a free and fair election has installed a communist government, anywhere on

the planet. But it was a certified free and fair election and so the government had full legitimacy. My predecessor, during his time, had built very productive relations with the predecessor government, and the new government had come in just before he was leaving. I was the first U.S. ambassador to have a full term and uni-focused relations with that communist government; it was important, I thought, to build a useful dialogue with them.

Moldova had had a tough time in the post-Soviet period and was considered, and in some respects still is considered, to be the poorest country in Europe. It has, as you may know, very rich agricultural soil. But it's hard to build prosperity on agriculture alone, particularly given that Moldova had depended during Soviet times on subsidized energy and subsidized markets and marketing. With the post-1991 disappearance of Soviet energy subsidies and the whole Soviet market structure, Moldova's agricultural economy collapsed along with many other sectors of its economy.

Q: Poorer than Albania?

SMITH: Well, it depended on how you counted. I have never been to Albania, so I can't say. At that time people who had been to both countries said it was hard to believe that Moldova was poorer than Albania. Moldova, at least, always had its great agricultural resources. Almost everybody in urban Moldova had relatives on a farm who could supplement their food supply in some way.

Q: I am guessing that you remember the day that you landed at that airport?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: What was your first impression?

SMITH: I was so excited and so nervous that I don't…. What I wanted to do, and what I did, was to say something friendly and positive to the Moldovan people. Being a public diplomacy officer I decided to offer an arrival statement. I had communicated with our embassy, and I knew that there would be press at the airport, so I prepared a statement in Romanian that I delivered to the media when I arrived. My focus upon arrival was pretty much on that first impression that I wanted to convey. I wanted to connect with the Moldovan people right off the bat. Of course, you can't say much that's substantive before presenting credentials, but I wanted to convey how thrilled I was to be there, and how much I was looking forward to getting to know the people and the country.

Q: Was there intense interest at your arrival?

SMITH: I guess there was, yes.

Q: Lots of press?

SMITH: There was fair amount of press at the airport, TV and print press. It was exciting for a public diplomacy officer to have her first act as ambassador be an act of public diplomacy.

Q: So, you were actually delivering a speech that you wrote. Usually you write for the ambassador; this time you were the ambassador.

SMITH: Yes, right. And I had been practicing the speech in advance so that I got it right. I put a lot of effort during my whole time in Moldova into speaking Romanian publicly, whenever possible. I would work with my language teachers to be sure that I had the intonations right, and that I was delivering the substantive message clearly and in a way that sounded literate.

Q: Great. Now, that's the first impression while you are at the airport. Then, after you got into the city… Talk about the poverty of the country. Had you been to Chişinău before?

SMITH: I had never been to Chişinău or to Moldova, but I had served in Romania 25 years before. There were a lot of similarities culturally and linguistically. Driving into Chişinău from the airport you come to some large apartment buildings that are very Soviet looking, so I saw that there was a more Soviet feel to Chişinău architecturally than there had been in Bucharest. It was November, and the weather was grim and dark and foggy, but I loved that. I have fond memories going way back to Romania of those grey southeastern Balkan winters.

Q: I think you said, in an earlier interview, that your time in Bucharest was not the very, very bad time when there were fuel shortages and such.

SMITH: There were a lot of shortages, but things got considerably worse in the 1980s than they were in the 1970s, bad though they were in the '70s.

Q: In Chişinău, you had pleasant associations. It was your familiar Eastern Europe, and it was a little bit ….

SMITH: Yes, and I had spent so much time in the neighborhood that I was absolutely thrilled to be back.

Q: You would have expected to see Soviet-style buildings. Did this match your image of what the city would look like and feel like? What were you expecting? Pretty much what you saw?

SMITH: I guess so. It was such a thrilling moment to be there. I remember I went straight into the embassy because I wanted to meet my new colleagues as soon as possible. There was a big group of both local and American employees waiting for me. So I said hello, met everybody, and was given a lovely Moldovan-style welcome with special bread and salt, and a short tour of the embassy, which was in a beautiful old

building, where it still is. Then I went to the DCM's house. My housekeeper, my cat, and I were graciously hosted for four days at the DCM's house because of some technical problems in the ambassador's residence, a water and sewage problem.

Q: So you were not driven straight to your residence, but you must have been curious to see it.

SMITH: Yes, that happened the next day or so.

Q: As you settled in and recovered from the delight of arriving, what were some of the first issues to hit you?

SMITH: The first thing that I wanted to do was try to build good relations with the government. That was not a particularly obvious course of action. As you might expect, Moldova is not at the forefront of everybody's attention in the State Department, and as a result I didn't really get intensive marching orders. I just decided, largely on my own, that the leaders of the Moldovan government were elected free and fair, and we might as well try to deal with them positively and productively. There were a number of Western European embassies that had different views and thought that the communist government was somewhat illegitimate and bound to do a lot of bad things; therefore, they preferred to keep an arm's-length distance from them. That didn't seem to me to be a particularly useful approach. Consequently, I wanted to get to know the people who mattered in the ministries, in the presidency, and in the prime minister's office. I wanted to try to work with them and find or develop areas of mutual interest that would benefit the U.S. That was my first concentration. Fortunately, colleagues in the embassy were very helpful in getting me briefed, getting meetings organized, and making arrangements so that I could present my credentials to Moldovan President Voronin reasonably early and get going.

Q: The embassies or the other entities that considered the Moldovan government, I think you said, illegitimate, was this just because they didn't like the communist party?

SMITH: Yes. They didn't consider the government technically illegitimate, but they took such a dim view of the communists that they were not, in some cases, particularly eager to forge close relations.

Q: So, you presented credentials within a week or two?

SMITH: Yes, in the first ten days or so.

Q: Okay. As you have just said, Moldova is not the top of the priorities in EUR. There are other countries that get more attention. So what were the bilateral issues as they emerged while you got to know the ministries and the members of the government? Were there multilateral issues too? Was it simply initially a matter of establishing a friendship?

SMITH: Friendship and trust underpinned everything, in my view. Although of course many other factors were in play, I don't think it's too much to say that one of the fruits of that friendship and trust was, eventually, a significant reorientation of President Voronin's foreign policy goals. He had campaigned saying he wanted Moldova to join the Russo-Belarus Union; a year later he was aiming for Moldova's accession to the EU. In interviews in 2002, he claimed credit for signing Moldova's first agreement with the EU and for other pro-West initiatives. This was an enormously positive turn-about both for Moldova and from the U.S. perspective. Naturally, there were plenty of other issues and problems that accumulated during the years of Voronin's presidency, not all of them pertinent to U.S. interests.

2024 addendum: I visited Moldova in 2018 as head of a pre-election assessment team assembled by the National Democratic Institute, and I met with former President Voronin and all Moldova's other leaders. It was gratifying to learn that at that time former President Voronin viewed his turn to the West positively. Moldovan friends have told me that this reorientation was a crucial step for Moldova, whose objective from then until now has been EU integration. This posture enabled Moldova to succeed in being granted EU candidate status in June 2022.

As I write in August 2024, the geopolitical landscape is evolving, particularly because of Russia's war in Ukraine and the associated hybrid threats facing Moldova. Former President Voronin's recent shift away from supporting the upcoming EU Integration Referendum is indicative of the complex and often turbulent nature of regional politics. So are the dynamics running up to presidential elections (also taking place in October 2024), in which over 10 candidates represent a wide range of views, including some that are pro-Russia. These factors demonstrate Moldova's vibrant democracy; they also challenge the electorate to be wary of candidates who may favor closer ties with Russia at the expense of Moldova's European aspirations. My Moldovan friends maintain hope that, recognizing the long-term benefits for Moldova, leaders like former President Voronin will still champion the country's path toward European integration.

Back to the 2007 interview: The U.S. had a number of other specific vectors or themes that organized our bilateral relations, and we'll get to them. Certainly in the aftermath of 9/11, the fight against terrorism was the first among them. As I saw it, part of the reason to build productive relations was to determine whether Moldova could be helpful in whatever ways to addressing some of the problems that terrorism presented to us.

Q: Were they receptive to that?

SMITH: Yes. But before I go further, I don't want to neglect saying that in addition to the new issues connected with terrorism, another longstanding issue of considerable U.S. concern with Moldova was Transnistria. On its eastern flank, Moldova has a breakaway region called Transnistria that is run by a group of Russian adherents and citizens. We sometimes call it a black hole, a den of smuggling and criminal activity; it is a very, very difficult place. It has, for unfortunate reasons, been embraced by the Russian government as an entity that they want to continue supporting and whose quasi-independent status

they favor. The United States and countries of the European Union – and the government of Moldova – see Transnistria quite differently. They see it as a region that has illegitimately separated itself from Moldova and ought to be reunited with Moldova.

Q: Is it crazy to think of the Sudetenland in the 1930s as something parallel, where Germans in Czechoslovakia who identified….

SMITH: It is not the same, no. If you want a parallel, go to Georgia and look at South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

One reason that Transnistria doesn't look like Sudetenland is that the people in Transnistria are ethnically pretty much the same as the people in Moldova. The proportion of the various ethnicities is different. But Moldova proper – that is, what we say is right-bank Moldova if we are on the Dniester River going south toward the Black Sea and we are on the western bank of the river – has people who are roughly 65% ethnically Romanian, and the remaining 35% mainly comprises Ukrainians and Russians, but also comprises smaller groups of Bulgarian, Jewish, Turkic, Roma, and other nationalities. On the left bank of the Dniester, Transnistria across the Dniester, the plurality of people are ethnically Romanian, but there are proportionately larger groups of ethnic Ukrainians and Russians. And in Transnistria they speak Russian more predominantly than in Moldova proper.

In any case, Transnistria represents neither an ethnic dispute nor a religious dispute. It is actually an economic and political dispute. The people in charge of Transnistria want to keep hold of the little smugglers' den that they have going for them, and the bosses in Moscow have political and economic reasons for finding this advantageous.

Q: It is said that Transnistria is a channel for weapons smuggling. You mentioned criminal and smuggling activity; do you know any of the specifics of what was being done there that was criminal?

SMITH: We heard a lot of accusations that weapons were smuggled, and we also knew that weapons were manufactured in Transnistria. There was also, I know, more evidence and certainly a lot of discussion about the smuggling of cigarettes and liquor, and money laundering, and trafficking in persons, and so forth. There have been a number of press articles on this subject. I never found a "smoking gun" on weapons smuggling, but there was so much smoke that it seemed to us that there was very likely to be some fire.

Transnistria is not officially recognized by any country in the world; until recently, when the EU was able to introduce a border monitoring operation along Moldova's border where Transnistria's eastern edge meets Ukraine, there was no internationally recognized border control. That made Transnistria's territory a no-man's land in terms of international regulation.

Q: You mentioned the word border. The Transnistrians considered a certain line to be their western border….

