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

JOHN H. TRATTNER

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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is 20 June 2007. This is an interview with John H. Trattner being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. I assume you go by John. Let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

TRATTNER: I was born in Richmond, Virginia, in December 1930.

Q: Let's take the Trattner side. What do you know about the Trattners?

TRATTNER: My father's parents were Austrian and German. They emigrated as young people to the United States sometime in the 1870s, maybe the early 1880s, met some years later, and got married. My grandfather was a real estate developer in New York City and my father was born there. He was the second oldest of five children. After getting an MD from New York University in 1914, he did a residency at Bellevue Hospital in New York City. His work at Bellevue sometimes meant riding an ambulance with the city medical services. I recall his saying that some of those missions involved injuries and fatalities that happened during the building of the New York subway system, and I believe also the vehicle tunnels under the Hudson River. In World War I my father joined the army in, I don't know exactly when, but probably 1917 and was stationed at Fort Lee, Virginia, as an examining physician. During his time there, he met his future wife. My mother was a native Richmonder, Richmond being not far from Camp Lee, now Fort Lee. At the end of the war and after his discharge, he returned to New York City. He practiced medicine there for a while, then went back to Richmond, opened an ophthalmology practice, and started courting my mother. They married in 1924 and settled in Richmond.

Q: What do you know about your mother's side of the family?

TRATTNER: Born in Richmond and grew up there. Her father had his own building supplies business, which he had started and which become quite prominent in Virginia and throughout the south by the time I was growing up. He set up two of his brothers in the business in other parts of the south.

Q: Of course if you were from Richmond there was only one war. Did the Civil War play prominently in the family history and with her?

TRATTNER: Not at all. My grandmother on my mother's side was born in Richmond two years after the Civil War ended. That was about as close as any of my immediate ancestors got to the Civil War. When I was growing up, it was known everywhere in Virginia as the War Between the States. In public school in Richmond, in history class, the Civil War was always called the quote War Between the States unquote, even in the textbooks, and the focus was always on Virginia's role in it. I don't remember hearing much about who won that war and who lost it. Or any reflection by teachers on the chief causes of the war or what happened afterward in the south.

Q: How much was the depression a factor? Your father a doctor, I mean did it hit around you? I mean were you aware of the depression?

TRATTNER: Not really, although my parents used to joke that I was a depression baby. It didn't mean anything to me as a child. By the time I was really aware of it, the depression was disappearing into the beginning of WWII. In my very young years, the great social and economic developments of the early and mid 1930s just naturally went over my head. I think my family didn't feel the depression that much because my mother's family had been fairly well off, and that blunted the impact. In fact, my grandmother, who was a widow by the time I was born, took my entire family and herself on a European visit in 1936. My father had expressed the wish to see Europe before another war destroyed it, as he put it, and my grandmother obliged him. We visited England, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Italy, and France. Our return trip was aboard the new French flagship liner Normandie, later converted to a troop ship during World War II, but then sabotaged and capsized in her berth in New York.

Q: Were you much of a reader?

TRATTNER: Not as much as my father wanted me to be. He read constantly and widely. By my high school years I was reading a lot of historical fiction.

Q: Well let's talk a bit about elementary school. I assume all of this was purely white?

TRATTNER: I went to an elementary school about half a mile from where I lived, walking to and from it every day. There were no African-Americans.

Q: How did you find the school?

TRATTNER: Looking back, I know it was nothing out of the ordinary. But I realize it was a very traditional and stabilizing element for every child there. I was there from kindergarten through sixth grade. Aside from the frequent returns to the "War Between the States," I think I got an average but solid basic elementary school education.

Q: Then you moved on to—did they call it middle school or what?

TRATTNER: Junior high. I moved on to the nearest junior high, and spent two years there. And was elected president of the class in the second year. This was a school with a group of kids from slightly lower economic backgrounds. They probably tended to be more racially conscious, but there were no black kids for them to look down on in the school. As far as education there goes, it was pretty much the expected expansion or extension of what I learned in elementary school.

Q: What about high school?

TRATTNER: I went to Thomas Jefferson High School in Richmond, in a different part of town, in what was then the western edge of the city. It was a newer school fed by five or six junior high schools, and was one of the two principal high schools in the city. By the time I got there, I had been taking piano lessons for about eight years. My activities tended to be student government, writing, and music. I played a lot of sports outside school with kids in my neighborhood, but didn't get into them on school teams. In junior year, I ran for vice president of the student body and lost by a handful of votes to a very good friend. I served on the student council all the time I was there, was editor of the literary magazine, was a piano soloist in school shows, and was elected to the senior scholastic honor society.

Q: What was the dating pattern?

TRATTNER: Pretty typical. I had one or two sort-of girl friends and dated a few others, but there was never anything serious, except during summers in the mid-1940s at a music camp in New England.

Q: You mentioned reading. Do you recall some of the adventure books?

TRATTNER: I do recall some of them, and have probably forgotten a lot more. But I'll mention two of them because I think when I was 11 or 12 they appealed to my inclinations toward writing. One, which every 11-year-old kid of the day read, was the Lad series about collie dogs. The other was a series of books by a guy named Van Wyck Mason, who wrote bodice rippers about the American Revolution, quite well done, which I enjoyed as a young teenager. They were comparable to the famous Forever Amber, which I stole from my mother because she wouldn't let me read it. But Van Wyck Mason's stuff was a lot better written than Forever Amber, and that's what I really liked. His writing style was brisk and colorful, interesting and direct, and not laden with clichés. And it was not flowery. I think it sort of inspired me, when I was 14 or 15, to write stories of my own just for the fun of it. I consciously and shamelessly imitated that style. While we are on the subject of writing, when I was about 13, I and a good friend in the neighborhood tried to publish a little hand-produced neighborhood newspaper. We just used a typewriter and carbon paper. My friend did the cartoons and crosswords, and I did the writing. It was free, of course, and it never went anywhere.

Q: Well then you would have graduated from high school in about 1948, was that about it?

TRATTNER: '48.

Q: I assume with the fact your father was a doctor, you were pointed towards higher education. Where did you go?

TRATTNER: I went to Yale.

Q: What brought you to Yale?

TRATTNER: Being from the north, my father was pretty disgusted at the education establishment he saw around him in Virginia as it was in the 1930s and 1940s. As a physician, he worked for some years for the state of Virginia and spent part of his time traveling through the state conducting eye clinics for school children. Based on what he saw of schools and colleges around the state, he decided his children should not get southern college educations. So my older sister went to Skidmore College, my younger sister to Mount Holyoke, and I to Yale. I did apply to the University of Virginia, because Virginia residents got a break on the tuition. Yale and Virginia accepted me and, I think, Michigan. I applied to Yale because of my musical background. I had studied the piano and performed in concerts since I was a little kid. Some people thought I had talent, though they didn't have any kind of professional expertise to judge. But my father wanted to further my musical education. For five summers in my teens, I attended a co-ed music camp in western Massachusetts. That followed three years at a boys' camp in Maine in the early 1940s (where I advanced my swimming skills and became a successful swimmer there and, later, at Yale. But that's another story). The music camp was a life-forming experience for me in important ways.

Q: What was the name of the camp?

TRATTNER: Camp Greenwood. Still very much a going concern—somewhat bigger and better than in my day. We had about 20 students, girls and boys, from the ages of about 11 to 17, and a small teaching faculty of men and women who were professional musicians. The secret of the camp's great and unusual success—and all my contemporaries of the time feel the same way—was its small size, vitality, diversity, easy informality, and mixture of music with sports and work projects. It was passionately devoted to chamber music. But you asked what brought me to Yale. When it was time to think about college, my father asked the opinion of the directors of Camp Greenwood. He wanted me to get a liberal, all-around university education, not go to a music academy—that is, to get a bachelor of arts degree, not a music degree. But he wanted a good education in music, too. They recommended Yale. Thank God my father had some insight into this—I was too inexperienced and young to see it for myself—or maybe it was just luck, but I applied to and enrolled in Yale College, not the professional music school and it was absolutely the right decision. I majored in music theory and composition in courses at the music school, and graduated with a bachelor of arts degree from Yale College.

Q: Where does the music come from?

TRATTNER: Again, my father, basically. He had been taught to play the violin in his childhood. By the time I was able to play the piano pretty well, he was constantly after me to play violin/piano music with him. I didn't enjoy doing it because he wasn't a good violinist, simply liked to hack away and get his pleasure. He also did a fair amount of composing, sometimes setting verse to music to be sung. He had no illusions about his talent for this, and joked about it by giving some of his songs deprecating titles. When I was about seven, or maybe eight, my parents took me to the Curtis Institute in

Philadelphia for an evaluation of my potential as a pianist. I don't recall what the precise verdict was, but I think Curtis thought I did show some talent, and that there was some potential for a successful career as a concert artist, depending on how much time and resources my parents wanted to devote to it. Even though I was only seven or eight, I do remember being asked how I felt about it and in some child-level way, I didn't think I wanted to go that route. I didn't know anything about the life of a concert virtuoso, or whether I could become one. I did seem to realize instinctively that it would mean changing my life around and that didn't appeal to me because I liked things as they were. My parents were probably disappointed, but weren't going to force something on me that I didn't want, so they elected to give me lessons with the best piano teachers they could find in Richmond.

Q: OK, you played the piano, but what about music? Did you like classical music, but of course as a kid you were at the end of the swing era.

TRATTNER: Well, I grew up with classical music, but also with popular music. At first, it was Bach, Haydn, Mozart, early to middle Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Chopin, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, and the like. Then, by my early teens, my older sister was listening to popular music on the radio all the time. I started listening with her as well, and liking what I heard. And swing, and pop music generally, was everywhere in the culture of those days, as it is today. I liked jazz pianists like Nat King Cole, as he was known before he became mainly a singer. I bought his stuff and other recordings and developed a real affection for swing and jazz, not just the pop songs of the day. My father raised his eyebrows; he didn't like popular music. But I persisted, and would bang out pop music by ear on the piano all the time, in addition to serious daily practicing. Later I piled up a small collection of pop and jazz sheet music. Gradually, my parents got used to it, or at least they tolerated it. I had real ideas that maybe one day I would play jazz or cocktail piano for a living. In Richmond, there wasn't much real chance to get into it, although in high school I did play sporadically in a couple of dance bands, where my dues to the musicians' union came close to equaling what I was being paid. At Yale, music became a key extra curricular interest as well as a major.

Q: Well you were at Yale from '48 to '52 I guess. What was Yale like when you went there?

TRATTNER: Yale College then was still very much a place for privileged white males. Of course, when I began there, it would never have occurred to me to think of it that way. Even then, the university as a whole was a formidable institution. It had a talented faculty, I mean a really storied faculty. Some of them were legends. Yale had enormous financial resources, and it claimed a highly principled view of what a university should be. This was not only a view about superior academic quality and attainment, or maintaining a broad and varied environment for learning and achieving. I mean that there were ideals, like an unbiased approach to admissions. And student opportunity. At least, they were ostensible principles, a bit different from the reality. Most Ivy institutions of that time fell short of such ideals, unsurprisingly. True, there were a couple of black guys in my class, and many non-WASPs, which was evidence of real change from the way

things had once been, say before the second world war. The Yale of that time, for all its traditional heritage, was not the totally uptight place it once had been. In addition to the private prep school community, my Yale College class had students from public high schools all over the country and from a number of other countries. In the early 1960s, I think it was, Yale fairly drastically revised its admissions process to elevate merit in the scheme of things and reduce the emphasis on legacy admissions. In the late 1960s, Yale began admitting women, and was led by Kingman Brewster, who was a broad-minded, liberal-minded reform president. He was later the U.S. ambassador to the UK. Beginning really with his tenure, the university turned itself into what it is today. It has come an incredibly long way, especially in the social and equal access dimensions, and is a truly extraordinary place, though still with faults and flaws. I have often felt that I should have gone to college three or four years after I graduated high school, not right away. When I got to Yale, I was several months short of 18. I think, in my immaturity, that I missed its greatest gifts. In 1948, there were still a lot of World War II veterans returning to Yale. Twenty percent of my class had been in the war, in fact, and more than a few were in their early or middle 20s. These guys were more mature, more settled, more serious. They were ready to take maximum advantage of what Yale offered, and they knew how to do it.

Q: Yale had an excellent swimming team.

TRATTNER: Yes, it was the best in the country and its swimmers were world-class. I'll tell you a little story about that. When I got to Yale, I was a good swimmer. No stamina, but an excellent short-distance free-style sprinter. One of the things every freshman had to do the first week there was take certain physical tests. One of them was swimming. Of course the freshman swimming coaches and the varsity swimming coaches were all hanging around to see if there were swim team prospects among the new class. So I did the swimming test, up and back the length of the pool twice. The freshman swimming coach came over and asked if I had ever swum competitively and whether I was interested in joining the freshman team. Well, I was brand new at Yale, somewhat overwhelmed by a new world. I had not given a thought to being a competitive swimmer, and didn't think I had the time to take this on. So I turned him down. He said, "Well, keep it in mind." Later on, as a sophomore, I joined the swimming team of my residential college. This was intramural swimming. I did 75 or more 50-yard laps almost every day to build endurance and strength, and had considerable success in the 50-yard free style. This time around, the varsity coach saw me. And this time I was asked to try out for the varsity swimming team. So I did try out, matched against a kid who was already on the team, in the 50-yard freestyle. He finished about half a pool ahead of me. The coach came over to me and said, "Well, you're really going to have to build yourself up." I realized he was inviting me to join the Yale varsity swimming team. Well, I was already giving a heck of a lot of time to swimming and still obviously hadn't built up to a level that I needed, and I didn't see how I could manage that with the other extracurricular stuff I was doing. So, again, I said no. And I really was into other things by then. I was singing in and arranging for a modern close-harmony undergraduate singing group, had written songs for the freshman musical show, and was in the Yale Glee Club. So I didn't think I would have room for the swimming team, which would consume even more time.

But I continued to swim intramurally, continued to practice and build strength, and as a senior tied the existing time record—I think it was the U.S. collegiate record—for the 50-yard freestyle. It didn't go into any record books because it was intramural swimming.

Q: William Buckley was before you, wasn't he?

TRATTNER: He was a couple of years ahead of me.

Q: Buckley wrote God and Man at Yale.

TRATTNER: Right. I think he was a returning war veteran. He was of course one of the most visible figures on the campus, the editor of the Yale Daily News. Which of course in those days, I guess it still is, a very prestigious job. It was a very good newspaper, even then. He was unique as a student who challenged the prevailing so-called liberal point of view that allegedly was poisoning some of the Yale undergraduate curriculum. Challenged the legitimacy of some of the faculty. People were definitely aware of him, but I did not know him personally.

Q: Well, was Coffin there at the time?

TRATTNER: Bill Coffin was then the chaplain of the Battell Chapel at Yale, which was, I guess, the principal Protestant citadel at the university. He was the chaplain of the university. I never knew him but I followed his career a bit because I admired what he did.

Q: Well let's talk about the courses. We talked about the music, how did you find the music there?

TRATTNER: In the first two years I had a couple of courses in theory and harmony, as prep courses for a major in music composition. In my junior and senior years, I studied composition, orchestration, conducting, and musicology, including a composition course with Paul Hindemith, the noted German composer, who was then a visiting member of the Yale Music School faculty. Hindemith was world-famous, probably the leading neoclassicist of his time, unless you consider Prokofiev. I had heard his music performed at Tanglewood, and did feel privileged to be in his class, but I have to add that I was completely bulldozed by the course content. I couldn't embrace his composition style or his theory, and didn't like his somewhat tyrannical manner in class. But that was the only element in all my musical education that I really had a tough time with. In all the other courses, I did well enough. I also studied composition with a couple of other reputable teachers there, wrote a piano sonata and a number of other pieces. The sonata was my senior thesis.

Q: Didn't Yale have a lot of musical activities going on, like singing, and so on? And the Whiffenpoofs?

TRATTNER: It really did. The extracurricular side of Yale music has always been extraordinarily rich. I sang in the freshman glee club, in a freshman singing group, in the varsity glee club, and in an upperclassman informal singing group, specializing in modern close harmony stuff, for which, as I said, I did arrangements and also was the director. That group was not the Whiffenpoofs, but the Spizzwinks, whose name always appeared with a question mark in parentheses after it. In my junior year, our group was considered to be the best among the eight or nine such groups at Yale, including the Whiffenpoofs, partly because the voices were just better. The Yale Glee Club traveled frequently. In addition to concert tours around the east coast during holiday periods, we had a spectacular spring vacation trip to Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico. I also wrote songs for the junior year musical show, and in my senior year one of my roommates and I put together an original musical show and submitted it to a competition for performance by the Yale Dramatic Society, which was a really impressive undergraduate organization that produced some very fine shows, musical and otherwise. He wrote the book and lyrics, and I wrote the music. None of the submissions that year was accepted, though, including ours.

Q: What about other courses? Which ones grabbed you particularly?

TRATTNER: Well, I had a contemporary European history course with a guy whose nickname was Wild Bill Donovan. You've probably heard the name. His fame sprang from his days with the OSS, predecessor of the CIA. It was a lecture course, held in a big lecture hall. He was a very lively speaker, and the course was oversubscribed and always well attended. If you didn't get there early, you sat in the back and barely saw or heard him. I didn't much like physics and chemistry. I did okay in chemistry, biology, history, philosophy, English, and French, but had real problems with particle physics and earned the worst grade of my years at Yale. Overall, I did acceptably well academically, making the dean's list most of the time in my junior and senior years. I could have done better, but was like everyone distracted by other things, including extra curricular activities and women. Halfway through college, I met my future wife. We were married four years later, after I went into the navy during the Korean War years.

Q: Where did your wife go to college?

TRATTNER: My wife, Gillian, got her secondary school education in Richmond and Vermont, and part of a college education at the Columbia School of General Studies. She then was accepted at Bennington College on a partial scholarship, but couldn't enroll because her father turned out not to be able to pay the rest of her expenses. I have to tell you that she is more widely read and more knowledgeable than most people I know. And she is more capable, sensitive, right-minded, and attuned, as a wife, parent, and friend, than any woman I have known. She is a simply terrific human being.

Q: Well, one of the things I think mostly when I look back, I realize how much education is really a personal thing. I mean, it is nice if people have been exposed to good teachers, but in the long run it is what you do with it. Where did you meet your wife?

TRATTNER: I met her in Richmond in 1950 when she was living there, and dated her a lot during my last two college summers.

Q: You were a junior, I guess, when the Korean War started. How did that impact you?

TRATTNER: In the summer after my sophomore year, as I recall, the military draft was activated for the Korean War. Male college students had to take an academic test resembling the Scholastic Aptitude Test to see whether they should be temporarily exempted from military service. I took the test in the fall of my junior year, passed it, and was duly exempted from military service until I finished college. When I graduated, having majored in music composition and gotten a BA, I really wanted to go to graduate school, but had the draft to deal with. Before graduating Yale, I had applied to the Navy's reserve officer candidate program but was turned down, I think because I didn't have an engineering or at least a history degree. Then, somehow, my draft board exempted me for another year to continue music studies at Columbia University. As the end of that year at Columbia approached, I knew I was not going to get another exemption from the draft to finish the two-year master's degree I was working for. So I renewed my application to the navy officer program, and this time was accepted, probably because they needed more officers and had to lower their admissions standards.

Q: Why don't you stay with your military service history, while you're on the subject?

TRATTNER: I entered active service in July '53 as an officer candidate in the training school at the Newport, Rhode Island naval station. Because of the navy's expanded needs for the war in Korea, they were churning out hundreds of new junior officers, supposedly shoving into their brains in four tough months what it took Annapolis four years to do. There were something like a thousand men in my class. Of course, the training wasn't completely adequate, but it turned out to be enough. If you academically survived the four months of officer candidate training, you were commissioned an officer and obligated for three years of active duty. If you didn't, you served four years in the enlisted ranks. Every Friday, the week's grades were posted for each man in each of six or seven subjects—celestial and dead-reckoning navigation, engineering, seamanship, etc. The standards were pretty tough, and people were flunking out every week. We lost 10% to 15% of the class that way, including engineers and science majors. But I survived the program and got my commission as an ensign. My first assignment as an officer was to communications school for another two months, also in Newport. Then I reported to a ship at the Norfolk naval operating base, a former sea plane tender that had been converted to a flagship for a U.S. admiral. His job was to cruise the Persian Gulf six months a year as a diplomatic/military representative to the sheikdoms and kingdoms in the Gulf whose friendship and oil—this was the Cold War era—were important to the United States. Things haven't changed a lot since then, have they?

Q: Was that ship the Greenwich Bay by any chance?

TRATTNER: It was the Valcour.

Q: Valcour. Because I served as vice consul in the Gulf and I think the Valcour and the Greenwich Bay used to rotate on that assignment.

TRATTNER: You're right. Six months of the year the ship was steaming to the Gulf, cruising around the Gulf, then steaming back to Norfolk. The ship would then spend six months basically in Norfolk or at sea on local training cruises. Then, about two weeks after reporting to the ship, I was transferred to shore duty in Norfolk, on the communications staff of the admiral who commanded all of the naval air forces assigned to the Atlantic fleet. So I had a very brief tour of duty on a U.S. Navy vessel, even though it never left berth in Norfolk while I was on it. My wife and I married a couple of months later, and we lived in Virginia Beach for the rest of my time on active duty. For two and a half years I commuted to my assignment at the Norfolk naval air station, on a rotating, round the clock communications watch, with seven fellow officers working in teams of two, and an enlisted staff of about 20. It amounted to an eight-day week. Eventually I in my turn became the head of the communications office, and worked day duty. Along the way, I got the routine promotion to lieutenant junior grade. My three-plus years of active Navy service ended in October 1956 with an honorable discharge.

Q. Where did you go then?

TRATTNER: During my time in the Navy, I developed a strong interest in international affairs, and also increasingly recognized that I no longer wanted to be a professional musician. Combined with that was a strong creative urge or instinct, without quite knowing how to channel it. By the time my Navy service was coming to an end, though, journalism had come to seem the right choice for the future. At the same time, I thought it would first be a good idea to go back and finish the music degree I had begun work on before the Navy. I had invested time and money in pursuing that degree and thought I should at least finish getting it. So I managed to bust my way into the Yale Music School in the middle of the academic year, timing that was against the school's better judgment. I simply browbeat them into accepting me as a graduate student, because I believed—with some encouragement—that, with a year of graduate study at Columbia already to my credit, I could complete the master's degree work at Yale in another half year. Halfway through that semester, the school advised that I was going to need another full year of course work to get the degree. Well, one more required semester might have been okay, but another full year was much more time than I wanted to invest, and I decided not to continue with it beyond the end of the semester I was in. Not long after that, ironically, I was awarded a prize for original classical fugue writing in the style of Bach. While still a Yale graduate student in music, I applied to the University of Virginia's new graduate business school, modeled on the case method pioneered by Harvard, took the business school aptitude test (the B-SAT) and was accepted in due course by the University of Virginia. But by the time the school notified me, I was in the newspaper business.

Q: So what happened?

TRATTNER: During that spring at Yale, a job had opened up on a twice-weekly newspaper on Cape Cod in Massachusetts. In July I saw the ad in a trade magazine and

drove over to the Cape from New Haven, walked into this newspaper's office literally with the ad in my hand, and got the job. It was a reporting job, but it turned out to be reporting, editing, page layouts, photography, selling advertisements for the paper, distributing the newspapers for delivery and trying to boost circulation. It was a jack-of-all-trades newspaper job of the legendary sort you once read about. I was to cover the upper-Cape towns adjacent to Falmouth, where the paper was based. I began work there in August, 1957, interrupted temporarily, two weeks later, by the sudden death of my father. The job was hard work, but really a lot of fun. I had never written a word of professional newspaper copy, but felt myself to be some kind of communicator. This job, at the bottom of the field, was clearly the right way to learn the newspaper business, at least in those days. I found out I could write, liked to write, and had an instinctive feel for covering a story. The job took me into most aspects of the basic life of that community. It was a good little newspaper—the Falmouth Enterprise, owned and run by a family named Hough, related to the famous Hough on Martha's Vineyard who published the Vineyard Gazette.

Q: Were there two parts of Cape Cod, the summer and the winter?

TRATTNER: It was like many resort communities. Even then, in the 1950s, it had a bare bones winter population, a year-round community of people who lived there, worked there. A mixture of poor and some middle class families, with some wealthier people, the Kennedys at Hyannisport being the notable example, of course. Even then, the Cape was a crowded place in the summer, though we got there towards summer's end. We lived first in Sandwich, in a huge old wooden frame house, then in Bourne, in a new contemporary house perched almost on the rocks at the western end of the Cape Cod Canal. From our living room we could look down the entire length of Buzzards Bay. Big merchant ships, entering or emerging from the canal, would slowly move into view, less than a hundred yards away, as if they were in our front yard.

Q: What were the politics of the Cape?

