

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

KATHLEEN STAFFORD

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Spouse (Joseph D. Stafford) Entered the Foreign Service	1978
Tehran, Iran—Worked in Consular Section	1979
The embassy takeover	
Escaping	
The cook helps out	
The Iranian government falls	
Getting help from the Canadians	
Relationship with the hostages	
The movie <i>Argo</i> and inaccuracies	
The role of the media	
Living in hiding	
The CIA's escape plan	
Final escape and the after-effects	
The remaining hostages	
CIA Officer Tony Mendez	
Palermo, Italy—Student at the Accademia di Belle Arti	1980-1982
Tunis, Tunisia	1982-1983
Cairo, Egypt	1983–1986
Kuwait	1986-1988
Son born	
Status of women and religion	
Iran-Iraq war	
Washington, D.C.	1988-1989
Algiers, Algeria	1989-1990
Washington, D.C.	1990-1993

Studying at Marymount	
Nouakchott, Mauritania—School Teacher Ethnic conflict	1993-1996
Fairfax County, Virginia—School Teacher	1996-1998
Tunis, Tunisia Painting	1998-2001
Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire	2001-2004
Banjul, The Gambia National problems	2004-2007
Washington, D.C. Spouse taught at the National War College	2007-2008
Lagos, Nigeria American community Printmaking workshop	2010-2012
Khartoum, Sudan The evacuation and Benghazi Family life in the Foreign Service Her son's education	2012-2014

INTERVIEW

Q: It is November 14th, 2012. I am Marilyn Greene and this is part two of our interview with Mrs. Kathleen Stafford, whose husband Joseph is chargé d'affaires of the U.S. embassy in Khartoum, Sudan. Yesterday when we finished we had just started talking about the movie "Argo" and how accurately or not it had depicted the events of 1979 when Kathleen and five other people escaped the embassy. Maybe we just reiterate a little bit about your view of whether that was an accurate description of the events.

STAFFORD: The movie.

Q: The movie.

STAFFORD: Right. Well, as a matter fact I think the movie was really about Tony Mendez, the CIA agent who was one of the two CIA agents who came to ex-filtrate us, take us out. And so the real story is about the Canadians, of course, and their bravery for the 80 something days that they hid us in their homes. And because the movie makers

wanted to maintain focus they eliminated one of the locations where we all hid. My husband Joe and I stayed with the Canadian Ambassador, Ken Taylor and his wife Pat, who was a research biologist doing work with the Pasteur Institute there. We stayed with them. But the other four people stayed with John and Zena Sheardown, who were the people we called in the first place.

Q: That was a question I had yesterday. Were they Canadians?

STAFFORD: Yes.

Q: OK.

STAFFORD: Why don't I start from the beginning?

Q: OK.

STAFFORD: Do you want to know the part about when we first walked out the door? OK. So we'll start from the beginning. So we had been there for — we had been in Iran for two months. We had arrived in September and I was able to go as an exceptional case. Cora Lijek and I were exceptional cases. The plan was that other adult dependents would be able to come later to the post. So we were just the first wave. Cora and I were there working on the visa line, because there were 40,000 people waiting for their visa interviews, because every person had to be interviewed. Joe and I arrived there in September and we knew that the embassy had already been taken over the previous February, but only briefly. And so the, the State Department's idea was that all of those people that had been there previously at the time of the Shah might be viewed as tainted. So there was a major turnover and there were lots of new people at the embassy.

We had been working in the embassy. And that particular day was the first of the week. The day before the embassy had been closed and demonstrators had come by and written things on the wall, "Death to America," "Death to Jimmy Carter." And so Bruce Laingen, the Charge, and Vic Tomseth, his deputy, and Mike Howland the Security Officer went over to the Foreign Ministry to complain. Now, something that led to our remaining safe, — one of the things for all of us to get out safely was that it was supposed to be Ann Swift who accompanied Bruce Laingen to the Foreign Ministry, but she was just a few minutes late. So Bruce took Vic with him and Ann ended up becoming a hostage. You see her being blindfolded in the movie when the militants break through the front office door.

So, Chargé Laingen went over to complain about lack of protection for the embassy and people being allowed to write on our walls and do these things. So in addition, the consulate was closed to non-immigrant visa applicants to protest this lack of security supposedly guaranteed by the Iranian government. Since we were closed, we were all doing administrative work paperwork. I had come in late because I had waited at home for our new housekeeper to come so I could show her what I wanted done at the house. It was to be her first day. She had called and said I could just leave the key and she would

come in and do the work. She was the housekeeper for Kate Koob, Public Affairs counselor and had previously been on the char force at the embassy. She was quite insistent that I just leave the key, but I told her “no” I wanted to go over the work together. I later began to think she might have been one of the people who were let go when the embassy downsized after February and she might have been there for the takeover of the embassy that very morning and perhaps told the planners about the layout and various things since the invading militants seemed to know right where the weak links were in the security chain and what windows to break in through. This is all my thinking though. Just so strange that she was almost rude about my leaving the key and she was just starting a job.

Anyway, when she failed to show up so I went to the embassy to work. After I saw that we weren’t opening for visa interviews I decided it would be a good time to take my diplomatic passport over to the chancery to sign the papers to get my Iranian Government diplomatic ID card so I went across this large compound, and the ladies in that office were very nervous. They said “Why did you come to work today?” I said, “I always come to work.” And they said, “But today is the day of the Martyrs.” They were obviously very nervous.

I walked back across the compound and went into the Consulate and straight to Joe’s desk. I told him that the ladies in that ID office were not in a very good mood and he should probably go over there with his passport and get his papers processed too. Luckily he didn’t listen and didn’t get around to going over to the chancery building or he would have been in the open or in the chancery building at the time of the takeover and would have been held with the others for the 444 days.

So we are in the Consulate and by mid-morning we heard noises and yelling that there are people running around on the compound, with sticks and rocks and things. And so somebody yelled, “Shut the door!” But Don Cook from our A-100 class was outside. He was getting us croissants. And so as soon as he ran in, I shut the door. I remember shutting the door (*laughs*). And then we waited for things to settle down, and it didn’t look they were going to settle down. More and more people kept coming on to the compound from the little bit we could see. And so somebody said, “Go upstairs,” because that would be one level up and quieter. That day, the only people that were in the consulate other than the regular American employees and our local staff were some people applying for some immigrant visas for their relatives or — things of that nature. So there might have been — I really don’t remember how many people. There might have been 15 or 20 non-embassy Iranians something like that.

I was quite sure that nothing would happen, because this consulate had just been reinforced with bulletproof glass everywhere. And I don’t know how much money, maybe two million dollars, which was a lot back then (*laughs*) to make it, you know, safe. So I was saying, “No, it’s going to be okay.”

Bob Morefield, the Consul General, our boss, called the police and said, you know, “We’re having trouble here. You need to send somebody over.” And I think they just

hung up on us. So after about an hour or so the local staff were looking very nervous. They were crying. Some of them took off their ID cards and tossed them behind the file cabinets, because they knew it'd take a long time before anybody found them there.

And so I thought, "Boy, these people are really worried."

And at a certain point, Al Golacinski the RSO, Regional Security Officer came over from the chancery. And he was walking back and forth trying to reason with the militants and figure out what to do with us. And so I can remember all this sort of pandemonium. And at a certain point, they said, "Well, we have to destroy the visa plates, because we're going to have to close this up and we don't want the, the visa plates compromised. We don't want people making false documents and getting into the country with their false visas."

So we thought, "Oh boy, this is serious, you know, we're not going to be doing any work for a while, if that is the case" since that was our job. And Cora and I are thinking, "Now, they're going to send us home," (*laughter*).

So, so after that was done, they were saying we were going to walk through the mob across this huge compound 22 acres, to the chancery, the main building. And so we thought, "Well, that doesn't really make a lot of sense." But someone got the data book and they asked me to carry that over and then they said, "No, we're not going to the chancery after all."

In the meantime someone threw something in through the bathroom window, I guess that had not been reinforced. The Marine, Sgt. Lopez, tied the doors of the two restrooms together with a coat hanger to delay anyone trying to get in that way. Then someone thought they smelled smoke coming from the roof so we thought we should try to leave out the backdoor where the visa applicants always come in. At this point — this was only a takeover by the students/militants and nobody else was in on it. So the local revolutionary guards, who were usually posted outside our door and they were armed, weren't in on this takeover. So they were just standing there guarding their post.

Rich Queen, who was also in the A100 course with Joe and Mark Lijek and Don Cook — went out and said hello to them. And they didn't say much, they said hello. And so then we started leaving. So first were the Iranians who were there for their immigrant visas. And then the FSN's and finally the Americans. We were going to split into two groups. Our group was Cora and Mark Lijek, Bob Anders, Joe and I, a young American woman, Kim King and a local employee, a young woman who offered to show us the way to the British Embassy since we didn't know its location. And that was our safe haven goal. Bob Morefield, Richard Queen, Don Cook, Robert Ode who was there as a TDY, and Gary Lee the Admin Officer and Sergeant Lopez, who had torn off all his insignia and threw on the janitor's jacket to hide his uniform. So we left separately, they turned down one street we went another way. So as we were making our way toward the British Embassy we saw this huge mob of people coming from that direction and we knew we were not going to make it through there.

Q: Which way? The six split up?

STAFFORD: Sorry, the American's in the Consulate split into these two groups, our group and the other group. I guess there were over a dozen of us and that was too large a group to be walking out keeping a low profile...

Q: Oh,

STAFFORD: So our 8 went one way and Mr. Moorefield group went another.

Q: OK.

STAFFORD: With the Marine and Don Cook etc.

Q: Mm-hmm.

STAFFORD: Kim King was with us. He needed to call home to get money. He was having problems, had lost his passport, that sort of thing. But I remember the Lijeks were with us and Bob Anders and Joe and me. And it started raining, so that might have helped too, because we had umbrellas out and we would not have been so noticeable. And you know, the idea that it was raining, it hadn't rained in a while I think, so that was helpful. So I don't remember exactly what all the different steps were. But we realized we were not going to make it to the British Embassy and Bob Anders said, "I think I'll go home and I live close by. Do you want to come with me?" And we had been there two months and we knew nobody but a few Iranians who we could not possibly ask for help.

So we said, "We're going with you, Bob."

So we headed over towards his house. And we separated a little bit more to be even less noticeable. There was one roadblock a Revolutionary Guard headquarters office that we had to walk by. So we crossed two at a time. And we got to Bob's house. And started listening to the embassy radio, you know, everybody had a radio in their house, we could hear that the Americans talking and the Iranians militants too. Finally we could hear that they got into safe and to the vault, that is, to the classified area. And we could hear that they had gotten in. Finally there were only Farsi speakers on the radio and so we knew that meant everyone at the embassy had been captured. We called the British Embassy to see who had made it there. And there was only one local employee who was hysterical really. So then we started calling around to the different places. There was an apartment building where some of the Marines and TDYers stayed. And we reached Lillian Johnson who was there. She was supposed to have left that day and there was some complication at the airport with her visa. So she had been brought back and she was in these apartment in a high rise, and she was looking down on the compound. She could see the mob and she could also hear people coming into the building. And so she was just trying to stay out of sight. Then we called Kate Koob the cultural affairs officer who worked at the USIS (United States Information Service) Office at the Iranian American Cultural Center,

which had not been attacked in February. So Kate was thinking, “Well, we’re not considered part of the embassy by these students so nobody’s going to bother us. So we’re just fine.” So she and her deputy, Bill Roper stayed there, and they opened a line to Washington. And they were talking to people in Washington.

The young woman who had been trying to get a visa for her husband wanted to call home. She was afraid that he would lose his temper and go over to the embassy and have trouble so she was trying to call him (*laughs*). And I think she did reach the family and when she said she was staying with some Americans, the line died, you know, the phone died. And it had been a party line, people in the apartment building were all using it. Someone, maybe Joe went upstairs to the neighbor’s apartment and asked if she could use their phone, so I think she was finally able to reach him and he came to pick her up. And then they both came back later and brought us chicken kebab since we didn’t have any food. Later in the evening Kate Koob called the apartment and said, “Can somebody come over — if I send my driver can somebody come over and keep this line open in to Washington?” Because back in those days if you lost the line you couldn’t necessarily get it back. So Joe and I and the Lijeks went over and Bob stayed there at his house. And we figured four was enough and all that fit in the car. So we went over and we stayed on the phone all night — not that we could tell them anything. But at that point we were talking to Washington but also to Vic Tomseth and Bruce Laingen over in the Foreign Ministry, as well because in the beginning it wasn’t a problem. The professional diplomats in the Iranian government were as perplexed as we were. They were not in on the student/militant takeover. So they let the three in the ball room of the Foreign Ministry call foreign embassies, and us and Washington and their Ambassador friends. The fact that Ann had been a few minutes late and Vic had taken her place would be key to our escaping capture in those early days.