SMITH: Yes, between themselves and the rest of Moldova, but no one outside recognizes that western border or Transnistria's sovereignty over its strip of Moldovan territory. It is Transnistria's – actually Moldova's – eastern border with Ukraine that everyone is concerned about, because the Ukrainian port of Odessa nearby was thought to be an entry and exit point for….

Q: If you went to Transnistria, what were the issues in crossing that border? Was this an issue for a U.S. ambassador? Were you allowed simply to cross?

SMITH: We certainly didn't recognize the legitimacy of the Moldovan-Transnistrian "border," so we just drove across it and we weren't stopped. We would always make appointments so that the Transnistrians knew that we were coming, and we would make sure that the Moldovan government knew that we were going.

Q: And there was never an issue?

SMITH: It was not an issue during my time as ambassador. But we didn't just go over there for the fun of it, because visiting Transnistria was not something that we could be sure was always going to work out well. We didn't let our American employees travel there without solid professional reasons. We always went with two cars. We always went with full transparency, and it was safer that way. I was going to say that we always went with cell phones, but I remember that our cell phones that worked in right-bank Moldova didn't work in Transnistria. The Transnistrians intentionally had a different system.

Q: So they considered themselves a government, but nobody recognized them, and neither did we?

SMITH: Right.

Q: Did this become one of the more intriguing portfolios?

SMITH: Certainly. There is a lot to say about it, but since you asked me about the main areas of U.S. interest, the third big area was our assistance programs. Moldova was a small democratic country, a place where our assistance programs really could and did make an enormous difference. We ran some very successful, very practical assistance programs. We helped the predecessor government, the government before the one that I dealt with, privatize all the agricultural land and get past the collective farm era. We also had programs against trafficking in persons, which I worked on a great deal. We had health and education programs, and a wonderful Peace Corps operation. It was of great interest to the United States that these programs be sustained, maintained in strength, and continue to be effective to help Moldova become a functioning democracy with a market economy that worked for the benefit of the people.

A lot of people say, "Oh, well, after the collapse of the Soviet Union everything must have gotten better." But it didn't. For the people of Moldova and many of the other new countries, life got much tougher after the Soviet Union fell. They no longer had guaranteed education and health care, many of them lost jobs, and their low-cost energy supplies disappeared. All the benefits that came from the centralized Soviet bureaucracy evaporated overnight. The United States and other Western countries that had been saying during the course of the Cold War that democracy and a market economy were better than communism looked a bit less credible to people for whom our system was not delivering a better life. I felt that we had a moral obligation to help post-Soviet states with their difficult transitions, and I was thrilled to be heading one such effort. It was like coming back full-circle from my first posting in Romania.

Q: Do you think this is why they elected a communist government in free elections?

SMITH: Yes. I think a lot of Moldovans were nostalgic for Soviet times. They thought that bringing the communists back was somehow going to restore some of the old benefits. And I felt that the United States, having touted the superiority of our system of democracy and a market economy, had a political interest – as well as an obligation to keep our promise – in materially helping Moldova and similar countries through their transitions until our system *did* deliver a better standard of living and a better hope for the future for these people.

Q: I guess the history of successful market economies is that they don't work overnight; it takes a little bit of time.

SMITH: Yes, none of these systems works overnight. In fact, they take a lot longer to get established successfully than anybody expected. The mentality engendered by the communist system is not conducive to an overnight transformation to entrepreneurship and civic activism. People who have lived for 60 or 80 years under the heavy hand of Soviet bureaucracy simply have different habits and expectations, and many lack essential skills and experiences.

Q: If their expectations were dashed after the disappearance of the Soviet Union, did you sense any resentment against Western countries?

SMITH: No, at least not when I was there. The Moldovans were thrilled, first of all, to have their own country, and secondly to be able to travel and elect a government and feel the sense of freedom. But after a few years, that wasn't enough to make up for not having enough to eat or wear, or enough education, enough medical care, and so forth. Consequently our programs, I felt, were filling a very significant void.

Q: The programs came in what form? Was there a USAID mission?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Can you tell me about the relationship between your front office and the USAID mission?

SMITH: We had a great relationship. I was very favorably impressed with the USAID director. He was a senior officer who had been in Moldova several years and he was doing an excellent job. Actually, our USAID office was technically under the USAID mission in Kiev but practically speaking, it was a freestanding office and should have been technically freestanding as well. USAID employed several American officers and a number of senior Moldovan employees, and also contracted with some NGOs that they worked with, which had American directors.

Q: So you felt that the mission of the USAID mission and the mission of the embassy were closely parallel? That you were working towards the same objectives?

SMITH: Yes. That's the way it should be.

Q: The way it should be, exactly.

SMITH: I was determined to make sure that the embassy-USAID relationship was cooperative, and I made a point of involving myself a lot with what USAID was doing.

Q: So you weren't conducting the programs, but you were supporting them publicly?

SMITH: Yes. For example, the agricultural projects, when I was there, were still the biggest sector of USAID's activities and the most politically important. We had gone to so much effort and spent so much time and money on land privatization that we needed to make sure that it continued to succeed. Most Moldovans had loved this program: "The Russians took our family farms away and the Americans are giving them back!" Yet some of the new communist government officials were still nostalgic for Soviet-era collective farms, and they were responsible for a certain amount of campaign rhetoric that had accused the U.S. and the whole land privatization effort of having destroyed Moldovan agriculture. Therefore I put great effort into drawing public attention to the successes of privatized agriculture. We had created farm stores where we supported the commercial, but low-cost, provision of seeds, fertilizer, veterinary services, and so forth. I made a big point of opening these in a very public way, inviting the Minister of Agriculture to participate with me while also trying to persuade him about the value of what we were doing. I also did some interviews on television, wrote op-eds about private agriculture, and arranged for an international visitor trip for the minister and his senior colleagues to go to the U.S. for the first time and see our agricultural practices firsthand; I really tried to convince officials and farmers alike that privatized agriculture was the way to go.

A word of perspective here: many westerners were shocked that anyone would want to return to such an inefficient system of agriculture as collective farms. But these "kolkhozes," or collective farms, were all that farmers in the Soviet sphere knew for decades. When outsiders asked me why Moldovans didn't just revert to private

agriculture, I would explain that they needed assistance to learn how to succeed in a free market. I'd turn the tables: "If you were asked to set up a collective farm, would you know how to do it?"

Q: As you made overtures to the public, either directly or through the media, did you feel that the responses were adequate? Did you get the coverage that you wanted?

SMITH: Yes, I got a lot of coverage. I became kind of a media star in Moldova, over the course of time. People seemed very taken with the idea that there was an ambassador from a big country who spoke their language and wanted to connect with them on the human level and talk over their important issues. I tried to make myself very available. And I traveled a lot, both to visit the projects we sponsored but also to see the country, from Stephen the Great's medieval fortress in Soroca to the Roman-era remnants and cave monastery of Orheiul Vechi, with many delicious farm and winery meals along the way.

Q: Did you think that understanding and friendship increased between you and, say, the Minister of Agriculture?

SMITH: Yes. Actually, we became friends of a sort, and he was a fascinating person. He was from Gagauzia, which is an enclave in the south populated by people originally from Turkey. I remember being in the south with him once, at one of our USAID events, and he invited me to a big luncheon that he had put on in the Gagauz style. It was wonderful.

Q: Well, that's successful diplomacy, I think. Now, you mentioned three themes that were ….

SMITH: Yes. Terrorism, Transnistria and the reunification of Moldova, and continuing to help Moldova to become a successful democracy with a market economy.

Q: So, we take them in that order? Was there any payoff in terms of war against terror? Did you get moral support?

SMITH: Absolutely. Regarding combating terrorism, over the course of the time that I was there, I had a lot of meetings with President Voronin, and he ended up deciding to align Moldova with the United States against terrorism.

Voronin was the man elected as president of the communist government, and now in 2007 he is still president. He remains a popular politician who seems to have earned the respect and affection of a lot of the population from the time when he was Moldova's Interior Minister under the Soviets. He refused, during some hostilities around the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, to enact Moscow's orders to fire on citizens engaged in public demonstrations. He earned his popularity by having shown that he had a heart and more affinity for his compatriots than for the Soviet orders that he had received.

Now, President Voronin also had a number of ideas based on his long experience as a Soviet official that were quite different from ours. Nevertheless we became, over the course of many meetings during my tenure as ambassador, productive colleagues, and we developed a level of real trust. One of the primary elements that built up that trust was the similarity of views that we held on the question of Transnistria – the importance of re-integrating it into Moldova proper and also the unacceptability of Russia continuing to station troops on Transnistrian – meaning Moldovan – soil against Moldova's wishes.

But your question was really about terrorism. President Voronin wanted to become recognized in the West as the legitimate leader of his country, and he was delighted when the U.S. conveyed to him an invitation to be received at the White House. That visit, which occurred in December 2002, was a turning point for him, both in the eyes of other countries but also in the level of cooperation that he was comfortable offering to the U.S. President Bush received him at the White House and Secretary Colin Powell and Deputy Secretary Richard Armitage received him at the State Department. From what I observed during the White House meeting, Presidents Bush and Voronin proved to be pleasant surprises to each other: Voronin was indeed "someone we could do business with" (as Thatcher said about Gorbachev) and Bush expressed empathy for some of the problems Voronin faced.

The Moldovan delegation also had other meetings around Washington that were very important for them, and it was quite a wonderful visit. President Voronin also was invited to North Carolina, which is the state partner with Moldova, and the North Carolinians did a fantastic job of welcoming him and his delegation. From that time on, there was a certain new closeness between the U.S. and Moldova.

Q: Did you accompany him on his trip?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Did you have anything to do with the invitation?

SMITH: Well, it was the White House's decision, but I was certainly very eager to see it offered and delighted that it was.

Q: That is very exciting. So you accompanied the head of state to the White House, to the Department of State, and to North Carolina. This was, what, a one week visit or something like that?

SMITH: Yes, it was maybe a little less than a week.

Q: What did the state of North Carolina want to show him? Agriculture, perhaps? What types of things…?

SMITH: President Voronin was received by North Carolina's Governor Michael Easley and by the committee in the capital that coordinated all the state's activities with

Moldova. It was at the meeting of that coordinating committee that I think that the Moldovan delegation began to understand something about the generosity of the American people, as person after person stood up and talked about the educational exchanges that they had with Moldova, the health and medical equipment that they were donating, the projects that they had for orphaned children, and the commercial activities that they were interested in. I believe that the Moldovan delegation, and certainly I too, felt really touched by the outpouring of warmth and human understanding and assistance that was being exhibited by these altruistic people from North Carolina.

Q: This was, I guess, people-to-people; these were not programs channeled through a centralized…?

SMITH: No, no, no. These programs were just coming from big hearts and …

Q: What was the history of that relationship? Why North Carolina?