TRATTNER: Maybe leaning slightly conservative. One of the reasons was the presence of Otis Air Force Base on the upper Cape. In those days it was quite active, with a sizable military community. Some of the paper's readers were military people and their families. Indirectly, this contributed to the political environment of the place.

Q: Just to get a feel for this local newspaper, were there stories that you didn't cover, like the alderman caught with the mayor's wife in bed or something? You know, things that were almost too scandalous or lurid?

TRATTNER: No, though some of that stuff certainly went on. I never ran into anything in the way of a scandal news story or even gossip that contributed to my endeavors there. In any event, the Cape was a great place to live, and we thoroughly enjoyed our time there. For me, the work was fascinating. I covered town meetings, politics, schools, business, anything that happened. I loved covering sports, high school sports. The stories just seemed to write themselves. But I knew I didn't want to spend a lot of time there; I

wanted to move on. My ultimate goal was to work for a newspaper somewhere else in the world, somewhere overseas. As it turned out, I would be in the Cape Cod job only eight or nine months. The Hartford Courant in those days had a very good reputation, and I asked them for a job. They offered me one, which I took. I also had an offer from another paper, which attracted me for sentimental reasons. It was the daily paper, the Berkshire Eagle, published in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Its music critic was the father of a fellow student at the music camp in western Massachusetts that I had attended years earlier, and I had met his father, and remembered the newspaper, all associated with my fond memories of summers at that camp.

In April 1958 we moved to Hartford—actually to Farmington, west of the city. I was assigned as an editor/reporter on the state desk of the Courant, the city's morning daily newspaper. With several colleagues, I edited news coming in from the region served by the newspaper and went out and covered news stories as well, around the state, and wrote an editorial or two. That was where I really learned how to edit copy, put a headline on it, report stories, write opinion pieces, do investigative reporting, and grind out features.

Q: How long did you do that?

TRATTNER: For almost a year.

Q: What were the politics of Connecticut at the time?

TRATTNER: Connecticut is a state whose politics I generally admired because of a reasonably good balance and alternation in power between Democrats and Republicans. And the ideology, if you want to call it that, was pretty moderate on both sides while we lived there. Although I wasn't covering politics and wasn't paying close attention, Connecticut seemed pretty middle of the road in those days.

The reputation of the paper's managing editor was one of the things that drew me to the Courant. As I expected, my stint there was not all that exciting, however, and I had gone to work there considering the paper as another step along the road I hoped to travel. By now, I was focusing more realistically on my plans. While in Hartford, I got two job offers from the Associated Press, one in New England, the other in Virginia. But I was asking myself about the wisdom of moving through several more jobs in the United States instead of jumping directly into working overseas. I was partly driven by a feeling I was behind schedule in my goals because of the years I had spent in military service. So now I was thinking about taking a short cut, doing free lance journalism in Europe. I figured I'd just go there and look for a free lance job with an American or other news organization. One of the reporters at the Courant was the son of the chief of bureau of the Associated Press in London. He volunteered to ask his father for any possible help once I was in Europe. I knew the AP itself did not hire reporters off the street overseas, but that bit of encouragement was enough to start actively planning to go to Europe.

A family friend in Richmond with good connections at CBS managed to get me letters of introduction to CBS News bureau chiefs in four western European capitals. Of course it

was unlikely that I would come up with a job through any of those people right away, but I looked at them as good contacts for networking to other organizations and as ongoing possibilities for the future. We planned a travel route within Europe, shaped around the cities—London, Paris, Bonn and Rome—where the CBS contacts were located. To help finance the venture, I borrowed a fairly modest amount of money from my mother. We bought a French car, to be picked up in Paris. The plan was to drive around Europe for a while, stopping in at various U.S. news organizations to see what job opportunities might exist, potentially or actually. If the outlook should turn out to be really bleak, we would still have fun meandering around Europe, and then return to the U.S., where I would go back to work for a newspaper somewhere. We booked cabin class boat passage from New York to Plymouth, England on the glorious old French Line flagship, the SS Liberté, which was originally a German passenger liner. We left Hartford in February of 1959, and on the first day of spring sailed from New York on a truly memorable six-day crossing to Europe. To our surprise, half a dozen friends from Hartford and the Courant came down to the ship to see us off. They gave us a send-off as though we were heroes, little Lindberghs.

Q: You were in Europe doing this from when to when?

TRATTNER: Roughly from March of 1959 to November 1961, principally in Geneva. But I don't think too many readers will care about our initial travel around Europe.

Q: But I would like to pick up what some of your impressions were, particularly as it would pertain later on.

TRATTNER: Well, we left the Liberté at Plymouth and took the train to London. The city seemed drab and subdued, much as it must have been at the end of World War II, almost 14 years earlier. They were still short of fuel to heat homes. Some foods were in short supply, and the shops weren't offering multitudes of luxuries. I didn't find much of a sense of vigor or excitement among people I saw on the street. Even understanding their great hardship and deprivation during the war, I got the feeling that the Brits had been, shall we say, relaxed about getting their economy back into shape. It was as if the Labor governments right after the war had almost deliberately held the country back, held it hostage to the party's social and economic philosophy. Anyway, a decade later the British economy still seemed to us deficient, not to say partially crippled, especially compared to what we saw later on the Continent. And, of course, we weren't wrong. It was indeed still deficient through the 1950s, as we all remember. During our stop in London in the spring of 1959, this was obvious in different small ways. As a small example, my wife came down with Asian flu she doubtless contracted from someone we had been friendly with aboard ship, and had to spend a few days in bed in our London hotel. I would go out to get juices and other things she could eat, and had real trouble finding these simple items, even in the middle of London 14 years after the end of the war.

I spent three or four days talking to six or eight news outlets in London—CBS television and radio, United Press International, the Associated Press, Reuters, several other British

organizations. I didn't come up with anything. That was not really disappointing, perhaps because I wasn't really expecting anything so quickly, perhaps because I was looking forward to the rest of our trip around Europe.

Q: I recall going to London just about the same time. You ate poorly.

TRATTNER: True at the time, for sure. Do you want me to go on talking about this free-lance trip around Europe? I mean, is this really relevant to this history project?

Q: Yes, it's all part of it, so please continue.

TRATTNER: OK. After London, we took the boat train to Paris. Next morning we jumped in a taxi to pick up the car we had bought before leaving the States. It was early April, a much-noted time in Paris with all the songs and legends that have tended to overstate the case. But having later lived in Paris for several years, I am an eyewitness to it. This was a day that lived up to the legend, with mixed showers and sun. The trees had just started budding. The taxi drove us up the Champs Elysees, and we saw the Arc de Triomphe at the top of the avenue half a mile or so away, huge tricolor undulating in the arch, all lit with a slanting, silvery light from the sky. We haven't ever forgotten that moment. We spent five days in Paris job hunting, including a brief meeting with CBS's man in Paris, and enjoying the city. A little news distribution agency with an office in the International Herald Tribune building offered me a job that wasn't much in the way of professional interest or money. It wasn't at all tempting, though it would have allowed us to settle in Paris and look for better jobs. But taking it would have meant canceling the rest of our planned trip, which we intended as a combination of job search and, as I said, fun. I wanted us to see something of Europe before we possibly settled in somewhere.

So after nearly a week in Paris we headed to Bonn, then of course the capital of the former West Germany and home to a number of U.S. news organization offices. Bonn gave me a really indelible impression of the West German economic vitality of the time. It was a striking moment. It came when I opened the curtains of our hotel room the morning after our late arrival on a dark, rainy evening. The hotel was perched on the west bank of the Rhine and faced east across the river. I looked out on an unbelievably busy scene sparkling in the sun—barges, too many to count, were chugging up and down river. Truck traffic was booming along a riverside road. I saw factory chimneys in both directions on our side of the river and on the opposite bank, where I could also see freight trains moving in both directions along the river. It was anecdotal evidence, but it was a strong, bustling contrast to what I had felt about Britain's economic condition.

The CBS correspondent in London had been unable to encourage me job-wise, but his colleague in Bonn was helpful. He sent me to the head of the Time Magazine bureau there, and that produced a result several weeks later, which I'll mention in a minute. After visits to several other news organizations in Bonn and establishment of one or two contacts that could be pursued later as necessary, we headed south, stopping overnight in Frankfurt, Stuttgart, and Munich, and for a short weekend in Innsbruck, in Austria. We crossed into Italy on a sunny Sunday morning, on a road frequently crowded with

churchgoers. Our immediate destination was Brescia, a small industrial city just west of Como and the big Italian lakes, near the foothills of the Italian Alps. We went there to visit an Italian man who, as a teenager, had befriended my parents, my older sister, and me on the beach at Viareggio, on Italy's west coast, where my family had stayed for a few days on a trip in 1936. Are you still sure you want me to go into this trip in all this detail?

Q: Absolutely. It adds perspective on your experience later.

TRATTNER: From Brescia we continued on through Cremona and Bologna to Florence for a few days, then to Rome via Siena. I had a great conversation with Winston Burdette, the CBS correspondent in Rome and a veteran journalist. He had almost nothing in the way of job leads, just small stuff that didn't look viable, but he had some wisdom and encouragement for what I hoped to do. The rest of our trip was pure tourism—north along the Italian west coast via Pisa, Portofino, San Remo, and Genoa, into France and to Nice, Cannes, Avignon, Montpellier, Carcassonne, into Spain through Barcelona and Zaragoza, a few days in Madrid, then north into France's far southwest Atlantic coast, and finally east across France to Lyon, and to Geneva, arriving there on my wife's 24th birthday. A week earlier, in Madrid, we had celebrated our fifth wedding anniversary. Somewhere during this leg of our travel, I heard from John Mecklin, Time's bureau chief in Bonn, who had a summer job opening in the bureau, and wanted to know if I was interested. I was. Our few days in Geneva and Lausanne were the last stop on our planned route, and from there we drove back to Bonn, toward the end of May. The summer job with Time had developed because Khrushchev was planning a visit to Scandinavian countries and Mecklin would be covering the visit. This was the period when the Soviets, Brits, and Americans were beginning talks in Geneva about banning nuclear weapons tests; this was an important milestone in the long Cold War road traveled by U.S.- Soviet relations and in the diplomacy between them and with U.S allies. There was a lot of interest everywhere in Europe, and other things were going on as well on the issue of arms control. In addition, President Eisenhower would be coming to Europe, and to Bonn, in September. All this meant that the Time bureau in Bonn would be busier than usual, and the absence of its chief covering Khrushchev and related stories would leave the bureau shorthanded. Mecklin needed someone to fill in, doing whatever was necessary, and he thought of me. Even before we arrived in Bonn, however, Khrushchev cancelled his visit to Scandinavia, and my summer job with Time collapsed. But we went on to Bonn, anyway, and I decided to hang in for a few weeks, since the bureau thought it might still have some need for my services. I did do some work there, as things turned out, and also caught on with a German business magazine published in English, turning very rough English versions of their stories into readable copy. During our five months in Bonn, I also took German language lessons. We lived as cheaply as we could, in a little guest house in Friesdorf between Bonn and Bad Godesberg, then the diplomatic residential quarter of the Bonn area. Godesberg later became part of the city of Bonn, but in those days it had real appeal and a good restaurant or two. A decade or so later, incidentally, John Mecklin was the U.S. military spokesman in Vietnam, working for the Joint U.S. Political Affairs Office during the war. He was the briefer at the daily American news conference in Saigon, best remembered as the five o'clock follies.

Q: How long were you in Bonn?

TRATTNER: After five months in Bonn, we decided that fall to move to Geneva, a longtime center of international diplomacy. It was the site of the UN's European headquarters and a number of UN-system specialized agencies. Many U.S. and other news organizations had operations there, and there was also an English-language weekly newspaper. The chances of free lancing in Geneva seemed good, and worth testing. And, of course, Geneva had attracted us at first acquaintance. All those were arguments Gillian used against my instinct to go back to the States and get a real job. I'm glad she did. In October, 1959 we went to Geneva, and I immediately got a job with the weekly newspaper there as a music critic. Geneva had a very active serious music scene and I got a tremendous kick out of covering concerts. Later on I did other stories for the paper and also helped with page layout and printing. There were various other writing jobs in Geneva that sporadically brought a little money in. We found a tiny studio apartment in the old city. After a couple of months, I re-established the contact with CBS in New York and, one day, Eric Sevareid, who was then a major and well-known correspondent for CBS, came to Geneva on a story and called me. He was one of the famous original reporting crowd assembled by Ed Murrow. The network had asked him to try me out as a radio reporter to work in Geneva as a stringer, or part-time correspondent. At his suggestion, I wrote a short text about some current issue, and voiced it to New York over a voice line from the press and radio studios at the Palais des Nations, the UN headquarters in Europe. As a result, CBS hired me as a stringer. That's a one-word description of a rather precarious existence in which you covered an event that the network might want stories on, sent a quick cable to the network to try to sell them on it, and then waited to see if they were interested. If so, you were scheduled for a feed on the overseas voice line later that day. If not, you'd wasted your time. The feeds varied between 45 and 90 seconds, depending on the CBS News programs that used them. The pay was minimal, but the experience was terrific—if I hadn't known how to write cogently before then, I learned how as a network radio stringer in Geneva. If you can take a complicated development in, say, the conference on banning nuclear tests and explain it adequately to American listeners in 45 seconds, you are doing the job.

Q: So describe the life of a stringer.

TRATTNER: Covering the Geneva diplomatic and international news front, and getting paid only for individual stories that you could sell to your client, was a matter of feast or famine. But Geneva supported a sizeable community of stringers and part-timers. Some worked on the same basis I did, and others were paid a retainer—a dependable small stipend a client used to keep a correspondent on the scene and available when needed, and not tied to individual stories and projects. These folks were sometimes identified by their clients as "special correspondents."

Working for CBS helped establish me in Geneva, and in time I gathered other "strings," including Newsweek and a few newspapers in the UK and the U.S. I also worked for Time when its own stringer was not available, and for the Voice of America, which hired

me from time to time to do voicings of its stories from Geneva because it didn't like the intonation or inflection of the regular Voice of America correspondents who wrote them. Covering the same story at the same time for both Time and Newsweek was an amusing challenge sometimes, since their prose styles then were so similar. The two magazines differed from CBS because they would initiate requests for coverage, not wait to be asked. Maybe I'm taking too much time on this subject? I mean, isn't this sort of irrelevant to the purposes of your project?

Q: No, not at all. Did you find—what were American publications interested in?

There were a number of things going on in or near Geneva, mostly in the diplomatic, economic areas, and also the UN. American publications were interested in a variety of issues and topics involving this activity, but not on a continuous basis. Not enough to keep salaried correspondents there fulltime. When Geneva did produce notable news, the stringers and special correspondents were there to cover it. The salaried, staff correspondents would show up in Geneva to cover the first few days of really big-time diplomatic events, like the start of a conference on arms control. Then they departed and left coverage to the stringers. Some big-time events were long-run affairs, like the conference to ban nuclear tests in the atmosphere. It involved the Russians, British, and Americans. When we came to Geneva, it had been going for perhaps a year or maybe a bit longer. You have to remember that, in those days, a conference like that between the Russians, the Brits, and us was many times a front-page story simply because those were the early days of nuclear diplomacy and possible nuclear confrontation. The American public was far less blasé about that than it is today. Today, nukes in North Korea and possible nukes in Iran seem almost commonplace issues. People then were genuinely worried about the bomb. Not that they don't worry today, but they have long since gotten used to the threat and learned to live with it.

Q: What was the test ban conference like?

TRATTNER: The test-ban delegates met daily or sometimes only two or three times a week and the conference produced newsworthy stories maybe 20 percent of the time. "Newsworthy" often meant that the Russian delegate had been unusually harsh that day, or had said something funny to the reporters hovering outside the conference room, or there had been a genuinely new development like a change of allied or Soviet policy in the talks. It was easy to sell a story, for example, that reported a possible break-off of the talks because the Russians had said something that could be interpreted as hinting a break-off. The Russian delegate most of the time was a character named Semyon Tsarapkin, and he was sometimes a story all by himself. He was known for his one-liners. He reportedly once said, at some conference or other, that he was not a gentleman, he was a Soviet representative—or words close to that. In any case, through all of this, it was clear that the Russians never intended the talks to produce a ban on nuclear tests that was really effective. I guess it was also their faint hope that they could sucker us into a faulty treaty where true inspection or monitoring would only be window dressing and they could continue testing undetected. Meanwhile, the conference at least allowed them to pretend a sincere interest in arms control, as they had in other similar talks. On the

other side, the UK and U.S. delegates had come to have few illusions about Russian motivations or any real hope the talks would achieve anything. But then, one never knew. So the two western powers continued the talks with the Russians. At the least, the west could be seen to be trying to negotiate an important arms control accord, even if nothing ever seemed to happen. And this allowed us reporters to keep on writing and airing stories on the talks. The market for our stuff was sustained by the world public's frail, fragmented hope for success or, on the other hand, its fear the talks would collapse. They did, finally, after the Russians blew off a megaton device in Siberia in the late summer of 1961. It was the biggest atmospheric test to date.

Another attention-getting diplomatic event in Geneva was the French-Algerian peace conference in 1961 that took place in a villa in Evian, a French spa town down the lake. For all intents and purposes, that conference ended the French official presence and colonial role in Algeria, which gained its inevitable independence. I covered that meeting to some degree, but had a lot more work during that same spring of 1961 covering a multi-nation Geneva conference that was a doomed effort to settle the civil war in Laos. That conference, which lasted for a couple of months, was one of the first major foreign policy initiatives of the new Kennedy Administration, hard on the heels of the Bay of Pigs experience. I think the Kennedy people had invested fresh hope in it to try to stop what was then seen as communism's steady advance in Southeast Asia. The Laos conference was probably also the first important meeting of most of the countries and parties involved in the struggles of Southeast Asia since the days just after Dien Bien Phu, in 1954.

The Soviets, mainland China, the three Laotian factions, North and South Vietnam and Cambodia took part, along with the French, the U.K., and the U.S and some others, more than a dozen countries altogether. It did produce an ostensible settlement for Laos, which had been repeatedly embroiled in conflict between the armed communist Pathet Lao faction, an anti-communist faction, and a neutral third faction that pretended to preside over the country. The neutrality of Cambodia was also at stake. The Laos talks agreed on a neutral coalition government for the country, but it never worked, because the major players on the communist side never intended it to. To us covering the conference, that lack of future intention was already pretty clear. For example, the International Control Commission was created by the conference to monitor and report on adherence to the terms of the agreement, but was hogtied from the beginning by procedural and other disputes. It never functioned with any real effect. The communists soon gained control of all of Laos, and Cambodia, as you remember, was later entangled in the Ho Chi Minh trail business, related to the war in Vietnam, and eventually fell into the hands of the Khmer Rouge.

When the Laos conference convened, the U.S. had been getting more involved in South Vietnam. I should have said earlier that the Laos conference was also one of the most significant diplomatic encounters the U.S. had had up to then with the Chinese, Vietnamese, and Laotian communists. Certainly, it was the first exposure for me and many of my journalist colleagues to large numbers of communist diplomats and journalists. In the briefings by the communist delegations after each day's meeting, I

remember vividly how camera crews from China and North Vietnam would roam the aisles, filming the attending press while western TV network cameras focused on the briefer at the podium. A really sinister touch. During that conference I was able to separately interview the Soviet and Chinese foreign ministers (Gromyko and Chen Yi) among many others. Lyndon Johnson, then vice president, also visited the conference. I tried for an interview with him, but only got a handshake at the airport.

In Geneva, there were also economic and related stories to cover—gold and the dollar, the International Labor Organization, the World Meteorological Organization, the Economic Commission for Europe, an international meeting on cotton textile trade problems. Many other kinds, too. In the winter of 1961, Truman Capote holed up in the French Alps to write In Cold Blood, and I interviewed him by telephone for Newsweek. He was very amenable and amiable. Time was interested in an art exhibition featuring the Holbeins, father and son, and I spent a day in Basel to see it and do a story. I covered various other kinds of lesser, feature-type stories as well—the wedding of the current king of Spain and Princess Sophie of Greece, an interview with Adrian Conan Doyle, son of the creator of Sherlock Holmes, a reception thrown by Kim Novak, and so on.

Our first child, a girl, was born in Geneva, and we decided before she arrived to move to a place with more space. We got an attractive small apartment in the southern part of Geneva, looking out on a large park, with views from our little balcony of Alpine foothills in one direction and the Jura range in the other, covered with snow from early fall to late spring.

Q: Were you coming away with any impression of the practice of diplomacy and how things worked?

TRATTNER: Well, I've described some of the diplomatic events I covered, so the answer to your question is, of course, yes. In the course of my work, I became familiar with the ebb and flow of diplomatic processes, for one thing. And I also observed the handling of the media, the niceties that delegates had to observe with one another, the code words embedded in official language, the particular pressures on diplomats, the rhythm of their lives. And so on. Also, inside the UN European headquarters, I first came to know that particular aura that seems to float through the corridors of international public institutions. It was sort of an impersonal or neutral feeling that you sense among international civil servants, all of whom seem primarily determined to keep their jobs and get along with their colleagues of so many different national origins. It's irrational, I know, but I always think of listening to the words of delegates at a meeting as spoken by the interpreters in their glass booths around the room. No matter who was speaking, or in what language, or with whatever personal emphasis, the translated version that came through your earphones always had the same detached, neutral tone. Devoid of emotion or color. It tended to put the proceedings at one remove from reality, to drain the meeting of the feeling of human engagement. Of course, that's the way it had to be. It couldn't be managed any other way. But for me, in a completely surface sense, it was a feeling of toneless indifference among career international bureaucrats as to whether any set of international talks would ever succeed in solving the issues it was addressing. I knew this

was emphatically not true, of course. But it seemed to put the emphasis on unending process, not on final product. Again, don't misunderstand me— this was just atmospherics, not a serious or substantive reality. It's stuff for a novel.

As reporters, we got to know many envoys and diplomats personally outside of the meeting rooms, at press briefings and social occasions. One of them was Averell Harriman, the former New York governor and presidential hopeful, who was an experienced senior non-career envoy, then probably approaching 80. He headed the American delegation to the conference on Laos and would regularly brief reporters at informal gatherings in his hotel rooms. Refreshments would be served, and we would hear his soft and friendly, never-failing optimism about the conference's likely results. I developed good working relationships and my wife and I developed good social relationships with several other official Americans, career diplomats, and their families in Geneva, among those who staffed the various conferences and those assigned to the U.S. consulate. It was instructive to watch them do their jobs, especially one of them who acted as spokesman for the U.S. delegation to the Laos conference. That was perhaps the first time I thought that I might one day be interested in such an assignment.

Q: Were there any developments going on, were you getting any reverberations from the situation in France over Algeria at all?

TRATTNER: We certainly picked up the tense attention reflected by French newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. Geneva is, of course, primarily Francophone, and its own media focused regularly on France. As we all recall, France was almost ripped apart, before and after the Evian conference, by its Algerian problem. At least one assassination attempt on De Gaulle took place while we were there. And, in any case, we very much felt the French presence next door. And we made many excursions into the exquisite French countryside that surrounds the Geneva region on three sides.

Q: Did you at a distance but at the same time get any feel for Kennedy and the Kennedy administration when they came in?

TRATTNER: Definitely. From the time we read Kennedy's inaugural address, I had thought more about maybe going into government service on the foreign policy side. We also observed some of Kennedy's appointees and career diplomats who came through Geneva on various missions. Kennedy had a rough first year, beginning with the Bay of Pigs disaster, then his poor performance at the Vienna meeting with Khrushchev, then the building of the Berlin wall, and finally the Soviet walk-out from the nuclear test ban talks. Even so, in that first year we sensed that his intentions were correct, and he had a lot of energy, and I saw increasing skill in his administration's handling of the conferences going on in Geneva. Kennedy's election was confirmed on the day our first daughter was born. We woke up that morning with my wife in the first stages of labor and flipped on the short wave radio to learn that the U.S. presidential election had not yet been decided. By the time the baby came a few hours later, Kennedy had been elected. In the months that followed, Kennedy seemed like a completely fresh breath of air. I agree with the conventional assessment of his foreign policy setbacks I just mentioned. But I

also agreed with those who ascribed part of that to his early naiveté on the foreign front and to events that were in large part beyond anything he could have done differently. For example, Khrushchev had been more and more impelled to seal Berlin off and halt the exodus to the west, and in all likelihood had decided on building the wall before Kennedy even became president. Or at least that's how it looked to us and to some of my reporter friends in Geneva. He just needed the right psychological moment to act, and that was set up by his meeting with Kennedy in Vienna, where Kennedy was badly out-imaged. The Soviet walk-out from the test-ban talks might also have been a product of the Vienna meeting, but I think it's more likely that the Soviets had reached the point where they needed to test a big device in the atmosphere more than they needed to go on with the test-ban talks. Anyway, after construction of the Berlin wall began that August, there was some serious and increasing talk about war. I even received notice from the naval attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Paris that I should be prepared to report if necessary for active duty at the U.S. naval base in Rota, Spain. Under the agreement in which I did my Navy service, I remained a member of the active reserve for eight years after my original active duty ended and, in any emergency during that period of time, I could be recalled to active duty. The eight years had not expired and so I was in fact still recall-able. But before we had much time to make any contingency plans, the real danger of war receded and I never had to report for duty.