When Kate and Bob woke up in the morning they said, “We’re fine now. We can take over again.” Now, all along we’re thinking, you know, this isn’t really going like it did back in February. They’re not freeing our people at the embassy. And it was, it wasn’t looking good. So we thought we better get some clothes and some money. Kate loaned us her driver and we went to the Lijeks’ house and they got some money and packed some clothes and we got some food out of the refrigerator. Their landlady was not a very sympathetic type and they wanted to be out of there in a hurry.

And then we went to our house. And our landlord came downstairs and said, “Can we do anything for you? Can we help?”

And we said, “No, thank you very much.” And then some Kurdish friends came over too and asked if they could help and we said, “No, you better throw away our phone number, you know, we’ll get out of this, but you could be — you could have problems.” So people were really courageous to offer us help at that time.

I was able to get through to my mother on the phone. I said, “You’ll hear things on the news and I’m fine and I’ll call you in a couple of days. But then of course I didn’t ever call her again for 90 days until I was back in the US.

So then we — I think we napped there in the afternoon having had no sleep the night before. Then Vic called to say his friends at the British Embassy would come pick us up and we could stay in their residential compound. Two cars came late in the afternoon and picked us up and went to Bob's house and took us all to Gholhak Gardens. It felt good to be out of embassy housing since we worried the students would find the rental housing list and come looking for stray Americans.

But the next morning we got a call from Vic saying the British Embassy had been attacked the night before and they felt they could not guarantee our safety so we would have to leave.

That's when Vic had the ingenious thought of calling his cook Sam from Thailand who was the cook for a number of American embassy employees and so had keys to the houses. Not only could Sam help us hide but he and Vic could speak Thai so no one listening would know about the plans or location. The Brits again gave us a ride, this time to the home of John Graves who by that point was a hostage. Sam was there to greet us and we slipped in trying to be as inconspicuous as possible. Over the course of the next few days we hid there, keeping out of sight with the lights off. The house was sparsely furnished so we slept under rugs or in our clothes. Sam would shop and cook for us. He learned that the regular housekeeper, also Thai was worried her boss would return and find his food eaten and wine drunk and be angry with her so she wanted Sam to get us out. Without telling her where we were going we snuck out and went to Kate Koob's house. Vic Tomseth had told us that she had been taken hostage too. I remember it as creeping out in the wee hours through neighborhood back yards. But I am not sure if that is just a dream. In any case we left more of our clothes in the washer. We didn't have many in the first place since we weren't planning on this being a long term event. By now we were down to almost no clothes and no money. So for those critical early days, thanks to Vic's quick thinking, and Sam's loyalty and courage, Sam could secretly help us hide. Within a short time, it was clear that holding the American hostages was earning support for the Khomeini regime so he was not going to free them.

The Secular government resigned and the Revolutionary Islamic Government took over. The people in the ball room called to say they would no longer be allowed to talk with us and wished us good luck, saying we were on our own.

That is when Bob Anders called John Sheardown and told him we were at the end of our rope.

Q: At what point did you — I mean in the beginning it seemed like a student protest. And was there a point where everyone realized that it was more serious than just a casual protest?

STAFFORD: I don't know which day it was, it seems to me that it was three days after the takeover that the Bazargan government fell. They withdrew. Which meant there was no longer a secular head of the government. And so then we knew we were in, in

difficulty, because there was nobody for our people to negotiate with, except for Khomeini's people. So I don't — I think that was around the third day. We may have been at Kate Koob's house a day or too later. It had a large picture window with no curtains right on the street. And so we couldn't really move between the kitchen and the rest of the house without being seen. We were getting very tense and stressed trying to figure out what to do. People knew that these were the American embassy houses. Everybody knew in the neighborhood. And we thought eventually the militants are going to go to the Admin Office and find the list of housing. And they're going to come looking for Americans. So that's when Bob Anders called John Sheardown. He said, "I know this great guy. I play tennis with John Sheardown. And he has four bedrooms, he has enough room for all of us."

Q: What was John's position?

STAFFORD: He was the Consul General for the Canadian Embassy.

Q: OK.

STAFFORD: And Bob Anders was the consular officer for American Services. So they were counterparts.

Q: OK. Well, the Sheardowns weren't mentioned in the movie, were they?

STAFFORD: That's right.

Q: And you thought that was unfair.

STAFFORD: Yes. Completely, it would take so little to add a footnote, like the others at the end of the film. They changed them after Ambassador Taylor and Pat viewed the film so it could have been done to give the Sheardowns that recognition easily enough as well

Q: You had just moved, yet again, to get away from the American housing.

STAFFORD: So when we called John Sheardown, he said, "We've been worried about you. What took you so long?" And so he said, "Of course you can come over." So the Brits then came over to the house. And they brought us over to John Sheardown's house. And I will never forget him standing out on the sidewalk with his hose washing, you know, watering the sidewalk with his garage door open so that the car could just pull in and nobody in the neighborhood would see us get out. And you see, I wear these scarves and Mark had blonde hair, so I think he was wearing one of my scarves. And Bob Anders had one of —

Q: For your head.

STAFFORD: Over them, yes, to hide their hair so that people looking in the car

wouldn't, you know, recognize —

Q: This is the very scarf you wore?

STAFFORD: No, no.

Q: Oh, OK (laughter).

STAFFORD: I wonder what I did with those scarves (*laughs*).

Q: So they closed the garage and you —

STAFFORD: That's right. So they closed the garage and we go in to the house— and we're sitting with the Sheardowns. And of course at this point we're sort of nervous about, hope this is really it and we get to stay here, because we felt safe in an official residence, another diplomat's home. So I think it was Mark who said, "Does your Ambassador know about this?" (*laughs*). And John Sheardown said, "There he is."

And, and here's this fellow that had driven up in this little two-seater sport scar and he had on jeans and he had curly hair. And we thought he was a junior officer. And so that's Ambassador Taylor.

So he said, "Yes, and we're happy, we're happy that you got out and that you're safe." And he said, "I'd like two people to come with me," because he wanted it to be official and also lighten the load for the Sheardowns

His harboring us made it official. Joe and I don't play bridge. So we went over and stayed with Ken so the others could still play bridge and things like that.

Q: So you weren't all together as it appeared.

STAFFORD: No. that's right.

Q: Mm-hmm.

STAFFORD: So in *Argo*, the Canadians really get very little credit for all the things they did. But Ken Taylor did — and he was doing other things besides protecting us. He was going back regularly to see, see Bruce Laingen and Mike Howland and, and Vic back in the Foreign Ministry. And he would go and talk to them and bring back messages that he would take to Washington. We knew he was doing that. Bringing them scotch in a Listerine bottle. but we did not know until we read his book that he was also collecting information about what was going on around the embassy and who was there and who's at this gate of the embassy, in case there was a rescue attempt. So he didn't ever mention that. But that explains why when he would come home at night, we're sitting there on the couch every day when he comes home, waiting for the news. And so he would choose his words carefully. And I thought, "Well, can't you just tell us what's going on?" But I'm

sure he was being careful about what he could tell us, sort of a need to know basis, and what we didn't need to know in case something happened or we got picked up.

When he brought us over, everybody thought this was short term, never imagining this could drag on for over a year. So Pat had introduced us to the household staff as friends of Ken's from Canada. There was the cook, and I don't remember his name. But he was a member of the local Revolutionary Guard we found out later. And there was Guna Siland who I think was from India or some other South Asian country. So they were the domestic staff — the housekeeper and the cook. . So it was kind of awkward after a while, because I thought, "Well, then we shouldn't speak Farsi." And then after a while we did.

I'm sure they were thinking, "Well, who — these are funny tourists. They come here and they hide upstairs when somebody comes to visit. And they don't have any clothes and they never go out," (*laughs*).

So it was never really clarified, you know, just what we were doing there. Nobody ever spelled it out. Probably for their safety so they could always deny they knew who we really were. But after a while, the cook is the person that Joe would ask for definitions of words, when he would be reading the paper. And in the end, that cook did come to Canada and told Zena Sheardown that he had been brought in afterwards for questioning and they had beaten the bottoms of his feet which is incredibly painful, and abused him to a certain extent but let him go. But he was able to leave and go to Canada. I don't know who provided the funds and the visa and everything for him to get out. But I was very happy to hear he got out, because we never knew.

So in the movie, the — they have Sahar, Sahar, who is the lady housekeeper. She was a composite character, because the housekeeper that worked for the Sheardowns was a Filipina. And so they either took her with them, or she was able to go to the Philippines. But she was safe. I was happy they had that part of the movie, because it does show how brave and loyal some of the Iranians were. It's nice that they are represented that way.

Q: That's good. The Swedish were involved in some way.

STAFFORD: Yes.

Q: What was their role?

STAFFORD: Yes. Lee Schatz was the agricultural attaché. And his office was not at the American Embassy compound but in same building as the Swedish Embassy. Since his office overlooked the compound he saw all this takeover happening. And he stayed for the first few days, I think four or five days at least with — was an officer or a secretary in their embassy. So he stayed in her apartment and then the Swedish Ambassador approached Ken Taylor and said, "You know, we've got this American we're hiding, but he really wouldn't blend in that well with us. Can you take him?"

And Ken said, “Sure, he can come join with the other five.” I think that’s the first that the Swedish Ambassador knew that the rest of us were hiding with the Canadians.

Q: Mm-hmm.

STAFFORD: And they were very helpful, so were the New Zealanders. Contrary to what is said in the movie. They were helpful all along. Very casual, you called Ambassador Bibi, Chris, his first name and he would chauffeur himself around, wonderful laid back people to say the least. But we didn’t want to talk about that much either, because New Zealand still had an embassy in Iran, and we didn’t want them to have any problems.

Q: How long did Bruce Laingen stay at the Foreign Ministry?

STAFFORD: Over 400 days I’d say, they moved him to the prison with some other hostages not long before they were all released.

Q: That long?

STAFFORD: That’s right. In the ballroom, the three of them.

Q: What has your subsequent relationship with Tony Mendez been like?

STAFFORD: I had seen Tony once, at a reunion picnic after our escape. Every five years or so there would be reunions for the other people. But Joe and I have always been on the other side of the Atlantic or some place. But we would just look at the pictures and read the emails and send pictures back and forth sometimes. And when Mrs. Dollimore died, one of the secretaries, Laverna Dollimore — she was a World War II veteran, and she was buried at sea. So they sent us the pictures and told us about the ceremony. We usually kept informed through Cora and Mark. So we’ve kept up with people that way, but not been able to attend the 5 year reunions.

Q: But you said you saw him at the Canadian Embassy. Was that for the premiere?

STAFFORD: The premiere of the movie, yes.

Q: All right. And what was that like?

STAFFORD: That was great. It was wonderful (*laughs*). And he’s just as quiet as ever, you know, he doesn’t draw attention to himself— even when he is a celebrity! It was just hard because I didn’t know who to hug first! Ken and Pat were there, Tony and his wife were there, Lee Schatz and his wife and two sons whom I had never met, Ben Affleck, Bryan Cranston, John Goodman. All these people and I should have had an autograph book, but missed my chance. It was sort of formal and I didn’t know how much time there were be to really talk. But over the weeks Tony and his wife Joanna and I have been on a panel together, speaking at the State Department. He is just as sharp as ever.

Q: What was the feeling — do you think the hostages at the embassy resented you six for leaving?