SMITH: After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Defense Department decided to try to pair the new countries with American states. The idea was that these new countries would find a closer partnership with a smaller entity than the whole U.S., sort of like a sister-cities relationship, but in this case with states. When it started, the U.S. National Guard of the paired state and the military of the other country were linked up so that they could form relations and help each other. I believe that the country-state pairings were chosen on the basis of geography and economy, and the interest of the state National Guard units. North Carolina is agricultural, they grow some of the same crops as Moldova, and they're not exactly the same size but within range. I can't remember all the other pairings, but I think Kazakhstan is paired with Arizona and California with Ukraine. Anyway, in the case of Moldova and North Carolina, the pairing has worked wonderfully, thanks to the initiative and generosity of North Carolina and the receptivity and friendliness of Moldova.

Q: So you sensed a real change, an awakening almost, at that meeting where the Americans were saying we are doing this, we're doing that? The Moldovans, perhaps, were not aware of...

SMITH: Well, none of us was aware of how extensive these cooperative programs were because they were taking place quietly out in the countryside, for the North Carolina participants had built relations all over Moldova. President Voronin was visibly moved by this and thanked the people of North Carolina very warmly and very genuinely. From then on I felt as though there was an extra element in our cooperation. I don't think you can be so "cut and dried" as to say that that trip engendered support for the U.S. I just think that it flowed naturally from that time on.

Nonetheless it was not long after that trip that I was asked to go to the Moldovan government and see if they would participate in the coalition in Iraq. The White House visit took place in December of 2002. The invasion of Iraq occurred in March of 2003, and it was shortly afterward that I asked for Moldova's support. Moldova decided that it

would indeed participate in the coalition. They had expertise in de-mining, in removing land mines. They offered, and were very happily accepted, to send some de-mining experts to Iraq. I worried about them, I have to say. I spent many sleepless nights wondering if those Moldovans were all going to be safe and sound in Iraq, for I felt that it was on my conscience if they weren't. By the time I left Moldova, the de-mining experts were still safe and sound. I heard that subsequently there was one Moldovan who was wounded but he was sent to a hospital in Germany and treated successfully, and he regained his health. I haven't heard since then.

Q: You were conveying a message from Washington to the other capital …. You didn't just dream up the idea of asking…. So they understood that you were the messenger in this case?

SMITH: Yes, of course. We also faced some ill-defined but worrisome security threats against the embassy from outside Moldova, and the Moldovan government provided us with real assistance and even one of President Voronin's personal bodyguards for me at one point.

Q: You mentioned the Peace Corps, earlier. What was the size of the Peace Corps contingent? What types of things were they doing?

SMITH: In my time, the number varied between 70 and 100 Peace Corps volunteers (PCVs). It bumped up to 100 when Putin threw the PCVs out of Russia. Since those volunteers there were Russian-speaking, they could work successfully in certain parts of Moldova, and we welcomed a large influx.

There were three domains that they focused on: teaching English, the teaching of health and health-related issues, and advising on entrepreneurial ventures, usually small ventures, many of them agriculture-based. The volunteers were stationed all over Moldova, often in very small villages. Their teaching occurred mostly in high schools. I visited a large number of the volunteers, and it was inspiring to see what they were doing.

Q: Did they come often to the capital? I know PCVs are not encouraged to do that frequently, but did you occasionally see them in the capital?

SMITH: Yes. They would come for medical treatment. We would always invite them to our Fourth of July party at the embassy, and they would come for a conference at Thanksgiving. I remember each Thanksgiving going to the Peace Corps Thanksgiving dinner. They all chipped in and cooked turkeys and it was great fun to be with them.

Q: Do you feel that you helped them when they felt a little bit isolated in an exotic country, in a village that day-to-day might have been very different from their domestic experience in the U.S.? Do you think that you were able to help them feel at home?

SMITH: I hope so! I think they really enjoyed those times when I visited and they seemed proud to have the ambassador see and endorse their projects; I think that's

inevitable. And I remember swearing them in, at ceremonies to which many Moldovans were invited. In fact, President Voronin came to one Peace Corps ceremony. I remember that well because a couple of the volunteers got up, one speaking in Romanian and one in Russian, and gave little talks. They were brilliant, and President Voronin was astounded that they were so fluent.

Q: You mentioned them earlier in the context of the development activities. Were the Peace Corps volunteers coordinated informally, or formally, with the USAID mission?

SMITH: There were some opportunities for them to work together. USAID occasionally would make small amounts of money available for start-up activities for them. Although I don't think it was orchestrated in Washington, certainly the two operations consulted well in the field. We also had a very, very fine Peace Corps director who became the mainstay of emotional support for the volunteers.

Q: Of the three fields, English, health and other training, and small entrepreneurial ventures, I would guess that learning about small entrepreneurial ventures would be the most radical change, culturally, for the Moldovans if they were accustomed to the previous communist system. Would this have been the most challenging of the Peace Corps Volunteer missions, to teach people small business?

SMITH: Yes, I suppose it was. It was certainly the smallest of the three sectors, and it was the one in which older volunteers predominated, people who had had experience on family farms or small firms. I remember one volunteer started up an organic vegetable delivery business for his village. He got the villagers to grow everything organically, and then he set up a system so that they would deliver their products to the embassies and international community in Chişinău, people who were happy to pay for hand-delivered organic produce. In this way the Moldovan farmers could see that by adopting new ideas and new marketing, they could make more money than continuing in the old ways.

During my time as ambassador, we also brought in The National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) to work on democracy-building. Their efforts entailed advice about political party-building, election campaigns, voter registration, voting-day logistics, and so forth. To avoid problems, I insisted that NDI and IRI divide up the work so that they didn't compete with each other, and that they offer their services to all local political entities. I believe they remain welcomed by Moldovans and are effective instruments of our long-term goals.

It may be obvious, but I'll say it: the U.S. rightly wants to assist other countries to become stable, prosperous democracies, because such countries can be our allies or at the very least are unlikely to descend into war, terrorism, famine, chaos, or other transnational perils.

Q: It must have been extremely satisfying to be there at a time when a whole new paradigm was being introduced.

SMITH: Yes, but it was also hard going. Not everything worked, of course; but enough worked that I felt confident that what we were doing was making a positive difference. Some of the USAID projects, which were on a much larger scale than the Peace Corps projects, were palpably beginning to bear fruit. I remember, for example, that USAID supported an investment in an Italian system of flash-freezing fruits and vegetables so that they could retain their taste, texture, and vitamin content, and not emerge from processing like mushy, tasteless canned vegetables. Those flash-frozen products were beginning to be exported to the European Union. I was pleased with such projects, which were enabling Moldova to turn away from selling cheap produce to Russia and the East and instead sell expensive produce in EU countries, which is the direction that Moldova has got to go.

Q: Would you say that that's a niche market? Or is the EU really going to be the main market for their agricultural sector?

SMITH: I think Moldova's economy is turning that direction, in part because they can and should aim at the EU. In effect, Moldova has had, by default, an organic growing system since the collapse of the Soviet Union, because they haven't been able to afford chemical fertilizer since 1991. But the shift Westward has also happened because Russia, in the last couple of years, has been playing a very nasty game with Moldova and Georgia. Russia, exerting a back-handed punishment for Moldova's and Georgia's moves to orient themselves more toward the West, has banned the import into Russia of Moldovan and Georgian wine and agricultural products. Russia has simply blocked these imports 100%, for several years now. And Russia was Moldova's largest export market. Even though Moldova was orienting toward the West, it still had a lot of its …

Q: Were the Russians upfront about why they did this?

SMITH: No, no, of course not.

Q: Did Moldova and Georgia suffer as much from the fact that their fuel and gas came from Russia? Was that also impaired?

SMITH: Yes. That issue is a little bit trickier, however, because Moldova and all the countries that had been part of the former Soviet Union had enjoyed preferential prices for their gas and oil; after 1991 Russia started wanting to raise their prices to market levels. In a way, I can't blame the Russians for seeking the market price for their energy exports. Why wouldn't they? But Russia would use discounts as a sort of lever to keep these countries of its "near abroad" under its influence.

Q: Your reference to Russia brings us into another context: regional and multi-lateral issues. The U.S.-Moldova bilateral relationship seems to have proceeded extremely nicely on an upward curve, I think thanks to you, Ambassador. What about some of the multilateral issues that you had to deal with? Was the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) something that you dealt with? Did Russia influence that

organization? What were the tasks that you had as an ambassador to deal with regional issues?

SMITH: Most of the multilateral issues revolved around Transnistria. We worked closely with the European Union on trying to resolve the Transnistria issue, and the OSCE had a presence in Moldova; it still does. During my first year as ambassador especially, I worked very closely with the OSCE head of mission, a former American ambassador named David Swartz. He and I worked as a team. OSCE was playing a very active and positive role at that time in the resolution of the Transnistria issue. I think that President Voronin also had a lot of trust in Ambassador Swartz as head of the OSCE mission.

In fact, the three of us worked together on a new Constitution that proposed a federalized solution, bringing Transnistria back into a unified Moldova but with a certain autonomy. When that document (known at the "Kiev Document" because it was first tabled at an OSCE meeting in Kiev) was being considered, Russia restarted the removal of its arms and materièl from Transnistria, in part, perhaps, because of the proposed federalization plan. The Russians had a huge arms depot in Transnistria called Cobasna, and they still do; they also had a history of being reluctant to remove the arms there or disband the Russian military presence. Nevertheless they are obliged under an OSCE agreement (the Istanbul Declaration) to remove all of their weapons and personnel, and the deadline was supposed to have been 2001. It was extended to 2002, and now it seems to have been extended into infinity. The Russians are now even saying that that agreement no longer has force.

But in 2002, anyway, the U.S., Moldova, and the OSCE were working very closely together, the Russians were removing their equipment – though not their personnel – and there was a sense that we might have found a way to re-unify the country. Then a feeling took root in Moldova that somehow the Kiev Document was not in Moldova's best interest; the idea of a federalized solution became associated with an old, Russian plan. It was very unfortunate because, actually, the plan on the table would have helped Moldova immeasurably; it was not at all negative, despite how it was characterized in the press. The result of skewed public opinion was that plan was shelved. I wrote about this in more depth in a monograph published by The Atlantic Council in 2005 called "Moldova Matters."

In late 2003, shortly after I left Moldova, the Russians came up with a federalization plan of their own, called the "Kozak Memorandum," which truly *was* as harmful for Moldova as people had said that the earlier Kiev Document plan had been. The Kozak Memorandum laid out a federal structure that was very much in Russia's interest and in Transnistria's interest, and not in Moldova's interest.