Q: Did you have much contact within this European time with our embassies?

TRATTNER: None, except, as I've said, regular contact with the American consulate in Geneva. It was a specialized office responsible for the operational and logistical backstopping of American diplomatic activity there, including dealing with the media. Two U.S. Information Service officers were among those assigned. The consulate also did all or most of the usual things consulates do, like registering our daughter's birth and issuing us a birth certificate. Over time, that consulate became a U.S. mission, with an ambassador.

Q. Back to the press. Were the European media looking at things differently from how you and other Americans did?

TRATTNER: Yes. Some of the Scandinavians, for example, viewed the test ban conference neutrally. They didn't automatically adopt the U.S. and UK view that the Russians ought to agree to stop testing nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, and underground for that matter. Most British correspondents covering those talks were pretty close to the American point of view, I would say, and maybe two or three took a more leftward view—sort of reflecting the anti-bomb sentiment evident in those days in the UK: that is, no testing of nuclear devices anywhere, and no actual nuclear weapons in anyone's possession. Then there were the Russian and two or three eastern European correspondents who worked for TASS or Izvestia or other similar news operations and they, of course, were not entirely who they were supposed to be. But they were only human and there was some genuine contact there outside the workaday framework. As I think I said earlier, there were a number of European reporters resident in Geneva who were free-lancing as I was. In fact, one or two American news organizations were

represented by Europeans. The Associated Press bureau chief in Geneva was German, and that was a fulltime, salaried job. The Time magazine correspondent was a Dutch free-lancer. The United Press International correspondent there was Jonathan Randal, an American, also fulltime but less well paid. It was Jon who hooked me up with Newsweek when he was preparing to leave Geneva. He went on to become a well known correspondent for the New York Times and, later, the Washington Post, and we knew him not only in Geneva but, later, in Warsaw and Paris.

Also in those days, as in these, European reporters' approach to news coverage was different from ours. Especially among television reporters, it was less aggressive. One of the CBS bureau chiefs in Europe came to Geneva when a big event warranted, and was very aggressive, always pushing to the front and center. He once physically and rudely shoved aside a Swedish journalist who happened to momentarily be blocking the CBS camera's view of a delegate coming out of a conference room. That kind of me-first behavior was, I would say, emblematic of a certain strain of American television journalism that persists to this day, in which the correspondent is more central than the story. You see it in what I would call the self-important travel by U.S. network anchors to cover events overseas that could much more intelligently be reported on by better informed resident or regional correspondents, not to say less expensively.

Q: So what developed after Geneva?

TRATTNER: We were in Geneva for two years. I wanted to stay there indefinitely, but two issues weighed against it. First, there was not enough income to really live on comfortably, especially after our daughter was born. Second, I didn't want to be a stringer correspondent forever. I needed a staff job with a news organization where, ideally, I could move in time to different foreign assignments and also move up. If I couldn't get such a job in Geneva, it was time to move on. And the likelihood of getting such a job in Geneva was very slim. American news organizations with stringers in Geneva did not eventually hire those people into staff jobs unless they intended to station them somewhere else at some point. That was very rare. For all these major news organizations, there just wasn't enough going on regularly in Geneva to justify keeping a salaried staff correspondent there. The U.S. armed forces radio station near Frankfurt had offered me a job, but it was one I didn't really want. So in the fall of 1961 I went job-hunting in the U.S.

Shortly after I began looking, the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) approved a job application I had filed from Geneva several months earlier. At the time, USIA was an independent federal agency in the foreign affairs community. In late 1961, the agency offered me a job at the Voice of America, and I also had also gotten offers of reporting jobs from the Baltimore Sun and the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. The Sun was a good newspaper and did have something of a foreign correspondent staff, but once you had served in one of those spots, you returned to Baltimore permanently. So I chose the Pilot in Norfolk. It served a region heavy in U.S. and NATO military facilities plus significant international commercial interests, and a population sprinkled with residents from abroad. I convinced myself that I could eventually persuade the management to assign me to

report from overseas on a longtime basis. And that was not completely wild speculation. During my time in Geneva I had offered the paper a couple of stories, one of them about the visit to Zurich of the governor of North Carolina, who was on a business-seeking trade mission. The Virginian-Pilot had a considerable readership in northeastern North Carolina, and it bought that story. So that was another spur to my decision to take a job there, but pretty flimsy. In addition, the newspaper had recently won a couple of Pulitzer Prizes for its editorials and general stance critical of Virginia's opposition to the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision against segregated public schools, and that suggested a management operating with at least some flexibility and openness to new or different ideas. Or that's what I wanted to believe, anyway.

My wife and small daughter left Geneva two months after I had, and we settled into a house in Virginia Beach, a 15-mile commute from the newspaper offices in Norfolk. That was early 1962. And so we transitioned back to the United States. It was not an easy change—we loved Geneva, gave up our life there with deep regret. We found life in the U.S. less interesting by comparison. But coming back to Virginia Beach, where we had enjoyed my Navy service years as newlyweds, and where we still had friends, helped a bit.

Q: So you worked for the Norfolk newspaper from when to when?

TRATTNER: 1962 to 1963.

Q: What were you covering and what was going on?

TRATTNER: I covered everything—murder trials, shipping news, traffic court, city hall, concerts and recitals, all sorts of local features. I covered Martin Luther King on a tour of eastern North Carolina. I wrote editorials on international issues, such as the president's next choice for ambassador to the Soviet Union, or events in Southeast Asia and my Geneva experiences with the Laos conference were helpful there. And I talked the Sunday editor into a column on foreign affairs. The column ran for about four months, until the editor dropped it in favor of stuff with more local content. By the time that happened, I already knew that my hopes in joining the newspaper had been unrealistic. I saw that what I wanted was never going to happen. Among other reasons, because the publisher was interested in expanding his coverage of North Carolina, not of the world. In the years since I was there, his family has expanded their little local Norfolk empire of newspapers and a television station into a much larger empire but, as far as I know, without any interest in expanded international reporting.

After a year with the Norfolk paper, I took an editing/reporting job in the World Service of the Associated Press, in New York City. This was an around-the-clock operation, and I had the graveyard shift, midnight to 8 a.m. It was nonstop editing and sorting, and was unrewarding in terms of using any reporting or writing skills. Maybe twice, I was sent out into the city to report and write stories. About eight months later—in November 1963—I joined USIA, which this time had offered me appointment as a foreign service officer. My first assignment was to the Worldwide English service of the Voice of America, in

Washington, a two-year stint. John Kennedy was in the White House and had continued to be a prime reason why I was attracted to government. Two weeks after I entered government service, Kennedy was assassinated.

Q: What were you doing with the Voice of America?

TRATTNER: VOA knew I had been a radio correspondent in Europe. I took and passed a test of voice quality for broadcast purposes, and after some orientation, became the editor and on-air voice of Worldwide English's Report to Europe. That was a daily half hour live radio broadcast of news and commentary in English to Eastern and Western Europe, originating in Washington in the middle of the day. The essential task was to assemble a program each morning that addressed the major news stories of the day in the areas of world affairs and foreign policy, and provided illustrative and amplifying information. The general idea was to illustrate U.S. foreign policy in the context of current and recent events, using taped material taken mostly from American television and radio, both straight news stories and editorial comment, and link all of it together in a coherent presentation. The program aimed at government officials, politicians, academics, journalists, and other professionals and decision makers. At least, that was how the VOA conceived it. The only material in the program that was produced in-house within the VOA by anyone other than me was the obligatory commentary on a current issue. This put forth the official U.S. line, obviously, and was identified as such on the air. That always enabled listeners, especially those in communist countries, to separate it from the rest of what they were hearing and to trust the integrity of the program. Getting this thing together from scratch each day was an absolutely frantic but interesting job of deciding content, splicing taped actualities together, and writing continuity text, often finished with less than a minute left to dash to the studio about 75 yards away, get in front of the microphone, and begin the broadcast on time. Once or twice I was enough out of breath by the time I was in front of the mike that I couldn't speak

Q: Did you run into the perpetual battle, the undercurrent at the Voice of America, with all those émigré writers broadcasting in the own languages to their own countries? It became like herding kittens or something.

TRATTNER: Yes, I ran into a little of that indirectly. As you know, the VOA language services were and are stocked with people who could write and broadcast to their native countries in their own languages. They had come from Eastern Europe, Russia, China, and other parts of the world in the forties, fifties, and sixties, and quite a few were refugees from communist governments back home. Some whom communism had driven out were naturally really fiercely anti-communist and that sometimes showed up in what they wrote for the VOA. As I said, apart from the official commentary segments of its broadcasting, the VOA tried hard to achieve balance and fairness in what it was broadcasting. That was part of the original VOA Charter, and in theory it was the reason for VOA's large audience. So it had to keep a close eye on what was being produced by its language services. The commentary broadcast on my program was voiced by another person, and I gratefully did nothing but introduce it.

My time at the Voice was only two years, but it expanded my knowledge of the foreign policy apparatus of the U.S. Government and of U.S. foreign policy itself. At the same time, I was looking forward to assignment overseas, which would follow the tour at VOA, and preferred it to be in Europe because we were Europe-oriented in many respects.

Q. *We have more time here.*

TRATTNER: Ok, well, I said my preference was Europe, but within that area, Eastern Europe had become a specific attraction. The region was stirring and it was restless under these various communist regimes. Khrushchev, behind closed doors, had distanced himself from the Stalin era in the mid-fifties. But the whole world soon knew about it and there were eventual repercussions. Also, it had been less than a decade since the uprising in Hungary and the disturbances in Poznan, and a more flexible era had come to Poland. In Romania and Yugoslavia, Ceausescu and Tito were traveling separate roads from the rest—little did we suspect in those days where all that would lead**.** All this interested me. Eastern Europe seemed to be where the real change was taking place, and that kindled my decision to aim for Eastern Europe when my tour at VOA ended. The personnel people at USIA didn't like the idea. They said I had no experience in the region. That seemed like questionable logic. But I still had about a year left at VOA and used the time to try boosting my credentials by taking a graduate seminar on the Soviet Union at American University. Whether that made a difference in the minds of the personnel people, I don't know. But eventually I received assignment as press attaché at the American Embassy in Bucharest. It was exactly what I wanted, but it fell through because USIA wanted me to get to Romania before VOA was willing to let me go. It was only a matter of two months or so, but VOA was adamant that I serve the full two years.

Things worked out, however. By the time the VOA tour ended, USIA had decided to send me to Warsaw, again as press attaché. I would need Polish language training first, something that normally required a year, beginning in the summer. But it was now November and too late for that, and I didn't even begin language study until four months of the regular language course had elapsed. Then, instead of going through to the end of the training, I was pulled out two months early because the guy I would be replacing in Warsaw was leaving that job early. In the end, I missed half the Polish language training. Somehow, I came out with a tested Polish language facility almost equal to what would be expected if I'd been able to take the full-length course. I went to Warsaw in June 1966, three weeks ahead of the rest of my family. We had had another child by that time, a girl, who was then seven months old. Our older girl was five and a half.

Q: OK, Poland, 1966. In the first place, what was Poland up to at that time, politically and economically, and then we will talk about American-Polish relations.

TRATTNER: Well, politically, Poland in the 1950s had been roiled by the riots in Poznan against the communist regime. Then came a calmer, easier era that began with the ascent of Wladyslaw Gomulka to the top party and government positions in, I think, 1956. It was, comparatively, a somewhat liberal period for the country as seen from the

outside. In reality, certainly by the time we arrived in Poland and while we were there, the regime had become steadily more repressive, reactionary, and orthodox. Gomulka became a hard-line, routinely unimaginative communist leader, and not too distinguishable from some of the other party hacks running other Eastern European countries. The Cold War was in full bloom and most of the region was firmly in the grip of the Soviets.

Still, several factors made Poland different from the other countries of the region. For one, Polish Catholicism was a distinctive brand—rather intense and passionate in its appeal to the country's overwhelmingly Catholic population during the long communist era. Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski was the leader of the Polish church. He was a charismatic figure who symbolized the Poles' entrenched resentment of the communist government. But it was a very subtle resentment and resistance. Wyszynski was often compared to Cardinal Mindszenty in Hungary, but the two circumstances were very different. Poles revered Wyszynski because he made no secret of his views of communism and its repression of the country. He had been jailed, I think more than once, for various religious and social activities and pronouncements, but the communists knew they couldn't really touch him without seriously risking their control. And the Poznan riots had made them all too aware of what could happen. They had to tolerate him, and of course he took advantage of that. We arrived in Poland in the middle of the country's observance of the thousandth anniversary of Polish Christianity. That was a truly national event, and it was really a very ardent devotional celebration, which Wyszynski organized and led, and for which the government refused to allow the Pope to pay a scheduled visit to Poland. That was Paul VI. And they would not let the cardinal leave the country for observances elsewhere. The famous Black Madonna, an icon, a painting housed in a church in the town of Czestochowa, was a prominent symbol of the Polish Christian millennium. One more thing about Catholicism in Poland: the church was allowed to publish in Krakow an independent and often outspoken weekly newspaper, Tygodnik Powszechny, which had wide readership and attracted much attention inside and outside the country. I think it was the newspaper that was once closed when it refused to publish Stalin's obituary. Later it was a vehicle for the views of Pope Paul, and it published early poems of Czeslaw Milosz, a well-known dissident. Still later, I think, the paper also reflected the views of the rising opposition to communism in Poland. And the church continued to be a strong defender of religious freedom and civil rights. It was a consoling refuge, protector, and encourager for the Polish soul. You could feel that every day. It was a real presence in Polish life and one the party and government had to contend with nonstop. The Catholic weekly newspaper continues today.

There's more. Poles were distinct from other eastern Europeans in what I used to call their hopeless romantic fatefulness. It was their tendency to accept life's setbacks with a wan little smile or ironic shrug or a pretense at gaiety. But they would also pursue a goal recklessly sometimes, regardless of the consequences. I called them the Irish of Eastern Europe. The old apocryphal stories of how some Poles opposed the Nazis with pitchforks in 1939, horse-drawn wagons against tanks, seemed to tie in with what I saw in the 1960s. Another factor was the Polish language, which was liberally sprinkled with adapted English words and usages, I think more than in other countries in the region.

Finally, Poland had had a particularly brutal history. It was partitioned several times, and didn't exist at all for decades, maybe more than a hundred years. Well, let's see, from about the late 1700s to World War I. That's more than a century. Then there was Poland's devastating experience during and after World War II. I mean, absolutely devastating. Well, we all know that, but if you lived a while there, you got to understand how deep that hundred-plus years of nonexistence, then the war, then the German and then the Russian occupation, really goes. Sort of a ghastly memory that lives in their bones or their genes. So all these things distinguished Poland from its neighbors in the years we were there.

Q: What about the economy and the cultural scene then?

Economically, Poland was not in good shape. No surprise there. Buildings were shabby inside and out, roads were poor quality, food was generally not available in any wide variety. Polish pork, however, was unforgettable, and in the late spring and early summer, some farm-grown vegetables were in a class by themselves. Poland has a short but intense growing season. Otherwise, meat, fruits and vegetables were usually low quality and in short supply. You'd go to a restaurant and be handed a huge menu with page after page of choices, only two or three of which were actually available. For variety, we and friends used to go to Warsaw's only Chinese restaurant, where all the entrees tasted the same. Cars available to ordinary people were relatively scarce and unremarkable. Poland did not have much of a native auto industry when we arrived there, though I seem to recall that a deal had been signed with Fiat that had not yet produced anything, and later I think there was some attempt or plan to produce a Polish Volkswagen. What I remember clearly is a smattering of cars from the West, and imports from the Czechs and East Germans. The East German cars were noisy, weak, and smoky, nothing to write home about. There was a fair number of expensive western cars, Mercedes and the like, mostly imported by the party and political elite and by the secret police. There were interesting flea markets offering a great variety of items, some of them really attractive. Lots of copper pots and vases, for example, big and small, all dark green or blackened with oxidation, but restorable to a beautiful gleam. Some Polish women, with little to choose from in stores, would cut patterns from western magazines and make their clothes themselves. In fact, one of the remarkable things about the Poles in those days was the style, or maybe a better word is verve, with which many women clothed themselves. And they had very little going for them.

Just one aside here. The U.S. had shipped huge amounts of grain, mostly wheat, to Poland in the 1950s to avoid famine. It was the PL-480 program, in which Poland paid for the grain in zlotys, a currency worth absolutely nothing except in Poland. The payments came to the American Embassy in Warsaw, and the U.S. zloty account piled up stupendously. Over the years, the embassy used some of these so-called counterpart funds for expenses inside Poland, such as salaries of its Polish staff. Also, official American staff could cash dollar checks for the zlotys we needed for expenses in Poland. The rate of exchange was ridiculously advantageous for us, and we could also use zlotys for advance bookings at travel agencies in Poland for travel, car rentals, and hotels when we

were outside the country and in Western Europe. Eventually, the huge U.S. store of zlotys was exhausted, I think by 1980 or so, and that was the end of that particular la-la land.

Culture in Poland was one of the bright spots. It's really something you don't forget. Their graphic arts were really spectacular, bold and full of color. And there were well regarded contemporary artists. The same high level of achievement applied to serious music, with several very accomplished performers and composers like Witold Lutoslawski, who was just then making his name. There was a good selection of concerts and recitals, regularly featuring serious, jazz, and pop artists from the west. My colleagues in the U.S. Information Agency, in the embassy's press and cultural section, were responsible for the visits of a number of those. The Polish film industry in those days was world renowned, truly in a class by itself. We got to know two or three top-notch directors and/or their wives. In the city of Lodz was a very highly regarded film school, if I remember correctly. The Polish authorities purposefully kept their hands off the arts, film, and certain other cultural activities. One of these was entertainment in night clubs, for example. In one of them, I remember first hearing the old joke about people standing in long lines at the butcher's, with little hope of finding any meat available once they finally reached the counter. One man who had been waiting for hours got so exasperated he dropped out of line, saying he was going to communist party headquarters to complain about the state of things. But he soon returned to the line at the butcher's, saying the complaint line at party headquarters was even longer. There was very little censorship in the arts and entertainment because those in power recognized the public's need for a genuine outlet, for some breathing space. The reality of life in communist Poland was grim and repressive. Giving the creative community its head was an escape valve that let people speak their minds and opinions in certain ways. Of course there were limits. Step over the line and you risked being punished. That was why many Polish artists and entertainers operated in a sort of self-censorship, and that in turn made monitoring of what they were doing easier. Polish artists were allowed to sell their products pretty freely inside and outside the country and the government snapped up a percentage of their sales receipts. There was also a full-fledged and famous Yiddish theater. It was still flourishing, but signs were growing that its time was coming to an end. And that brings me to the intriguing story that was unfolding in the late 1960s that involved Polish politics, Middle East events, and Polish Jews.

Q: Well, as I recall it, there was still anti-Semitism in Poland.

TRATTNER: Indeed there was. In 1967 and 1968, a conservative wing of the communist party led by the interior minister, or at least he was its nominal leader, was seeking dominance within the party by stirring a wave of anti-Semitism. It was not very subtle. It aimed at individuals in the party and government with alleged Jewish connections or ancestry or sympathies. The controlling faction of the party had supposedly allowed such folks into positions of influence. Familiar tactics, of course, and familiar scapegoats. The implication was that these people had some connection with what was then happening in the Middle East. It focused on what was called Israeli aggression in the 1967 six-day war. Communist dogma generally viewed Arab countries as friends of Warsaw Pact countries, and of course the Soviet bloc had aggressively developed supportive relationships with

Egypt, Syria and maybe one or two other countries in the Middle East. So the connection between Israeli actions and certain elements within the Polish communist party allegedly sympathetic to Jews was somehow supposed to be plausible. I was now and then asked by Polish journalists what the U.S. view of this struggle was, and of course I stayed completely away from it, saying we did not take positions on internal political events. In the end, the allegations fell pretty much of their own weight, but in 1967 after the six-day war the Israeli embassy was forced to close and its departing staff badly harassed at the Warsaw airport. There were few Jews living in Poland then, and a small Jewish community in Warsaw, and they were of course a key audience of the Yiddish theater. But with the events I just described, it closed down. Things were pretty intense, touch and go. The director of the Yiddish theater was an accomplished actress and Polish citizen named Ida Kaminska. A kind of charismatic figure. She felt she needed to get out of the country, and my wife and I and several others played small roles in making that possible. Of course, we were directly violating various kinds of rules of the time, both the Poles' rules and our own.

Q: How did the '68 invasion of Czechoslovakia affect you all, and what was the reaction in Poland?

TRATTNER: There was never any love lost between Poles and Czechs, and this was clear from any number of conversations I and colleagues had with Poles. So there was little sympathy in Poland when the Russians went into Prague in August 1968. But I think there was a lot of secret interest in Poland in the well-remembered Prague Spring and in what exactly was going on in Czechoslovakia before the Russians ended it. All this also made Poles curious about what it might mean for them at some future point. On two or three successive nights in the early summer of 1968, we heard Soviet trucks and tanks in the streets of Warsaw. It is a distinctive sound. Not too unusual, since the Russians had sizeable numbers of troops and equipment garrisoned in Poland, but you didn't often see large assemblies of soldiers or convoys on the roads. The Soviets tried to make their military presence less visible because the Poles resented it so much. Since tension between Czechs and Russians had been rising almost from the beginning of the Dubcek regime in Prague, we were expecting some kind of serious trouble. My wife and I had spent a few days in Prague in May of that year, and saw much evidence of the Prague Spring, such as a young couple being interviewed in a park by an American network television team. Doesn't sound unusual to you, but it was unprecedented at the time. In Poland, things like that absolutely never happened. We thought the tanks we heard in Warsaw that June were part of a Soviet move to at least physically threaten the Czechs. Nothing happened for some weeks, though, and in August we took a vacation in the south of France. While we were there, the Soviets went in. We flew back to Warsaw a week early because I figured I'd be needed there, and I was right. The Czech events, as you can imagine, produced a lot of reporting work for the entire Warsaw embassy staff.

Q: Was there much give and take with the media?

TRATTNER: Well, let me start with some background. Polish newspapers and magazines were plentiful, and there were a fair number from outside, including some

from the West that the authorities evidently decided were harmless. Polish media, including radio and television, were tightly controlled as to content. The only news agency was an organ of the Polish government, as was the only television station. The key newspapers were a daily paper, Trybuna Ludu, the more or less official communist party organ, and a weekly, Polityka, which in its early days had something of a moderate outlook and reputation. In our time, I think it was generally regarded as the best key to the thinking going on in party political circles. Its editor while we were there was a first secretary of the party, and the newspaper was closely scanned by the party and government rank and file, and by the diplomatic corps. It provided the most accurate reading of party and government policy, and of day-to-day developments and changes in the ruling structure when it came to purposes, intentions, and outlook. The paper was particular, as I remember, about what kind of communism was right for Poland. It did not want a radical, extreme, despotic regime, but rather, an enlightened reasonable approach that really genuinely tried to advance the interests of the country.

Now there was a pretty distinct contrast between the impenetrable and uninformative blank face the Polish media turned to the world, and the behavior and character of individual Polish journalists. A very important part of my job there was to know them and talk with them, and for American Embassy people a number of them were fairly approachable and friendly. Some were less so, but still willing to meet and have a conversation. I spent considerable time in friendly arguments with Polish journalists about Vietnam, they chiding me for example for what they liked to call U.S. imperialist goals, and I reminding them of the facts about the origins of the war. Some of them had known successive generations of embassy officers. My contacts with them usually came over lunch, one on one, or at cocktail and dinner parties on the Warsaw official and diplomatic circuit. We attended literally dozens of these and also regularly entertained at home. In entertaining Polish guests, we would sometimes show a renowned recent American film like “To Kill a Mockingbird” and invite a group of Polish film people and journalists for dinner, and my wife and I once organized an event around the visit of the widely-known American travel author John Gunther and his remarkable wife Jane. We spent a couple of unforgettable days talking and dining with the Gunthers as we showed them around Warsaw and surrounding regions, and grew genuinely close. They were exceptional people, and he was at the height of his reputation, but without a drop of pretension.

We of course were hardly naïve about our relationships with Poles—my journalist contacts were working under the stern and watchful gaze of the Polish authorities and to greater or lesser extents had to do their bidding. Some were willing cat’s paws of the authorities and were used to search out information about diplomats and other foreigners. The word “spy” would be a bit dramatic, but that’s what it basically amounted to in a sort of understated, genteel way. Others really tried to be journalists. They did their jobs because the life interested them despite its obvious handicaps. Also, because it gave them broader avenues to travel, and a few perks, and perhaps because the pay was somewhat better than other lines of work. Or to put it another way, this group knew that Americans like me were mostly off-limits to them, and I think regarded us as curious, slightly risky people with whom it was nonetheless useful, even exciting, to flirt around the edges with.