STAFFORD: Well, I couldn't paint for a year after I got out. And it didn't occur to me until maybe about 10 years ago that that must have been survivor guilt. Everything I'd paint, I'd ruin. And so then I would have these dreams that we were on that same plane as when we were leaving. And they would be on the plane, but they wouldn't talk to me. So when they were released, Sheldon Chris who was executive director of NEA-EX at the time and took a personal interest in each and every one of the hostage families, knew how important it was for us to be able to see the other hostages. And so he had the State Department bring us back from Palermo so that we could be there and see the others and have them tell us, "We were happy you got out." And the way they found out that we got out — since everything they received was censored — they never had access to the Red Cross or anything. No one was really allowed to visit them. They never had any news. They thought they were forgotten.

And so the — there was a baseball game between the New York Yankees and the Montreal Blue Birds, something like that. The baseball team. And so that was in *Sports Illustrated*. And it showed our picture and it said — "These were the people who escaped with the Canadians and we'd said, 'Don't forget the other hostages' and things like that." And Reggie Jackson gave me his hat. So the militants had not censored that, because they weren't thinking it would be in a sports magazine. So they told us later that they saw that magazine and passed it all around to everybody to see it.

Q: Oh, that's great. That's a great story.

STAFFORD: *(laughs)* Yes, they told us later it was like they were really happy someone had scored a point for our side. It made all the difference to us to hear it from them.

Q: OK. How, if at all, does the film promote understanding of international diplomacy? Was it useful in helping people understand that?

STAFFORD: Well— I don't know about international diplomacy, but other people in the State Department have told me that they are very happy to see the State Department presented in a positive light, as opposed to just having cocktail parties or giving visas to the wrong people or things like that. So that's very heartening. And Ben Affleck — at his presentation at the premiere and at other times has commented that this is an homage to the Foreign Service and to the clandestine officers in the CIA and the difficult life they lead. Joe's brother and sister saw the movie in New York. And they said at the end of the movie when they say that none of our group of 6 left the Foreign Service, that everybody gasps. They can't believe that we all stayed in. That was a surprise.

Q: Stick around.

STAFFORD: Right. And so I think that is a positive thing. I think it would be nice if the Canadians had gotten more play in the movie, but, I understand, the movie is about Tony

Mendez and the wonderful and ingenious role that Hollywood played in our escape and it is truly creative and collaboration between CIA friends and Hollywood. More than about the true friends the Canadians were to us, people and government.

I think it shows what chaos occurs when international laws, such as sanctity of embassies, is ignored. I do think Iran has lost much more than it gained in all these years thanks to it ignoring international law. The government of Sudan did not make the same mistake when our embassy was attacked on September 14th. Even though there is no love lost between our two governments.

Also the final footnotes were changed after the TIFF (Toronto International Film Festival) presentation. The first time the movie was shown in Toronto. Ken Taylor was not invited and Ken's friends saw the movie and were angry. The first version mentioned the 1000 or so awards Ken had received for his role planning and executing our escape since he could not say that the CIA were involved. The footnote was worded to sound like Ken did not deserve the recognition he received. And so they changed that.

Ben Affleck invited Ken and Pat to Los Angeles and they watched the movie and they said, "What do you think?" And they said, "Well, we could change this to say that this is an example of cooperation, that the CIA assisted the Canadians in rescuing the Americans. And it's a fine example of international cooperation." I just wish they had mentioned the Sheardowns and the fact that all the other Canadian embassy employees voluntarily put their lives at risk for our sakes.

Q: They did no damage. There was no negative —

STAFFORD: Well the Brits angrily said they did not turn us away and the New Zealanders said the same. Since the movie says they did turn us away I would say that is doing damage since it is not the least bit true about the New Zealanders. They did whatever they could to help. Maybe not hiding us physically but helping in other ways. The Brits helped too and personally several of them would have continued to I think but had no choice. I think overall something a bit more creative about hiding us or giving us aid when we were desperate could have been done. I can only say I suppose they all thought it would end soon too and so did not see us as desperate. Which makes the Canadian help that much more precious.

The Canadians were also not pleased with the way their role in protecting us was shown and so they did a documentary style film called *Our Man in Tehran* with interviews of Joe Clark who was Prime Minister of Canada at the time along with Flora McDonald, their Secretary of State, and the Canadians and the five of us house guests who were in the States at the time. The best part for me was to see Ambassador Taylor and Pat and particularly Zena Sheardown who came to Washington for the filming. She and I spend the afternoon together before she caught her flight back home. I took her around to some of the sights of Washington since she had never been here before.

She was disappointed in *Argo* for John's sake really but since he had suffered with

Alzheimer for a few years before his death in December last year, he would not have known about *the* slight anyway.



Q: OK. Some people say the U.S. often gets in bed with the wrong leaders for the wrong reasons. And I wonder if you had that feeling about the Shah and Iran and all of the situation that led up to this.

STAFFORD: I am about the least articulate person who could answer this question. Joe could give you a thoughtful, reasoned answer but I can only think of examples pro and con and how policy makers might have been perceiving the world when they were backing certain leaders. If Roosevelt and Churchill couldn't decipher Stalin than I am in no position to even comment. I can only say, I don't see the crystal ball getting much clearer now than it was then. The world is so very complicated there are actors out there we can't even see. I don't envy the policy makers, I just hope they are asking as many questions as they can.

Q: Over the posts where you've been, what has been your perception of the media, both the U.S. media and the media in your, in your countries? What has been your perception?

STAFFORD: Well, sometimes it's surprising how much free press exists in some countries with very powerful dictators. And sometimes there's just no free press at all. Everything is, everything is blocked. I don't think it is useful for me to pick out an example here and there, but what I see now is the internet and how it is out of balance. Google as probably the biggest search engine in the world is extremely powerful. Europe has forced them to let people be "forgotten" if they request it but not in the US. So if someone in a country writes something false about you, to get it off of Google's list you have to write to the webmaster of that newspaper and ask them to remove it. Well that just adds fuel to the fire because the new headline is that you deny that you are chartreuse or bankrupt or whatever they have mistakenly put in the paper and repeated in 25 languages. So just like people will view the film as reality, anything up on the internet must be true to. So I am wondering how we are ever going to be able to tell what we should believe.

Q: — some people have drawn a parallel between a free press, an economic prosperity, and democracy. Now, do you, do you see that they're — that one leads to the other? Are they connected?

STAFFORD: That's a big question. One hopes it should lead to greater democracy, But with our newspapers closing one by one in the US. Who is going to cover what's going on in our State Senates and Congressional buildings and police stations? Who else is paying any attention or has resources to watch? Social media cannot replace a professional press corps but technology will shape the world. I hope all these wonderful inventions do more than just target us for more sales. That's for sure.

Q: Do you want to talk a bit about that YouTube video and the parallels between the affects in Sudan, which are clear, and the affects in Benghazi, which are a little bit controversial?

STAFFORD: Well, first I will take it as a whole. Because for me the major point is that Benghazi was not an isolated incident as it has been made to seem. Why I seldom if ever heard stated that there were 40 different posts where there were confrontations many violent, that occurred between Tuesday and Friday of that week, before all the TV Sunday morning talk shows began I do not know and I do not understand. The smoke had not cleared before people were accused of dereliction of duty, cover ups, obscuring the facts. It was too frustrating to listen to after a while. Finger pointing so cynical. I don't know how people keep their optimism when we see performances like that, and just for the sake of the TV cameras. I wish these hearings were handled like court cases where there is a courtroom artist. Maybe civility would return to the proceedings. It is just very difficult to watch such a tragic death be twisted so cynically for political purposes. .

Regarding the You Tube miserably insulting film about Mohammed, It did so much useless damage. Since the film was meant to infuriate people, a ridiculous and poor quality as it was, it did cause outrage. I think that outrage was used by extremists who brought in extra demonstrators, and that was not expected by the Sudanese government. They were caught off guard. They did send extra reinforcements in time to keep the

demonstrators from breaching our embassy walls since thankfully, it was a large structure built to withstand an attack. We were lucky.

The bussed in demonstrators made it take on a different flavor and then the Sudanese police probably weren't expecting it to be, to be so violent.

And then there was another photo that came out with Angela Merkel of Germany recognizing someone who had done a cartoon against Mohammad. So that is why the German Embassy was burned. And then the British Embassy is close by. I don't know exactly how much damage was done to their embassy. But we are watching all this on CNN, all of the spouses and everyone considered non-essential personnel who were told to stay at home. We knew the demonstrations were going to happen. And so we're watching this on Al Jazeera, because of course the cameras were there. And we were all very happy that our embassy was a brand new embassy built two years ago much farther away from the downtown section. So it wasn't as easy to attack.

Q: What was the time difference between the Benghazi incident and your evacuation?

STAFFORD Three days. Our embassy was attacked on the 14th, because it was after Friday prayers. The Benghazi attack was on the 11th

Q: Without Benghazi, do you think they would have evacuated you?

STAFFORD: Yes, because we did not have a great relation with the government of Sudan. I think they might have evacuated us temporarily because we had 2,000 demonstrators come. There was a good deal of damage done since the bullet proof glass and doors are expensive and difficult to replace but the embassy did it in record time. The demonstrators just hammered it and had rocks and you hit something long enough and it breaks. So all of that has been repaired now for a long time. So I think without the Ben Ghazi attack putting the distorted spotlight on embassy security that we'd have a much stronger chance of having been brought back by now. But I think Benghazi has made everyone terribly cautious and worried. But we were already a danger post. We were already a post with no children.

Q: Right. When did you know that you would be leaving? Was it the same day when everything began?

STAFFORD: No, I thought that since the embassy was not over taken, I thought I'd be just fine. I finished unpacking (*laughs*). Once again, bad judgment (*laughs*).

Q: Needed to go shopping again.

STAFFORD: Right. So they called everyone the next day — some people left on the 16th and they're were told, "Pack up, you're leaving tonight, you're going to Greece," because the flights are at night. So they packed for a vacation. They were told it would be for a week or 10 days. So they took their summer clothes and they went to Greece. And I knew

I was going to have this exhibition and from past experience I know evacuations do not end in a couple of weeks. I didn't expect to be able to go to Greece and then leave for the States, so I said, "I'm going back to Washington," so a number of us came back to Washington next day.

Q: Good decision in retrospect. In terms of your job, when you go back, how will it be different in Sudan than in other posts? Maybe the security would be an issue or the interest of the people or whatever. But you don't do exactly the same thing in each post.

STAFFORD: That's right. It varies. There is no American community there in Sudan. Not like Lagos, where we had a very large American community because of the oil companies. There was a large international school going through high school. But we had a very large American's Women's Club, we did not have that in Sudan. There's not even a Diplomatic Wives Club, as far as I know. There's a small Sudanese/International Club with some longtime residents, Lebanese and others who try to do some charitable work. Some expats participate but there are few spouses there who are not working at their embassies and have time to devote to those activities.

So my focus in Nigeria was very much with the American community. We lived in a very large residence on a beautiful green compound on the Lagoon. Many people loved it as one of the last green areas in a city of 18 million people. I can't think of any parks that were left. Everything had become commercial property. The American school had a fundraiser for the high school band in our backyard and the Boy Scouts camped out and the American Women's Club had their annual teas and all sorts of thing, their carol singing at Christmas. The marines might come and play games.

Q: It was a center.

STAFFORD: It was a center, yes... The focus was really just on our embassy families, both American and local employees families. I'd spent more time doing things with them or helping whatever projects they have, or working — I had planned to work with Sudanese students who were applying for college. I will work a good deal with the artists who are there and bring them some frames, because there are no frames and there's no wood in Sudan, in Khartoum at least. I think it's against the law to cut trees because of the desertification, So I will be working — I think I will do a lot of things with the, with the artist community and then there is a group of wives, diplomatic wives who paint. And so I will probably join them once in a while and — or give some watercolor demonstrations, things like that.

Q: That sounds like great. Would you like to talk a little bit about your husband's work? To whatever extent you wish. And what you perceive as his greatest challenges and achievements?

STAFFORD: Well, I think his greatest achievement is that when he is an ambassador or DCM somewhere the employees feel their boss values them and takes a personal interest in them. He says good morning or hello to everyone he passes and they wait for him to do

that. In Tunisia when we were leaving, FSN's came back from their vacations. So they'd be there for his going away party, because they appreciated the time he took with them. And I think — I know that he does that because — he values the local employees, the FSN's. So he has quarterly luncheons for them and they come in and love to be in the residence and they talk about what their concerns are, whether it's about, their salary increases or lack of them, or their healthcare or their parking problems or whatever it is. They know they're going to have that occasion to talk directly to him.