In any case, I spent a great deal of time and energy on Transnistrian questions, including on possible agreements. This involved intensive work with the OSCE and with representatives of EU countries, there being no EU mission in Moldova at the time. I worked particularly closely with the German embassy. As a matter of fact, the EU and

the U.S. decided together to impose a visa ban on the senior leadership of Transnistria. I remember going over to Transnistria with the chargé from the German embassy to deliver this news to the regime in Transnistria. I also worked hard with the State Department to get the Transnistria issue on the agenda for summit meetings between Presidents Bush and Putin or Secretary Powell and Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov. Regrettably but understandably, other larger issues tended to dominate these discussions.

Q: And the reaction?

SMITH: Well, Mr. Smirnov (Transnistria's so-called "president") pretended that the visa ban did not matter at all and that it was irrelevant. But I think it did make an impact. Smirnov is a very cagey person and he certainly didn't show his displeasure. I had a number of other meetings with him, usually on the occasion of visits from senior Washington officials, and they always had a staged quality; certainly Smirnov himself was a Central Casting-worthy simulacrum of the tough, Soviet regional boss, an impression intensified by the Soviet tank outside his office and the mid-century Soviet backwater atmosphere of Transnistria.

Q: Thank you, Ambassador Smith. This is Dan Whitman on October 13, 2007, concluding the fourth interview with Ambassador Pamela Smith.

Q: It is October 20, 2007. It is Dan Whitman with the fifth session with Ambassador Pamela Smith. In our last session a week ago, we discussed some of your activities in Moldova, where you were ambassador. Anything to add to what was said last week?

SMITH: Yes, I've had a few more thoughts. It occurred to me that I should have started off by saying a little bit about the role and work of an ambassador. I gave an interview to my hometown newspaper before I went out, and the journalist asked me, "What does an ambassador do?" I felt like saying, "Ask me in six months!" But having observed ambassadors both good and bad for nearly 30 years, I made a guess that turned out to be quite true for me. I refer to this answer because it provides an easy way to remember or characterize an ambassador's work, at least for many of us.

I said that ambassadors spend about a third of their time on government-to-government relations, making sure that the host government understands U.S. policy and positions on a variety of issues, making sure that Washington understands the host government's positions, and being the senior-most person advocating for U.S. interests and managing the bilateral relationship in all of its facets, including multilateral relations.

Then I explained that ambassadors spend about a third of their time making sure that the activities of the U.S. government in the host country are working well. This means not just running the embassy, because the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] also plays a large role in that task, but ensuring that, in the case of Moldova, the assistance programs are effective, the exchanges programs are working well, the budget is sensible and properly conducted, the visas are granted properly, and the American and local staff is productive, safe, and energized; this "third" of the work encompasses all oversight of U.S.

government activities and personnel, and support for the American community. I almost felt as though I was mayor of a small town.

Then the ambassador's third "third" is being the face of America in the public domain. I interpret this set of responsibilities to include all public diplomacy activities and also all kinds of outreach, the many receptions that one gives and goes to, the visitors one hosts from home or from elsewhere, and acting publicly as the representation of what the United States is about in that country. Having been a public diplomacy officer my whole career before becoming an ambassador, I probably enjoyed this public part of the role the most, felt the most comfortable in it, and brought the most experience to it. And maybe I emphasized it more, therefore, than other ambassadors with non-public diplomacy backgrounds might do.

As I think I said before, I traveled all over Moldova meeting with our Peace Corps volunteers and other partner organizations conducting our assistance programs and our exchange programs. I did a lot of press out in the regions and in the capital, really trying to shape Moldovan opinions about the United States in a positive way. There were two wonderful results of this effort that made it all worth it. First, when I left, countless people came up to me and thanked me for increasing American assistance so dramatically to Moldova. Actually, the American assistance budget for Moldova had fallen slightly during my time, but because so many more people knew about what we were doing than before, they perceived that it had risen. I certainly wasn't trying to pull the wool over their eyes; I was just trying to explain what we were doing in Moldova and what we cared about. The Moldova people were extremely receptive and grateful. That was very beneficial for the United States.

To understand their attitudes, remember that Moldovans had grown up with a lifetime of Soviet education, and the picture that they had of Americans was not that we are generous, kind, open, fair, or any of the good things we like to think about ourselves; they had been fed quite opposite pictures. They wanted to believe something positive about us, however, and they had an inkling there might be something out there positive to believe. But until they came into person-to-person contact with a senior representative from the United States, they didn't have much to hang their hopes or opinions on. I was thrilled about being the vehicle for their improved perceptions of us.

I also had some opportunities in Moldova to use my art history background. The State Department has an "Art in Embassies" program that borrows American art for display in ambassadors' residences. This effort enables host-country guests to learn a bit about American culture. I chose to feature living artists from the Pacific Northwest, the most illustrious among them Dale Chihuly, and I added a painting by my late grandmother, the painter B.L. Hyde. The State Department also has the "Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation," which provides modest funds to preserve cultural heritage in less developed countries. I chose to fund a new roof for a historic church in Căuşeni, whose frescoes were being destroyed by rain. The villagers were thrilled and (2024 addition) Moldova's President Maia Sandu even mentioned it in a recent speech.

The other positive public diplomacy act I'll cite was my decision to give a major farewell speech as my last official act. In the speech I outlined not only everything that the U.S. was doing in Moldova and why we cared about the country, but also what I personally, after this wonderful experience of being ambassador, thought that Moldova itself had to do to succeed in its path forward. I am not trying to brag but that speech has reverberated for a long time and still echoes today. It had a very big impact. At the time, there were talk shows on television about it, many articles were written, and people discussed it among themselves in real depth. Apparently President Voronin was unhappy about the speech because I was quite honest about the problems that Moldova faced, and no president likes to hear the negative realities of his country laid bare. I think his attitude changed later, because I have seen him in friendly circumstances a couple of times since I delivered the speech. But anyway, the speech really sparked a public debate about some of Moldova's challenges. That was quite a healthy thing.

Q: It sounds like the speech was a form of tough love.

SMITH: Exactly.

Q: And, if so, would you share with us some of the points that you made that might have been delicate; some points that might have been difficult messages to deliver?

SMITH: Well, first I tried to establish and remind people how much I cared about their country. This wasn't some remote official pronouncement; this was coming from the heart, and from *my* heart. I think that is what gave the speech its impact. I tried to talk to the Moldovan people first of all about their national identity, about how they needed to see themselves as citizens of a country, not as diverse ethnic groups who happen to live on this territory. I talked about how a sense of national citizenship, not separate ethnic identification, would help them move forward toward becoming a more stable democracy, with a market economy that had a closer relationship with the EU, which is where they had chosen to put their hopes and aspirations. I talked also about the impediments that the remnants of Soviet bureaucracy and corruption were putting in their path, in terms of developing their economic sector. That was, perhaps, the most sensitive and difficult message, and something that maybe can only be said publicly under certain special circumstances, such as when an ambassador is leaving. I also had a lot to say about Transnistria, but my message about Transnistria was already well known and on the table.

Q: When you talk about ethnic diversity in Moldova, I cannot avoid thinking of the Balkans and the problems there. At that time, did you see Moldova as a country at risk of violent ethnic friction in the way that countries to the west were?

SMITH: No, not at all. The Moldovan ethnic frictions are far less severe than in, say, Bosnia. In fact they are not even in the same room as the ethnic conflicts in the western Balkans. But Moldova does suffer from animosities between the Romanian-speaking, Russian-speaking, and Ukrainian-speaking sectors of society; there are also some

resentments held by and against the Gagauz [Turkic] minority in the south. But these are the kind of frictions that goodwill, education, and economic prosperity would put to rest.

Q: Looking back, and I know you have kept close track of the country since then, do you feel that Moldovans have been making progress since your departure?

SMITH: They have been making some progress. Certainly their economy is better than it was. There have been a number of positive developments between Moldova and the EU in terms of trade and the EU border monitoring mission. I don't think there is any concrete hope of EU accession, yet. Moldova has a long way to go. But there have been some positive developments. There have not been positive developments, unfortunately, with the Russians on Transnistria. In fact, there have been very negative developments. Russia has been trying to punish Moldova, as I think I mentioned last time, in the same way that it has been trying to punish Georgia, for having a westward outlook that the Russians find inimical.

Q: You mentioned corruption as one of the legacies of the previous Soviet system, and I am sure you gave this a lot of thought. What do you feel a Western embassy or a Western country can do to assist in this area, without becoming arrogant and threatening the sovereignty of a country? Short of that, what do you think is an effective way for Western embassies, the U.S. embassy, to assist the Moldovans and others like them in finding their way?

SMITH: What we were doing seemed to be a good approach. For one example, we brought in a legal advisor. President Voronin invited us to do this, to "embed" someone to work in the Moldovan anti-corruption unit and to try to help them find better ways of routing out – that is, identifying and prosecuting – corruption in the bureaucracy and in business. We also had good working relations with the prosecutor general's office, some of the police, and the customs and border guard officials as well. By helping train people and giving them computers and technological means of assembling information, we could help them do their jobs better. We weren't so much lecturing them as trying to make them more effective at fulfilling their responsibilities.

The problem that we did not resolve, however, is nearly intractable: when wages are as low as they are in a country like Moldova, it's almost inevitable that there's going to be some petty corruption. When teachers are making thirty dollars a month, doctors are making fifty dollars a month – at least they were then – even if it's one hundred dollars a month, the society finds it is normal, say, to pay extra when an operation is being performed in a hospital. Until salaries rise, that petty level of corruption is very hard to eradicate, yet it is pernicious in the way it infects all of society. Related to this is the petty corruption of small bureaucrats, charging little extra fees for licenses or access to paperwork required to register a business or property. Moldova was hamstrung by a mass of bureaucratic steps needed to get anything done; that was the Soviet legacy. Each step of the way in those long processes provided an opportunity for petty corruption.

Q: It is sometimes said that you can provide good techniques, data collection systems, computers, and the like but they will work only to the extent that the highest authority really wants them to work. Did you feel that you had that support?

SMITH: I felt that at that time President Voronin wanted our anti-corruption programs to work, and certainly when I was there I felt that he was supporting what we were doing. I wasn't sure that everybody in every Moldovan government office shared his view, and I may have been naïve in my optimism, but I took our work seriously and I think that we were making some progress. We provided fine experts. Our legal advisor was excellent, as was our customs adviser, and our diplomatic security officer who worked with the police.

Q: There is always a mixture, I think, in any society of people who are genuine and then the wolves in sheep's clothing who say they want to do the right thing, but in effect they do not. Was it possible to detect who was who, or was it just….

SMITH: Well, I am sure we didn't in every circumstance, but we certainly tried. The fact that our legal advisor had an office in the Moldovan anti-corruption unit helped a lot, because she was there and ate lunch with….

Q: Was the anti-corruption unit really empowered and motivated to do its work?

SMITH: Well, some employees felt they were, and some weren't. It was a bit of a mixed bag.

Q: Most countries have this problem.

SMITH: And we are not exempt ourselves, regrettably.