And I'm sure they liked their invitations to dinner at American homes, and those of other western diplomats, not least for the food they didn't often get elsewhere. These people were not dull or stupid, they were smart and seasoned. But they still had to toe the line, and to agree to try gleaning information from their conversations with us about embassy activities, embassy people, anything they thought might be useful to the people who permitted them to have such contacts. I'm reasonably sure they had to undergo a session with their intelligence authorities after almost every contact with us. Given that, it was hard for some of these journalists to think of themselves as true professionals. Willing or unwilling, the entire official and semi-official Polish community, and many others as well, had to comply with the mandate to collect whatever information was available. Despite the obvious caveats raised in every contact with them, a handful of us saw a certain number of Polish journalists on a regular basis. Our conversations with them were mostly individual, and we knew how to distinguish between polite talk, boiler plate party line bull, and the occasional bit of political or economic information or gossip that was genuinely interesting. Maybe those bits were still deliberate leaks on instruction, but it was also clear that now and then it was on their own hook, maybe because they disapproved of what the government or party was doing. In some respects, it was a silly game, because we knew what they were doing, and they knew we knew.

Q: What about foreign reporters in Poland? Were they many of them and were you involved with them?

TRATTNER: Yes, to both questions. There was a fairly sizeable foreign press corps in Warsaw. In addition to correspondents from other countries of Eastern Europe and from the Soviet Union and China, there were a dozen or so representatives of the Western European media. They included the French, British, and West German news agencies and one or two leading newspapers like Le Monde. Plus two U.S. news agencies and the New York Times, manned for a time by our old friend Jon Randal, whom we had known in Geneva. As embassy spokesman, I saw all of them pretty regularly, especially of course the Americans. The American Embassy was an ongoing source for them, not only for news in the Polish/U.S. context, but also as a check against the accuracy or newsworthiness of information about things going on in Poland that they were picking up from other sources. Naturally, we had to be discreet and discerning in what we were willing to do for them in that respect.

In varying degrees, the Polish authorities gave resident western reporters a hard time about matters like travel permissions, visa renewals, working space, and interview requests. These needs were tools the authorities used to complicate reporters' lives, make it more difficult for them to do their jobs, and maybe to encourage them or their employers to shorten their time in Poland. I tried interceding a couple of times with the Polish authorities on behalf of an American reporter based in Poland who was a particular target of this, probably because he was the most skilled and persistent of the small American press contingent in the country. He never knew, when he had to go outside the country, whether he would be allowed back in, even though his papers were in order. In particular, the correspondent for the West German news agency, Deutsche Presse Agentur, led a tough existence because of Nazi Germany's legacy in Poland. Anti-West

German sentiment was tangible, not just as an official government and party line, but among sectors of the Polish people. Bitter memories were still strong. Of course, among ordinary Poles in those days, those feelings were directed at Germans anywhere, in communist East as well as in capitalist West Germany. We were always amused at the lengths Polish authorities would go to, to try to separate the "good" and the "bad" Germanys in Polish minds. I should add that, in one respect, many Germans returned the Polish dislike in equal measure. That was because, in the post-World War II settlement, Poland's frontiers moved west, and a good chunk of pre-war Germany became part of western Poland.

But I'm getting away from the subject. Much of my work in Warsaw was the management of all press contacts with our ambassador and the rest of the staff. Few Polish journalists expressed interest in coming into the embassy for a talk with the ambassador, which was not surprising. But there were regular interview requests from the resident U.S. press corps, and occasionally from other western European reporters and visiting American reporters. I was also responsible for handling the press on the occasions of what was called "the China talks," in Warsaw. This was a regular but infrequent meeting between the ambassadors of the U.S. and China that had been arranged in the 1950s as a way of maintaining a sort of minimal contact between Beijing and Washington. There were no diplomatic relations between the two; the U.S. had not yet recognized what was then still called "mainland China." Dean Rusk, then secretary of state, still referred to the Chinese capital as "Peiping." Not much was accomplished in the China talks to move the two countries visibly closer or warm up their relationship. But they were symbolically important as the only official contact between two big countries who regarded one another basically as enemies. The era of ping-pong diplomacy was still just around the corner. Yet there was always an attendant fuss surrounding the talks on both sides, with specialists coming in from both capitals as part of the two small delegations to the meetings. There was always a small influx of western media to Warsaw when the talks took place, including people like Robert Novak, but they took place strictly in private, and hardly anything was said publicly about them. That made my job, as spokesman for the American side, something of a non starter. Though I was nominally part of the U.S. delegation, I did not actually sit in the meetings, and was given little to say to the press afterward. Maybe a crisp little uninformative two-liner. Nothing could be said to the press in advance of the meeting, but once it was in session, I could confirm it was taking place. In no circumstances could anything be volunteered to the press—only offered in response to a question. So, in none of our contacts with the press during a China talks session were journalists able to get any hard information—I mean confirmable facts—or extended insight beyond the little that was said officially, on the record, after the meetings ended. Still, the media were intensely interested in the China talks, because one never knew when something might change the glacial quality of them. For the two officials who came in from Washington for the talks, Paul Kreisberg and Don Anderson, my wife and I did throw receptions for the resident and visiting press. One guest was a guy from TASS, then the Soviet news agency, who invited Gillian and me to visit Moscow, all expenses paid. This came late in our time in Warsaw, and there would have been no time to schedule a trip to Moscow, but of course I did not accept the invitation for all the obvious reasons. Still, in some corner of my mind, I always regretted

not being able to do it, just to visit Moscow. Interestingly enough, the talks moved to Paris in the early 1970s, after the Nixon/Kissinger visit to Beijing opened up the relationship. The talks remained at the ambassadorial level. At one point Don Anderson was assigned to the embassy in Paris, in part for the China talks function. I was press attaché in Paris by then, and filled the same role for the China talks that I had earlier in Warsaw. I remember the line I used in response to a question about the talks, something to the effect that one of the reasons for the talks between the two ambassadors was to ensure that a channel of communication was always available. Informative, right? Actually, the embassy's political counselor had frequent contact with the Chinese in Paris right along.

Q: What were your ambassadors in Warsaw like?

TRATTNER: John Gronouski had a Chicago political background, and had been Lyndon Johnson's postmaster general. I think Johnson thought an affable Polish-American would appeal to the Poles, especially in the midst of our expanding war in Vietnam. And Gronouski did appeal, even though he spoke no Polish. Poland's regime, like other communist regimes in the region, was officially up in arms about the war, taking the line mandated by Moscow. This didn't help the already testy, I would say dogmatically suspicious, Polish view of us. But Gronouski sailed into that environment with some gusto. He was likable, irascible, and instinctively political. However, he didn't have much feel for diplomatic niceties. He would entertain visitors to his office with one leg thrown across the arm of his chair, and treat them with sometimes unsettling informality. Though not always. But he was who he was. He was certainly an emblem of the affection that many Poles had for the United States. Many Poles had relatives living in the U.S. You heard it said that the Polish-American population of Chicago was bigger than the entire population of Warsaw. Polish-Americans sent money and other support to their relatives in Poland and scores of them would visit Poland in the summers. The host of a popular Polish-American radio program in Chicago visited Warsaw for a week and was treated very warmly at private gatherings of Poles. The Polish government looked benignly on all this, partly because it valued the inflow of hard-currency dollars from the Polish-American community.

Poles whom we knew and mingled with often expressed pleasure that the Americans, for a change, had sent them a Polish-American ambassador. In 1968, when Johnson announced his decision not to run for re-election, it fell to me to relay the news to Gronouski. It was very early in the morning, and I got the word by telephone from our agricultural attaché who said he had heard it on the Voice of America. Since the Johnson decision would have impact on Gronouski's own future, I called him at home right away. His wife answered in a sleepy voice and put the ambassador on the phone. After listening to what I told him, he asked in a somewhat stunned voice if I was sure. I replied that this was what I'd been told, and repeated what the source of the information was. "Well," Gronouski growled, "you damn' well better be right." I spent the next several hours very much hoping the Ag attaché had heard correctly. Gronouski traveled as extensively in Poland as he was allowed, and I and sometimes my wife were often part of his little traveling group. Some of those trips were memorable, as much for the times we spent in

his company as for the visits themselves. Once, on a visit to Krakow with him, we were rushing to get dressed for an evening event the Poles were staging for him, to which we would be accompanying Gronouski in his car. As we were leaving our room, I asked my wife to call his room to see if he was ready to go. She always smiles at the memory of his answer. He said, impatiently, "All right, okay, I'm coming, just let me get my damn' pants on." Gronouski, I'm sorry to say, is no longer with us.

The other U.S. ambassador for the last eight months or so of our Warsaw time was the late Walter Stoessel, a much more traditional and highly competent career American diplomat, who later was the U.S. ambassador in Bonn and Moscow, and deputy secretary of state. A friendly, pleasant and quite thoughtful guy, with whom I worked quite closely and easily. When we left Poland, he and his wife threw us a farewell luncheon. Some years later, at State, I had the pleasure of working with him from time to time. And once, when I was working for Warren Christopher, when Christopher was deputy secretary of state, we stopped in Bonn en route home from a tough trip to Turkey, and stayed with the Stoessels at the residence. Christopher and I were just dead tired, and I remember the extraordinary hospitality and comfort they provided us.

Q: A couple of more things. Were you and your colleagues particularly harassed by the internal security forces?

TRATTNER: I wouldn't call it harassment. Let's say we were certainly aware of their presence. Our home phones and walls were bugged, and now and then we would be followed on the street or the highway. Our military attaches got the really heavy surveillance, and the Poles made little secret of it. We knew that domestic servants, under pain of losing what for them were privileged jobs with diplomatic families, were obliged to report to the authorities whatever intelligence or personal information they could pick up about their employers. If my wife and I wanted to discuss embassy activities or personal topics like finances, we did it while walking in the park, not at home. It was really a game, and we were used to it. The UB, the Polish secret police, had their jobs to do, and we had ours. It even worked to our advantage now and then. Our cook, very talented in the kitchen, took to stealing little portions of sugar or butter, or perhaps coffee. We didn't mind—she was an excellent and experienced cook and would be hard to replace. My wife did confront her a couple of times about it, but then the situation began to get a bit out of hand. So Gillian and I had a conversation in our living room, complaining in loud voices about the food stealing that was going on. If it didn't stop, we agreed, we would have to let the cook go. The bugs in the wall were listening, and no further stealing took place after that. The Poles obviously didn't want to lose an experienced operative and told her to stop snitching things. She would be hard for them to replace, too. She remained with us throughout our time there, and we now and then would give her gifts of food to sort of seal the deal. It worked out for everyone involved.

The Polish internal security guys provided other bits of amusement. They followed the U.S. military attachés assiduously, everywhere they went on their regular travel within the country. There would be the attaché's car on a highway and, about a quarter of a mile behind, the familiar black Mercedes with a couple of UB people tracking the attaché. The

pretense was always that the attaché had no idea he was being tailed. During one such day jaunt, the car of one of the American attachés broke down 40 or 50 miles out of Warsaw. It was a Sunday and there was no way to get the car fixed. The UB tail car had also stopped at the usual discreet distance behind. There was no nearby town from which to phone for help. Some time went by, with nothing happening. As related by the attaché, he knew he would eventually get help from the UB. Eventually, a repair truck miraculously appeared, the attaché's car was fixed, and the attaché and his UB tail continued their tandem journey. The way the attaché saw it, the UB agents knew that they themselves would never get home that night if the attaché couldn't continue his trip. So they radioed for the repair truck.

Then there was the visit to Warsaw of a popular young Polish film actress, Elzbieta Czyzewska, who was living outside Poland, and what happened with her was not so amusing. She was the wife of David Halberstam, then a New York Times correspondent stationed in Warsaw, who had lived with her for a time in the apartment just above ours, before we got there. In fact, they were married in the apartment we later occupied. They had left Poland before we arrived, but she returned on a visit sometime in late 1968 or early 1969, at the height of the anti-Semitic wave I mentioned earlier. Although her husband was Jewish and though there was still resentment that she had left Poland, she felt safe returning for a visit. Nonetheless, she was followed and harassed a bit, to the point of serious worry that the Poles might not allow her to exit the country again. She had good contacts at the embassy, and we got to know her pretty well while she was in Warsaw. Despite the concern, she left Poland without incident.

Q: Did you get any feel for the university? Was communism sort of a pro forma *philosophy or did you feel that there were dedicated communists?*

TRATTNER: It was certainly *pro forma* for ordinary citizens. They had to accept it, which doesn't mean all or even most of them really believed in it, much less belonged to the party. Perhaps some believed in communism as a theory that might actually work in certain conditions, but few believed in what they saw being done in communism's name. In the official Polish government and party community, there was a lot of *pro forma* acceptance and also there were some who did believe that communism was the answer to the country's future. I never ran into anybody, official or otherwise, who tried to persuade me, however. As in many countries, the universities were potential generators of new political thinking, the push for change, and young Turk-like movements. The University of Warsaw was certainly a center for student activism, and there were visible signs sometimes of unrest. Nothing distinct ever emerged, but there was a time or two when there was a possibility of real trouble. Some of my embassy colleagues paid close attention to the universities, but they were not my primary focus.

Q: What else can you tell me about your work in Poland?

TRATTNER: Well, I've spoken about my responsibilities with Polish, U.S., and other foreign journalists. Often I felt myself to be an extension of the Embassy's political section, doing political reporting based on my contacts with Polish reporters, and

sometimes with other Poles. I handled the ambassador's contacts with the press and acted when necessary as his and the embassy's spokesman. I managed other information activities, such as exhibits and the embassy's film library, all of which was pretty routine. But there are a couple of things to note. One was a well-done color film that USIA provided us about the Apollo 8 flight, which was the first orbiting of the moon, for showings to Polish audiences. The film was really an excellent piece of work, but the narration was of course in English. I thought it would be far more effective if we could rig up some way to put it into Polish. There was a highly competent Polish writer whom we frequently employed to translate English texts into Polish for a magazine distributed in the country through agreement with the government. He had a great voice. He agreed to translate the narration of this Apollo film into Polish and to voice it onto audio tape, with the help of a stop watch I used to synchronize his voice with events on the screen. He and I thus produced an audio tape in Polish, to be played through speakers as the film was shown, with the film's own audio in English turned off. It worked out beautifully, and the film began drawing packed houses twice a day to the embassy's theater. That was in early 1969. The film was still showing when we left Poland and I heard that it continued for several months thereafter. This was a contrast with the normal small number of ordinary Poles who came to the embassy.

One other note might add a bit of color here. With the war in Vietnam at its height, the Warsaw government felt obliged to express its disapproval by staging demonstrations at the American Embassy from time to time. These were billed as spontaneous events in which Polish citizens ostensibly showed their righteous outrage at U.S. policy. In reality, of course, the demonstrations were organized by the government. We always had advance word when a demonstration was brewing, word I believe was actually passed to us by the government itself, to give us time to prepare by closing the front gates, locking windows, and keeping staff away from the front of the building. The embassy faced a broad main avenue in downtown Warsaw and you could see the demonstrators coming, usually a crowd of several hundred, chanting slogans and carrying signs, maybe 20 or 30 abreast. They would halt in front of the embassy, shouting and sometimes throwing rocks or similar stuff. The embassy's political section, in a moment of comic-opera pretense at intelligence gathering, had assigned me to go out and mingle with the crowd on such occasions, to pick up what they were saying to one another. I was supposed to look like one of them, not like an embassy type. So I would take off my jacket and tie, and do whatever else I thought would help and go out on the street. It was of course ridiculous and a bit scary. One of these demonstrations went beyond flag-waving, chanting, and throwing things. Part of the crowd stormed the iron fences and gate and tried to break through. The embassy Marine guards went out to reinforce the gates. No one got onto the grounds of the embassy, but there was a lot of broken window glass and a broken front gate. Meanwhile, I mingled with the crowd and listened. Amid all the shouting and yelling, this was almost impossible, and I never gleaned anything beyond a comment or two on the price of food or about someone's daughter. During one of these events, a couple of high school girls who had come to watch the show smilingly threw snowballs at me. They knew perfectly well who I was.

Q: Did you get any feel for the camaraderie or love of the Poles for their eastern neighbors the Russians?

TRATTNER: No. Obviously, individual Poles resented and disliked the Soviet Union. That was true of at least 75 percent of the population and was very clear all the time. But they normally couldn't or didn't want to show this in any really visible or vigorous way. There was just no future in that, unless you wanted to suffer personally. The party, through the government, enforced Polish obedience to Soviet mandates for the country and complete support for Soviet objectives abroad. As I've noted, Poland had a very strong Soviet military presence. Russian language study was obligatory in Polish schools and monuments to Soviet heroes were part of the scenery. Underneath the surface of Polish submission to Russian will, of course, was a powerful current of Polish resistance, mixed with nationalism, a thirst for contact with the West, and affection for America. It was expressed in dozens of subtle ways, as maybe I've already suggested—everything from night club acts, theater, and films to underground essays or prose pieces on cultural and political themes that traveled hand to hand. Many Poles that we knew made no effort to hide their feelings in private conversation. Sometimes, these feelings were openly expressed, as in the outpouring of popular celebration of the thousandth year of Polish Christianity, or in the pages of the Catholic weekly newspaper I mentioned, or the occasional sermons of Cardinal Wyszynski.

Q: So in 1969 you are off to France?

TRATTNER: I was transferred out of Poland two or three months earlier than my assignment would have normally ended because the recently-arrived U.S. ambassador in Paris, Sargent Shriver, had decided to re-open U.S. Information Service (USIS) operations at some of the American consulates in provincial France. Those operations had some years earlier been shut down for reasons of economy. One was in Lyon, I think, one was in Bordeaux, and one was in Strasbourg. It wasn't a job I wanted. A year before my scheduled departure from Warsaw I had lobbied for and gotten onward assignment to the U.S. Mission to NATO, as deputy public affairs officer, to begin in mid-1969. This fit with my interest in European community affairs and the East-West relationship in Europe. But in late 1968, that assignment fell through due to various personnel timing problems elsewhere. So when Shriver embarked on his re-opening of USIS operations in provincial France, I was available. We left Warsaw in April for Strasbourg. We really regretted leaving Poland, and for a time were actually homesick for Warsaw.

On a personal note, leaving Poland early meant our older daughter missed the two final third-grade months of the school year. There would be no English-language school in Strasbourg, and we didn't necessarily want one for the longer haul, only a chance for her to learn some French first. Before we left Warsaw we had her tutored in French. But we only had two months for that, and it wasn't enough. She floundered a bit at the Catholic parochial school we put her in when we arrived in Strasbourg. During home leave that followed during the summer, she again had French tutoring and by the time we returned to Strasbourg in the fall, she was ready to really pick up the language. And she quickly did. She was then almost nine. She loved the school and thrived there.

Q: *What did you find in Strasbourg, and how did the work contrast with Poland?*

TRATTNER: Well, Strasbourg was and is one beautiful city, at least the central old city—sort of the epitome of a central European town. The food was legendary, the weather pleasant, the people interesting. But overall we didn't entirely enjoy what turned out to be our brief Strasbourg experience because of the internal American administrative obstacles we encountered. Shriver's quick move to re-open USIS operations in Strasbourg took the administrative people at the embassy in Paris by surprise, and they never caught up. The consulate had no office space for me, and no furniture, not even a desk or telephone. They had no housing under lease that we could live in, and there was no housing allowance that would help us rent something on our own. So we spent our entire time in Strasbourg living in the third-floor apartment of the consul general's house. If we wanted to do official entertaining, we had to use that house and borrow the consul general's china and glassware. He was not very cooperative, to put it mildly. No diplomatic title existed for me, although it had been applied for. But, meanwhile, that meant I could not get diplomatic plates for our car, and it spent the first five of our six months there sitting in the consulate garage still wearing its Polish diplomatic plate.

Q: Other problems there?

TRATTNER: No. And the things I just mentioned were just typical bureaucratic snarl-ups. But I would say that substantively my job in Strasbourg seemed like overkill. There was no real need for the services it entailed. The populace of Alsace was very friendly to the United States and U.S. policies. Much more so than in other parts of France. Many people in Alsace (and in the region of Lorraine, which was also nominally part of my territory) still remembered the liberation of France in World War II. A lot of Alsatians of that time had seen Patton's tanks at first hand, pushing the Germans out of eastern France. France, of course, had long shared with us all the important democratic and human rights values. Some very old people felt even more strongly that way, since they could remember the time after World War I when Alsace and Lorraine were restored to France after 75 years or so of non democratic existence as part of Germany. Given all that, there was hardly any need to go out and win the hearts and minds of Alsace, and not even any huge need to stage constant cultural events, place articles in newspapers, or stay in continuous touch with the media and the academic community. American films were shown everywhere, American books and newspapers were available everywhere, including university libraries. A sizeable number of Americans lived in Alsace. I felt superfluous and not very useful, and on that, I got similar vibrations from USIS colleagues at re-opened posts in Lyon and Bordeaux. What's more, the consul general was already very active on the press, cultural, and academic scene that was supposed to be my responsibility, and understandably resented my presence there. So my assignment to Strasbourg seemed a terrible waste of time, money, and people. However, there was one event that I felt was indeed worthwhile and did make a real impact, and that was the visit to Strasbourg of U.S. astronaut Russell Schweickart. He had been a crew member on one of the flights in the Apollo moon series, and his ancestors were Alsatian. But you asked about the contrast of my work in Strasbourg with my work in Poland. There was no

comparison, of course, with what I and my wife felt had been constructive, challenging work and life in Poland. A life and work that involved us both.

Q: Well, the public affairs officer in Paris I assume had to be a high ranking person. Who was that and how did he or she react to all of this?

TRATTNER: Leslie Brady was the PAO in Paris at the time. I had spent a week of orientation in Paris en route to Strasbourg and first met him there. Soon afterward, he was succeeded by Burnett Anderson. They were both senior USIA veterans. USIS Paris was pleased to have these re-opened provincial posts and had expectations that everything would go well. After five months in Strasbourg, I told Anderson in Paris of my intention to request reassignment, and he convinced Shriver to transfer me to the embassy in Paris, where I retained my responsibilities in Strasbourg and the region. The idea in the switch was that I would now get some support for the work I was already doing, or trying to do in Alsace. We moved to Paris in November 1969 and for the next several months I traveled regularly to and around the Strasbourg region and continued carrying out what cultural affairs programs were possible with limited resources. Two things helped. One was a visit of several days to Lorraine by the American deputy chief of mission in Paris, an old French hand around whom we could stage a number of cultural events. The other was the exceptional public interest in moon rocks—small pieces of the moon's crust recently brought back from the first U.S. moon landing and sent by USIA to show in various parts of the world. USIS Paris received one of them and I took it to Strasbourg to put it on display. It was like carrying a semi-precious jewel. Six months after we came to Paris, the USIS job in Strasbourg was closed, and I became the assistant information officer in Paris. About six months later, I became the embassy press attaché and spokesman.

Q: Did you see any signs in Alsace and Lorraine or France generally of the consequences of the Prague Spring?

TRATTNER: I'd say there was a distinct relationship. The Prague Spring of 1968, and the Soviet squelching of it that August, was just one of the political and social developments roiling the European landscape in 1968 and 1969. As people who lived in eastern and western Europe in those years, we saw much of it close up. There was the adverse reaction within western European communist parties to the Soviet action in Czechoslovakia. There were the French student riots, mainly in Paris, in the spring of 1968, when it seemed possible that De Gaulle might be toppled, especially when a sizeable segment of the French labor force supported the students. When De Gaulle did resign a year later, I recall that many looked back to the riots as a strong preamble to the end of the De Gaulle era. But not of the Gaullist era. There was also the wave of anti-Semitism in Poland in 1968 and the struggle for power within the Polish communist party, connected indirectly to the six-day war in 1967 in the Middle East. There was the war in Vietnam. The U.S. was taking heavy criticism on that in Eastern and Western Europe alike. The French intellectual left, which seemed genetically suspicious of the U.S., was particularly vocal about Vietnam, and the Gaullist government was not above encouraging anti-U.S. feeling. That was part of its posture of French independence and

what it saw as U.S. infringement on European sovereignty. Even De Gaulle's encouragement of a free Quebec had been part of that mentality. In ways hard to define precisely, some of these phenomena across Europe were linked to one another. Certainly, when we arrived in Paris, the student riots there were still a fresh memory and you heard people making the connection with what happened in Czechoslovakia just a few months after those riots. When we got to Paris, speculation abounded on what further developments might be expected there. The French government and the city of Paris had for some time been on guard against possible physical assault against the American Embassy by anti-Vietnam war protesters. And the government was also wary of the possibility that further unrest among university students could morph into attacks on the embassy. Sidewalks around the embassy were sometimes barricaded with an impenetrable line of army trucks and busses and later this barrier became a permanent fixture. Finally, the Vietnam peace talks in Paris, which began in 1968, focused additional attention on the American Embassy as a target of demonstrations. More about that later.