Q: This is Stu Kennedy. Did you meet Stu?

KENNEDY: No. How do you do? Stu Kennedy, how are you?

STAFFORD: Very nice to meet you. So I think that's what, what sets him apart.

Q: OK.

STAFFORD: Because I — from what I gather, that's — these luncheons or just meetings, are not done that often. He's diligent about obtaining professional training for his, office managers, staff, his other officers, he mentors the junior officers. He's, somebody I'd like to work for. Because he's fair, he's always fair. And he's a very good listener. And even though it takes extra time and effort when someone has done an exemplary job makes sure they are recognized he so it can go in their formal record and not just be a one time "thanks for a good job." All that stuff takes time but that is why I can't complain when he spends long hours at work. I know that's what it demands if you want to do it right.

What about the relationship between the Ambassador and other agencies that are represented at the embassy? USAID, the Agriculture Department, all of the others? Does that vary from embassy to embassy? Is there a —

STAFFORD: Yes, it does. There's a whole variety of agencies on the country team. Often there are rivalries and he works to get agencies to cooperate together, share information and ideas through country team meetings and outside of meetings. He insists that people show respect for each other and that sets a tone. I have had people tell me when I see them in later years that it was a pleasure to work with him because he would give them latitude and encourage initiatives. Others who became DCMs and ambassadors said he had been a wonderful model and mentor. I think his ability to listen with an open mind and with patience. And somehow he has avoided becoming pompous. I tell him I help him with that. *(laughs)*

Q: I listed the posts you described to me yesterday, and I thought maybe if you could do that we could just go through and you could talk to me about the personal highlights of each of these posts and maybe the issues that were, that you remember as being important. And the people who were there who were outstanding. We'll start with Iran. You were there for what, two months?

STAFFORD: Mm-hmm, two months, yes *(laughs)*. I'd have to say John Limbert was a

star. He was so gracious and encouraging to us as junior officers, him being at midlevel. He was and is an excellent Farsi speaker and was very enthusiastic about the post. He took us under his wing and took us out to dinner at this wonderful restaurant where you have a Persian carpet that is placed on rocks, and they bring you — this is going over a rushing river — and then they bring you delicious kebab and vegetables with perfect seasonings, things like that. And people tell me it's still there. It was a wonderful experience. You can imagine for a first tour couple it was like living "Arabian Nights."

Then a group of us we all went down to Isfahan and stayed at the Caravanserai Hotel, which of course we never would have been able to afford in the days of the Shah

Q: Is that hotel still —

STAFFORD: I hope it is. It's beautiful. There are two mosques there, one for women and one for men in a stunning turquoise color. It's breathtaking. And in fact, I'm pretty sure that's the trip we almost didn't make it back in time for the takeover. I think we were — the car almost broke down near Ghom which is Khomeini's town, and I think then it started up again and so we made it back just in time.

Q: Oh my goodness.

STAFFORD: *(laughs)*

Q: That's a big what if, isn't it?

STAFFORD: Yes, it is.

Q: OK.

STAFFORD: Sorry.

Q: So then —

ANONYMOUS: Sorry, I didn't want to interrupt, Marilyn. But just going back to *Argo* being in the — so basically, from say, mid-November, late November, you're day after day after day in the house. I was just wondering if you could sort of describe the routine of what it was like being there, you know.

STAFFORD: Right. Well, there was a routine, and I think that's what keeps you sane too, having a routine. Every morning we'd get up, go downstairs have breakfast. The Ambassador and Pat would already be gone. And I guess about noon, the staff would have lunch for us. And then we would read — I would read novels. Joe would read the Farsi language newspaper, Friendly embassies and other Canadians were loaning us whatever books they had. And so I read everything John le Carré they had. And The World According to Garp and I don't know how many — Graham Greene, Durrell's Alexandria Quartet, just you know, whatever they had. I think I'd already read Kurt Vonnegut, which was very appropriate. It was more like real life at that particular

moment. (*laughs*).

– Then there would be news on late in the afternoon, and we would watch with talk about negotiations for the hostage’s release. We’d be very hopeful, and then they would fall through. And then they would start up again with another leader, either Yazdi or Banisadr, and then that would fall through.

So there wasn’t very much good news. And then at one point, maybe it was Thanksgiving. Their son, Douglas, came home. He was in his early teens and. He came home from boarding school and he was there in the house for a while. So we played Monopoly with the OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) countries, Monopoly. And there were — these gold playing pieces. It was a gift to Ambassador Taylor (*laughs*). So we played, you know, whatever games — Douglas wanted to play. And then we joked and said, “See you at Christmas,” and then there we were at Christmas. Wasn’t so funny then. But he never told anyone, you know, he never told anyone back in his school that he was going home and these people were hiding in his home.

So at one point, I don’t remember when it was that Peter Jennings came. I think it was after Thanksgiving. But he came to dinner and so we hid upstairs, of course. And he was very —

ANONYMOUS: Wait, *the* Peter — *the* Peter Jennings?

STAFFORD: (*laughs*) Yes.

Q: You hid upstairs.

ANONYMOUS: OK, could you give us a little background on this?

STAFFORD: Well, he was in Tehran because he’s Canadian and so —

ANONYMOUS: Canadian, right.

STAFFORD: And so he came to see Ken Taylor. And so we hid upstairs so that he wouldn’t know we were there. And he was very mad at Ken Taylor afterwards of course, for not letting him on his secret. But it turns out that lots of people knew — lots of press people knew that we were hiding with the Canadians. In fact, we didn’t know at the time but I later read that Pat Taylor got a phone call saying, “I’d like to speak to Joe Stafford.” This is probably about two weeks before we left. She supposed it was someone from the press who had figured things out, that if there are people hiding, this is a logical place. So I think that’s what happened. But I know that Jean Pelletier who wrote the, the first book, The Canadian Caper — knew about us Henry Precht, the Iran desk officer and a mentor to us had a meeting with him and - said, “Don’t publish it,” “If you publish it, if you put this in the paper, the Canadians will be in danger as will the Americans.”

Q: This was while the hostages were still being held.

STAFFORD: That's right.

Q: I see.

ANONYMOUS: So it's late January, I guess early February when Mendez and the other CIA operator comes by.

STAFFORD: That's right. Late January the 26th since I remember us being together only about 48. It's two or three days before we left

ANONYMOUS: So what was that like? All of a sudden they pop up — I mean did you have any foreshadowing that this was going to happen?

STAFFORD: Well, we knew something was changing because the Canadians started leaving. But, before that happened, they had started bringing people in and out, randomly. The Canadian Royal Mounted Police, their, equivalent of the Marines would start coming through so that the airport immigration people would get used to seeing Canadians coming and going. And they would also observe everything about how the airport worked. And they also were thinking about the best time for us to leave. So that's why we left so early in the morning, because they thought well, you know, it's the end of the shift, people are tired, they're not going to worry about yellow and white pieces of paper matching or things like that. . And there were not that many Revolutionary Guards around that time of the day. So that had been happening. And we knew Pat was going to leave. Nobody had said that *we* were leaving. We were in the dark most of the time so I guess they didn't want to get our hopes up, I didn't know. But Guna Siland, the housekeeper, came over one day and he said, "Don't worry, if they all leave you can come and stay at my house."

So eventually Pat left and then we were going over to the Sheardowns house. — I don't think they ever spelled out how — what was going to happen. And then we went over and stayed at the Sheardowns. And that's when Tony Mendez alias Kevin Harkin and "Julio", I don't know his last name, — came to give us a choice of which of these three scenarios we were going to leave with. And so we had the going out as nutritionists, something we knew nothing about, oil company people, — even less, or going out with this movie production company, which had all the, all the props, concrete things that made it believable. Business cards, the magazine with an advertisement for our movie site search, — and of course I felt comfortable with the movie production company, because I was the graphic artist. If somebody asked me to draw something, I could draw it. And Cora was the writer, the screenwriter, I think. Joe was a producer. He looks good in a turtleneck, so that was the logical choice.

And you know, somebody asked Mark Lijek the other day if we trusted them. And he said, "You know, it's not like we had a choice, send in another exfiltration team please," *(laughter)*.

Q: And did you actually memorize a script?

STAFFORD: There was not that much to memorize, what our names were and where we were born and how to say this and that in Canadian accent and things of that nature. We knew so little about Canada. We tossed everything we had from the USA, everything we owned that had any sort of American brand on it. And all the people from the Canadian Embassy gave us their clothes. And I had this suitcase full of sandals in wintertime in the snow. I had been wearing my one pair of pants and I think I had Ken Taylor's shirt, because his wife was a diminutive Chinese Canadian lady. And so they gave me some more clothes to put in my suitcase. For my disguise I just took all the long hair and put it up and they gave me fake glasses. I still have them.

So all I had to do was pull my hair back and put on some glasses because people only recognize me because of my hair and my height. So I didn't feel, very recognizable. I think Cora was probably the most uncomfortable being Asian American. It was harder for her to disguise herself and still look like her passport picture. Everybody was concerned that since we had interviewed so many people on the visa line somebody might recognize us. . Luckily no one was really looking for us anyway, and it had been three months since the takeover.

Q: And there was a suggestion in the movie that the Iranians had figured out that you were there and they were almost outside the gates at the Ambassador's house. Was that true —

STAFFORD: No.

Q: — not the case.

STAFFORD: Well, at one point they did send two guards to stand outside the Canadian Ambassador's house to watch who came and went. And Guna Siland said, "If I don't give them any tea, they won't be here tomorrow," (*laughs*). And they weren't. So he was right! Something we didn't know at the time was that Charge Laingen had told someone in the Foreign Ministry that the Canadians were sheltering some of us in hopes that they would help us. They just kept quiet. They were interviewed recently and confirmed that they knew about us but figured exposing us would just lead to more trouble so they kept that information to themselves. That is what they say now, but I think they were protecting us too. As professional diplomats they understood and respected international treaties and the militants did not.

And the other thing that happened that we didn't know about until we read the books was the, the dates were wrong in our visas.

Q: The what?

STAFFORD: The dates, the entry dates for us entering Iran were wrong. The CIA had

not used the new Iranian calendar. They had used the previous one from the days of the Shah. So if we had been caught with those we would have been in *big* trouble. But Roger Lucy, the young Canadian officer, saw them. We did not see any of these items until those last two days. I don't know if we would have caught the errors or not. Joe probably would have with his attention to detail. We might have been so happy to have our, our getaway stuff that we wouldn't have even checked. Tony requested another set of passports and being a master forger he "corrected" the dates using Ambassador Taylor's good scotch to moisten his ink pad. In fact that is the moment the CIA chose to memorialize Tony's incredible contribution to the CIA. There is an oil painting in the CIA visitor's center showing him sitting at the table correcting the dates, but they decided they couldn't show the Scotch bottle. I went there for the unveiling and to recognize him not long ago.

ANONYMOUS: And then you just left through the airport. I mean so there was no great suspense there.

STAFFORD: That's right. For a moment they stopped Lee Schatz and asked why his mustache didn't match his photo and he made some gesture so they let him through and then we did line up to board the flight and were told there would be a delay. That was worrying and we hoped it had nothing to do with us, and we didn't want to still be hanging around in the airport with the Revolutionary Guard shift came in. Tony said to sit tight, he went to check I think with our New Zealander contact and found that it would be a minor delay so we figured it would look suspicious to try to change flights and send our luggage one way and us another, so we waited and finally boarded the plane.

ANONYMOUS: And then the Ambassador — and then the Canadians had to basically shut down their embassy shortly thereafter.

STAFFORD: Right. And I think they had already started, the only people that remained after us were the head of their security Claude Gautier (Sledge) along with Ken Taylor. I think they left the same afternoon of the day that we left. Everyone else had already been sent out. And thank goodness, because you know, if it had gone wrong, they would have all been in jail with us. If we were lucky enough to be in jail I suppose.