Q: That's correct. Looking back, and this is a major, major, problem in all developing countries, would you recommend that other U.S. embassies in poor countries get a legal advisor into the local anti-corruption unit?

SMITH: If it's possible. I thought it was an excellent idea, and I believe we have continued this program in Moldova. I often wondered, though, whether we all ought to take a lesson from Singapore. Forty years ago Lee Kuan Yew transformed Singapore from the most corrupt city in Asia to the cleanest city in Asia in not a very long time. I know that civil liberties were trampled in the process and that some very rough tactics were used. But, on the other hand, it worked, and Singapore is now prospering as a magnet in Southeast Asia and certainly as a place where business can be transacted ethically and successfully. Maybe there are some harsh but indispensable lessons to be learned there.

Q: Very interesting. Now, earlier you were talking about the three things that an ambassador does, government-to-government relations, assuring the proper functioning of U.S. activities in the host country, and being the face of America. Some diplomats

sometimes say that a third of their time, or more, is absorbed by internal diplomacy, dealing with one's own system.

SMITH: Yes, and I would include that task in my second "third," making sure that American efforts are going well. Running the country team meetings, writing personnel evaluations, negotiating with counterparts in the Washington bureaucracy, all of that is, I think, encompassed in making sure that U.S. operations are working properly.

Q: So you would agree with those who say they spend a third of their time doing diplomacy internally?

SMITH: Well, no. I thought that there was more creative work in that realm than you imply in that question. My second "third" also meant, for example, my sitting down with the DCM, the USAID director, and the Peace Corps director, and figuring out how best to approach some problem through collective brainstorming. We did some very innovative things. I set up, thanks to the good work of my DCM and other colleagues and their supporters in Washington, a tuberculosis hospital for prisoners, in an abandoned prison, which prevented a tuberculosis pandemic that would have occurred if Smirnov closed a TB hospital that the Transnistrians were running, as he threatened. This was a political and a health issue at the same time. It took a lot of internal work to get the funding (largely from USAID), the medicines (largely from the international community in Moldova), the approvals (from the Moldovan government and Smirnov, the most intransigent factor), and the cots and equipment (excess and discarded supplies from the U.S. Army in Europe). We put together quite a disparate package to make this happen, and we saved many lives, including possibly some in our own community.

Q: I didn't mean to say that internal work is dull or meaningless.

SMITH: Well, sometimes it's quite dull, but I just wanted to lay down that it is not so always, not at all.

Q: That's a great achievement, because TB in prisons is a major problem.

SMITH: It's a death sentence, actually.

Q: In some countries more than half succumb to TB.

SMITH: Smirnov was going to shut down a prison that was in a disputed border area between Transnistria and Moldova proper. All the inmates were going to be turned out on the streets, spreading their drug-resistant TB among the population.

Q: And his motive for doing that?

SMITH: This was his habit, finding ways of being nasty to the Moldovans. He wanted to control the real estate that this prison was on. I wrote the harshest letter of my career to him about this, telling him that if he didn't desist and give us the time to build an

alternative prison hospital, I was going to go to the world press and he was going to be very unhappy about it. So he did give us the time. And we did finish the hospital in a record five months or so.

Q: Tell me more about this letter. Were copies given to anybody?

SMITH: No, because he did actually give us the time. But I would have gone to the press if he hadn't.

Q: Okay. Now that we are on Smirnov and Transnistria, this is such an intriguing, puzzling situation. We've talked about it in previous sessions, but what do you do about a place like Transnistria? What did you do, and what do you think you could have done?

SMITH: We were primarily, at the time that I was there, trying to persuade Smirnov and his colleagues in his so-called government, to accept the idea of reintegration with Moldova, and to enable the Russian munitions and arms to be removed from Transnistrian territory. We were also trying to work very seriously with the Russians at that time. Since then, Smirnov has become even more intransigent. Evidence of his stubbornness existed when I was there, but it now appears much more futile to succeed in finding a negotiated settlement.

What the present ambassador is doing, therefore, sounds enlightened for today's moment. He is trying to extend our democracy-building assistance programs to include Transnistria. When I was in Moldova, we were prevented by the Transnistrians from operating at all in their territory. Nevertheless in my time we were beginning to try to work with some fledgling NGOs (non-governmental organizations) there. But there's a bigger effort now, and I think that is terrific.

Q: So, on the one hand Smirnov, you say, has a certain intransigence, but on the other hand he seems to tolerate….

SMITH: I don't know if he is tolerating NGOs or if perhaps Transnistrian society is evolving a bit. Because of economic improvements in the rest of Moldova, there are now businesspeople in Transnistria who are beginning to trade legally through Moldovan channels, rather than illegally across the Transnistria-Ukraine border.

Q: Now, this is your successor doing this. Do you happen to know about the democracy programs? Do they take place in Transnistria, or do you take people out of the region?

SMITH: I have heard that we are supporting some cultural exchange activities and more NGOs in Transnistria but I don't know any details.

Q: Any guesses on what might happen to Moldova and Transnistria in the next five or ten years?

SMITH: I always thought it would be wonderful if Russia just grew sick of supporting Transnistria's corrupt, illegal throwback regime and offered Smirnov and his buddies a nice retirement somewhere. It would certainly be cheaper for them than having to support the whole strange place and provide lavish gas subsidies and everything else that the Russians are still giving the Transnistrians. But that doesn't seem to be what the Russians want. Therefore what I hope is that the citizens of Transnistria will want so badly to integrate with the rest of a prospering Moldova that their leadership will become irrelevant, or even an impediment. I hope, too, that some form of autonomous federal structure is embraced for the formal integration of Transnistria into Moldova, because that way Moldova will have a better shot at eventual EU accession, which is what I think – and many Moldovans think – should be Moldova's future. But if Transnistria stays unrecognized or, even worse, peels off and becomes some little Kaliningrad-like entity, that would be, I think, dangerous for the region, and not only for the Transnistrians and the Moldovans.

Q: Is it your sense that the citizens of Transnistria do indeed want to be Moldovans? Many, or most?

SMITH: Some do, but they have had such a censored press for so long that many don't grasp, except those who have traveled, what a bad deal they've got. I think supporting a free press has got to be a major effort of the international community and its assistance organizations. I hope there will be a movement toward integration that comes from the people themselves.

Q: Do you think, theoretically, democracy-building efforts would serve that purpose?

SMITH: Oh, yes, if we can find ways to operate in Transnistria.

Q: Right. It is very difficult for NGOs to function in Russia, difficult or impossible. So there would have to be more freedom of movement in Transnistria for there to be progress, I guess.

SMITH: Yes. I want to talk about trafficking in persons a bit, because that was a big problem when I was in Moldova, and it still is. There are a many impoverished people in the Moldovan countryside and they, unfortunately, are sometimes the victims of unscrupulous traffickers who pretend to offer good jobs in Europe as nannies or waitresses or nurses. Naïve young Moldovan women are then turned into sex slaves. It is just terrible. The United States did a lot to combat this problem, and we worked with our European colleagues. I think that we made some considerable progress, and I am proud of three efforts, even though we did not eliminate the scourge.

My first major focus was to deconstruct everything that the U.S. was doing, understand it, and organize it. We had some great programs, but they were not well coordinated when I arrived. When I found they were operating in a sort of limbo without cooperative arrangements, we deconflicted the U.S. effort. Then we made an effort that is still going on, fortunately, to gather and share information among all the international donors, so that

the donors became aware of what each other was doing. That way, we could identify where there were gaps and where there was duplication, and this made everybody's efforts more cost-effective. For example, there were two donor-funded hotlines that were competing with each other, which was certainly counterproductive. So we got that sorted out.

My next focus was working with the Moldovan government to get their support against trafficking in persons. That was challenging because the government was embarrassed to admit that they had such a terrible problem on their hands. The first instinct in such circumstances is denial: "It's not really as bad as you say, and furthermore we can't do anything about it, and we anyway don't have any resources to do anything about it." But most Moldovans are very good-hearted people, and once the facts became apparent, most officials really did want to do something, but they did have problems with inadequate capacity and funding to jumpstart this process. After a certain amount of prodding, I felt as though Moldovan officials remained stymied, so I came up with an unusual but effective approach: I invited to lunch the wives of all the cabinet ministers who had anything to do with the trafficking problem, as well as Mrs. Voronin, Mrs. Tarlev (the Prime Minister's wife), the female cabinet ministers, and the Swedish head of the International Office for Migration, which ran the main shelter for returned victims. I showed the movie Lilia Forever, which is a heart-breaking tale of a girl trafficked from a post-Soviet society who eventually commits suicide because her life in the West is hell. All the wonderful Moldovan ladies at the lunch and I ended up in tears together, and they all, at that lunch, decided that this scourge was something that they wanted to address. From then on, their husbands were suddenly much more engaged in the issue. I don't want to take too much credit. There was already a lot of good work being done against trafficking, but that lunch seemed to be pivotal for the Moldovan government side of the equation, and it thus appeared to have been a novel and effective way to nudge them to do what they knew they should do.

My third focus was inspired by a man working in USAID who suggested an important idea to me. He said, "Why do we keep only working on the supply end of this problem? Why aren't we working on the demand end?" It was one of those epiphanies – of course he was totally right. So we examined where the demand for trafficked women from Moldova was. It seemed that many of these women were ending up in the Western Balkans. Most, but not all, of their clients were peacekeepers or international forces stationed there in the aftermath of the atrocities of the 1990s; what a revolting irony that troops stationed to prevent violence were perpetrating another form of violence! I felt as though the way the U.S. could be the most effective in this arena was to influence NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) to act. NATO did not have any anti-trafficking program at that time, and some of the offending troops in the Balkans were Partnership for Peace troops operating under a NATO umbrella. After research I found that U.S. troops, for the most part, were not part of the problem because they were confined to base. Thus I felt I had some legitimacy talking to NATO: I knew what hideous experiences the trafficked woman had been through, having met some of the victims in the shelters we supported in Moldova, and U.S. troops were largely not among the clients.

Anyway, thanks to Beth Jones (assistant secretary of state for Europe and Eurasia, who visited Chişinău on my watch and saw our anti-trafficking programs), I was invited to NATO Headquarters, and our ambassador there, Nick Burns, hosted me. I gave a speech to all the NATO and Partnership for Peace ambassadors, describing the problem, telling them what it was like at the source, what it was like for the victims, and observing that for the clients this was not a matter of "boys-will-be-boys," this was rape; I concluded with the plea that the NATO ambassadors do something about it. From then on, the U.S. ambassador, in partnership, it happened, with the Norwegian ambassador, became very engaged with this problem. They took up anti-trafficking as a cause and put into place new codes of behavior, training practices for NATO and Partnership for Peace troops, and coordination with the local police in the Balkans, all of which together began to make a difference, although much more needs to be done. I can't say that this was a complete turning point, but it was a step in the right direction.