Q: I would like to go back to one thing, Alsace-Lorraine. Was there a sizable German speaking area there, and if so how did we treat that?

TRATTNER: French was the spoken and official language for all of that region, even though a number of older Alsatians did speak German among themselves. Much of the architectural style was typically central European, and there were some German-language publications. But the region was long since solidly part of France and French was the language spoken everywhere.

Q: OK, you were in France from when to when?

TRATTNER: From April to November, 1969 in Strasbourg and from then until July of 1974 in Paris.

Q: What were the major activities of the embassy in Paris when you were there? What was it working on?

TRATTNER: The Vietnam talks, important as they were, were a separate operation and, at least technically, were not part of the embassy's main preoccupations. But more about that later. About a year after we arrived in Paris, I became the embassy press attaché, and had extensive first-hand exposure to activities embassy-wide. In the area of French foreign policy and French relationships around the world, these included tracking the French hostility that De Gaulle had decreed towards British membership in what was then still called the European Economic Community. We closely followed developments within the EEC, NATO and such European international organizations such as the old Western European Union. This all related to U.S. support of progress toward European political and economic unity and our interest in Europe's own defense initiatives in addition to NATO. Other items on that list were the mutual and balanced force reductions talks that began, I think, in 1972 or 1973 between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and another East-West forum, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Another key focus was France's view of the Vietnam War, which was distinctly negative and critical of the U.S., though it began to moderate under De Gaulle's successor, Georges Pompidou, but didn't really fade until some time after the peace accord on Vietnam reached in Paris in 1973. Part of the French antagonism to U.S. actions in Vietnam almost certainly was rooted in France's own earlier failure in Indochina, and you sensed bitter satisfaction in some French quarters at our own floundering there. In fact, I can't tell you the number of conversations I had with French journalists, and not only journalists, just on that issue. Their typical view was that we were trying to replace the French position in Vietnam, trying to establish the same position the French had developed over many years, a sort of neo-colonialist position. Only they felt that we were doing it with typical American clumsiness, not the finesse the French had employed. Some even alleged that this was our real goal in Vietnam, not rooting out the communists. I would point out the big differences between what France had done in Vietnam and what we were trying to do, that France had been the colonial power there for generations and right up to the end had tried to preserve it by force, rather than understand the feelings of the Vietnamese and perhaps reach accommodation with them that might have allowed the French to maintain their position, or at least prolonged their presence. France had not done that, and had lost its way there, and finally had to leave. As for the U.S., I said we in a real sense had to pick up the pieces of the French failure in Vietnam, fill the gap, and try to preserve South Vietnam from the communist north, but that we had no colonial designs on Vietnam. I also made clear I had no illusions about our military failures and mistakes. It was an interesting exercise to make the argument, at least.

The embassy also spent time and effort on the goal of reducing French tolerance of heroin trafficking to the United States, the so-called French connection that at one point brought the U.S. attorney general to Paris to press for more cooperation in eliminating it. And there was a range of lesser French-U.S. bilateral issues the embassy was involved in.

Also while I was there, two summit meetings took place between Presidents Pompidou and Nixon, the first in December 1971 in the Azores, and the second in June 1973 in Iceland. By the time of the Azores meeting I was the press attaché at the Paris embassy and even before that had worked with the White House press office during Nixon's attendance at De Gaulle's funeral in the fall of 1970. So, with the approach of the Azores summit meeting a year later, the White House appropriated my services to handle the French press there during the meeting. Later, they asked me to do the same job for the meeting of the two presidents in Iceland. It was actually a mix of handling French journalists and helping the White House press office with the press that accompanied Nixon from Washington. In the Azores, that got me into things like taking a couple of hours to sightsee around the island with Dan Rather and one of his cameramen in a Volkswagen rented by CBS. The Azores meeting was the first of several summits Nixon had in that period with European leaders, in part to consult with them on his upcoming visit to China, but also to talk about security and disarmament issues. Also, France had been a go-between for the U.S. and the Chinese and played a role in arranging the Nixon visit. Further, I think Pompidou had recently talked with Brezhnev and Nixon probably wanted to directly hear about that. Those summits, incidentally, were the first of a

number of encounters I had with Henry Kissinger. The second Pompidou-Nixon meeting, in Iceland, was basically about defining the direction that Atlantic relations would take in the coming three to five years. As I remember, the issues surrounding that were balance of trade, currency reform, the possible withdrawal of substantial American forces from Europe that Congress was threatening, and what else? Oh, arms control. It was Nixon's "year of Europe" and he envisioned a summit meeting of Atlantic leaders. The Iceland summit was to lay the groundwork for that, but it was inconclusive. Nixon by that time was being engulfed in Watergate, and Pompidou was visibly suffering from the illness that killed him the following year. But the idea of an Atlantic summit soon materialized in the series of economic summit meetings that began in France in 1975 as a G-6 meeting.

Speaking of Nixon, I'm reminded of one or two of the atmospherics that have stuck in my memory of his meeting with Pompidou in the Azores. First, the Nixon advance team was intent on ensuring that Nixon would arrive second, not first, at the site where the initial meeting was to take place. The meeting site was a little house in the middle of the main town on Terceira, the largest of the islands. There was something nearly obsessive in the American advance team's intent to be absolutely certain that Pompidou's limousine would arrive first, and in the trouble they took to persuade the French side to allow it to happen that way. Then, second, in the discussions the U.S. advance team had with its French counterparts, I was assigned to eavesdrop on what the French on the other side of the table were saying to one another. The idea was to find out anything the French were secretly planning to one-up the Americans in some phase of the summit meeting. There was even a moment when I was sent with other Americans into the town on the night before the meeting to wander around near the meeting site to see whether any secret operations might be underway. This was really pretty astonishing, and I could only put it down to paranoia. It was very strange.

As for the Paris peace talks on Vietnam, as I said earlier the U.S. delegation was not formally attached to the embassy. It got administrative support from the embassy, but was not a part of it, and operated independently. It's not that there was a total wall separating them, just that officially the delegation had its own separate existence. Bill Porter was the head of the delegation, with the rank of ambassador, I think for most of the duration of the talks. I may be wrong about that. But Averill Harriman had headed the delegation when the talks began, with Cyrus Vance as deputy. Phil Habib was involved, too. The delegation had its own spokesman, even though that spokesman drew on one of my French staff for assistance, and he and I were in frequent touch. I filled in for him when he was away, and at some point the delegation dropped its spokesperson position, and the responsibility mainly came to me and, as I recall, another member of the Vietnam delegation. We kind of shared the work, but by then there wasn't a lot to do there; the talks had become quite routine, and press attention had dwindled. It rekindled when Henry Kissinger moved from the job of national security assistant to that of secretary of state and began a series of lightning visits to Paris as the talks reached their climax. I got involved with those visits.

But to go back a bit, as some will recall, the Paris talks on Vietnam were the result of Lyndon Johnson's suspension of U.S. bombing of Haiphong in March 1968 to encourage the North Vietnamese to negotiate. Johnson announced at the same time that he wouldn't run for re-election. Beyond hoping to end its role in the Vietnam war, the U.S. thought that would also let South Vietnam stabilize its political situation. That would help it to rebuild infrastructure, and re-enter life as an independent entity. As things turned out, those were misguided hopes. But when the Paris talks began, American casualties in the war had risen to a staggering total and were a powerful incentive to ending it on at least ostensibly good terms, or the best terms we could get. Opinions differ about U.S. motivations later on in the talks, in 1971 and 1972 when Nixon was moving to seek re-election. As I recall, North Vietnam was worried that the so-called U.S. détente diplomacy with the Russians and Chinese would affect Soviet and Chinese support for North Vietnam's military effort. So Hanoi changed its tactics in the Paris talks, by agreeing to let South Vietnam remain in existence after the fighting stopped and negotiate an eventual settlement with North Vietnam. I remember clearly that it was about then that press interest in the Paris talks began to revive and we had to increasingly gear up to respond adequately but carefully. During October 1972, two things happened. Nixon announced the U.S. was halting all its bombing of North Vietnam, and Hanoi announced details of a draft peace agreement. That's when Kissinger publicly stated that peace was at hand. His announcement surprised us in Paris because it seemed premature and rash, and because it came just a few days before the 1972 presidential election. Many people thought anyway that Nixon had maneuvered to boost his chances of re-election. They argued then and later that a settlement in Vietnam could have been reached earlier. There was a lot of skepticism among French and American reporters about Nixon's real purposes, as I've just talked about, and I spent time trying to respond to it, but didn't have much to go on. In any case, domestic U.S. anger about the war had by then gone even higher, and Nixon was under pressure to end it. South Vietnam had asked for certain concessions in an agreement and thought it had been deceived by the U.S. It was resisting the agreement that was now emerging, in which the U.S. committed itself to, I think, eventual military disengagement from Vietnam. When the U.S. told South Vietnam it would abandon its support altogether if it didn't come around, South Vietnam was forced to give up. That produced a peace accord, and it was signed in Paris by North and South Vietnam and the U.S., in January 1973. After the ceremony, Kissinger held a massively attended press conference arranged by the U.S. delegation and the Paris embassy, and I remember introducing him and being with him on the platform. Close to the end of the Vietnam talks, my staff and I had gotten more involved in the daily back and forth of news and rumors about the eventual outcome, and were providing the delegation with the extra public affairs support it needed. I guess that's why I have given you this long spiel about the talks.

In any event, fighting soon resumed in Vietnam, ignoring the existence of the International Commission of Control and Supervision established to carry out the agreement. It reminded me of what I had seen happen with the International Control Commission in Laos, when I was reporting on the Laos conference in Geneva years earlier. Within about two and a half years after the peace treaty signing, the U.S. had taken a lot more casualties, then militarily withdrawn from South Vietnam and closed its

embassy, North Vietnam had defeated and taken over South Vietnam, Kissinger had received the Nobel peace prize, and Nixon had resigned. Anyone in active foreign service at the time was an especially horrified witness to how huge, destructive, deep, wounding, and sad this whole episode was for the U.S.

I should have spoken briefly about my earlier days in Paris. My work as assistant information officer was expectably routine, such as overseeing production of a magazine that USIS distributed all over France, assisting the information officer in various things, now and then sitting in for the embassy press attaché when he was absent. I'm sorry if I'm repeating myself, but in November 1970 I left that job and became the embassy press attaché, which among other things involved my moving to the embassy from the USIS offices two blocks away. Our third daughter was born about six months later.

Q: What was your impression of the French media, and how did we deal with it? What about the intellectuals?

TRATTNER: Well, first, I am hardly an expert on French intellectual life, and I'm not about to give you an exhaustive riff on it here. That's a vastly complicated topic, with a very long history. Bookshelves are filled with it. A lot of discussion and observation over the years has focused on the French intellectual left. It was and is a deeply embedded part of French political, social, and cultural life. It has contributed hugely to the country's history and vitality, and also I would say to its legacy. If I think about the French left, I see passionate views, deeply-held views, a spectrum of sometimes brilliant writers, journalists, and political figures. And what else? Philosophers, film makers, artists, and playwrights. Then there's the left's own particular defense of French primacy and independence. And that was an intellectual defense, as opposed to political defense such as the positions of Gaullist governments over the years. As I think I suggested earlier, the position of the left on France's place in the world thrived on the belief that French culture was special and superior. Well, it is certainly special. Whether it's superior, well, superiority is hard to define. In any case, that belief automatically, or almost automatically, meant skepticism, or even cynicism, about American intentions in the world, and also some snobbery about U.S. culture and society.

You asked about French media. Several leading newspapers and magazines represented the French left in varying degrees, and they generally were considered to reflect the views of the socialist or communist parties. But I don't want to absolutely categorize any newspaper because there were many ambiguities in how the French press approached any issue. The newspaper l'Humanite was the daily newspaper of the communist party then. The leading daily in France was and is Le Monde. Not in terms of circulation or popularity, of course. But that newspaper in those days often reflected the views of the Gaullist government on foreign policy issues, and was also very much a newspaper for intellectuals. It tended to be critical of U.S. foreign policy. Le Figaro, which I think was France's leading newspaper when the Second World War began, was still a leading paper, basically conservative, with more centrist views on world affairs. There was Le Canard Enchainé, the celebrated satirical weekly. For it, there was absolutely nothing sacred, except perhaps the fact of its own celebrity and place in the scheme of things. It

lampooned everyone and everything, and was very widely read. And let's not forget the wildly popular photo journal, Paris-Match, and the English-language daily International Herald Tribune, written and edited in Paris, published and sold in much of the world, which continues to be an influential player on the European press scene, and has a unique niche among American media and publishing efforts abroad. I've left out many other newspapers, including some good provincial papers**.** French television was a government entity, with two or three channels, but not controlled by the government. There were a couple of strong outside broadcast channels, Radio-Television Luxembourg and Europe 1, which tended to be more objective and had significant audiences. Among the weekly magazines the big ones were Le Nouvel Observateur, devoted to business and political news, and there were L'Express and Le Point, both associated with Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, who was a flamboyant, versatile, and resourceful French politician and writer. He co-founded the first of those two and patterned it after Time magazine, and founded the second during our time in France and modeled it the same way. He also wrote a couple of well-read books, one of them an international best-seller titled "The American Challenge."

Q: Did you have a lot of contact with the media in France?

TRATTNER: Yes. Even more than in Poland, as press attaché I saw them frequently. This happened either individually at lunch, or at parties and dinners we and others hosted as a regular part of our work, and my wife and I were often guests at events given by French and other journalists. I handled the ambassador's media contacts, arranging a number of interviews of him by French journalists, was the embassy spokesman, and accompanied the ambassador on just about all of his official travel within France. One of the three ambassadors I served with was Arthur Watson, who was in the habit of flying his own plane around France, and I flew with him a couple of times. He always had a co-pilot, who was a professional. At the end of the Nixon-Pompidou summit meeting in the Azores, Watson, who had flown himself to the Azores, wanted me to fly back to Paris with him. But I wiggled out of it because I wanted to return on the French press plane.

Among French journalists I got to know was a reporter for l'Humanite, the communist paper, whom I sent to the U.S. for four weeks or so in USIA's International Visitor Program. That was especially satisfying, since he was the kind of person the program was particularly designed for. I could never have sent a Polish journalist on such a visit. This guy returned to France and wrote a series of positive pieces about the U.S. I set up or helped facilitate visits to the States for more than a few French journalists over the time I was there. Some of them went under U.S. official auspices, and others went on their own and paid their own expenses.

The resident U.S. press, and to a lesser extent French and other foreign journalists, gave us a lot of business. They'd call me for comment on issues or events, or asking to interview the ambassador or to cover some of his activities. Every day we distributed the USIS news wire to newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations, wire services, and foreign media bureaus in Paris and to some extent in the rest of the country, and one of my French press office staff briefed the ambassador each morning on what was in the

French press that day. We also sent a summary of the French press to Washington each day. I handled and sat in on all the ambassador's media interviews, arranged some of the media's contacts with other senior embassy people, attended the ambassador's small team meetings, and worked often with the embassy's political and economic sections, sometimes sitting in on their staff meetings. The press office was also called on to help arrange and deal with what I call the public dimensions of a constant parade of visiting Americans, both official and otherwise, and we would also deal with the expected and sometimes unexpected results of their visits. These visitors included a number of American editors and reporters, many wanting to talk with the ambassador. As you can imagine, members of Congress came through all the time, and I was usually involved in their visits. A number of U.S. Senators came through, such as Mike Mansfield, the majority leader at the time, and Barry Goldwater, who came as U.S. representative to the Paris air show, and Mac Mathias. I was involved, in one way or another, with all of them. I should mention then-Senator James Buckley of New York, William Buckley's brother, who walked into my office one day for a meeting and promptly stretched himself out at full length on the floor, explaining that he had back problems. So we conversed with me at my desk and the Senator on the floor. A couple of state governors who went on to become president came to Paris. One was Jimmy Carter, on a trade-seeking mission for Georgia, whom we included in a big reception we happened to be giving at home while he was there. The other was Ronald Reagan, on a similar visit to France. I handled his media contacts and news conference, and found that, unlike many another official American visitor, Reagan was easy to manage. There was also the visit of future president George H.W. Bush, making the rounds of capitals after being named as U.S. ambassador to the UN. And there was Richard Nixon (as president, not as senator). I've already talked about being assigned to the two summit meetings he had with Pompidou, in the Azores and in Iceland. Nixon also came to Paris a couple of times while I was there, on one occasion to attend the De Gaulle funeral. That's when the White House press office first latched on to me to help handle the press. Then there were the two summits with Pompidou, and just before we departed Paris in mid-1974, the White House borrowed me to work in Jerusalem during Nixon's visit to Israel, and in Brussels where he stopped en route to Moscow. They wanted me to go on to Moscow as well, but I managed to get out of that one because by that time the packers and movers were literally at our door in Paris.

Q: Well, the communist side of things was not off limits to you all?

TRATTNER: No, not French communists. But there was an odd situation resulting from U.S. diplomatic practice of the time. Ordinary U.S. diplomats were not supposed to have any meaningful contact with officials of countries the U.S. did not recognize. In practical terms, of course, that mostly meant communist countries. It had been drilled into us, especially in Warsaw, that we had to be careful. So at a cocktail reception at the Polish embassy, for example, you didn't go out of your way to encounter anyone from, say, the East German or Chinese or North Vietnamese embassies or talk with journalists from those countries. If you were introduced, you would nod, maybe say something minimal, and move on. I think the idea was that, if you did anything more than that, the East Germans in particular might interpret it deliberately as a sign of possible change in the

U.S. posture of non recognition, because the East Germans were anxious to establish parity with West Germany in the eyes of the West. Kind of ridiculous. Then, toward the end of our time in Paris, things changed. There was the Nixon visit to China. That didn't immediately result in diplomatic relations with Beijing, but it loosened things up. Another factor in the change was that the U.S. and East Germany finally established diplomatic relations in about 1974 and we opened an embassy in East Berlin. There was also new focus on the semi-annual talks between Chinese and American ambassadors in Paris, and there was also the fact of the Vietnam talks in Paris, where U.S. diplomats were meeting with North Vietnamese diplomats every day. So all that worked to ease the awkwardness about contact with diplomats whose countries we didn't recognize. It was a refreshing change.

Q: Was the communist party in France considered a tool of the Kremlin?

TRATTNER: Not really, when we were there, except perhaps in some minds on the French right. But they were still a powerful presence, with about 20% of the vote, and could partly cripple the country with labor strikes, especially in the transportation sector. Strikes occurred regularly. The party and its unions were a nuisance but never a threat. They were simply tolerated, sometimes angrily. Eventually the party began to wane and lose impact as the face of the French economy and politics bore less and less resemblance to what it had been before and after the Second World War. And the old ties with Moscow corroded in the face of the long east-west confrontation in Europe and as disillusion with the Russians set in. The situation in France roughly paralleled what happened to the Italian communists, though they were more of a real threat, of course, than their French counterparts. Also, the barons of the French party's glory days, such as they were, were growing old and dying and being replaced by less cunning but more realistic, though faceless, leaders. The party was beginning its decline before I got there and that continued while I was there. But it was still a distinctive feature of the French political landscape.

Q: While you were there what was our attitude towards the socialist left in France? How did we view this?

TRATTNER: Well, the socialists were the main opposition party in the Assemblee, and the second largest political party, with solid and durable foundations. I mean that they were strongly rooted within the French left, the unions, part of the media sector, and, if I remember right, much of the academic community. When we were there, they had never gained a majority in the assembly or elected a president, at least in the Fifth Republic. But in the early 1980s, I think it was, with the election of Francois Mitterrand to the presidency, they were able to do both. In the late 1960s and first half of the 70s, when we were there, the U.S. attitude toward the French socialist party was what you would expect toward a large political party that played a very significant role in French politics and represented sizeable numbers of people across the country. They were serious, if unsuccessful, contenders for political power, and always had to be taken seriously by their opponents. They spent what seemed a lot of time embroiled in their own internal politics. I think the U.S. would have greeted their accession to power pretty much with

equanimity, as was in fact the case when Mitterrand finally made it. Certainly, they were never thought of as any kind of threat to the established democratic order in western Europe. Our approach to the French socialists was not greatly different from how we regarded the British Labor Party or the German SPD.

Q: What was your impression of the French press and the reporters?

TRATTNER: Well, earlier I spoke about the press, about the media. As for individual journalists, they were by and large a fairly hard-working, conscientious group. There were many newspapers, magazines and broadcast media in France, so the journalist community was large. Many of these news organizations could be identified with particular political parties, viewpoints, and the kinds of readerships they served, more so than in the U.S., for example. Many reporters were specialists serving those viewpoints and readers, and did not range much outside those niches. But some stood above that, usually worked for nationally-read publications, and were widely read and well-known, such as Raymond Aron, the lead columnist at Le Figaro. I didn't really have the opportunity to get to know any reporters working outside Paris for provincial papers and the like, and mainly worked to establish relationships with some at the national media level who wrote for and had impact on readers important to us. There were probably 200 serious journalists working for established, serious organizations in Paris. They were experienced, reasonably friendly, self-assured, and established. With a handful of exceptions, they were very sharp, and you had to be on your toes when you talked with them.

Q: Were there any other events that engaged you during this time?

TRATTNER: As I said, President Nixon visited Paris two or three times while we were there. I think I already mentioned his attendance at De Gaulle's funeral, which brought perhaps three dozen heads of state to Paris. On these three or four day visits by a U.S. president, of course, most of the embassy was turned full time to a supporting role. My job was in some respects similar to what I did at the presidential summit meetings in the Azores and Iceland, but it was also substantially different, because this time, in addition to personally assisting the president's spokesman in dealing with individual reporters and keeping the media informed, I had the lead for the embassy in accommodating the scores of American reporters, anchor people, TV and film people, and photographers traveling with the president. This was the White House press corps, and not only them but dozens of other Americans from around Europe. I wasn't alone, of course. I worked with the presidential advance team from Washington, which included White House communications agency technical people, and usually came in several waves over the two or three weeks preceding the actual visit; there was the advance team, the "pre-advance" team, and even the "pre-pre-advance" team. This often seemed like overkill to me, but such was the style of White House operations, and it was a style that had grown with every American presidency since the end of World War II. One key task was to provide a well-equipped facility for the phalanx of press to work in. That meant turning a large ballroom in one of the four or five best Paris hotels into a press room stocked with everything big and small that reporters need, including electronics, dozens of telephone

lines, access to satellite transmission, and so on, plus a facility for the briefings and press conferences of presidential press secretaries and dignitaries that included the secretary of state. During the Nixon visits to Paris, I got to know the two people who successively served him as press secretary, Ron Ziegler and Gerry Warren, and that was why my help was requested for later Nixon travel abroad and for the travels of Presidents Ford and Carter. They just passed me along from one administration to the next.

Q: By the way, what about Ron Ziegler?

TRATTNER: Compared to the impressions I had gathered from all the bad press about Ziegler, he turned out personally to be a fairly ordinary, mild guy who didn't know much about France, or the French, or about foreign affairs, or the world generally. And why should he, given his own background before becoming Nixon's spokesman? I didn't really get to know him until toward the end of Nixon's tenure, by which time he had probably been softened up by all the adversity of that period. The Watergate business was in full cry and had begun to seriously nibble at Nixon and at Ziegler. One sign of Ziegler's isolation may have been in the fact that he called me one day during Nixon's last visit to Paris and said he had no one to have dinner with that night, and invited me to join him. Pretty astonishing. As it happened, my wife and I had another engagement that night.

Q: What was the evaluation that you were getting and your own opinion of Pompidou?

TRATTNER: He was a serious man without a lot of personality. At the meeting with Nixon in the Azores in 1971, he made time to mix with the press once as he entered the meeting site. Some of us exchanged a few words with him, and he was affable and relaxed. Just not a lot of personal charisma. But he had been a politician, and a pretty clever one, held a number of private-sector and public sector posts, and rose to become the prime minister under De Gaulle. When De Gaulle resigned the presidency in 1969, Pompidou pretty much directly succeeded him, though there was an interim president for about three months while an election took place. I thought he seemed practical-minded and bent on maintaining, but somewhat revising, the Gaullist approach and tradition but in far less pompous and exalted style. Pompidou was more of a realist than De Gaulle about France's place and ambitions in the world. More accommodating to the British and more willing to deal first-hand with his American counterparts. His party, as you may know, went through a number of incarnations and name changes over the ensuing years, but remained coherent and in power as the big party of the center-right. We'll always remember Pompidou's first words announcing De Gaulle's death on television: La France est veuve – France is a widow. Pompidou himself fell ill not long after, and died just before we left France in 1974.

Q: Did you get any impression of the French political class? My impression from what I have seen is it seems to be so much disconnected.