So we arrived in Switzerland and traded in our Canadian passports for our very own U.S. diplomatic passports, and went to stay in the American Ambassador's residence. It was beautiful and felt so very great to be out and safe from harm. There we met Sheldon Kryss, a dear and familiar face and he had a State Department doctor with him in case we needed any medication or care. The next day, as promised, Jean Pelletier broke the story as soon as Ambassador Taylor and Claude got to Paris. The State Department had planned to have us hide in Florida until the Hostage Crisis ended, never dreaming it would be another year of course before they could obtain the release of the others. But then the secret was out. We had to go undercover again, trying not to antagonize the Iranians and have a chance somewhere to collect our thoughts so we headed to Rhein – Main. I remember it being dark in our little van as we were driving on the highway with the radio on and they said the escaped hostages are just crossing into Germany, as if the

press had a GPS system on the car or something. We were left with our mouths open! The sad part for the other families was that no one knew who had escaped. They all hoped it was their hostage who was free. It had to be such a letdown for them.

We were driving to Germany to go to the Rhein -Main American Air Base. Were we stayed a couple of days. The Base graciously opened the commissary for us, Sheldon gave us some wardrobe money and I bought the only dress in my size with matching shoes. Thank heavens! My own clothes. Then we flew back to the States to Dover Air Base in Delaware in the official plane of the Commander of US Air Forces Europe. End of tour. (laughs)



Mark Lijek, X, Lee Schatz, Sheldon Kryz, Joe Stafford wearing Tony Mendez's CIA purchased raincoat for which Tony was charged. (State Department photo)

When we arrived at the air base, first we were reunited with our families and the next day we were briefed about how the press might approach us. We knew that we could not mention the CIA's role in our rescue but we needed to craft a statement for release.



Kathleen and Joe Stafford at Dover Air Base writing joint press release after Iran escape. Bob Anders is standing off right. (State Department Photo)



Welcome back at the State Department February 1980

Bob Anders, Kathleen and Joe Stafford, Mark and Cora Lijek and Lee Schatz

Q: Are you surprised that none of the hostages was killed or?

STAFFORD: Yes. And we didn't want to antagonize anyone with something we might do.

But as much as the militants insulted President Carter I believe that they understood that if any of the hostages were killed there would be no mercy from him. I think of his threat of retaliation, kept the hostages from being killed. I don't think they would have let our friend Rich Queen be evacuated otherwise before the release of the others. He had contracted Multiple Sclerosis and they did not want a hostage death on their hands so they agreed to his release as they still held the others.

But with the hostage's safety in mind we did not talk to the press, we didn't go on "Good Morning, America" or anything like that. Then Les Harris, one of the producers from the Canadian Broadcasting Company, wanted to make a movie. He asked us to participate and we said no. And then we went to Palermo. We went to Palermo in May. In fact, we got there in time for Jimmy Carter's Rome visit. And so Joe helped with that, because he speaks Italian (*laughs*). And then we went to Palermo and one of the major networks, CBS, NBC came and they were taking pictures of the consulate building. Well, all the Italian — the Sicilian workers there were very frightened, because the camera man

looked — they thought he looked like an Iranian. They thought he was making plans to blow up the building or something. So they're all looking out the window through the blinds and then they send Joe out to talk (*laughs*). But he was from NBC or whatever and he just had a lot of hair. And he told us that they wanted to do a thank you, Canada segment. So we said, "Fine, and you come to our house." So they came to our apartment and then when we sat down they said, "We understand one of the embassies turned you away."

So we said, "End of interview, goodbye."

Because of that, when Ben Affleck's staff asked if we would like to participate we declined.

The only time we did talk to the press after that was when the CIA wanted to recognize Tony Mendez as one of their stars. Joe was in Algeria then. And so they called the house in Virginia and they asked if I would talk about Tony Mendez and Iran. And so I thought, "We're not supposed to do that." So I called Joe and he said, "Yes, we can talk about it and they would like you to talk about it."

Q: This was after 1997?

STAFFORD: 1997, that's right. So that was the first time that I told anyone the real story of Tony and Julio's role in exfiltrating us. The CIA put his name on one of their 50 stars recognizing the 50th anniversary of the founding of the CIA. And he was one of their outstanding people. I must say, with that imagination and creativity I can see why.

Q: His what?

STAFFORD: His imagination.

Q: Ah-ha, OK. Is there anything else? OK. Let's go on to the post.

STAFFORD: OK. Oh yeah, sorry.

Q: We've done Iran and then after Iran you went to Palermo, Italy.

STAFFORD: Yes.

Q: From 1980 to '82.

STAFFORD: Right.

Q: What was going on at that time between our two countries?

STAFFORD: Between America and Sicily — and Italy?

Q: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

STAFFORD: Things were great. Sicilian staff often talked about the generosity of the U.S. after WWII and it allowed them to survive. The issues at the time were regular mob killings and heroine addiction of the young people there. It was a big problem. Syringes around the bus stops. Pretty melancholy sometimes. Joe was the Admin officer there.

Q: This was at consulate.

STAFFORD: This was at the consulate, right, which is no longer a post... He had come in as an admin cone, and so, so he was doing the admin work. And that was a good opportunity for him to learn about managing people.

. And Sicily's fascinating because half of its Arabic influence on the, on the West side, and other half is a Greek influence, all the way to the language dialects and the main meals. One of the major temples there in Ragusa is the old temple to Athena. And Archimedes was sitting in a bathtub in Ragusa when he said, "Eureka! I have it!" A displacement of water. So that was a wonderful place to live and travel and paint

Q: Did you do —

STAFFORD: — a wonderful place.

Q: — a lot of art?

STAFFORD: I did. I attended the Accademia di Belle Art, met a kindred spirit, Fausta Zangara whose father was a famous Sicilian painter and we worked together and had a joint exhibition of our work. My first, professional exhibition,

Q: Watercolor.

STAFFORD: yes, in Sicily.

Q: OK.

STAFFORD: Then Tunisia.

Q: Tunisia, yes.

STAFFORD: We were studying Arabic for 11 months.

Q: Both of you?

STAFFORD: Yes, both of us, yes.

Q: Were you at the U.S. —

STAFFORD: Yes, the embassy.

Q: The embassy itself?

STAFFORD: Yes, well we ate lunch on the embassy compound, the school was right down the street in those days.

Q: And who did the teaching? Was it a —

STAFFORD: There were six teachers.

Q: Were they Tunisian?

STAFFORD: Not all of them, there were two Palestinian and one Lebanese teacher, because the school had been in Beirut until the fighting became too dangerous. So the whole school with the teachers was moved to Tunis. And so three teachers were Tunisian. And three teachers, two Palestinians and one Lebanese teacher taught conversation— what is referred to as Modern Standard which is more Lebanese, Palestinian, and Arabic. It was very stimulating. I enjoyed learning it, because Arabic is very mathematical. There's all these —13 forms to make verbs and this and that and the other. But it was — after about eight months after that, because it was some five hours a day in class, and then more hours of homework. So by the — by the end of the last couple of months when I went home from class, and I was painting again. So I had an exhibition there before I left (*laughs*). April Glaspie who later was serving as the Ambassador to Iraq during the first Gulf War was our director and a lovely person. The students gave her one of my paintings at the end of her tour.

Q: Good. What does Joe do for hobbies, by the way?

STAFFORD: He learns more languages (*laughter*).

Q: He knows quite a few, doesn't he?

STAFFORD: Yes, he does. He speaks — well, he spoke Farsi, but that turned into Arabic. But he got a four-four in Arabic after one year. He studied Spanish language and poetry in College. He speaks Italian and French fluently as well, and studied Portuguese and Turkish on and off.

Q: So after your year of studying Arabic, you went on to Cairo, is that right?

STAFFORD: That's right. We went on to Cairo. One of my favorite postings. I even drove around there. Friends and family came and enjoyed it with us. It was spectacular getting to live in a City like that, "Mother of the world" is what Egyptians call it.

Q: That was just for one year though?

STAFFORD: Three, that was three years.

Q: '80?

STAFFORD: No, '83 to '86.

Q: I got that wrong, OK, very good.

STAFFORD: David was born while we were there and then I had my first one-man show, that was opened by the Minister of Culture at the Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil Museum. So that was pretty exciting. It doesn't get any better than that. The Egyptians first just looked around expecting to see pharaonic Egypt, the pyramids and Luxor that all of us foreigners fell in love with, and instead I had painted ladies with water jugs on their heads, people in the fields like the *Nubian Boy* and small junk shops. They seemed to enjoy the new perspective of their city and were pointing out things to each other. It was very satisfying. It taught me a good lesson though, to not be afraid to paint unbeautiful mundane subjects since they could become compelling in their own right. That was good to learn.

Q: David was born in '85?

STAFFORD: Five, right.

Q: And the actress who plays Kathy in the movie was born in the same year (laughter). Wasn't even born in '79. OK. And then you —

STAFFORD: That's funny. Been a long time.

Q: — went to Algeria in 1989.

STAFFORD: Oh sorry, sorry, '83 to '86 in — '83 to '86 in Egypt. And then '86 to '88 in Kuwait.

Q: Oh, OK. Was that an interesting place to be a woman?

STAFFORD: That was another danger post, because they had just bombed our embassy and the French Embassy in 1983.

Q: Who, the —

STAFFORD: Attributed to the Dawa Party, Iraqi Shiites and someone tried to kill the Emir in 1985. At that point, by the time we got to Kuwait the Iran-Iraq War been continuing for some time, beginning late in the Hostage Crisis. And so that was still going on and three of our FSN employees were killed in the bombing of our embassy. So every day I would have to go out and look under the car, make sure there weren't any bombs, and then I would cool it off because it was so it got up to about 120 degrees.

Q: And did you drive?

STAFFORD: I did, mm-hmm.

Q: Were there other women driving in Kuwait at that time?

STAFFORD: Yes, that was no problem and I didn't have to cover my hair either. But I did have to dress modestly. But I could walk around freely. My mother came to live with us for the last year in Cairo and while we were in Kuwait. She loved shopping for fabrics and in the souk and she loved going to Kentucky Fried Chicken on weekends with David and our nanny/housekeeper.

Q: Kuwait?

STAFFORD: Yes. Very different after living in Cairo which at the time was very tolerant of different religions and ways of dressing. Kuwait was much more conservative and of course it was evident from the start that women did not have the rights or position of men. They couldn't even vote in a national election. They didn't count as a whole witness in legal proceedings. So we had to be circumspect. I painted a Bedouin weaver who worked at the National Museum, and she let me paint her family members. So that was just for two years. And the year after we left, that's when, that's when the first Gulf War started. So we missed that one. It's nice to miss something (*laughs*).

Q: Yes. Yes. What were the issues? Do you remember the issues that your husband was discussing with the Kuwaitis while you were there?

STAFFORD: There was always the Palestinian Crisis that came up regularly everywhere in the Middle East but at that time in Kuwait their concern with the Iran –Iraq war. Kuwait is only about 28 miles across on the Iraqi border. We could hear bombings sometimes when it was quiet at night.

Q: Yeah.

STAFFORD: Well we had friends who were Iranian living in Kuwait, If they were out visiting in Iran and if they had young boys older than 11 or 12, they could just be picked up off the street and taken off to the war. And they would have the boys walk out first in the mine fields. They were being martyred. So it was truly awful. I would not have believed that a nation could do that to its children but other people and articles have confirmed it. Combined with that, it is the only country where I have lived that even diplomats could not have access to alcohol. I am sure that has changed. The Kuwaitis had well stocked bars but embassies could import no alcoholic drinks of any kind. It was worse than our Appalachian hill town. (*laughs*). So Mother and I flew to Bahrain for three days, so I could buy her scotch for her, wrap it in David's diapers and bring it back as hand luggage. I don't know why, but that was permitted. Come to think of it. Most Expat conversations were about people's beer or wine recipes, how to make things almost

palatable or how to smuggle in alcohol in Listerine bottles because they were plastic and the x-ray machines didn't detect them.

Q: Let's see, what came after Kuwait?

Q: You said you were only there two years.

STAFFORD: Two years, yeah.

Q: Instead of three. Was there a reason?

STAFFORD: No, it was a hardship post and dangerous so those postings are usually for two years.

Q: And then you came back to D.C. for a while.

STAFFORD: For French. We came back for six months for French.

Q: But you went to Marymount at that time.

STAFFORD: Later.

Q: No — later, yeah.

STAFFORD: That's right.

Q: Algeria was first.

STAFFORD: That's right.

Q: OK.

STAFFORD: That's right.