Q: Discussing supply and demand, I don't know about Moldovan victims of trafficking, but many others end up in places like the Netherlands and France…

SMITH: And the U.S., and the Middle East, and as far away as Japan.

Q: And the U.S. tier system. I am guessing you may have worked with the Bureau of Global Issues?

SMITH: Yes, with G/TIP (The State Department Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons), mostly.

Q: And G/IWI (Office of International Women's Issues) possibly, which sometimes deals with that? Was this a fruitful partnership, with the bureaus in Washington? It sounds like the lunch that you gave was a purely innovative, personal touch.

SMITH: Most of what I was doing dealt with the field side of the problem. Washington was funding various programs, and we did work with Washington, but most of what I accomplished on this issue occurred overseas.

Q: Not to dwell on the Washington side of it, but did you feel that there was adequate interest in Washington? Was there attention given?

SMITH: Oh, yes.

Q: And the lunch that you gave sounds like a wonderful program. It was an advantage to be a woman?

SMITH: Yes, definitely. Otherwise that event never could have happened. It wouldn't have been the approach that a man would have used. This was about us women together wanting to help our sisters. It sounds corny, but we really connected on an emotional level, across cultures, simply as women worrying about other women.

Q: And did this cooperation become institutionalized in any way? I gather you stayed in close touch with the women at that lunch after.

SMITH: Yes. This occurred fairly late in my tenure but, no, I don't think that this was something that needed to be institutionalized. This was a spark plug, and the engine was the Moldovan government structure that these women had a very good way to affect.

Q: Well, it is an endemic problem that has not been solved anywhere. But do you feel that progress has been made by NATO?

SMITH: I understand that it has, though there have been ups and downs. Somebody was just in touch with me a month ago, however, wanting to know how to move a NATO anti-trafficking program forward, so I was pleased to hear that …..

Q: So out of nothing, came something, thanks to your speech in Brussels, whereas there wasn't even a rulebook prior to that. That's a major accomplishment.

SMITH: Yes, I felt really great about that. And I'll say a further word about the advantages of being a woman Foreign Service officer. People ask me if I found it difficult to prove my credibility in societies accustomed to dealing with men in positions of authority. Maybe at the outset, but by the 1990s I didn't face that – being a representative of the United States carried plenty of weight. And in instances like tackling the trafficking-in-persons issue, being a woman helped. I'd say the same for dealing with most male host-country counterparts: they relaxed a bit and were more open with me one-on-one than when a male U.S. official accompanied me, and turf and power dynamics came into play.

Another thing I wanted to talk about, if it would fit in your plans, is representational entertaining.

Q: Absolutely.

SMITH: I found myself doing a great deal of representational entertaining as ambassador and before that. Sometimes I feel as though people who aren't on the inside of diplomacy don't understand why we do this. They think that diplomats just go to cocktail parties, have fun, and it's all very glamorous and sort of frivolous. But I found that although some representational work can be pleasant, there are very serious purposes for doing it. I felt as though I gained a great deal for the U.S. by opening my house and welcoming people into it, finding combinations of people who wouldn't otherwise talk to each other but should, finding visitors from the U.S. who could connect in a more personal, and therefore more memorable, way with Moldovans by meeting them over dinner or lunch or drinks. Doing this became a theme of my tenure. I would host several events a week.

I had the good fortune of being the first resident of a beautiful, very large house for which I oversaw the initial decorating and landscaping. I set up housekeeping in this grand

residence, and then used it for everything from a dinner with President Voronin and just one other guest, to a reception for 300 people, and a great deal in between. At each one of my representational events I felt as though we accomplished something important. For example, one of my early receptions was for all the Moldovan alumni of our exchange programs, people who had been to the United States as Fulbright scholars, youth exchange participants, and so on. They came into my house and I said, "Welcome back to America!" And some of them started crying, and it was so wonderful to….

Q: Had this not been done before?

SMITH: Previously there hadn't been such a wonderful house, for one thing. Prior ambassadors had to make do with a smaller, inadequate house. Also, since I came from a public diplomacy background, it just felt very natural to me to do a lot of outreach, so maybe I did more than had been done in the past. In any case, it was effective in Moldova.

Q: What you have done, Ambassador, has since become the industry standard. It is now expected of ambassadors.

SMITH: Well, I think it's always been, and some people are just more into it than others.

Q: A couple of comments, maybe intended as softball questions. When you talk about the stereotype that outsiders have of the frivolous aspect of entertainment, sometimes they imagine that only the elites ever get invited to diplomatic events. I don't know the population of Moldova, but you can't get everyone into your house. Do you feel that you went beyond the government itself in including people in these representational events?

SMITH: Oh, I definitely went beyond the government, although I focused on the government a lot. I was trying to persuade Moldovan leaders that the U.S. was a valuable partner and friend, and so it was very important that we got to know each other well. And it was good that we became friends. But, no, I definitely reached into the academic community, into the press community, the business community, and the arts community. I tried to connect with the think-tank and civic society people. I tried to reach every sector of society that counted. The State Department encourages this activity by reimbursing us, up to a modest limit, for representational events whose guests are half or more comprised of “contacts” from the host country.

I’ll mention two other models of events, one that I paid for myself. The first Christmas I was in Moldova, I gave a holiday party to which I invited every single embassy employee and their spouse, from the most senior American officer to the junior-most Moldovan guard. There were so many people we had to run shifts! But I wanted everyone who worked with us to have been to the ambassador’s residence as a guest.

Then sometimes American visitors come to town who want to be entertained by their official representative. The most memorable of these for me was a group of over 100 Jewish Americans who came in 2003 to commemorate 100th anniversary of the Chişinău

(Kishinev in Russian) pogrom. Some background: until 1903 Chişinău and other parts of what was then called Bessarabia, as well as parts of neighboring Ukrainian Bukovina, had been home to substantial, prosperous Jewish communities that were subject to antisemitic prejudice, which had its first 20th century expression in the violent, destructive Chişinău pogrom. Some of the Jewish American visitors knew this well, as their forebearers had hailed from the region, and Moldovan records about them were reasonably complete and accessible. In any case, for the American Jews visiting, we arranged visits to the ruins of a yeshiva, a Jewish graveyard, and the Jewish quarter, and the government of Moldova graciously mounted a dignified commemoration ceremony. Then the group came to my residence for dinner, which they kindly funded, and my Indonesian housekeeper and I devised a way to host our 100+ visitors: outdoors in benign weather, with a menu suitable to the occasion.

Q: Dwelling on this idea of the value of representation just a bit more, when you conducted representational events, I think you used the word work or theme. It's a subtle thing, is it not, to make a representational event mean something or serve a purpose? How were you able to do that, to focus people's attention, let's say?

SMITH: I would always give a little talk, welcoming people. After the majority of people arrived, I would stand up and say a few words. The purpose of each event was different. Sometimes it was just building goodwill. Sometimes it was having a very important discussion about Transnistria with a visiting Washington official. I even had the so-called "foreign minister" of Transnistria to dinner once with an American official. We had many varieties of events, but for each one I would set the tone with my welcome speech and then, at seated meals, underline it with a toast and by guiding the conversation.

Q: Is the Transnistria government considered a pariah government?

SMITH: We don't recognize it. No countries do, not even Russia.

Q: Having an official in your house, is that an issue?

SMITH: We decided that the value of having the conversation was worth the possibility that the Transnistrians would try to use this as some form of recognition, which it wasn't – and they didn't. We also, incidentally, hosted Smirnov for dinner in Vienna, trying a different angle in pressing him to action.

Q: Well, we are getting through the Moldova…

SMITH: Yes, I think I am finished except maybe to say that I spent a fair amount of time working on morale within the embassy. I felt as though I left a happy, productive working community of friends and colleagues. That was a very gratifying and good thing to do.

Q: Aside from being a nourishing and positive person, what does an ambassador do to create better morale in the embassy?

SMITH: I tried to have a lot of communications with everybody on the staff. I tried to be open, and also to schedule meetings across the spectrum of employees. I conducted regular town hall meetings. I had one-on-one meetings with people, local and American alike, wherever there were problems or issues, or just to find out what was going on. I tried to make it clear to everyone that inter-office rivalries and spats were just not desirable in my time. I wanted everybody to cooperate collegially and work well together. Sometimes, you know, when messages come from the top, they get listened to, especially if supervisors behave themselves in a way that's consistent with such pronouncements.

Q: I don't remember discussing the size of the staff.

SMITH: Well, it sort of depends on how you count, but there were between 30 and 35 Americans, and about 140 local employees.

Q: In a country the population of?

SMITH: Well, that depends on whether you include Transnistria. But the normal estimate of population, including the almost 600,000 people in Transnistria, is between four and 4.3 million.

Q: That's a pretty generous staff for a small country. It never seems so when you are in the situation.

SMITH: No. But keep in mind there are also only about four plus million citizens of Norway, Georgia, and many other small countries where we have larger embassies than in Moldova. And, if I'm not mistaken, there are 300 thousand citizens of Iceland, and Slovenia has two million people. Moldova is small, but it's not the smallest country we have relations with.

Q: Of the 35 Americans, was it a mixture of senior, midlevel, junior?

SMITH: Good question. In a small country, in a new embassy, you don't find very many senior people. In fact, I looked around about a month after arriving and realized that every single American in that embassy was doing their job for the first time, including me. People had been in the Foreign Service before, but in more junior positions. We had a first-time administrative counselor, a first-time political counselor, a first-time DCM, a first-time public affairs officer, a first-time ambassador, etc, etc. So we were all learning leadership roles fast. We needed to help each other out.

Q: Was there a sense of frontier and discovery and mutual….

SMITH: Kind of, yes. I had two great DCMs in sequence, both of whom helped me enormously. For the most part, we had a good people who worked hard, though of course there were exceptions. The public affairs officer, in some ways, probably worked hardest because I kept having so many brilliant ideas for ways….

Q: Who was that?

SMITH: The PAO for most of the time I was there was Alicia Woodward. She did a terrific job.

Q: What would you say to ambassadors being ambassadors for the first time about mentoring junior and mid-level officers? How does one go about that to get them to develop and also to get the work done?

SMITH: I think spending time with them has got to be the main thing. Of course, you also have to care, but it takes a lot of time to give people a sense of comfort so that they will really share their concerns with you. You have to be open and listen, and then try to help them through whatever the problem is.

The first DCM during my tenure, Norm Olson, did a superb job of that, which was fortunate because there were some people who really needed mentoring during that period. Norm spent a lot of time helping some new officers learn how to write properly in the State Department reporting style, for example. He spent hours and hours on this.

Q: Looking back on that, do you feel that many really developed as people and as professionals in that period?

SMITH: I hope so, yes.

Q: Any anecdotes about their follow-on assignments that indicated that they went forward? That comes later, I suppose.