TRATTNER: One good way to get into that question might be to note that our oldest daughter attended a very good parochial school in Paris for most of the time we were

there, from age 10 to almost 14. Our second-oldest went to a British and then to an American private school. Those two now have French husbands and live in France. So, though it's been almost 35 years since we lived there, we still have strong, and now continually updated, impressions of the people of France. Our oldest girl made some close friends at her school, some of them the daughters of well-placed and well-to-do French families, and was often invited to their homes and their country homes for weekends and the like. Through that lens, we got an out-of-the-ordinary glimpse of the upper layer of French society, and formed our impressions in many other ways as well, of course. Generally, our impressions were good. Some of those families were politically and socially prominent, but they seemed to have little, if anything, in common with the glitterati social set who were the constant focus of the popular media. I guess you could say they were old money, and they lived gracefully but quietly. There were some impressive and memorable features to their life style, but they weren't flaunted. The same was true of a family living in our apartment building, whom we came to know through friendships that developed between their daughters and our middle daughter. Members of the political class whom I actually knew as part of my job, aside from journalists, were mainly people in government ministries or in government posts and cultural positions, like museum directors, in the provinces. They were like members of the elite anywhere; most had middle-class origins and had managed, by talent or connections or both, to get an education in one of the so-called elite schools that were feeders into the ranks of government and business. Similar to their counterparts in other countries, they tended to obey deep instincts that governed their work habits, social connections, and outlook. They protected their status and smoothed the way for those coming up behind them. Because of the structure of the French system, the national government operated not only at the national level but in the cities and provinces, and had hundreds of jobs to staff, a good number of them with people coming out of the elite schools. The most ambitious, clever, and intelligent would try to work their way upward into positions at the regional and national level of government, as big-city mayors, prefects, and officials of ministries in Paris.

Speaking of Paris, I have to say something about our apartment. It was an exquisite two-floor place in the seventh arrondissement of Paris, with views of the city in all directions. A five-minute walk from the embassy. The rent was beyond what we wanted to pay, but once we had seen it, we knew we wanted to live there and decided we would somehow have to afford it. We were lucky to have it, and later, we got even luckier when an embassy administrative officer, whom we'd invited to a reception, took a look at the apartment and decided to lease it long-term for the embassy. That apartment remained in the embassy stable for quite a while.

Q: How did your wife like the work and what you were doing in Paris?

TRATTNER: She supported and enhanced everything I did. I know that's a cliché for a lot of people, but I mean it truthfully. For one thing, as a hostess, she has wonderful insights into the mix of people that is right for each occasion, and how to bring them together and make it interesting for them, and she demonstrated this repeatedly in the entertaining we did. She was always moving among the guests, like any good hostess, but

she also did it at the many other receptions and dinners we attended, where she could instead have stayed in the same corner talking with the same people for two hours. She gracefully and helpfully put up with my frequently long or late hours and preoccupation with my work, and spent as much time as she could out in the city. She made an already beautiful apartment into something extraordinary. And she managed two children's sometimes complicated school lives while settling our newborn third daughter into life.

Q: Were you picking up any bubbling from the university?

TRATTNER: There always seemed to be some restlessness in the universities. Some of it was about practical things like stipends or living quarters or class curriculum. Some of it was political. Now and then, it was directed against America, because of the Vietnam war. One day my wife and I were walking toward home in mid-afternoon and heard the unmistakable sounds of an approaching demonstration. It was apparently headed for the embassy, but we weren't sure. We knew that our two younger children were probably playing in the strip of park that ran along the river near where we lived, and even though our babysitter was with them, we were worried that the crowd might just sweep through where they were. Then this phalanx of kids came running across the Pont de la Concorde into the Place de la Concorde, just as we were about to cross the bridge in the other direction. Dozens of police with billy clubs were coming after them. They were going to pass us at close range, and maybe even engulf us, so we ran down the quai on that side of the river and escaped. But since we were wearing casual clothes, the cops wouldn't have distinguished us from the kids because they weren't only kids. There were many adults among them. The crowd, by the way, had never come near to where our kids were playing. I should add that while things like this were going on, the American Cultural Center in Paris continued to be a popular attraction, and a sizeable number of visitors there on a given day were young people, and university students. From what I saw indirectly in my own work, and what I heard from USIS colleagues, there didn't seem to be a noticeable diminution of interest in America among the youth of Paris.

I wanted to mention earlier a colleague in the Paris embassy's political section. I no longer recall his name, but he was, to my mind, what a truly effective Foreign Service political officer ought to be. That was because, beyond the traditional rounds of calls on government ministries and social contacts with officials and politicians, he spent a lot of time immersing himself in the country and the people. It was a part of his responsibilities, and he took it seriously. He traveled regularly around the country, sought out provincial and local officials and every kind of French man and woman, and talked with them at length. He was a close and skilled observer, fluent in the language, and he was able to correlate everything he learned. He put it all into descriptive mosaics that were the most beautifully worded, colorful, and informative reports that I ever read. What he gathered up in those trips truly informed his understanding of the country, its politics, and its policies and this was reflected in what he wrote and how he performed as a diplomat. That skill is the true measure of the profession, as far as I'm concerned. There can't have been many like him, and I'm sure his reports were under appreciated in Washington. So I want to pay tribute to him here, even if I can't recall his name.

Q: Well, then, you left Paris when, and where did you go?

TRATTNER: We left in the summer of 1974. USIA had wanted me to come back to Washington, after eight years overseas, and take one of several jobs that were open and that did not appeal much. They were perfectly good conventional jobs, and I had to remind myself that I should accede and take one of them, that it was my turn for a dull stateside tour, and that I had enjoyed more than my share of unusual responsibilities and interesting assignments—press attaché at big embassies in eastern and western Europe, press officer and/or spokesman at important East-West meetings, summit meetings, presidential travel. Right at the end of my Paris time I went to Israel to assist with the state visit of Richard Nixon, two months before he resigned. Now, I knew by all rights I should return to Washington, as USIA was demanding, and, in the nature of the business I was in, do some less-interesting job for a while. But then the U.S. mission to NATO in Brussels requested my assignment as deputy public affairs officer, and that's where we went in September 1974, after home leave.

Q: Can you tell me a little about your trip to Israel with Nixon?

TRATTNER: Well, it was June 1974. Our time in Paris was finished, and we were packing and getting ready for home leave. There were the usual farewell parties, plus two we gave for ourselves so we could include people we might not see elsewhere. We had to cancel and reschedule them after the White House press office asked me to go to Israel. I didn't really want to go; we had too much going on in getting ready to depart Paris. But there was no easy way to refuse. The Kippur War had taken place the previous fall. Israel had overrun the West Bank and the Golan Heights, and Kissinger had been trying to arrange a formal settlement of the fighting and some semblance of stability between the parties involved. That was still in process when Nixon, who by then was in deep trouble with Watergate, went to Israel on a state visit, and later to Egypt, perhaps one or two other countries in the region, and then to Brussels and Moscow.

Q: I think it was considered that he was running away from Watergate.

TRATTNER: Yes, that was the consensus, and doubtless true. So I went to Israel prior to Nixon's arrival, spent a day or so in Tel Aviv consulting with the embassy there, and then on to Jerusalem where Nixon's visit would take place. As in previous such Presidential visits, my job was focused on the White House press corps coming in with Nixon, and it was heavy in both substance and detail. With help from embassy people and working with the White House communications folks, I set up the usual fully equipped press room in the King David Hotel, where many of us were staying and which had been hit by rockets a few weeks earlier when Kissinger had been staying there. In addition, I had to find housing for the incoming American press, not an easy thing in Jerusalem. I took over an entire hotel and worked out room assignments for all accredited reporters, camera and sound people, and photographers traveling with the president. Since doubling up was necessary, care was needed not to put people together, men or women, who were widely known to dislike one another. There was more than one such set of antagonisms, and it was an amusing task to see that everybody would be happy.

Substantively, I did some informal press briefings, and was available to individual reporters, but the main press events were handled by the White House press secretary, who as I remember by that time was Jerry Warren. I of course took my cue from him. A lot of tension and security consciousness surrounded all of this. Nixon went to and fro in heavily-guarded, fast-moving motorcades. In his one public appearance, at the Knesset as I remember, he looked old and tired. During this trip, American reporters traveling with Nixon asked me a number of times off the record how the Watergate affair was being seen in Europe. I told them that many Europeans, and especially in politics and government, were aware that Nixon was in deep trouble, but at the same time that most of the French I talked to couldn't understand why Watergate was such a big deal. That surprised the American reporters, who of course weren't much aware of the cynical view many Europeans took of their politicians where dishonesty and corruption were concerned. For Europeans, scandal was expectable, and they tended to pay it relatively little attention over the long haul. Look at the current example of Italy's now-and-again president, Berlusconi.

Q: You had spent a fair amount of time with the White House press corps. Was there a feeling of excitement among them, that they had sort of brought Nixon down? Did you get any of that feeling?

TRATTNER: No, I really didn't. I didn't see any gloating, really. What I saw was their deep sense that Nixon was about to get what he deserved. At that moment, the smoking gun phase of the battle over the Supreme Court decision requiring turn-over of the Oval Office tapes had not happened. But I don't think there was any doubt among the press that something like that was inevitable, that Nixon was already off the cliff. There was a feeling of satisfaction that finally maybe a more rational regime would be coming to the White House. But they weren't rubbing their hands in anticipation. There was just a simple satisfaction.

I flew back to Paris on an El Al flight, which worried the embassy in Tel Aviv. I suppose there was some danger of attack on the plane, but there was no other flight I could get, and I needed to get back to Paris quickly. It sort of reminded me of my return from the Azores, which I think I mentioned before, after the Nixon-Pompidou summit, when Arthur Watson, my ambassador in Paris, wanted me to fly back to Paris with him on his own small plane. I didn't, not only because I wanted to return with the French press, but because I was a little leery of flying transoceanic with Watson at the controls. It wasn't the same as the short trips he flew within France.

Q: Well, let's talk a little about him. He became notorious because of, I don't remember exactly why.

TRATTNER: Let's note first that Watson has been dead for 30 years or more. He was one of the sons of Thomas Watson, founder of IBM, and had been the president of IBM Europe. Nixon appointed him to Paris in 1970. Watson spoke good French, and was an impeccable dresser. He had a quick and unpredictable temper and, like a number of

others in the embassy, I had one or two pretty nasty run-ins with him. Apart from those, I mostly navigated my daily relationship with him, and my travels with him around France, without problems. He could be extremely pleasant, and the French liked him because of his French, and what they assumed were his close ties to the White House. He wasn't a bad envoy on the face of it, but was seriously hampered by that temper and, ultimately, even more by his drinking, which got him into a scrape that effectively terminated his ambassadorship. He went on home leave in the summer of 1972 and never returned.

Q: How was Mrs. Watson?

TRATTNER: A very nice woman, a sympathetic woman who I think showed the signs of having dealt with a number of problems. Curiously enough, Watson's successor as ambassador was John Irwin, whose wife was one of Watson's sisters. Irwin was a quiet, gentle, likeable person who unfortunately made little impression on the French, I think. Some years later, by the way, Watson's younger brother, Thomas, was Jimmy Carter's ambassador to Moscow.

Q: Well, let's get back to your departure from Paris. You then headed for NATO in Brussels?

TRATTNER: As I mentioned, the U.S. mission to NATO had requested my assignment and I had gone to Brussels ahead of that, to talk with the public affairs officer who had offered me the job. Before the assignment was nailed down, however, USIA in Washington had to be persuaded to agree. That finally happened, but only after the public affairs officer at the U.S. mission convinced his ambassador to persuade USIA. That ambassador was none other than Donald Rumsfeld. We arrived in Brussels in September of 1974, and I went to work as the deputy PAO at U.S. NATO.

Q: You were there from when to when?

TRATTNER: From mid-1974 to January 1975. The public affairs officer who had asked me to take the job had once written a report on his time at the Johns Hopkins Center in Bologna. His report had been one of the things that had gotten me interested some years earlier in the subject of European integration and what its future would be. When the NATO assignment came along, I welcomed it even though it wouldn't be focused as directly or closely on integration as another assignment would be, such as to the U.S. mission to the European Community, as was its title then. NATO was, of course, an expression of European and American military cooperation and common defense. That was very critical, but it was not as interesting to me as European economic and political integration and what the U.S. approach to that should be.

Q: Was the matter of the short or medium-range Soviet missiles a big issue while you were there, or was it later?

TRATTNER: I think you mean the controversy over the plan to put U.S. short-range missiles in western Europe and Europe's fear that this would increase the Soviet

incentive to target western Europe with its own missiles. No, that big argument came later, during the Reagan years. During the short time I was at NATO, one of our basic political preoccupations was France's relationship to the alliance. As you'll remember, De Gaulle had pulled the French out of the military wing of NATO—I think it was in the mid 1960s. And later, NATO moved its headquarters from Paris to Brussels. But the French remained part of political NATO and were intensely involved in its decisions and actions. Their half in, half out status produced a lot of ambivalence in their positions and this was the cause of continual minor frictions between them and the rest of the alliance. One of these was France's so-called independent nuclear deterrent and how that fit or didn't fit with NATO's collective nuclear strategy and planning. That of course had been a U.S. concern for years, including the time we were in Paris. I don't remember anything else of a really important nature at NATO, at least in my brief time there, but the mission was constantly attuned to the atmospherics emerging from the constant meetings and consultations that were at the heart of daily activity at NATO. One major project that we were trying to support as a mission related to the increasing awareness of the dangers of environmental deterioration. Sounds a bit tame in terms of today's hyper focus on global warming and climate change, but in those days people and governments had just begun to talk about it. There was already considerable feeling in the United States that government ought to be doing a lot more. Military activities were seen as among the many sources contributing to the problem. So at the directive of President Ford, the U.S. had been working to make environmental awareness and protection part of the functioning mechanism of NATO. Already, the U.S. had led the move to create NATO's Committee on the Challenges of a Modern Society, and the mission, and especially we in the public affairs section, did a lot of supportive work in the form of conferences and press events.

I should mention here that Rumsfeld, our ambassador to NATO, was called back to Washington just after Gerry Ford succeeded Nixon in the White House. Rumsfeld left in about early October to be Ford's chief of staff. His successor at NATO was David Bruce, a legendary U.S. diplomat in the final years of his career.

In any event, before I really had time to settle into the NATO job, I was offered assignment as deputy director of the Office of Press Relations at the State Department in Washington. The offer came from Robert Anderson, who at the time was the State Department spokesman. By the way, I have used the term "spokesman" here, and will be using it again, and it should be clear that no bias against women is intended. It's just easier to say "spokesman" than "spokeswoman" or "spokesperson," especially if you're using the word frequently. Anyway, I had known Bob Anderson quite well when he was the political counselor in Paris. After Paris, he had been the U.S. ambassador in Dahomey, now Benin, and then was brought into the spokesman job at State by Kissinger. When Bob came to Brussels with Kissinger for the winter NATO ministerial meeting, he made the job offer and I chatted briefly with Kissinger, who remembered me from encounters in Paris related to the Vietnam talks. The idea of working at State, where I would be continuing the kind of work I'd been doing and liking for years, had strong appeal. After three weeks of bureaucratic back and forth between USIA and the NATO mission about whether I could take the assignment, it was approved, and we left Brussels in late January 1975 for Washington. This emphatically was not the best plan for my

family. It had only been five months since we arrived in Brussels. My wife was looking forward to settling into a house we had just rented, and a further two or three years in Europe, and two of our three daughters had already settled pretty comfortably into schools in Brussels. The last thing they wanted to do was move yet again.

Q: One of the things that struck me, and I hadn't paid much attention to it until I started doing these oral histories, is that USIA officers were extremely active, involved in policy and everything else abroad. They get back to Washington and got for the most part stuck in what amounts to support things, personnel, the programs, and so on. Compared to the nitty gritty stuff overseas, it seems like the normal USIA headquarters stuff was kind of dull.

TRATTNER: Well, I can only agree with you. If you were a USIA Foreign Service officer, and were coming back from overseas assignment to headquarters in Washington, you would normally be assigned to a geographic bureau or an administrative function of some kind or other, and it was likely to be fairly tame compared with what you'd been doing overseas. What's left of the old USIA is now part of State, but I don't think that has really changed what we're talking about. And I think State Department people have had similar experiences. That may be a terrible generalization, but I think you'd find more than a few who would agree. In those days, however, a number of public affairs slots in State Department bureaus were more or less reserved for assignment of USIA officers. Most of those jobs were in geographic bureaus. They had titles like public affairs advisor. They supported the assistant secretary of the bureau as well as the department spokesman, and often required quick work, varied work, with the scenario changing day to day. They really had to know what they were doing. They needed good relationships with very senior State Department people. The material they were asked to draft every day for the spokesman's guidance was seen and approved not only by the assistant secretaries of their bureaus but often by the Secretary of State.

Q. So let's talk now about your new assignment in the State Department press office. This began in 1975?

TRATTNER: Early 1975. I spent three of the next five years in the department's press operation, beginning as deputy press office director and ending as the department spokesman. Since I'll doubtless be talking a lot about that as we go on with this interview, maybe it's worth a few words at this point to see how the operation basically worked, at least when I was in it. I know you must have interviewed other former spokespeople at State, but perhaps not anyone who had other positions within the press operation before moving into the spokesman job.

Q: Yes, please do.

TRATTNER: When I was there, the spokesman headed the department's press operation, assisted by a deputy spokesman who also directed the Office of Press Relations. Neither of them, nor the press office itself, were part of the department's Bureau of Public Affairs, as is the case today. The press office supported the spokesman and was also the

daily main contact and information center for the press corps covering the department. When I say press corps, I mean people working for newspapers, wire services, television and radio networks, news magazines, newspaper chains, and other news services, plus TV camera people. The press briefing room was just around the corner from the press office on the second floor, and on the same floor the press office also maintained a press room for reporters whose beat was the department. The room was kind of like a newspaper's bullpen, with individual work cubicles. The press office assisted the press in a number of ways. It answered questions, acted as liaison with the spokesman, ran down and provided answers to questions the spokesman took but did not immediately answer in the daily press briefing, and put out a same-day transcript of each briefing. All but one or two of the press office staff attended the daily press briefing. One of the most important press office functions supporting the spokesman was to task the various bureaus of the department each morning for the guidance material the spokesman would have available for use in the briefing.

I came to the press office as its deputy director, which was the third-ranking job under the spokesman. My responsibility was to make those various things I just mentioned happen as smoothly, quickly, and efficiently as possible, and assist the office director in anything and everything. The press office director/deputy spokesman position, which was the second-ranking job, often did the press briefing when the spokesman was away or otherwise unavailable, and when I moved up to that job, I probably did 30 or 40 briefings in the year I had it. Even as the deputy director before that, I occasionally stepped in as spokesman when neither of the other two was available. When the spokesman did the daily briefings, which was most of the time, he would drop in to consult the secretary just before starting the briefing, to review any particularly sensitive new guidance and, as necessary, to get the secretary's personal instruction on handling questions on any issue. On days when I was the briefer, as deputy director of the press office or as deputy spokesman, instead of one stop at the secretary's office, I saw as many as three people each time—the deputy secretary, who during that period was Robert Ingersoll, then Charles Robinson, and then Warren Christopher; and then also Bob McCloskey, who was the assistant secretary for legislative affairs and an ambassador at large; and also Larry Eagleburger, who at the time was the deputy under secretary for management, but more importantly, close to and trusted by Kissinger, as was McCloskey.

Q: What else did the press office do, and what were some of the things you spent your time on?

TRATTNER: The office helped support the travel of the secretary of state. It also supported the visits of foreign dignitaries, working with other elements of the department. For example, French president Giscard d'Estaing and his wife were among the many who came here for the U.S. bicentennial in 1976. After Washington, they traveled for several days. The press office arranged the credentialing, travel, and billeting of the media covering Giscard, both American and foreign, and as was customary, put one or two of its own staffers in the traveling group to assure that things went smoothly press-wise. I put myself on that particular trip, so I can remember exactly where we went—to New York, Philadelphia, Yorktown, Houston, Lafayette, which is the heart of Cajun Louisiana, and

New Orleans. And to the shipyards at Pascagoula, Mississippi for the christening of a destroyer built for the French navy.

Q: Who was the secretary of state then, and how did the press operation relate to him? Did you do any traveling with him?

TRATTNER: Glad you asked. When I first came to the press office, Henry Kissinger was secretary of state, and his style and approach and needs had deeply shaped the press operations of the department. Much of this was good. A sense of purpose and energy infused the office. People worked quickly. It was a busy place, and busier than it was on the several occasions when I had seen it previously, with reporters dashing in and out, checking the news tickers, asking questions, picking up releases and other hand-outs, and dashing back to the press room. The press office phones rang constantly. When Kissinger was traveling, everything he said publicly was immediately faxed to us for release to the press in Washington. Since he was often several time zones away, someone had to mind the fax machine 24/7and that sometimes meant keeping a staffer in the office through the night, a procedure that seemed mostly unnecessary. And it was tinged with the sense of Kissinger's self-importance. There was also a tangible feeling that a mistake that came to Kissinger's personal attention could be personally costly, and people were wary of him. That was the other side, the not so good side, that uneasiness, maybe even fear, of getting in his sights, getting cross-wise with him, getting transferred to other jobs, getting careers damaged. But nobody underestimated his mind or his ability.

As for travel, I did a fair amount of it, even as deputy director of the press office. In the summer of 1975, the White House asked for me to serve on President Ford's trip to attend the Helsinki summit marking signing of the Helsinki Accords. That was the final agreement of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, known everywhere as CSCE. The agreement didn't do a lot to really change things in Eastern Europe or modify the temperature of the Cold War, but it did commit the Russians in principle to a range of precepts and arrangements that went beyond what had existed previously. That trip also included state visits to West Germany, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia, the latter two stops designed partly to show support for the apostasies of Ceausescu and Tito. My job on this trip, like what I did in previous presidential travel and visits when I was based in Paris, was to help brief and handle the traveling White House press as well as the press in the countries visited. Of all the presidential travel I did, that trip was among the truly memorable. Two things stand out especially, but not because they were relevant to the substance of the trip, just that they left lasting impressions. One was a cruise down the Rhine from Bonn to, I think, Bingen, and back, hosted by Helmut Schmidt, the West German chancellor, on a boat laden to the gunwales with food and drink of every choice variety, with Ford, a lot of American and German officials, and the full White House press mob, on a simply beautiful June evening. The other was seeing so many heads of state in attendance at the Helsinki event, three dozen or so of them. About 35 countries signed the act, and on any of the two days we visited the conference hall, we could see everyone from Brezhnev, Schmidt, Giscard, and Ford to Ceausescu, Tito, and Archbishop Makarios. The entire memberships of NATO and the Warsaw Pact were there, plus some non-aligned European countries. At one point, before the first session, three or four of us

staff people walked through the empty auditorium to get a close-up look at the big stage on which they would all assemble. Next thing we knew, President Ford, who must have had a few spare minutes on his hands, had come up behind us. He shook hands all around, and struck up a conversation, with secret service people standing around us. I remember saying something about the unusual gathering of so many national leaders, and Ford said something about never having imagined he'd see anything like it.

The other parts of that trip were routine state visits, about a day and a half for each stop, and did not present any challenging press problems. I had not been in Bonn for 15 or 16 years or in Warsaw since 1967, so it was particularly interesting to see them again.

I also traveled as part of the Ford entourage to the G-6 economic summit meeting in the fall of 1975 at Rambouillet, near Paris. It was the first of a series of annual meetings that have continued in varying forms, with the meeting site in those days rotating among its members. At least partly, I think the summit initiative was the result of Nixon's push earlier in the 1970s for meetings on economic issues between European and American leaders. The Rambouillet meeting was convened by Giscard d'Estaing and brought together France, the UK, West Germany, Italy, Japan, and the U.S. Canada was added a year later, to make it the G-7. The U.S. hosted that second meeting, which took place in Puerto Rico in June 1976, and I was again involved. This time, as host, the U.S. had to mount an extensive effort, apart from its substantive participation, to accommodate the meeting. That included planning the meeting schedule, preparing the site, setting up transportation and food and housing, and offering the other heads of government and their delegations as much convenience and comfort as possible. Much the same was true for the hordes of media covering the event, not only to credential them and house and feed them, but to provide a press center with all the usual facilities. I was asked to head that press effort, and to bring on board as much assistance as I needed. So I put an experienced press office staffer fulltime on the job of credentialing the media, which among other things required security checks on each media person asking to cover the summit. To set up and run the press center, I brought in the director of the foreign press center in New York, a facility operated by USIA to support foreign journalists covering the UN. As these preparations got under way, I went to San Juan with the pre-advance White House team to check out the scene and nail down the press procedures and locations and formalities that we were planning. Then I returned to San Juan a couple of days before the actual summit to oversee all that and to help the White House press office handle the media. That was the substantive side of my work at that summit meeting, and I had to work pretty closely with Ford's spokesman, who was Ron Nessen, and his group. Of course, not a lot of really deep substantive content was conveyed to the press at these summits; most of the delegations would issue brief statements about each day's developments, and they really didn't say very much. We were able to talk some substance to individual reporters in very general terms and also answer procedural questions. Again where substance was concerned, those summits usually didn't make much detailed hard news, and the closing communiqué was always negotiated in advance. Where the U.S. press was concerned, any detailed reporting of the real import of what did or did not take place at the summits, at least the two I took part in, came a day or two later, in analysis pieces by a handful of veteran economic reporters who were given access to selected

senior officials, like the under secretary of state for economic affairs. Those briefings were not on the record, of course, and the reporting based on them was not attributed to identified people. But they were authentic, and got the job done.