Q: And how was Algiers?

STAFFORD: In Algiers they were just opening up to the press for the first time in a very long time. There were 28 newspapers, just all of a sudden. So they were all very excited. And there was still petty crime, but nothing serious we traveled around by car. We drove to Morocco (*laughs*). And we drove all over Algeria. It was absolutely beautiful, it was just geographically gorgeous, you know, just cliffs going down to the sea and every place was so different from every other place. It's a huge country. I can see why the French wanted to keep it as French. But it was very poor with so many people out of work. A young woman that I painted with had 10 brothers and sisters and most of them either lived at home or had no prospects. And so that's why I think later, when Joe was serving there the second time, they had their very bloody insurgency by Islamist extremists. They

had their democratic elections and the election wasn't recognized or accepted. And so then they had all sorts of fighting and bombs. Civilians again the easy targets so that people could be intimidated as happens so often now everywhere there is war. But while we were there the first time it was safe enough for us to drive around. The problem was, after having the Soviet model economy the idea of customer service really did not exist. You had to be pretty aggressive to get what you needed if you were a tourist. There were also 10 to 12 hour stretches of road with no place to wash your hands. You had to be strategic I guess I could say. *(laughs)*

Q: OK. Good. And again, that's French and Arabic?

STAFFORD: French and Arabic, right. French and Arabic.

Q: OK.

STAFFORD: I think I was probably speaking — I was probably speaking a little bit of both. Because my French was pretty bad, but my, my Arabic was much better. But their Arabic is very different, different dialects.

Q: After that is when you came back to D.C.

STAFFORD: That's right. Joe was in an automobile accident so we curtailed and we came back to DC.

Q: And you studied at Marymount.

STAFFORD: That's right. I went back to school and got my master's in education from Marymount.

Q: Great. And Joe was doing what?

STAFFORD: Joe was working — first he was in I&R (Bureau of Intelligence and Research) for about two years, and then he was on the Morocco desk. And he was the Deputy Director for the Maghreb, North Africa.

ANONYMOUS: Mm-hmm.

STAFFORD: So he was pretty busy. And the King of Morocco came and he had a party at the Willard Hotel and I too was invited to the White House, not for being in the wrong place at the wrong time! *(laughter)*. The King brought his own big chest full of his own tea cups, with gold leaf—He even brought his own musicians.

Q: Oh my goodness.

STAFFORD: — my friends saw what was probably an ancient as it was being loaded up in a Mayflower moving truck, and he took it back to Morocco with him on a friend's

yacht. *(Laughs)*.

Q: That's amazing. Did you ever entertain on the eighth floor of the State Department, or the individual diplomats?

STAFFORD: Once for Joe's swearing in, another time I was a guest when Secretary Clinton honored the families of unaccompanied tour officers and staff at Christmas and once for the announcement of the founding of the State Department Museum.

Q: Oh, OK.

ANONYMOUS: Yeah.

Q: OK.

STAFFORD: That was it.

Q: Such a lovely room.

STAFFORD: Yes, yes, it is.

Q: Is it OK if we do this? I don't know if we — I mean by posting, just the highlights that come to your mind?

STAFFORD: Mm-hmm.

Q: If there's a way you'd rather do it we can, but I just thought you've had so many posts and it seems to make sense. You were in Mauritania then from '93 to '96.

STAFFORD: That's right.

Q: And was David with you?

STAFFORD: David was with us he was eight. And I had a teaching position at the school.

Q: This is in Mauritania.

STAFFORD: This is Mauritania. And it's the American —

Q: OK, at the American school?

STAFFORD: Yes, the American school. And so there were supposed to be 17 kids, that was it. So it was the director, his wife, and me. So then after I guess a month, the Nigerian Embassy came in and they had about 12 children. So then the school suddenly grew overnight. And I was supposed to only be teaching fourth or fifth grade. And that

was about four children, but every one of them was on a different reading level and a different math level. And one was from Bamako, two were French, and this whole — this class moved in and out all year long. People coming from India, two little Japanese boys came, Japanese American whose mother was American but they'd never spoken English. — She'd spoken to them in English, but they always answered her in Japanese. So it was quite a mix. And David was in my class, my son, and he's eight and smarter than me, and so I would give them a math assignment to do the problems on page 12 and he would say "How about if we just do the even ones?"

I'd Say, "Be quiet, David." Which wasn't fair to him. So by the end of the year I said, "I will teach anything but not Fourth Grade. So I ended up teaching music and art to all the classes and ninth grade math and the next year, Music, art and kindergarten.

Q: My goodness. You're an amazing person. This is cool. And what was going on diplomatically in Mauritania at that time?

STAFFORD: A few years earlier there had been border disputes only the Senegalese River and the border between Mauritania and the Senegalese. There had been attacks and reprisals and of course since the borders are artificially drawn in the first place you have ethnic groups artificially divided so people and stores were attacked, there were refugee camps of displaced people on both sides of the river and this is all about shortages of arable land due to continued desertification.

Then it was always difficult to unknot the question about whether "slavery" of the Hariteen, who were the black Moors designated by the Arab word for slave, were really slaves or just victims of a tradition like a caste system where they were never taught other skills than to tend to the animals and take care of the white Moors. The trouble was the whole country had been nomadic for years. There weren't a lot of other jobs for them to move to in the city. A large portion were still nomads when we arrived, living in tents in the Sahara and herding camels.

It's a huge country, it's impossible to patrol, you know, the government doesn't have that much money. Keeping the sand off the major roads took 1/3 of the national budget when we were there so desertification was a problem lots of NGOs were trying to stall. Most without success. It was like living on the ends of the earth. The Sahara is so hostile that you begin to understand why Arab hospitality is so expansive. Really boggles the imagination.

There was a goldmine. That was a — one of the few employers. And then my friend Nancy who won the Rolex Award for Enterprise made me teach her to paint watercolors. I said, "I really can't, I'm teaching fulltime. This is the first time I'm the wife of the DCM and I have a little boy."

And she said, "No, you're going to teach me every Wednesday." And so I did. And she taught me all about all these problems she had with her dairy. The truck would tip over or it would be too hot and the — or something happened to the cows. Or it was too cold and

the Mauritians didn't want to drink cow's milk or camel's milk. And it never stopped her. And she would just keep going. And so now her dairy is one of the largest employers in the country.

Q: She owned the dairy?

STAFFORD: Yeah, she started this dairy from nothing, because people didn't have any fresh milk in Mauritania. And she had been an engineer. So she started the dairy with used equipment. That is what won her the Rolex award. — I learned a lot from her. And she learned to paint watercolors. So we had an exhibition after two years.

Q: She was a Mauritanian?

STAFFORD: Mm-hmm. Well, had a British mother, American father, raised in Spain and married to a Mauritanian that she met studying engineering in Paris. A real "Third Culture Kid."
(laughs).

Q: And she's still there?

STAFFORD: Yes, she is.

Q: She stayed.

STAFFORD: She came to my exhibition in The Gambia and in Tunis.

Q: Oh, that's nice, that's wonderful. That's great. You went on from there to Algeria — no, Joe did.

STAFFORD: That's right, Joe went.

Q: You couldn't go.

STAFFORD: Right. We weren't allowed to — it was too dangerous, so we couldn't go. And David was a child and we wouldn't expose him to that, so we two returned to Virginia and I taught for two years in Fairfax County.

Q: In Fairfax, OK.

STAFFORD: But I had an art room that time. No more pushing the cart *(laughs)*.

Q: (laughs) Did you enjoy teaching?

STAFFORD: Oh, I loved it. I loved it, yes.

Q: Think you might ever want to teach again?

STAFFORD: But not 900 students.

Q: Ooh. Ooh.

STAFFORD: Yes, I'd like to teach about 30 students.

Q: Mm-hmm.

STAFFORD: Yeah, I will teach again. I will teach again when we settle down somewhere.

Q: Super. Then it was Tunisia.

STAFFORD: Then it was Tunisia, which was wonderful. And you know, we were back together, that was already a big plus. But Tunisia was the most beautiful place and safe and the perfect place for a watercolorist, because the buildings are all white like the paper. And then there's bougainvillea and blue water, blue sky, turquoise wrought iron –

Q: Vivid colors.

STAFFORD: Yes, exactly. And the sky is just as — it's just as — almost like that cup up there. Just incredible, beautiful colors. And almost never rains. Just Mediterranean climate, — and the people were so nice and it was so safe. David could take — during Ramadan he could take a taxi home. He was about, I guess he was 13, 14, something like that. And, and he and his friends could take a taxi together at night, no problem, it was wonderful. So I had three exhibitions there, because I painted all the time. The, embassy was a good size and — it was just a great place to be. We had the American school, which has now been looted and burned when our embassy was attacked in Khartoum but when we were there it was a nice friendly community school.

Q: Did you paint in oils at all or just —

STAFFORD: Watercolors.

Q: Always watercolors. I painted with oil for a while in Kuwait and did love the colors and the size possibilities but came back to watercolors. I had been painting for around 20 years by then so felt more capable with watercolors.

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Q: Ivory Coast, 2001 to 2004.

STAFFORD: No Anti-American sentiment but there was a lot of street crime. There was a large Lebanese and Southern French ex- pat community since there had been much French cooperation and even monopolies. The country was suffering from instability and roads in the interior were bad, even though the skyline of the capitol, Abidjan, looked

very modern. You would have to quick lock the car and run in. And be ready to do the same when it was time to get back in your car. Sounds like I am exaggerating but even did that to the Spanish ambassador as she was buying plants on the side of the road, even and ministers except the one time I heard that happened they gave him taxi fare.

And then, later in 2002, there was — there was an uprising, President Gbagbo decided to cut the wages of the military people. And so they decided to have a coup against him. And a number of major political figures were killed, and their whole family and even their dog. So it was very bloody and it was a big question about whether or not the post should go into an ordered departure or not. And then the school was waiting to see what the embassy would do, and the embassy would try to sort things out.

Then we were brought back. And we were here for nine months, so starting in October the children had to start school all over again wherever they landed. Most of the people came to Washington. And I suggested they do that too, because I think we fare better when they're — around other people in the same boat.

Q: Right.

When you went back, then you weren't there too long after the —

STAFFORD: Another year

Q: Another year.

STAFFORD: Ambassador Render's children and with their nanny and me. (*laughs*). That was it. Everybody else had been reassigned. But of course the Ambassador and the DCM have to stay on. They can't really curtail.

Q: Wow. Wow. And then in 2004 you went to The Gambia.

STAFFORD: The Gambia, that's right, 2004. Joe became the Ambassador.

Q: Was this his first ambassadorship.

STAFFORD: Ambassadorship, yes. After four DCM-ships. So he knew what he was doing.

Q: And what were the outstanding issues with the Gambians?

STAFFORD: Well, The Gambia is very small. They were often at odds with Senegal, who is their neighbor to the north and the south. Nothing serious, just bickering. Same problems of too much power in one person's hands that you see in so many African countries and people struggle just to survive from day to day. Much of life is still rural since people can at least survive with subsistence farming and when I was there it was the women who did 80% of the work, and they work all day.



Ferry Princess Watercolor

The roads looked like they hadn't been repaired in 50 years. The children paid fees to go to school, it took most of our embassy guard's monthly pay to buy a bag of rice for their compound. You can imagine. People were always afraid of getting malaria. It was a hard life for most people. The amazing thing is how the people work so hard to take care of their children and families and try to make a better life for them. You can see why so many young Africans want to immigrate to Europe where there is hope that their lives can improve. It is very hard for them in so many places in Africa. My heart goes out to them.

I worked with Some Gambian Artists and attended their exhibitions and gave a workshop or two at mine so between that and all the lovely fabrics and the way the women are so creative with styling their clothes, it was again a wonderful posting.



Washday princess watercolor The Gambia

And of course an inspiring place for an artist.

Q: The end of the tour.

STAFFORD: That's right.

Q: and then you came back here again?

STAFFORD: Then we came back and Joe — yes, Joe taught at the War College for a year and a half. And every time his name would come up for an ambassadorship, they would say, “We could really use this guy in Iraq because of his Arabic.” We had already decided not to have any more unaccompanied tours after Algeria, and the evacuation in the Ivory Coast, because we had had enough, you know. But he realized that he would not be in a position to apply to manage a large post again, which he thoroughly enjoys, unless he went to Iraq and checked the box. So he did. And he went as the anti-corruption coordinator.