SMITH: One example comes to mind immediately. When I was on a recent inspection trip to the Caucasus, in one of the embassies I visited I came across one of the young political officers from Moldova days who was now a mid-level officer. His wife was also a Foreign Service officer, and both of them have moved into positions of much greater responsibility. They are doing beautifully, and that was heartening to see.

Q. Did you get any official recognition for your tenure in Moldova?

SMITH: Yes. The State Department conferred a Superior Honor Award and President Voronin conferred Moldova's Order of Honour, which I believe is its highest decoration that can be awarded to non-Moldovan citizens. I was deeply honored by both awards.

TEACHING AT GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Q: Well, it is a good note to close the chapter on Moldova. But life continued after Moldova. Tell us what came next.

SMITH: On my way home from Moldova the State Department asked me to lead the U.S. delegation to the annual the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting of ODIHR (Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) in Warsaw, under the auspices of the OSCE (Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe). During the Cold War, the Helsinki Accords established this mechanism for improving détente between East and West, and all European countries plus the U.S. and Canada, but excepting Andorra and Albania, signed on. Almost thirty years later, the ODIHR meetings remained a useful forum for the West to express objections to abuses still occurring in the East, principally in Russia, in such realms as human rights and press freedom. The U.S. delegation comprised subject experts from the State Department and a Congressman. I felt that our presence was effective thanks mainly to them.

When I arrived back in Washington, my daughter picked me up at Dulles, and I was so bleary-eyed that a funny thing happened: I got to our well-used Saab and automatically stood by the right rear door, waiting for my Moldovan driver Nicolai to open the door. My daughter sagely observed, "Mom, it's over." *Sic transit gloria.*

Q: And on to Georgetown?

Yes. What came next for me was a "detail" (meaning loan) assignment to Georgetown University where the State Department has traditionally had a position for a senior public diplomacy practitioner to teach courses in public diplomacy. This is somewhat different from being a diplomat-in-residence, which is aimed at recruiting for the Foreign Service. That's not what we do at Georgetown, because the Foreign Service already attracts more people from Georgetown than from any other academic institution. I think the State Department feels it is wise to keep the stream coming, but we don't have to recruit there. We do, however, teach there.

I followed a number of officers who had taught at Georgetown before me, and I benefited greatly from the syllabi that they had developed. When I got there, however, I decided that I wanted to approach the teaching differently. I developed my own syllabus from scratch, drawing just a bit on predecessors' syllabi. I left Moldova in late 2003, started teaching a Master's level course in the winter term of 2004 at Georgetown's School of Foreign Service, and enjoyed it enormously. I also taught once at the undergraduate level, I mentored several students writing theses, and I participated in various campus activities, like sitting on the admissions committee for the School of Foreign Service. I was on the State Department detail there for two years; during that period I decided to retire from the Foreign Service, largely in response to Abu Ghraib and other aspects of Bush administration foreign policy with which I disagreed. Georgetown asked me to stay on, and now I am teaching there, fall terms only, as an adjunct professor, which suits us both. I teach basically the same course as before, although I update it dramatically every summer, as new things keep happening and being written.

Q: There's pedagogy of diplomacy and governance in some Western countries. We don't have that in the U.S., but many people believe that Georgetown is the petri dish that develops diplomats.

SMITH: Georgetown is a very interesting place. It is worth interrupting you to say that it is true that the U.S. doesn't have "*grandes écoles*" for administration as they do in France, for example, but if you are talking about practical preparation for a career in foreign affairs, Georgetown does an outstanding job. And further, the State Department runs The Foreign Service Institute to train diplomats once they have joined the Department. If you are talking about the academic study of international relations, however, then there are other institutions that compete very well. Johns Hopkins, Columbia, Harvard, and Princeton come particularly to mind. But I think for career preparation, nobody beats Georgetown because Georgetown makes a point of having so many practitioners available to the students, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Georgetown combines the academic and the conceptual side of international relations with the practical, pragmatic, on-the-ground, here's-how-it really-works approach of practitioners. And I am just one of many; there are some very big names at Georgetown – Madeleine Albright, George Tenet, Andrew Natsios, Tony Lake, and many others whose names once appeared in headlines.

Q: Of the students you have taught at the Masters and undergraduate levels, what is your sense of how many of them wish to go into the Foreign Service and how many of them succeed in doing so?

SMITH: I don't have statistics for you. In my classes, typically there are about two-thirds Americans and one-third foreign students. Many of the foreign students are already in their foreign services. Their foreign ministries send them to Georgetown to get Masters degrees and become their countries' new America experts, which is fascinating, and they make for wonderful classes. Of the Americans, about half are aiming for, or are already in, or have a foot in our Foreign Service. Perhaps they have passed the written exam and not yet the oral, or are planning to take the written exam soon. After graduation, a number of those I have taught do join our Foreign Service. I am still in touch with many of them, and I am hearing about their first assignments, which is gratifying.

Q: Are you familiar with the Fellowship of Hope program where Germany, Italy, Spain, and the U.K.…. Do any of those foreign students belong to that program?

SMITH: Those are foreign diplomats, aren't they, who work in our State Department, and our diplomats work in their foreign ministries? That program doesn't have an academic component that I am aware of at Georgetown, or anywhere. I worked very closely with one of those Fellowship of Hope participants because he was Moldova desk officer at the State Department, one year after I was ambassador. He was from the French Foreign Ministry.

Q: Wow. So he spent a year as the Moldova desk for the U.S. State Department, then went to the French Embassy in Washington?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Fascinating arrangement.

SMITH: Yes. Once he was back at the French Embassy, I invited him to a Moldova-themed dinner at my Washington house, because we had gotten to know each other. It was very nice.

Q: Great, great. Well, Georgetown recognized your talent and ability to motivate students. They asked you to stay on; you did stay on. Now that you are in a pedagogical phase, among other activities that you do, do you have any comments on how one teaches a skill that is really learned mainly in the field? It's like teaching musicians who might or might not have perfect pitch.

SMITH: In my Georgetown classes I introduce the concepts that underlie public diplomacy and I also talk a bit about some of the practices and programs that the U.S. and other countries undertake. Since I have so many foreign students, I try to spend some time in each class on how Japan, or France, or wherever, conducts public diplomacy, not just the U.S. Mine is not like a course at FSI that is preparing people to go out into the field and start working. But I do give the students some practical skills, along with the history and the conceptual basis of public diplomacy. I train the students in skills that will be useful no matter what they do in any realm of international relations. For example, their midterm assignment is to write a speech that an ambassador would give, either entering on duty or leaving duty, a broad-gauged foreign policy speech, with some heart and soul and persuasion in it.

Q: With echoes of your own departure speech in Moldova?

SMITH: Yes, I assign them to read that, along with some other examples. And I give them some media training. We do mock press conferences, where they play officials and journalists and undergo what is as close as we can get to a real press conference setting. They tell me that they find that quite valuable.

I would add that during these years of teaching at Georgetown I have given some guest lectures at other universities; I've talked publicly about Moldova; and I've done some writing about Moldova and about public diplomacy. It's been a wonderful opportunity to step back and not only pass on some experiences and ideas from a long career, but also to reflect on them, to consider what they mean and express that in writing. This isn't something I ever thought I would be doing, but I have found it rewarding and interesting.

WRITING ABOUT MOLDOVA AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Q: I can't let you get away with that without asking you, writing of what sort?

SMITH: I wrote a long paper, roughly two and a half years ago, about Moldova, looking at the question of "whither Moldova?" The Atlantic Council approached me and asked me to do this, and they published my "Moldova Matters," which I mentioned earlier. I also gave a talk related to the paper, under the Council's auspices. That was when I was still fresh out of Moldova and had some pertinent things to say, particularly about Transnistria. I've covered these ideas in earlier sessions with you. More recently, a little less than a year ago, I wrote a piece on public diplomacy that the Georgetown Journal of International Affairs published. In it I laid out what I considered to be the challenges that our country faces now in the public diplomacy arena and what I think ought to be done about them. I'm very, very concerned about the loss of credibility that we have suffered in the last six or seven years, and particularly since the Iraq war.

Q: Where would the reader of this transcript find that article?

SMITH: The winter 2007 issue of the Georgetown Journal of International Affairs. The piece is called "The Hard Road Back to Soft Power," or people can look up my name.

Q: What does a government or person do after losing credibility, to restore it?

SMITH: Well, come take my course!

Q: Okay. Do I have to wait until next fall?

SMITH: Credibility is a huge subject. In the paper, I talk about two main streams that I think are concerning. First, our policies are very unpopular. Just as you cannot advertise and persuade people to buy a product that is a badly made or defective, it's very difficult, if not impossible, to persuade people to embrace foreign policy positions that are not beneficial to them or do not seem to be well motivated. So first of all, I think there need to be some serious changes in our foreign policy.

Additionally, however, and separate from our policies, our public diplomacy infrastructure is, in my view, far too weak for the challenges that we face now, given the very virulent rise of anti-Americanism in so many parts of the world. I believe that the issue of antipathy toward the U.S. is a national security threat, and I think we need to spend a lot more time, money, and effort on turning it around. I believe that because of the virulence of anti-Americanism, we need to have a different structure to deal with public diplomacy; and I talk about that in the paper.

Very briefly, I recommend that the policy advocacy function should stay in the State Department. But I think that exchanges and relationship-building and all the long-term and even medium-term activities of public diplomacy need to be separated from such close association with whatever administration is in power. I suggest, therefore – and I am not trying to bring back USIA, although I think it was a mistake to get rid of it – that we create a new Smithsonian-like umbrella structure under which all the instruments of U.S. soft power would find a home and relate to each other. I'm thinking certainly of broadcasting, certainly of the exchanges and relationship-building activities of the State

Department, but also of the Peace Corps, the U.S. Institute for Peace, the National Endowment for Democracy, maybe USAID (or maybe not, that's a matter of debate). But I think the U.S. supports a lot of efforts that are small, noble activities happening here and there that don't have much impact. They don't get much attention in Washington; they are too small, too scattered, and too stove-piped. They would cohere better and have more impact if they were linked up. Then additionally, I urge that public diplomacy activities, for sure, and maybe some of these other arms of soft power as well, need dramatically more funding. Four times more, ten times more.

Q: Once the structure becomes more solidified, less fragmented - we are looking at a hypothetical future - would the exchanges themselves be conducted more or less the way they have been?

SMITH: Overseas? Yes. I still see it as useful to have diplomats conducting these programs overseas. My restructuring ideas apply more to the Washington support system.

Q: Right, let's take exchanges, for an example, like the International Visitors, Humphrey, and Fulbright programs that you were very involved with. Other than raising the profile of these activities and giving them more money, would you see structural changes necessary in the way exchange programs are conducted in the U.S.?

SMITH: No, the programs developed by our network of volunteers, non-profits, and universities work very well, but I believe the oversight and direction of the exchange programs would benefit from being more removed from the State Department.