Also in 1976, I was one of two individuals assigned to support Kissinger's media activities during his two-week trip to Africa in September. His aim was to jump-start negotiations in the conflict between Rhodesia and the neighboring so-called front-line states that were supporting an end to white rule in Rhodesia, a former British colony. This is terribly oversimplifying it, I know, but somewhere in the mid 1960s, what was then Southern Rhodesia had declared independence from the UK, changed its name, and set out on its own under the white-minority rule of Ian Smith, the prime minister. As I remember it, within five or six years, he was fighting an organized and armed insurgency aimed at getting black majority rule in the country. It was being led by several internal movements, like the Zimbabwe African National Union. I think that was its name. The insurgency was supported from outside by guerilla groups based in Zambia, Mozambique, and I think Botswana as well. Robert Mugabe led one of those guerilla groups. Tanzania was trying to mediate the conflict, I think, and Kenya and Zaire were marginally involved, but I don't know where the line was between active support and less visible support. On the other side, South Africa supported the Smith government. By the mid 1970s, Rhodesia's economic and military situation had gotten pretty bad. There was a lot of tension between Rhodesia and the surrounding countries. South Africa was continuing its support for Smith, or was it? Yeah, I think that's right, but South Africa was also reconsidering its support for Smith, getting worried about the possible fate of the whites in Rhodesia at the hands of a black majority that outnumbered them maybe 20 to one, and also worried about other implications of continuing violence. The possibility of a really bloody end to all this was looming, and inevitably, the U.S. was seen as maybe being able somehow to settle the thing peacefully. One reason for that was that U.S. policy toward white regimes in Africa had begun to change, or I should say, begun to harden. Our position on South Africa's racial policies had been largely uncritical, but that was changing. Africans naturally had detested that position, but some of those closest to the Rhodesia problem also saw us as a friend of South Africa, and therefore maybe able to exert some pressure there to push Smith harder in the direction of black majority power in Rhodesia. So Kissinger went to Zaire, Tanzania, South Africa, and Kenya, and I think also to Zambia. He had visited some of those same countries earlier that year, and also one or two in West Africa. On this second round, I was assigned to support him press-wise in Tanzania, South Africa, and Kenya. I know he also visited Zaire, but I'm not sure about Zambia. About a dozen reporters who covered the State Department traveled with him.

I think it's safe to say that Kissinger's talks in Africa produced little if any immediate progress on Rhodesia. The conflict wasn't settled until several years later, and it was the Brits who finally pulled it off, in negotiations in London. Again, I'm oversimplifying. Rhodesia was renamed Zimbabwe, and I think Mugabe's power dates right from that point. But Kissinger's effort certainly helped the push, especially the South Africa dimension. I guess on that trip I was more involved with him than at any other time. He would outline what he wanted to tell the press, and I would go out and brief them. Larry

Eagleburger was also on the trip, and occasionally talked informally to some of the American press.

In Dar es Salaam, Kissinger asked me to attend a press conference of the president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere. Nyerere was the leading African mediator, or would-be mediator, of the Rhodesia dispute, and was of course an important interlocutor for Kissinger. He was doing the press conference in conjunction with Kissinger's visit, and in advance of his meeting with Kissinger, who therefore wanted to know exactly what Nyerere had told the press, immediately, without waiting for news reports. I went to the Nyerere event, and then briefed Kissinger in his hotel room. In South Africa, in Pretoria, Kissinger spent a couple of days in meetings with Prime Minister Botha and other officials and in Nairobi another day or so, same general thing.

Q: Did you get any feel for Kissinger on that trip? Was he frustrated with these guys or did he engage or how did you see it? It was his one main exposure to Africa.

TRATTNER: Well, it was hard to tell. I felt that he thought that he was doing the indispensable, filling the indispensable role. As I said, the Rhodesia problem wasn't resolved until some time later. But in those days he was trying to bring them together, to get the other surrounding African countries, the front line states, to work out a common position, and probably probing for intelligence that might provide an opening, or a key, to what Smith's thinking was as seen by the front-line leaders. South Africa was probably the key focus for him, given its support for Smith up to that point. I think he felt he was being effective, doing what was possible. And, let's not forget, he was showing U.S. concern for Africa. His going there focused a great deal of media and other attention on the fact that the U.S. was taking a role. We were coordinating this with the Brits, but the Brits, I think, were content in 1976 to let the U.S. handle a situation that they had left hanging. Later it fell to them, after all, to resolve it. It's interesting that, today, we again have South Africa supporting the ruler of the country, or at least refusing to join in the criticism of him. Only this time it's Mugabe and Zimbabwe, not Smith and Rhodesia. To me, more than a bit ironic.

Q: So two months after that, Jimmy Carter was elected, and things at the State Department changed, of course. How did it affect you?

TRATTNER: Well, positively. For one thing, I moved up in the spokesman hierarchy. To go back just a bit for the sake of the history, at some point in the summer or early fall of 1976 Bob Funseth, who had replaced Bob Anderson as State Department spokesman earlier that year, left for a new assignment, and Fred Brown, who was the deputy spokesman and press office director, became acting spokesman for the rest of the Ford presidency. When he wasn't around, I did the daily press briefing. That was the situation through the Carter transition and into the new administration and the arrival in about February 1977 of Hodding Carter, who had been designated as new spokesman. His job was actually assistant secretary for public affairs, with the spokesman job as part of that. This was a change in structure, and I have some thoughts about it which maybe I'll talk

about later. Hodding was awaiting Senate confirmation, so didn't actually take over his position until April or May.

Meanwhile, USIA wanted me back and was getting ready to pull me out of the State Department. I didn't have any clue about what they would give me as an assignment, but figured it would be at USIA headquarters. While that was going on, Hodding Carter asked if I wanted to be his deputy. He was preparing to bring Tom Reston, one of James Reston's sons, the senior James Reston, into the press operation, and wanted me to take over as deputy spokesman and press office director for a year while Tom, who was a lawyer, was learning the business. I agreed, and USIA was persuaded to leave me at State. I began the new responsibilities in about May, 1977 and almost immediately found myself doing the daily press briefings when Hodding departed on travel with the secretary, Cyrus Vance. I also had the press office to run, with the usual administrative and personnel details. The office had a staff of half a dozen mostly young officers, in both the foreign and domestic services. It was just as busy as always, but with a less frantic or harried approach than before. That was the general new atmosphere in the department as a whole, after the Kissinger era. Where Kissinger had been seen as a sort of tyrant, it was soon obvious that Vance was much more mild mannered, gentler, and less visible.

Q: What about travel? Did this new job include more travel?

TRATTNER: Well, it did. Although the spokesman always traveled with the secretary, Hodding asked me to replace him on several trips during the year I worked with him. It was really quite generous of him to share some of the most interesting parts of his job. So I first went with Vance as his spokesman to the ministerial meeting of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in June, in Paris. Similarly, later in 1977, it was in October, I think, I traveled with Vance to Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela. He had two basic missions on that trip, human rights and nuclear proliferation. In Buenos Aires, he met with the ruling military junta and delivered a list of 7,500 names of people who were believed to have disappeared in Argentina during the regime's dirty war, as it was labeled, against left-wing terrorists. These missing people, the famous *desaparecidos,* had vanished off the streets and from their homes, and there were reported to be many thousands of them. Reports of all sorts abounded about what happened to them, and some of it was pretty gruesome, and there was every reason to believe it. The "disappeareds," and other aspects of the junta's behavior, had been the subject of building international criticism and pressure on Argentina. In one of the city's main squares, some of us saw a demonstration of relatives of these people, mostly women. This was the same Argentine regime the British went to war against, in the Falklands in the 1980s. Vance also addressed with the junta U.S. concerns about nuclear reactors that the Argentines were suspected of diverting to production of weapons-grade material. Nuclear weapons were also his main theme in Brasilia, where he met with the president and the foreign minister, and issued a joint communiqué concerning the Latin American agreement on banning nuclear weapons, which I think was called the Tlatelolco Treaty. We spent a couple of days in each of those capitals, and the visit to Caracas on the way back was just a drop-in of two or three hours.

You may remember that Jimmy Carter about halfway through his term made state visits to a number of countries, maybe ten or 11, and split that travel into two major twin trips. Vance accompanied him on both. Hodding Carter went on one of those, and asked me to do the other one. It began in Warsaw in late December 1977 and ended in Paris in early January 1978 with Tehran, New Delhi, Riyadh, and Aswan in between. I was traveling as Vance's spokesman, but as this was a presidential trip, I had to stay fairly close to Jody Powell, who of course was Carter's press secretary. This, by the way, was the trip where a phrase in Carter's arrival speech in Warsaw was mishandled by his State Department interpreter. Carter said something like, "I want to know the Polish people." But the interpreter's first language was not Polish, it was Russian, maybe. And what he said, translating Carter, was the equivalent of, "I want to have carnal knowledge of the Polish people." That naturally made press headlines and stories in Poland for a few days and outside Poland as well. Carter looked bad, though it was obviously not his fault. Also, and this was a major aspect of the trip, we were in Tehran on New Year's Eve, and the Shah threw an unbelievable feast in the big hotel where we were staying for the entire White House press mob and many White House people and Americans based in Tehran. At a state dinner, Carter toasted the Shah.

Q: Wasn't that close to the end of the era of the Shah in Iran? Wasn't he in trouble?

TRATTNER: Indeed he was. That's why I think this was a memorable feature of this Carter trip. We didn't know it at the time, of course, but we were seeing some of the last big moments of the Shah era. He had of course been running a police state for years and gradually descending into tyranny and now was coming under increasing criticism within Iran, on issues like police brutality and suppression of democracy, and even of anti-Islamism. He had exiled Khomeini back in the 1960s. But now it was the old story of hubris and denial of reality, and refusal to see that your time is at an end. How many times have we seen that? When Carter visited Tehran, the Shah's regime was already shaky. The U.S. had almost blindly given him full support for years, especially in the Nixon period, embracing him as an important ally, and giving or selling him abundant weapons of war. True, Iran was important to us as a bulwark against Soviet designs in the Middle East, not to mention as a base for aerial surveillance of the Soviet Union. It was the old Cold War tactic—you embraced any country willing to line up against Moscow, no matter how rotten or despotic its government. It made us no friends in Iran. I'm leaving out tons of detail here, but the debate over U.S. Iran policy was heating up, and some professionals were beginning to question it. I remember that one of them was Henry Precht, a career diplomat who had a lot of experience in Iran, I believe, and later headed the Iran desk at State. But it was too late. Just a year after that big New Year's Eve gala with Carter in Tehran, the Shah was gone and Khomeini was back and in power.

Q: So, any more travel?

TRATTNER: That Carter trip ended in Paris, and the White House mob went back to Washington, but Vance continued on an additional mission. We broke away from the presidential framework, and Vance and the State Department contingent took his own

plane to Budapest. There, he represented the U.S. in the official return to Hungary of the Crown of St. Stephen, who I think was a king of Hungary in the 11th or 12th Century, maybe. In any case, the crown was a gift of the Pope of the time and became a strong symbol of Hungary's emergence as a country, or I should say as a Christian country. In World War II, the crown was taken out of Hungary to keep it out of German and, I guess, Soviet hands, and later given to the custody of the U.S. Army. And I believe it stayed in American possession until Jimmy Carter decided to return it in 1979. A well-timed gesture. I remember a very grand and quasi-sacred ceremony in Budapest, attended by top Hungarian officials and many other notables, including Adlai Stevenson.

That pretty much covers my year as deputy spokesman at State, I think. During that time, in the absence of the spokesman, as I may have mentioned, I did the daily press briefing a hundred times or more. Besides giving me excellent experience in that line of work, I got a really deep look at the policy process as it relates to the public arena, and began to understand why policy making has to include the public dimension, from the beginning. In other words, you can't develop policy without considering how it will play in public, without thinking about how your spokespeople, among others, will explain or defend it, how you will answer questions about it, whether the timing is right, and so on. The time to think about the public aspects of anything you do in government is when you're planning it, not after the fact. The fact is that timely advance consideration of the public aspects of a policy can sometimes change its substance or tone or timing.

I do remember one other event that was notable, in the spring of that year, 1978, and that was the 30th anniversary of the launch of NATO, or maybe it was of the treaty signing. I think the occasion was the spring meeting of the NATO foreign ministers, where the meeting site rotated among the members, and it was the turn of the U.S. to host it. NATO had decided to duly mark and observe the 30th anniversary, and there was a lot of additional press work and ceremonial detail compared to a normal annual ministerial. I can't remember precisely, but there may have been some heads of government there. I mainly remember coordinating our work with the White House press office, and personally with Jody Powell.

Q: I would like to go back and talk a bit about the transition from Kissinger to Vance. You were there when Hodding Carter came along. Was there a change in attitude in how one dealt with things and all?

TRATTNER: Well, I may have already said that the new secretary of state, Cy Vance, brought a new atmosphere to the department, markedly different from the Kissinger era. The department began to react accordingly. In the press operation, I was the acting spokesman most of the time until Hodding Carter came on. He was, he is, a pretty smart guy, a very nice guy, a capable guy. He was not a career diplomat; he was a journalist, with a crusading Mississippi newspaper editor father who had won a Pulitzer Prize for his opposition to racism and support of civil rights. Hodding was one of the young Turks in the Democratic Party in the McGovern/Carter era and worked in the Carter campaign. He handled himself extraordinarily well.

Vance may have brought a less aggressive, more open, less cunning approach to diplomacy than his predecessor had, but he threw himself vigorously into Jimmy Carter's foreign policy agenda. Early on he launched a new attempt to advance the state of our intercontinental ballistic missile relationship with the Russians. In his first months he visited China, Latin America, Europe. He laid the groundwork for the establishment of U.S. diplomatic relations with China. He rapidly got deeply into the Middle East, and was heavily involved in the Camp David agreement of 1978 which established diplomatic ties between Egypt and Israel. We in the press operation had a lot of work connected to that. That was a big moment for American policy in that part of the world and a lot of people, including many in the State Department, believed that the crossing had finally been made from impossible to possible in the Israeli-Palestinian struggle. I myself wasn't too sure. But one big mistake in that era was the U.S. failure to recognize that the days of the Shah in Iran were numbered and to start adapting policy to prepare for, or be ready for, change in Iran.

Q: You mentioned a while back that USIA wanted you back with them. Then you had the deputy spokesman assignment. That was for a year, right? I assume USIA still was after you. What finally happened?

TRATTNER: Well, USIA had loaned me to State originally for two years, and then that was extended for more than a year, so USIA understandably wanted me back in its ranks. The personnel folks there had been talking to me about a few jobs at USIA headquarters, and they were jobs I didn't want. Still, as the spring of 1978 wore on, I was accustoming myself to the idea of a job at USIA.

Then, in about May, Warren Christopher, the deputy secretary of state, sounded me out on joining his staff as a special assistant. He and I had come to know one another a bit when I, as deputy spokesman, was doing the briefing on a given day and would stop in to see him as part of the clearance process for press guidance. Chris had a small staff that included about six officers, five working as special assistants, and one as the executive assistant. He had achieved distinction not only as a partner and then managing partner in a major Los Angeles law firm but in government as deputy attorney general in the Johnson Administration, and had served on many academic and civic boards and commissions at the national, state, and city levels. For example, I remember that he had chaired the Stanford board of trustees and also the Carnegie Corporation board, and was a senior member of a governor's commission on the Los Angeles riots in the mid 1960s. And much else, too. He was quite an accomplished individual in the public and private sectors. Not long before I joined his staff, he had negotiated in Congress the transfer to Panama of the Canal, which was a long and very hard-fought battle for congressional approval. Though there was huge criticism of the Carter Administration for embarking on that effort, there was no other outcome of what was a growing crisis over ownership and management of the Canal that would have been better for the U.S. That was very clear, and since the Canal settlement, I don't believe any of the major disasters that were predicted as a result of the transfer have materialized. Christopher achieved that. What he proposed to me was that I work as a special assistant for a year, then take the executive

assistant position. I spent a very busy, instructive, and happy two years with him. When I left the press office, Tom Reston took my place there and as deputy spokesman.

Q: Who were the other assistants in Christopher's office?

TRATTNER: When I arrived, Stephen Oxman was the executive assistant, a lawyer from outside the department, though I think he may have had some previous foreign service experience. Steve later was assistant secretary for European affairs when Christopher was secretary under Clinton. The roster of assistants changed fairly often, so some of these people either served contemporaneously, or overlapped, or came later in my time there. There were two or three other outside lawyers, bright young guys. Doug Dworkin and Bob Seitz were two of them. Marsha Barnes and Wendy Chamberlin, both career officers, were other special assistants.

Q: Talk about the work you did with Christopher.

TRATTNER: Well, let's look for a moment at Christopher's own job, because my job was a close function of his. As deputy secretary, he was the department's chief operating officer, but also regularly stepped in as acting secretary when the secretary, who was Cyrus Vance, was traveling or away from the department for any length of time. That's the standard way that deputy secretaries function. In addition, Christopher regularly attended the meetings of the deputies committee of the National Security Council, which was the second highest decision making body on national security and foreign policy issues. And, as acting secretary, Chris would attend meetings of the National Security Council principals committee, where the president sometimes presided. So from all this, you get an idea of the broad sweep of responsibility. What it really came down to was that Christopher had to know everything going on in foreign policy and in the department of state.

Just about every major policy proposal, and a lot more besides, went through him. Many times he was the decision maker himself, but for issues that went to the secretary for decision, it was Christopher who made the recommendation for disposition, whether to approve or disapprove or send back to the originators for reworking or reconsideration. To cover all these bases, he simply divided all the work-ups among his six assistants, each with a subject area of responsibility. It was our job to review proposals carefully, see what revisions might be necessary and what questions needed asking, and work with the originating bureaus and offices to get that done. Often there were clashes between bureaus, which Christopher mediated, usually with our assistance and recommendations. Some of them were fierce, such as the battles over the extent to which human rights considerations should be part of a policy formulation or action decision. You'll remember that Jimmy Carter was determined to emphasize human rights in his foreign policy, and this emphasis was reflected by the creation of a human rights office at State, headed by Pat Durian. Especially in Latin American policy making, but not only there, human rights was an issue. In those days, for example, the U.S. was training, or had been training, groups of military officers of several Latin American nations, among them countries run by military juntas or other kinds of authoritarians, where human rights was, shall we say

delicately, not the prime consideration of domestic policy. The human rights people at State felt it was their mission to question these training missions, to halt them, or limit them. They didn't want to give aid and succor to regimes they believed were violating human rights. So they wanted to weaken U.S. support for those regimes, such as training their military people. But those objectives had to be weighed, of course, against other U.S. interests and concerns regarding these countries. And many of those struggles played out in the deputy secretary's office. There was some serious anger involved, and also, I'm sorry to say, some snickering by a few senior people at State at the idea of taking human rights seriously when it came to hard-core American interests.

In addition to these broad general responsibilities, Christopher had a number of specific assignments. They ranged from the very significant, like the Panama Canal negotiations, to the important but routine, such as the World Administrative Radio Conference. What is the WARC? Do we really want to take time for this? Okay, in a minute, I just want to finish the point that Christopher, like most deputy secretaries, had numerous specific assignments. Some of them were ongoing, long-term issues, like human rights, and others were things of a more spontaneous nature that arose on short notice and needed quick attention. For example, Khomeini's assumption of power in Iran in 1979 changed balances and equations throughout the Middle East and South Asia and Christopher undertook a number of missions overseas in response to that and other related developments, as the U.S. adjusted its stance and its planning. I was among those who went with him on those trips. Some were to meet with heads of government and/or senior foreign ministry types, to consult, or exhort, or to fact find, or observe, or warn, or combinations of those. I don't think there's a need for the details of these conversations, since their intent was straightforward and obvious. On one such trip in early 1979 we visited Hong Kong to follow up with American intelligence officials at the U.S. consulate general there about China's December 1978 attack on Vietnam in displeasure at Vietnam's invasion and occupation of Cambodia, China's ally. The Vietnamese invasion had ended the Pol Pot regime, and China's incursion into Vietnam had lasted only about a month. Next day we were in Bangkok to meet for a couple of hours with Mort Abramowitz, then our ambassador there. Then on to New Delhi, and then Islamabad, where the key subject was Pakistan's unacknowledged nuclear weapons program. It had long been virtually an open secret, but as you remember, it greatly worried us all that time, for all the obvious reasons, with the additional complication now of the change in Iran. The final stop on that trip was Riyadh, and then we flew home via Europe, which added up to a trip around the world in something like six days. In 1978, I think it was, Christopher was sent on a mission to Taipei to explain our decision to establish relations with Beijing. Taiwan was naturally very unhappy about it, and in a not-very-spontaneous demonstration along Christopher's Taipei airport route, he and some of his party, including Steve Oxman, were in real danger of being badly injured or killed. The motorcade was stopped and their cars were roughed up, and there were some minor injuries. It really looked very bad for a few minutes, until Taiwan army units broke it up. The Taiwanese authorities had simply let things get out of hand, and they later apologized, as I recall. That was a trip I didn't go on.

There was also a consultative mission to Ankara in early 1979, focused on Turkey's increased strategic value to the U.S. vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in the wake of the loss of Iran in that respect, and we also stopped overnight in Bonn. The seizing of American Embassy staff in Tehran in November 1979 meant the U.S. needed close consultations with allies and, as I mentioned a minute ago, Christopher traveled at least twice within two or three months to make the rounds of several European capitals and NATO headquarters. I remember those as lightning swoops in and out of cities, quick stops at foreign ministries and quick meetings with American ambassadors. Though once we overnighted in Rome, at the American residence, complete with a dinner there with Anthony Quinn, one of whose new movies was shown. Typically, on these trips, Christopher's party included one or two people from whichever regional bureau at State was involved in the issue, someone from the National Security Council, perhaps a CIA type, plus me and maybe one other Christopher assistant. I did most of these trips as his executive assistant, in 1979-80, but also several earlier as a special assistant. In early 1980 there was a trip led jointly by Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's national security assistant, and Christopher, to Islamabad. About a dozen reporters who covered the White House accompanied us on this venture, which took place about a year after the Russians had invaded Afghanistan. There were discussions with Zia, the Pakistani president, and a visit to the destroyed American Embassy, a brand-new contemporary building which we had visited less than a year earlier. It had been burned in an attack related to the seizure of Americans in Tehran. We also took a day visit to the Khyber Pass area in a Pakistani army helicopter, which flew with open doors at treetop level from Islamabad to Peshawar. There we boarded a bus to go up to the pass. At the pass, we gazed into Afghanistan from an army observation tower, then went to a large camp area sheltering hundreds of refugee Afghan fighters, Mujahideen, who had fled to Pakistan after the Russian invasion. I remember a huge upland field in knee deep mud, big tents where we ate mutton and rice and drank tea, shivering in a cold wind, surrounded by tough, bearded types with weapons slung and fierce, angry eyes. They were anxious to cross back into Afghanistan and take on the Russians guerilla-style but, at the moment, had no hope of doing so anytime soon. Christopher and Zbig were there to offer encouragement and vaguely promise help. Of course, some of those people, perhaps most of them, later morphed into Taliban fighters in the rapid churning of Afghan politics and ideologies and force dispositions. We returned to Islamabad, and then stopped in Riyadh for meetings with the Saudis. There was also travel within the U.S., perhaps a dozen times to places like Seattle and Los Angeles, most connected with the hostage crisis in Tehran, and these were basically public affairs trips where Christopher did speaking and television appearances. There was a trip as well to Mexico City at some point during my time with him. One day I was asked on short notice to go with Vance on a quick speaking trip to Dallas. It was down and back the same afternoon and evening on one of those small business jets. Just the secretary of state and I, and a security detail, on the plane, and he and I had some interesting conversations. When Jimmy Carter went to Mexico on a state visit, Hodding Carter asked if I could replace him and accompany Vance on the trip, and with Christopher's assent, I did, again flying on Air Force One. It was a routine state visit, and I again worked pretty closely with Jody Powell.