Q: And how long was he there?

STAFFORD: A year and a half. It would have been a year, but since he started in December, they couldn’t find any replacement. So they asked him to stay on through the summer.

Q: And you —

STAFFORD: Stayed here. Right, I stayed here.

Q: And then Lagos came up.

STAFFORD: And then Lagos, right.

Q: Lagos.

STAFFORD: Then we went to Lagos for two years. And he was a Consul General. And that’s a good-sized post.

Q: Uh-huh. And what were the issues there?

STAFFORD: Our first summer there he was chargé in Abuja about a month. So he went up to the north, to Kano and Kaduna.



Ambassador Stafford presenting a book, America 24/7, as Chargé de Affaires, on a courtesy visit to the Emir of Kano, Nigeria 2011 (Embassy Abuja photographer)

Now no one travels there since it became so dangerous after that, thanks to Boko Haram... But the major discussions in the northern half of the country were about terrorism. Islamic extremists bombing churches, government troops over reacting and being brutal in the repression of suspects which lead to more recruits for the extremists, that sort of cycle. As Consul General in Lagos Joe traveled to the southern part of the country. That is the oil rich sector and there have been decades of struggle, kidnapping because of family disputes and of oil company personnel for large sums of money. We could not drive in Lagos at night without one armed guard vehicle following us and another leading the way. Sometimes with a siren and honking a horn for all the good it did. There was fraud of all sorts, corruption by government officials and anyone else who thought they could get away with it. And villas would have signs on them, permanent signs that read "This property is not for sale." Because people would pretend they owned property and sell it some unsuspecting buyer. Joe he did travel to almost every one of the 17 regions in the south. But it was always, with quite a large convoy of armored vehicles armed guards and police escorts.

Since simple grocery shopping could take hours I made the list and left that to our cook Amadou since it amounted to just sitting in traffic for an hour and a half or more just for regular shopping, so I had a good deal of time to paint and so had two exhibitions a year apart.



Obioma "The good hearted" Itinerant Taylor— Watercolor

Nigeria had a rich history beautiful and sophisticated art forms and the wealth to promote a community of modern artist since the discovery of oil in the 60's so it was a very exciting city to work in with creativity in every sector, beautiful fashions and fabrics. And when Prince Shyllon asked me to teach a printmaking workshop for a week at the University in Lagos, I was delighted to do it and it turned out to be a highlight of my two years there.



Kathleen leading University of Lagos printmaking workshop 2011

So rewarding. Outstanding students and wonderful dedicated teachers there with whom I stay in touch. The AC and lights went off after the first 3 hours so we spent the rest of the workshop week out on the sidewalk in 95degrees of heat and humidity. No one seemed to mind though.



Workshop Students final prints University of Lagos, Nigeria

Q: And then he was supposed to retire, wasn't he?

STAFFORD: He was supposed to retire.

Q: (laughs) What happened?

STAFFORD: *(laughs)* Well, then he was having second thoughts and said, "I'm not quite ready to retire. And there's Khartoum." So, he, he retired one day and was sworn back in the next day so he could go to Khartoum.

Q: Well, is it likely that we'll reestablish relations in time for him to become the Ambassador there? Or will he chargé until the end?

STAFFORD: I think he'll probably be chargé until the end. I think there's a very good chance. Because I don't — I can't imagine President Bashir changing anything he's going to do. So relations between our countries will not change and there are people in Washington that refuse to even start a dialogue with him. And you know as soon as someone has been accused by the International Court, they're not going to leave office because they could be arrested.

Q: OK. Well, is there anything you — looking back over this magnificent career, is there anything would have done differently if you had had the choice?

STAFFORD: Well, thank you for the compliment. Oh, there's plenty of things I would do differently with hindsight. First I would take different kinds of vacations. I probably would have had a fixed place to go back to every year so David could have friends that he could see every year. I think this "unrootedness" of the Foreign Service, I mean it's fine with me. I — that's how I grew up with my dad in the Air Force. But I had my siblings to squabble and commiserate with and my stay-at-home- mother who was our rock. But it's hard on many people. I would have also had two children, so they would have someone to travel around with (*laughs*).

Q: Are there things that the administrative people in the State Department could do to make it easier for diplomatic families, or more understanding of the situations?

STAFFORD: Oh boy. My observations and tips become OBE in weeks now instead of years with the way technology is changing our world, but given this opportunity I should say that I see families paying in hide because of the inflexibility of the regs. Since the number of countries labeled as Unaccompanied Tours is not going to lessen anytime in the near future from what I see, serious thought needs to be given to the conditions families as experience while the employee is away. I know FLO has a decision chart so people can see the pros and cons but there are dramatic differences in the quality of the network or safety net a family has depending on whether the UT tour occurs after a Washington assignment, or if it is a Temporary Duty assignment and the family stays at the overseas post or if the family comes back and stays at Oak Wood Apartments. That is one area I see as very uneven and families need all the information they can get from people who have lived through the basic scenarios. Next there is the status of foreign born spouses and what their safety net is if their marriage dissolves. From what I can tell they are on the trapeze without any net at all and that is not right. Something should be in place for them or a certain expectation from the State Department on the employee-spouse to provide for them should the marriage dissolve. U.S. citizen spouses have rights, I think the foreign born spouses have very few if any.

Finally, there is the issue of spousal employment which gets lots of discussion. I hear major discontent with spouses of career diplomats who work for years and then when spouse employees become DCMs or Chief of Mission the spouse can no longer work at the embassy for a salary, benefits, retirement credit, and unlike the Europeans there is no salary for the wife performing spouse of the COM duties because we pretend the person doesn't really have duties but we all know there are expectations to satisfy. So some creative minds should work on that, rethink nepotism rules or be prepared to have a bachelor profile for senior officials as the spouse decides to stay in America or elsewhere and pursue their own career. As we old timers have been saying for years, even asking for a car to an event where we are representing the embassy is a favor to us and not a right.

On the other side of the equation, it is not hard to have a very satisfying life if one decides to accompany their employee spouse, and we can find rewarding positions, sometimes with a salary, but we can't count on them being lucrative. We have constraints on how far we can spread our wings regardless of our talent if we want to maintain a

close relationship with our loved ones. Since there are compromises in any relationship. So my advice would be, plan to be frugal so that money is not a worry and divider. I also think that the working spouse has to remain aware that sacrifices are being made so that they can pursue their career and not forget to voice that appreciation to all their accompanying family members. Unfortunately I don't see the State Department shifting from its outmoded structure when the diplomatic life was a profession for the wealthy. It will probably take slow and steady data collection and creative minds to find ways for family members to consistently find rewarding work as they are hurtled around the planet. So since things will be slow changing from the top it is up to us to find a balance, to focus on other things that we want to have as the richness of our lives. So I'd say it's really a question of finding things that one really loves to do, that we can take with us and do wherever we go. So that there is something compelling when we wake up in yet another new city. We have that something to throw ourselves into that can put us in a different state of mind.

STAFFORD: But I have been trying to think of ways that, that it would be easier, that would help people as they start this career. But it's not like you can say, "Develop a sense of humor," or "Become an artist," you know. But —

Q: Did you find your training — well, it was a long time ago, probably when you started out. But the training you get here, before going overseas, is that something that —

STAFFORD: Well, the language training without a doubt.

Q: Uh-huh.

STAFFORD: The language training has been invaluable. I have been so happy every place I've lived, to be able to communicate and, even if you just have 10 weeks it's always so important. It just helps you not feel isolated, gives you some independence. And that's the big thing.

Q: (laughs) would you be unhappy if David told you he wanted to become a diplomat?

STAFFORD: No, I think he'd be great at it. And you know, there's also a great book called the "Third Culture Kids." And I read that book too late. I read it when David was 18, I should have read it when he was five. But it's absolutely true. They have a different profile. They make friends differently and they, they need to be around other people like themselves. Because when they come home, our kids are foreigners. Nowadays, they — people tell me it's not quite like that, because they have Facebook and they have emails they have all sorts of ways to know what's going on. It's not like you come back and you've never heard of this TV show or this kind of little quote everybody has. But there is a way of interacting, that gets right to the heart of the matter quickly that may seem too forward to some people, but third culture kids know time is fleeting and you have to choose and make your connections while there is time. I can see that now.

Q: Right. Right.

STAFFORD: So I think that makes a difference. But I think, unless you have lived in other countries and across the ocean and you have a different perspective and it might be harder to relate to people sometimes. Feel understood. Luckily the FLO Office does have groups for children of Foreign Service Officers to get together. I would really almost insist that kids go, because I think they'd be very happy if they did.

Q: Are there some things that you'd like to pass along as recommendations to the State Department or just to the community in general along the lines of advice or lessons learned?

As a teacher, a mom and a person who has listened to families for 35 years, I would say to everyone with children, they should spend lots of time with their children since they will be the only adults consistently with them throughout their traveling life. Calculate that there is a good possibility that their children's education will have gaps because the schools are such a patchwork. The mission statement changes with each new director in my experience. The experience is very enriching thanks to the international classmates, but teachers cannot cover all the material they would cover in the US... Our children's horizons and understanding of the differences in the world are broadened. But that, as far as standardized tests are concerned, parents need to stay on top of that, Not suffocating that natural curiosity, but just knowing that the school cannot cover everything.

I think that if you read to children every night, that fills so many gaps, gives them the vocabulary and so the tools to study and analyze... Then they can learn anything they want. Besides that they know that they can count on having you to themselves if they have something on their minds. At least that is a time you can connect without all the other distractions of the day. As far as math goes, play with blocks, board games, monopoly, music, all the concepts are there, fractions, adding and subtracting, multiplying and if played in groups, negotiating skills, (*laughs*). It doesn't have to be dreary Xerox sheets at the kitchen table.

Our children are going to come back to a very competitive society and we need to make sure that they have every, every opportunity to learn all sorts of things. How to do the wash, iron their clothes, even cook... Take things with you related to the arts and music and imagination, we all have access to the internet now. There are no boundaries as to where interests can take us. And remember, training in art and music improves SAT scores," (*laughs*).

Q: Did David suffer? Do you think his academic —?

STAFFORD: He's fine, No thanks to me, even having been a teacher. He will soon have a Masters in Finance from Johns Hopkins and is always interested in every facet of the world so we are happy for him. But I think — he did have holes and gaps, and I never realized it. In Mauritania, the last two years he was in a math class of 9 students from 4th to 8th grades combined. So after the teacher put the assignment on the board and said, "If you have any trouble, let me know," she would try to work with the kids that had the

most problems. But David would just do it and he got them right, most of the time. And then he seemed to be doing well. But then he got to the sixth grade in America and he came home and asked, “What’s a diagonal?”

On another point, I know from talking with lots of families that children feel very torn when they must leave their high school friends in the last couple of years of high school so that is worth keeping in mind. If boarding school is the only option for those high school years I would recommend finding a school that is really a boarding school and not a suitcase school. Some prep/ boarding schools really almost close down over the weekends and short holidays because they were really “suitcase” schools, and the children lived nearby, leaving only the few, true, long distance boarders at school. So that’s worth investigating.

Many of our overseas schools are small, close knit, we make a point to include everyone especially the newcomers. Transition to any school in the States, no matter elementary to high school to college can be traumatic or at least unsettling. So especially if we talk of boarding schools a smaller school that is big on tender-loving-care might be preferable to one with higher academic ratings. I’d say the same goes for the first year of college if they have spent most of their high school years abroad unless their parents are close by for moral support. It is good to have someone to talk to, a sympathetic ear that is in your own time zone.

I also have noticed that our children may seem very mature since they can catch international flights and perform at high levels in so many areas but they have not had as many opportunities to try things out on their own, make mistakes. At least in the countries that had elements of high crime or social unrest the adolescents spent a lot of time supervised. High school age children in the States spend a lot of time on their own, learning how to size things up and make decisions independently. Our children often don’t get a chance to cope on their own out in the world, learn to drive and practice driving as important a life skill as that is, so it may take them a while to acculturate into their own country.

Q: Is there anything I haven’t asked you about that you feel we should have discussed?

STAFFORD: I think we’ve covered everything and then some.