Q: This issue is much discussed, it's in hot debate in Washington. You mentioned broadcasting as part of the soft power pantheon. Broadcasting, in USIA days, worked very hard to separate itself from USIA and from State Department.

SMITH: Yes, I have heard people in the broadcasting world say that they do not see themselves as conducting public diplomacy or being part of any public diplomacy structure. Frankly, I think that they are wrong. I don't think that U.S. international broadcasting exists, as somebody said, as a public utility. I think the taxpayers fund this activity in order to accomplish something for the U.S. Spreading accurate information is a legitimate act of public diplomacy, and that's what the Voice of America does. It's not quite what the surrogate broadcasters do; they are broadcasting accurate information, but they are substituting for the free press that doesn't exist in the societies to which they are broadcasting. They are broadcasting more internal news, whereas VOA is broadcasting news about the U.S. and the world.

Q: I would love to go on at length at this, but I think I will just take your course. I would, however, like to probe a little bit about the so-called independence of, let's say, a VOA reporter. VOA reporters operate on the basis that they are first journalists, and second employees of the U.S. government. Is it possible to have that double identity? Russian reporters for Radio Moscow used to make the same claim. I don't think what a

VOA reporter does and what a Radio Moscow reporter used to do is comparable. But they both worked for governments, and they both claimed to be absolutely independent professional reporters like any other, joining the press corps in the White House, or the State Department, with their colleagues from the Washington Post and the New York Times. Are you comfortable with that? A VOA reporter paid by the U.S. government but functioning as if they had ….

SMITH: Yes, I think Voice of America reporters have to function as journalists. I just don't think that they should harbor illusions that the Voice of America is anything other than a public diplomacy activity. But, yes, each VOA or Radio Free Europe or Radio Marti reporter ought to operate with complete journalistic independence, or else our entities would turn into the Radio Moscow of today, which we certainly don't want. They wouldn't have credibility. The VOA and our other U.S. government broadcasters should be seen much more like the BBC than like Radio Moscow.

Q: One final question for me on an issue that you have mentioned, and then we can go to whatever comes to mind. You were talking about the United States' loss of credibility, which you termed a national security threat, and you spoke about anti-Americanism and people overseas having real problems with U.S. foreign policy. These are not exactly the same thing, perhaps. There's been a lot of discussion about "why they hate us." Or do they hate the things our current administration is doing? Any comments on the difference between people's suspicions of our policy at this time and their suspicions about us as a people?

SMITH: I believe that in the first years of the George W. Bush administration, the antipathy was largely toward our policies. The international polls that I use in my course show, however, that the second time the American people elected President Bush, many people overseas began to question whether it really was just the policies that they didn't like. Why would the American people re-elect somebody who had policies that were, in the eyes of many people overseas, often so misguided? That watershed began a process, in some countries, where antipathy toward the policies began to bleed over into antipathy toward us as a people.

There is a long history of negative attitudes overseas about the U.S. and American culture, especially pop culture. A form of culture war between the U.S. and France, for example, has simmered for decades over globalization, Americanization, McDonalds, and "cultural imperialism." So I don't mean to say that these issues are with us for the first time during the current administration, because that is not the case. They have deep roots. But the policies of this administration and the second election of President Bush have given much more force to feelings of skepticism, or even dislike, toward Americans than had been evident before.

Q: Please talk more about the credibility is the issue. What would you say to an American citizen or to an American official regarding our loss of popularity after the second George W. Bush election? How do we fix this?

SMITH: I think that whoever is elected president in 2008 will have to recognize that repairing our credibility overseas is one of his or her biggest tasks. We had better elect somebody who understands that this must be done, someone who has the skill to do it and the will to concentrate on it very closely.

Post-interview note: After President Obama came into office, Ambassador Smith changed her views about the urgency for the reorganization recommended above, while continuing to urge significantly increased funding for public diplomacy and increased autonomy and authority for public diplomacy within the State Department.

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
Q: Now let's turn to inspections!

SMITH: I was very happy to have been asked to lead an inspection team to our embassies in the Caucasus last spring. I am right now leading an inspection of a domestic operation in the State Department. I find it quite a wonderful thing that the State Department examines itself in such a thorough-going manner. When we went out to the Caucasus we looked at absolutely everything, from how our ambassadors were relating to the senior leadership of the host country, and whether our foreign policy was being conducted well, down to whether the account books were in order, the visas were being given according to law, and whether our people were secure in their houses and offices. Thus we assessed very practical, small issues and the largest issues alike. We found some great work being done, and we found a few corrections that needed to be made. I think we left each embassy a better place, and I think it is extremely important that this tough internal vetting gets done.

Q: How are inspection teams composed? The ones that I have seen there's the public diplomacy specialist, the budget specialist….

SMITH: Yes, we try to have someone from each element of State Department work. There typically are two officers specializing in the management side of things, two or sometimes three looking at security and related issues, and one each for the consular, public diplomacy, and political/economic functions, although that composition could vary depending on the work of a specific embassy. The team leader, which is the role I have filled, looks at executive direction and specifically the work of the ambassador and DCM. We don't examine or assess the non-State Department parts of an embassy, which are getting larger and larger proportionately as time goes on. But we do examine how the State Department relates to and supports, and in the case of the ambassador and DCM, supervises the other agencies that operate at our posts.

Q: So you have done this in the Caucasus, meaning several countries.

SMITH: Yes, my team was in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia, each of them fascinating countries and very different embassies.

Q: So, your schedule now is teaching in the fall and inspections in the spring, is that correct?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Wonderful. A wonderful combination of ways to improve the intake and the outtake, on both ends. So, it's now October, do you know which countries you may be involved with next spring?

SMITH: I don't, but I am beginning to talk with people in the inspection office about that and, as I said, I am conducting a domestic inspection right now, which is just in the beginning stages.

Q: There is the sort of funny gallows humor about inspectors, who always say "we are here to help you." How have you been received in the various embassies?

SMITH: The people in the embassies are our colleagues, after all, and generally they are collegial with us. We know coming in that undergoing an inspection is not fun for the embassy. They have to spend a great deal of time on the inspection, preparing armloads of papers and talking to us in depth, in addition to all the hard work they are normally conducting. And we might end up criticizing them, so nothing is pleasant about it. But for the most part the people we encountered in the Caucasus embassies and in the bureau I'm inspecting in Washington have been very good-natured and very cooperative. My hat goes off to everybody that we worked with.

Q: Is it ethical for an embassy official to take an inspector to dinner?

SMITH: No. There are rules about that. We can be invited to events that are already scheduled for other purposes. And we were invited and attended happily, which allowed us to assess how the embassy conducted representational events. But, no, the rules stipulate that we inspectors can't accept any sort of special favors.

Q: So you would say that the inspection system works rather well?

SMITH: What I have seen of it has worked extremely well.

Q: They too have had budget problems. It used to be that they would try to inspect every three or four years, and now it is every six or seven?

SMITH: I think the Congressional requirement is for embassy inspections to occur once every five years, but exceptions have been granted when the budget is inadequate, and gaps of six or seven years have occurred. On the inspection that I conducted in the Caucasus, it had been, I think, exactly five years since an inspection team had been out.

Q: Well, it sounds like a very complete life professionally and, I think, personally. I am looking out of your window, and it is a beautiful fall day; life seems good.

SMITH: Life is good. I won't argue with that.

Q: Any final thing to share?

SMITH: No. You have been very patient and I think that's all.

Q: Well, this is Dan Whitman thanking Ambassador Smith for a wonderful series of conversations that I know will be useful to people getting into this business; and I am very grateful.

SMITH: Thank you very much.

End of interview

ADDENDUM, written by Pamela Smith in 2024
INSPECTIONS
I stopped teaching at Georgetown at the end of 2007 and worked as a rehired annuitant at the State Department's Office of Inspector General until 2014. In addition to the Caucasus embassies mentioned above (Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia), I served as team leader for inspections in the Western Balkans (Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro); Israel (Tel Aviv and Jerusalem); Vienna (the country mission, the U.S. mission to International Organizations in Vienna, and the U.S. mission to the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe]); Uruguay; Barbados and Cuba; and in the U.S. in PEPFAR (the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief); the Foreign Service Institute's language schools; and the State Department's Office of Civil Rights. Inspection reports go to State Department leadership, the White House, and Congress, so their findings and recommendations are taken very seriously by the embassies and offices we survey.

As noted above, I believe that our inspection teams left each embassy and state-side office better than we found it, sometimes by an inch, sometimes by a mile. We shared best practices and counseled officers on how to perform better. Where there were problems, they often stemmed from the counterproductive supervisory style of senior officers whose intelligence quotients overshadowed their emotional quotients. We found the operations that worked best and got the most out of all levels of employees were headed by collegial, tough but fair, inspiring leaders, not bullies. I was relieved to find almost no fraud, and where there was waste, it was usually correctable with efficient new systems.

After seven years of strenuous inspection work for more than half of each year, I decided to step down. I felt I had been out of office as an ambassador long enough that my counsel to other ambassadors and to embassies might be seen as out-of-date. Additionally, my parents were aging and I needed to visit Tacoma often.

RETIREMENT

The inspections didn't slake my love of travel. From 2005 until now, I've traveled in a private capacity to forty-three more countries – so far! – on six continents, with many stops in London (where my daughter Marian and her family live).

In 2014 I applied to be a docent at the Smithsonian's Freer and Sackler Galleries, now branded as The National Museum of Asian Art. It was a joy to return to art history, and to learn about art I didn't know well. The superb year-long training course was like studying for a Masters in Asian art. I spent five years giving tours of the NMAA's permanent collection and stunning special exhibitions. Toward the end of this period, I was asked to become a board member, which I remain; circumstances prevent me now from continuing as a docent.

NMAA service rounds out other non-profit board service, with The Nature Conservancy's Maryland/DC chapter (after serving with the Colorado chapter previously), and Georgetown University's Institute for the Study of Diplomacy. Earlier, I also served on the board of my former prep school in Tacoma, the Annie Wright School.

As noted above, I write this as the Russian invasion of Ukraine continues to devastate Ukraine, menace Europe, trample international norms – and seriously threaten neighboring Moldova. Despite being in Russian President Putin's sights, our valiant Moldovan friends have welcomed more Ukrainian refugees per capita than any other country, a heavy lift for a small nation with few extra resources. But Ukraine fights for them too, and for us all.

I'll add in closing that personal developments have made my retirement delightful. Both my daughters are happily married with great careers, while raising two fabulous children each. And I've finally attained a life goal – to be a ski bum! Covid caught me at my long-loved house in Telluride, Colorado, where I met a wonderful man with whom I share life. Michael Falker and I are based in Telluride, with a foot in DC (where my daughter Catherine and her family live) and a foot in New York, and we ski, travel, try our best to stay healthy, and very much enjoy ourselves.