Q: As I said, some of these interviews go for 10 or 12 hours and you don’t have that kind of time, but I do want to make sure that we have a well-rounded view of what you’ve been through and what you’ve been thinking and so on.

Q: Well, thank you so much for all the time you’ve given us.

ANONYMOUS: Yeah, thank you, it was great.

ANONYMOUS: It was really nice to meet you.

STAFFORD: Aw, very nice. Thank you.

ANONYMOUS: Like an honor.

STAFFORD: Thank you.

Q: Anything you interns would like to ask?

ANONYMOUS: What was it like personally like, watching *Argo*? And seeing like your kind of life experience on the big screen, like how did you feel?

STAFFORD: Well I was very curious to see how the story was going to be told and how we would be depicted since we had not been in contact at all with the movie makers. So right off the bat the actor, looked so much like Joe at that time, down to the little curl in his hair, big glasses and sleeveless sweater vests, and everyone one was smoking, and I thought, “Well, that’s right, look at that,” (*laughter*). I figured out the red head must be me since I guess they had to distinguish between me and Cora Lijek and I thought, well she doesn’t ever smile, she just pouts but her clothes are nice (*laughter*). And I had seen from the trailer that the Sheardowns weren’t included. So I already knew that part was missing, and then you know, I started just watching the movie.

But it was, it’s funny, because my — Joe’s brother and sister saw the movie and they said, “Kathy, you’re such a crybaby.”

And I thought, “Oh well, they have to add drama to the story.” I’m really not a crybaby. But I was hoping at the end they’d get away (*laughs*). They made that movie so exciting and I thought it was so clever, the parts about Hollywood were wonderful. I thought they really made a pretty great movie.

Q: Did you ever get to know Chambers?

STAFFORD: No, I never did. I think he did go to one of the reunions that the others had. But I missed out on that. It sounds like he was really a great person.

Q: I see.

STAFFORD: Because one time they had a party at Tony Mendez’s house in Maryland. I remember seeing the pictures for that. But I never met him. That would have been nice.

Q: It would have. He sounds like a character.

STAFFORD: Yes (*laughs*).

Q: OK, well —

STAFFORD: I think — I was just happy it was better than the first one, the one made by

the Canadians before anyone knew about the CIA role, “The Canadian Caper.” And in *that one*, we’re speaking German, which is one language none of us spoke. And, and I’m walking around in a towel with a pickle. And I thought —

Q: A pickle?

ANONYMOUS: A pickle?

STAFFORD: A pickle, it makes as much sense as the towel. I mean and here I’m walking around in a towel with all these people that can’t leave? Right. *(laughter)* And so Cora, told me that when she — she saw it with her aunt. And her aunt said, “I’m so glad you’re not the one wearing the towel,” *(laughter)*.

And my mother and sisters saw the movie together, because it was always on TV. Every time I would call them it would be on TV for years later. They’d say — my mother asked my sister, “Do you really think she wore that towel?”

She said, “No, Kathy would not do that,” — *(laughter)*. So you can see the power of film. Even people who know better question things, Ha.

Q: You said you don’t like being around crowds.

STAFFORD: No, that’s right. Exactly. No, I don’t. I won’t stick around, I will head the other way. If there’s a crowd. And I’m sure it’s left over from those days.

ANONYMOUS: Was the scene in which they were all going to like, the tourist spots, was that real? It’s not really real.

STAFFORD: No. We had gone to the souk a few weeks before the embassy takeover with Henry Precht who had come to visit to size up the situation and who knew the city from two previous tours of duty but we never went anywhere public after we went into hiding. but that was just to add tension too, I think.

ANONYMOUS: OK.

STAFFORD: And I would *not* be using a flash camera *(laughter)*. They have me act like a ninny. But it’s Okay. It’s all vanity.

Q: She was a very pretty actress.

STAFFORD: She was pretty, and she had nice clothes because they went directly to the Taylor’s house, they left out the part about the first 5 days hiding here and there and leaving our clothes behind, not enough time for all that.

Q: And that quick view of your passport. You were pretty then and you’re still pretty (laughs).

STAFFORD: Oh, thank you. That's very kind. Well, I'll tell you one thing that's funny. After we got back, when the first people got out, the, the women and the African Americans were set free because the Iranians said that they were oppressed people.

Q: Victims of—

STAFFORD: Victims of the American government, right. So they released them. They were — they had really been hostages, they had been tied to chairs and blindfolded and mistreated. They had been interrogated. They had had Russian roulette played with them. Things like that. So they were furious that, President Carter had let the Shah come in before taking us all out. So they were very angry at him and they told him so.

So then when we got out and we were back in Washington they told us we were going to see Secretary Vance. So we were taken to the State Department and we were very excited. We were first tour officers and meeting the Secretary is a very big deal. And so we met him and then he took us over to the Oval Office. We had no idea we're going to see the President. So there I am, my chance of a lifetime to have my photo made with the President in the Oval office and I look like Morticia from the Adam's Family. I thought, you know, "Let me go get my hair done, please."

Q: Do you have that picture at home?



*With best wishes
to Kathleen and Joseph Stafford*

Jimmy Carter
2-80

STAFFORD: I do. And I look like (*laughter*). Just hair all over the place. Anyway.

ANONYMOUS: Well, if you'd ever love to share that photo with us, we'd — I'm sure we could put it to good use.

STAFFORD: Oh, I think I have it here. It's in my hotel room.

ANONYMOUS: Oh, really?

STAFFORD: Yeah.



ANONYMOUS: Oh, that would be great.

Q: It would be. It would be awesome.

ANONYMOUS: That'd be awesome.

STAFFORD: You'll know exactly what I'm talking about (*laughter*).

Q: That would be great, if you wouldn't mind.

STAFFORD: And you know, Mark Lijek told me that when they went to see the *Argo* premiere, his son wore the suit that he wore out of Iran.

Q: Oh, that is —

ANONYMOUS: The exact suit?

STAFFORD: Yeah.

Q: That is wonderful.

ANONYMOUS: Wow.

ANONYMOUS: And I, I think — was he the guy who said about — he always had, is it

Labatt's beer can opener?

STAFFORD: That's right.

ANONYMOUS: Kind of his good luck charm?

STAFFORD: Yeah (*laughs*).

ANONYMOUS: OK. And what was the story about that? He just kind of had that as — to pretend to be Canadian.

STAFFORD: That's right. They gave us stuff. You know, they gave us Band-Aids and restaurant receipts and all sorts of things, match books from Canadian restaurants, so that if anybody examined our belongings or pockets, it would confirm that we were from Canada.

HIDDEN SPECIAL

The Hollywood Reporter

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Special Foreign Reports

'Survivor' will start shooting in Poland in March

By JOHN ALSTON
International Editor
Production will start in March on "The Survivor," based on an Eisner book about his survival in a Nazi "death camp" in Poland during WWII. Eisner is personally financing "most" of the \$10 million budget, with Victor Stouckens producing and Stanley Kramer directing from a screenplay by Abby Mann. In addition to "Survivor," — continued on page 4

UPITN to supply China with news

From The Hollywood Reporter
London Bureau
LONDON — UPITN, the joint marketing company for Independent TV News in London and the New York headquartered news agency, has broken through the "Bamboo Curtain."

After two years of negotiations, the company has finally reached agreement with the Chinese Central TV network for 10 minutes of Western news. — continued on page 4

MIDEM opens

CANNES — The 14th annual Marche International du Disque et de l'Edition Musicale (MIDEM) officially opens in Cannes Jan. 18.

More than 1,400 companies from 50 countries will be attending the week-long music convention, with registration up this year from Canada and South America. The festival will wrap Jan. 25. (See pages 19, 20, 37, 38.)

Warner moves into legit which could lead to more films, TV

From The Hollywood Reporter
New York Bureau
By MARTIN GOKUL
NEW YORK — Warner Communications has set up an in-house subsidiary, Warner Theatre Prods. Inc., to develop and produce theatre properties which could lead to further film, TV, cable or video projects. Clam-Warner Corp. Warner Theatre Prods. Inc. is looking for good

plays which do not necessarily have to become movies," Nichtern said. "However, with all the areas in which Warners is involved, the possibilities to extend the life of a play are limitless."

According to Nichtern, who serves as director of theatre projects as well as vp of the production company, Warners will maintain an open-door policy in regard to producing theatre. The company will alternate between producing on its own, working with other producers, along with possibly serving just as investors in other productions. Nichtern told The Hollywood Reporter that she will have complete artistic control on the plays which Warners will produce. She added that the company has not regulated any specific amount of money to be utilized by WTP over a certain period of time.

The first WTP production will most likely be a drama titled "The Lunch Girls," which was written by Leigh Curran. While it was originally — continued on page 49

Astor named Uni vp production

Burt Astor has been named vp, executive production manager for Universal TV, announced Donald Sipes, president.

Astor has been with Universal for the past 13 years as a production executive, assistant director, unit manager and production manager. His Hollywood career started 25 years ago as a production assistant with the Sam Katzman unit at the Columbia Sunset Studios. His earlier experience in New York City was in theatrical distribution and exhibition.

Dick Clark files to halt NATO's awards name

Dick Clark Prods. has filed suit against the National Assn. of Theatre Owners' "American Movie Awards" charging that the title infringes on its "American Music Awards" program.

NATO is named as a defendant in the complaint along with NBC, which will broadcast the show Feb. 11, and producers David Paradine Prods. and Jack Haley Jr. Prods.

The suit seeks to block NATO and NBC from using the title. The "American Movie Awards" is a new program in which the moviegoing public will be the judge. Balloting began at theatres on Jan. 9 and will continue until all 5 million ballots are — continued on page 4

NBC's Weinblatt shifted; Lafferty seen successor

By RICHARD HACK

In a move which surprised even network insiders, NBC Entertainment president Mike Weinblatt was removed from his post yesterday by corporation president Fred Silverman and named the head of the newly formed NBC Enterprises division. Weinblatt's probable replacement according to informed sources will be Perry Lafferty, currently NBC Entertainment's senior vp in charge of programs and talent.

While the official announcement of the Weinblatt shift made no mention of NBC's third-place position in the national ratings, it is common knowledge that the network's entertainment division had not been performing well. — continued on page 4

Jane Fonda to star in ABC's 'The Dollmaker'

Two time Oscar-winner Jane Fonda will make her dramatic debut on ABC in an ABC Theatre presentation of "The Dollmaker," Entertainment division president Tony Thomopoulos told the visiting out-of-town press Sunday night at the Century Plaza Hotel.

Fonda will star as Gertie Nevels in a three-hour presentation based on Harriette Arnow's American classic. Set during World War II, Gertie — continued on page 4

INSIDE

Japan: 'Moonraker' leads Japan box-office	Page 16
Australia: Six features planned for children	26
Italy: Minister concerned over 'U.S. influences'	16
Week in Review:	44
Foreign Film Charts:	40
The Great Life: George Christy	50
Stage Review: 'Evita'	10

THE SEARCH IS ON.
THE IDOLMAKER
IS SEARCHING FOR THE IDOL.

ANONYMOUS: Canada.

ANONYMOUS: Wow.

STAFFORD: But you know, there were a number of things that had to go right for all of us to escape for so long in the early days. One is that Ann Swift was 10 minutes late. So Chargé Laingen took Vic Tomseth with him instead. Vic was the person with friends at the British Embassy who gave us shelter for one night until they felt they could not guarantee our safety. Then Vic Tomseth's cook had keys to all those embassy residences. He was courageous and shopped for us and protected us... Bob Anders was going to go on home, before we got as far as we did down the street and Mark Lijek asked him not to, to stay with us. Otherwise we would have had nowhere to go. So there were a number of things that had to go just right. So then Roger Lucy had to notice that our entry visa dates were wrong too, so that all had to line up — all these lucky stars were lined up.

Q: Right.

STAFFORD: We were so fortunate.

Q: Right.

STAFFORD: So.

ANONYMOUS: Yeah. Yeah. It's an amazing story.

Q: It really is.

ANONYMOUS: Yeah. But thanks again for sharing it with us.

STAFFORD: Pleasure.

Q: Thank you very much.

STAFFORD: *(laughs)* it was a pleasure meeting you.

Q: Pleasure meeting you too, Kathy. Real honor.

End of interview