I've left for last Christopher's longest foreign assignment as deputy secretary and among the two or three most important, and that was his protracted negotiations in Algeria through Algerian intermediaries for the release of the American embassy people who had been taken captive in Tehran. Christopher spent many days in Algiers in the fall of 1980 and succeeded in putting together an agreement that finally sprang the American hostages in January 1981. Iran waited until Reagan had been inaugurated before releasing them, but the agreement that freed them was Christopher's work. By the time he went to Algeria, I had left his office to become the department spokesman. The guy who did the really invaluable work for him in that episode was Arnold Raphel, Vance's executive assistant then, who was assigned to work with Christopher in Algeria. Arnie and I had worked together for a year or so, as executive assistants to the secretary and to the deputy secretary, respectively, and we got to know one another pretty well. He was a greatly revered and super gifted career foreign service officer, with a deep background in South Asia, who later was U.S. ambassador to Pakistan and was killed in a plane crash while traveling with Zia. And Arnie was also a true friend.

Q: Talk a bit more about your work with Christopher that wasn't with him on the road.

TRATTNER: You're right, it does sound as if I did nothing but travel during my time with him. Actually, of course, I spent most of my time with reports, memoranda and action proposals generated by the regional and functional bureaus and sent up the line to Christopher for review and sign off. He didn't need to see every one of these, naturally, and his six assistants represented his review authority for much routine material. Anything we thought he should see, however, we passed along to him, perhaps adding a comment or even summarizing longer documents. For significant action proposals, we would apply careful study, consult as necessary with the originating office, and recommend an option for his choice. Many of these went on to the secretary after Christopher signed off. We also could initiate action ourselves if we saw some need or some issue within the deputy secretary's jurisdiction that needed his attention. In these cases, with Christopher's okay, we'd propose an action or a paper to the appropriate bureau.

In about summer 1979, I moved into the executive assistant job with Christopher, where in addition to the kind of work I just described, I was responsible for seeing that his office ran fast and well. Since my colleagues were highly talented, and the support staff extremely efficient, I didn't spend much time supervising things. I saw that work coming into the office was assigned to the right persons, and tried to keep things moving through the process without undue delay. I probably spoke with Christopher six or eight times a day on one thing or another. Also, he had the job of producing at the end of each day a one-page report to the president on the half dozen most salient developments or actions the department had been concerned with or involved in that day. This was a very highly classified little document sent by the secretary to the president each evening, but the work of producing it was coordinated by Christopher's office. The bureaus and offices of the department would send up little paragraph descriptions of what they had done during the day, sort of like a big show-and-tell exercise. Every office submitting something hoped it would make it into the final document, which literally had to be confined to a single page.

As executive assistant, I took the first editing cut at all this material, and necessarily had to discard most of it, though many submissions were perfectly worthy. I then boiled the chosen few remaining down to a bare three or four sentences each, maybe a half dozen items altogether, before giving the document to Christopher for final approval. As often as not, Christopher would further touch it up, and off it went. Next day the document would come back from the White House, with the president's handwritten comments alongside some of the items. On a selective basis, we would then communicate those comments back to the originating offices in the department. Let me add here that Christopher was a tough editor. Almost nothing got past him, this little document or anything else, without at least minor revisions. I once joked to him that if I gave him a sheet of paper with just his name on it, he would find a way to improve it. I should also not omit to point out that relations between the Vance/Christopher team at State and Brzezinski at the NSC were strained almost from the beginning of the Carter Administration. At times, that would have been putting it politely. Some of the friction had to do with turf considerations, some of it with varying shades of the hawk vs. dove dichotomy, some of it with personality. I'd say the Iran problem and the hostage crisis typically brought those conflicts into relief more than most other issues.

Q: You were going to talk about the world radio conference.

TRATTNER: Right. To make it quick, I think the name of the conference has changed since we were dealing with it, but it is the international agreement governing the use of the radio-frequency spectrum. It is a function of the International Telecommunications Union, and meets every two years or so to revise as necessary the assignments of radio frequencies to the nations of the world. Countries use them for a variety of critical purposes, including military usages. It sounds dull, and it is, but frequency assignments are really critical and are jealously sought and guarded. There was a WARC meeting coming up in Geneva in, I think, 1979, and one of the key U.S. interests was in the fact that Third World countries for the first time would outnumber developed countries at the meeting. This focused attention on equal access to the air waves, and on the push by developing countries for what was called a new world information order. I think this was the same idea that later decided Reagan to withdraw the U.S. from UNESCO for a while. At any rate, the 1979 WARC meeting was dominated by sensitive issues. Christopher was to represent the U.S. at the meeting, and one of my jobs was to prepare for that, winnow through the issues, and be sure he was thoroughly briefed. There were enough legal and technical complexities involved that I asked Matt Nimetz, the department counselor, for help, and he was invaluable. He and I went with Christopher to Geneva for the meeting. Just before Geneva, Christopher and some of us had been in Rabat, where he had a meeting with the King—but not about radio frequencies.

Q: How long did you work for Christopher, and what happened after that?

TRATTNER: I began in August 1978 and finished in June 1980. It was a great and hard-working two years. Although I hadn't worked for USIA for more than four years by then, I still belonged to it, and once again was uncertainly eyeing the prospect of returning to the fold. By mid 1979, I had been in Washington for four and a half years, and felt I was

probably eligible again for an overseas assignment rather than something in Washington. In those days, you could apply for one of several open jobs of your choice. I first put in for public affairs counselor at the consulate general in Geneva, because I knew that job had many elements attractive to me and also I wanted to re-sample the pleasures of a place that still retained its old pull for my wife and me. My second choice was public affairs officer in South Africa, where I believed big changes were imminent. I didn't think I had a chance for Geneva, and was really set and looking forward to South Africa if they would give it to me. But I was so busy I really didn't have a lot of time to worry one way or the other.

Soon after the American hostages were taken in Tehran, Christopher began the series of consulting trips abroad that I mentioned earlier. In December—this was 1979—the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. Around the same time I learned that after all I had gotten the public affairs counselor assignment in Geneva. That good news came about two days before I had to have an emergency appendectomy. I got out of the hospital to find out that Christopher would be leaving for Europe within days, and on New Year's Eve we flew off to London, Brussels, and one or two other capitals. Whatever air line we departed Dulles on lost my bags, and I spent three or four days going with Christopher around Europe in one suit, shirt, and tie. Several more such trips followed, to Europe, including Ankara, and within the U.S. My Geneva job was supposed to begin in February but Christopher wanted to delay my departure until April because of his heavy workload. By then, the Iran hostage episode was in full throat and the Carter Administration was letting itself slip into a sort of paralysis, in which nothing except Iran, and to a lesser extent Afghanistan, got its undivided attention. I advised Bill vanden Heuvel, our ambassador in Geneva, that Christopher wanted to delay my arrival there. It was Bill who had asked for my assignment to Geneva, and he readily agreed to the delay. As we got closer to my new April departure date, Christopher again wanted to keep me for another couple of months, and so we went through the process again, this time so that I would leave in June. By then, we had a new ambassador in Geneva, Gerry Helman, a career officer whom I had known at State. Gerry was also game to have me delay until June, even though the guy I would be replacing as public affairs counselor had already left Geneva.

In April came the failure of the U.S. attempt to rescue the Americans held in Iran. A few days before that, Cy Vance had told Jimmy Carter he was resigning in principle, in disagreement with the decision to attempt the rescue. As I recall it, Vance had been out of Washington when the critical decision meeting took place and Christopher had represented State. Vance's resignation was made public right after the failed rescue, effective in May. It had already seemed clear that Hodding Carter was planning to leave his spokesman job well before the end of Carter's term and, when Vance resigned, Hodding announced he would leave shortly afterward. So Carter would need to fill Vance's job and Hodding would need a replacement. Christopher was clearly a candidate to become secretary, and many at State, including me, hoped Carter would choose him. But within two or three weeks, Ed Muskie, the senior U.S. senator from Maine, was announced, and there was no denying that it was a good appointment, though there were some doubts raised because Muskie was in his late sixties. Christopher was planning his own departure at that point, but agreed to stay on as deputy secretary to help Muskie run

things at a very difficult time. Arnie Raphel also agreed to stay, to work for Muskie, which meant a big sacrifice, giving up his ongoing assignment as ambassador to Pakistan, a job as I mentioned he later did achieve. As for me, I was planning our departure for Geneva in June. We began packing, shipped a car to Geneva ahead of time, applied to enroll two of our kids in school in Switzerland, and did all the other usual labor that moving involves. And while that was in process, I was asked sometime in May if I wanted to be considered by the incoming secretary of state for the press spokesman position. I was really torn between staying with the Geneva assignment, which we were really and truly looking forward to, and taking on the spokesman thing, which was the top position in the foreign policy press and public affairs business, which I had been in for my entire government career. It was undeniably a great job, the proverbial offer that's too good to refuse. But a presidential election was coming up that fall, and there was no good reason to assume Jimmy Carter's re-election. He was ahead in the polls at the time, but the Iran episode and other things had undermined him severely. If Reagan was nominated, as seemed certain, and elected, whoever was spokesman at State would not continue in that position beyond January. But I felt it would do no harm to at least agree to be considered for the spokesman job, without yet deciding to take it if offered. A bit later I was asked by Ed Muskie, the secretary-designate, to have a talk. He interviewed me for the spokesman position, and I told him I was interested and also that I had already been assigned as public affairs counselor in Geneva. He understood my quandary. I also said that, if I were offered the job and became his spokesman, I would want him to guarantee me complete access to him whenever I needed it, whatever the circumstances, time of day, etc. I tried to make clear to him what I had observed from my several years in the press operation, which was that spokesmen are only really credible if the press knows they have total access to and the confidence of the secretary. That credibility incorporates confidence on the part of the press that the spokesman has knowledge of everything that's happening, even if he or she can't always speak to it on the record or even on background, and that he or she truly speaks for the secretary, not any other senior official. Muskie understood me on this. I of course knew about Muskie, whose reputation in the Congress was very, very high, not to mention that he represented Maine, a favorite place of ours. In late May, I traveled with the usual small Christopher group to Geneva, where he had business to conduct at the UN European headquarters related to the fate of refugees who had been exiting Vietnam in large numbers. While there, I had time to meet the person who was going to be my deputy public affairs counselor. Not long after I returned from that trip, Muskie offered me the spokesman job. I continued to agonize over my choice, which had eloquent pros and cons on each side. My wife and daughters, not to mention myself, had really been looking to Geneva with great anticipation, and we logistically already had one foot there. But in the end, I chose the spokesman job and took it over from Hodding Carter in late June. We canceled our plans for Geneva and managed to quickly re-instate the lease on our house here.

Q: Tell me about Muskie and what sort of person he was, and then we can get into your time as the spokesman.

TRATTNER: Well, it's always a pleasure to talk about Ed Muskie. First, he was a very seasoned and wise politician, well accustomed to the public platform and audiences of all

kinds. Television was second nature to him. Second, he was an intelligent man, not given to self-promotion. He in fact had no need to promote himself—he had an easy smile, and a genial approach to everything, a tall and appealing guy, and people instinctively liked him. His reputation as a legislator preceded him. Historically, he really did more to preserve and defend the environment than any other single member of the Congress before or since. He was intensely popular in Maine, where he had also been governor, and had run both as Hubert Humphrey's vice presidential candidate in 1968 and as a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination four years later. There was a time, around 1970, when Muskie was regarded as the national voice of the Democratic Party. He brought four or five people with him to State from his Senate staff, and they readily made room for me to fit into the small group closest to him. I heard that Muskie could burst into a quick temper with people within his own group, and I saw it a couple of times, but it never happened with me. In fact, he seemed to go out of his way to help a good relationship to develop between us. Later, in the post-Carter period, when I had left government, Muskie asked me to help him with a couple of public affairs events, and we spent some time together in Washington and also, with my wife, in Maine. He was easy to work for, and it was a memorable time.

Q: And what was life like as spokesman?

TRATTNER: Well, it began with a presidential state visit in June to Italy, where Carter would also take part in the annual G-7 economic summit in Venice. Muskie and I were part of the crowd that flew on the presidential plane to Rome for two or three days and then to Venice, where he and I left the plane for a small boat to one of the islands in the Venice lagoon and to a rather elegant hotel. It was a whirlwind two days of summit meetings, and for me, press briefings in groups and also individually. Similar to past such trips, and even though I was the department spokesman, I wanted to carefully calibrate what I was saying with what the White House, that is, Jody Powell, was saying. I also helped Muskie with arrangements for some television and other interviews. After it was all over, there was a quick trip to the famous beach at Lido di Venezia, and a late night of visits to a few restaurants with two or three Muskie people and a *vaporetto* for transportation, escorted by Danielle Gardner, wife of the American ambassador.

From Venice, Muskie, now with his own plane, headed for Ankara, for the NATO spring ministerial meeting, then to Kuala Lumpur, for an equivalent gathering of foreign ministers of the Association of South East Asian Nations. We took along about a dozen American journalists covering the State Department to those capitals. We then made a quick stop at a U.S. airbase north of Tokyo, and returned to Washington via a refueling stop in Alaska and a stop in New Hampshire to drop Muskie off; he was going to take a few days off in Maine. It was by then late June, and at the State Department we gave Hodding Carter a terrific farewell send-off on his last or next to last day there. I think I did my first briefing as spokesman the following day. And it might be good at this point to talk for the record about the structural history of the spokesman position. I know I've talked about the general press operation at State as it then existed, but in the oral history project no one may have focused specifically on the evolution of the spokesman position and it should be in there, I think.

Q: Okay, I agree this is useful, so talk about it a bit.

TRATTNER: Over the years, there have been changes in the spokesman title and the organization chart that shows lines of responsibility. Currently, the spokesman at State is also the assistant secretary for public affairs, and his office, in turn, is part of the operation of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Back in my time, many people thought that the combined job of spokesman and assistant secretary for public affairs worked okay, but I was not one of them. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was some debate about whether the two jobs should be handled together, or whether the spokesman should be part of the office of the secretary of state and accountable to the secretary. Bob McCloskey, who most people think was the most skilled and effective spokesman, believed it should stand alone, in the secretary's office, unencumbered with public affairs duties. In his day, the job was designated as S/PRS. That's how he did it, and I think it was part of his memorable success. I believe his successors, including Bob Anderson, felt that way as well, and that's how they did it. But in 1977, when Cy Vance became secretary, the two functions were combined, and that's how Hodding Carter found things when he became the first spokesman in Jimmy Carter's State Department. As Hodding's deputy spokesman for that first year, I could see that he had little time for the public affairs aspects of the job, and those functions deserve due attention from the top, even with a capable deputy for public affairs to manage them day to day. So when I took the spokesman job a couple of years later, I re-separated the two functions and returned the spokesman job to its former status as an independent entity within the office of the secretary of state. I turned down the opportunity to be assistant secretary and spokesman and the public affairs functions continued under the supervision of a former deputy assistant secretary who was promoted to assistant secretary. When I left, the job reverted to the combined model. But the spokesman position, in whatever structural arrangement, has remained very visible, to the public as well as the media. It has impact at home and abroad. It has to be carefully done. My strong view continues to be that the individual who takes this job should operate without the distraction of other duties that are only indirectly related. And I feel that way even though the assistant secretary who is also spokesman doubtless has deputies for the public affairs side of his position. Hodding did well in the combined position as it was then structured, and oversaw his deputies effectively, because he was bright. Some others who had the combined position did not do as well. Well, that's my little history lecture.

Q: You mentioned preparing guidance for the spokesman and I've heard about that. Can we go back, can you talk a bit about it?

TRATTNER: Sure. It was one of those important internal processes that, again, merits a little attention from the history point of view. I think the process today is probably similar at least in some respects to what we did 30 years ago. The first job every morning for the press office director and staff was decisions on what questions the spokesman was likely to get at the mid-day press briefing. These decisions were based on what events around the world in the past 12-18 hours were going to generate questions, plus requests the spokesman might make for specific guidance on other subjects. The staff then telephoned

the relevant bureaus and offices of the department, asking for written press guidance. If those bureaus had public affairs advisors, and most did, the requests for guidance went to them. On any given day, bureaus and offices often knew without being asked what they needed to provide, and the most alert of them would already be working on it in consultation within their bureaus and with the person or persons who would actually sit down and draft the guidance. Everybody knew the written guidance, cleared by an authorized senior individual in a bureau, normally the assistant secretary or office director, had to reach the spokesman in time for him or her to judge whether it was adequate and, if not, to ask for further details, or revision, or whatever. That was how it was supposed to work. But of course, it usually didn't. Some guidance was just boiler plate, and unimaginatively written, or uninformatively written, and needed improving or expanding. I often would revise guidance style-wise just to make it less dull or more forthcoming. Some guidance would only vaguely address the question to be answered, or lack important details. Then, some guidance was always late or never arrived at all. More often than not, the spokesman would still be reading and absorbing press guidance en route to the briefing, which normally began at noon. But in the end, this was less disastrous than it might seem. When briefing the press, the spokesman is on his own, and can use whatever language is most appropriate to the circumstances, whether prepared language or ad hoc. By that, I mean that through established practice, the spokesman had unwritten but legitimate authority to use his own judgment in answering any question. There were always unexpected questions and they needed answers. For really delicate or technically complicated questions, the spokesman could always promise an answer later that day, and had to deliver on that promise. But that tactic could not be overdone. Good spokesmen, in my view, did not spend the briefing with their noses buried in the guidance book, just reading from the page. Any good spokesman spends all his time focused on policy and how news and foreign developments relate to policy. He has daily exchanges with people throughout the department including the secretary and other senior people. He reads the press, he reads summaries of radio and television news shows, he reads the wire services, and he reads what department and other government people are reporting from overseas. He sits in on meetings. He is very well informed and shouldn't have to brief the press in someone else's stiff formal written boiler plate. His own knowledge and understanding of policy enables him to enunciate that policy and answer questions in his own words, with flexibility and the latitude to elaborate, and often with humor, and that's what he should be doing. And the press guidance process was only a part of that knowledge, important for nuts-and-bolts details but not as a script. That kind of authority was strengthened by the fact that, each day just before the briefing, the spokesman consulted one-on-one with the secretary of state to review the four or five most important or tricky stories of the day. In those meetings, I would say how I thought I should answer questions about those stories, and the secretary would either approve or provide alternate guidance. In addition, I sat in first thing every morning on what was called the secretary's small group meeting, which was a heads-up session that looked ahead, department-wide, to the major actions and projects of the day. That group normally included the deputy secretary, the political undersecretary, the counselor, and one or two senior aides.

Since the press briefing was piped electronically to many offices in the building, there was an expert, non-media audience for what the spokesman said, and sometimes there

was second-guessing from bureaus as to whether something was said correctly or should not have been said at all. But independence and the use of good judgment were spokesman prerogatives. And so I want to repeat the point I made just a minute ago, and it's one I've often made in public speaking and writing, which is that this press guidance we're talking about was just that; it was guidance. As I said, it should never be a script, and there was nothing sacrosanct about it. By the way, I should also mention that written guidance went into a loose leaf book that spokesman could refer to, or read from, if necessary. I say "read from" because now and then something did have to be stated with absolute precision, word for word, in order not to leave room for misinterpretation, deliberate or otherwise. It was sometimes necessary to repeat such statements for days or weeks on end, as in the case of the long Lebanese civil war or the hostage episode in Tehran. If even a single word was altered from one day to the next, it would likely provoke questions or panic, or both, about whether the U.S. position had changed. It sounds absurd, I know, but it was true. So precision was mandatory. After a while, of course, you could do it from memory. But you had to be careful.

While we're generally on the subject of important internal procedures, I might add a word about the job of designating and facilitating the travel of State Department-based journalists with the secretary, within and outside the U.S. This was always a delicate thing, because most of the reporters covering the department wanted to travel with the secretary, especially overseas, and seats on the plane were limited. A few of them were always unofficially reserved for the two or three big national newspapers, such as the New York Times and the Washington Post, the principal wire services including AP and UPI, which has since disappeared, what were then the three major over-the-air television networks, plus what was then the cable news start-up, CNN. The rest were parceled out among a revolving selection of one or two other newspapers and radio networks. You couldn't exclude the majors from these trips, and you had to be very judicious and fair in allotting the other seats. The spokesman was the ultimate decision maker on this. There were maybe a dozen press seats in all. Reporters valued these trips because, by custom, the secretary would come back to the press seats when the plane was flying and have an informal back-and-forth with reporters that was almost always on background, never on the record. It was their only real chance to spend some quality time with the secretary, whether on a trip or back in Washington. Front-page stories sometimes emerged from these casual sessions, with reporters hanging over the backs of seats and holding their tape recorders as close as possible. Tape recorders were okay as long as they were for note-taking, not for broadcast. You'll remember how effectively Henry Kissinger used the traveling press as a diplomatic instrument, always sourced as a "senior official traveling with the secretary." He was probably the originator of this particular tactic, or at least the one who polished it to a fine art. That senior official is apparently ageless and tireless, because he has traveled with every secretary of state since.

Q: Well, often what the spokesman would say would help articulate the policy.

TRATTNER: That's right, the spokesman not only stated, explained, and defended policy. He would sometimes add to it. That's not to say the spokesman ever formulated major policy out of whole cloth on his own. But he would get live questions about

specific bits or details of policy where no set position had been thought of or developed. When we answered that kind of question, we were winging it, as we used to say. You had to think. Your answer to that kind of question would state a position that you were actually formulating based on what you knew, what you thought was logical and sensible, and which maybe had some kind of precedent. Again, this was not big policy making by the spokesman. It was mini policy making, filling in small gaps in a larger concept. And sometimes a State colleague hearing you say these things would ask why the hell you said it. My answer would usually be that we try to answer as many questions as possible. And the colleague might then ask why didn't you just take the question and get the answer back to them later? My answer to that was that I sometimes took questions to be answered later, but couldn't spend my life saying I will give you the answer later. You need to stand there and answer most questions, whether they're easy, hard, delicate, or whatever. You're there to answer questions, not duck them.

Q: Who were sort of the leading people in the State Department when you were doing this?

TRATTNER: Well, beyond Muskie and Christopher, there was David Newsom, the under secretary for political affairs, and assistant secretaries like Dick Holbrooke for East Asia affairs, Hal Saunders heading the Near East and South Asia bureau, Dick Moose for African affairs, and William Bowdler for Western Hemisphere affairs. Tony Lake was the policy planning director and Sandy Berger was the deputy there.

Q: Was George Vest there?

TRATTNER: And George Vest, who headed the European and Canadian affairs bureau. He had himself been the spokesman, just before Bob Anderson. Arnie Raphel and Peter Tarnoff were the prime movers and shakers in Muskie's office and in the secretariat. Dick Cooper was the under secretary for economic affairs and Matt Nimetz was under secretary for international security affairs, though I think he only held the job for a year after being counselor of the department at the beginning of the Carter administration. I believe his predecessor as under secretary was Lucy Benson.

Q: When you were the spokesman, what were the main issues or problems we were dealing with?

TRATTNER: First and foremost, the attempt to get the release of the 50-odd American Embassy people who had been seized some months after Khomeini took power in Iran, and confined virtually incommunicado in various parts of Tehran. When I took the spokesman job, they had been held for about eight months, and were released on the day Reagan was inaugurated, my last day as spokesman. I would estimate that half my time in that job was spent on that problem or things related to it. I said earlier that the hostage affair seemed to subordinate every other foreign policy concern of the Carter Administration, and of course there were indeed other important concerns. A major one of them was the Iran-Iraq war that began in the early fall of 1980. I became spokesman the year after Israel and Egypt signed the agreement Carter had negotiated at Camp

David, and the development of that new relationship was of course a prime issue for our Middle East policy, fragile and closely monitored and the subject of ongoing questions at the daily press briefing. One of the issues I remember was the failure of Israel and Egypt to complete agreement on autonomy for the West Bank, and the UN's repeated censure of Israel for behavior related to the West Bank. Likewise for the Lebanese civil war, which was really a 15-year episode, with a few breaks, and had direct impact on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, as people still fondly refer to it, and on the Israeli domestic scene, as well as our relations with Israel, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. We were concerned with political developments in Pakistan and the undoubted development of nuclear weapons capacity there. Of course, the Cold War was going strong, and we were involved with Russian ambitions not only in the Middle East but in Africa and Latin America, not to mention their invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, which among other things resulted in Carter's decision to cancel U.S. competition in the winter Olympics in Moscow. Our relations with the Soviets in those days were complicated and layered and dangerous. The East-West confrontation in Europe had been eased somewhat by the 1975 Helsinki agreement, but the issue of nuclear and conventional arms and armies continued front and center, especially the presence of U.S. missiles in Germany and Soviet maneuvering to persuade Germany to oppose them or freeze their number. Also, the first labor disturbances began at the Gdansk shipyard in Poland that eventually led to martial law the following year, but also played a role in the end of communist rule in Poland a decade later. China was continuing to emerge as an entity to be reckoned with on several fronts—old issues like Taiwan and the varying deployments of the U.S. seventh fleet in the Taiwan Strait, and new issues like the establishment of diplomatic relations with Beijing, which of course affected Taiwan, the strengthening of democracy in South Korea, and trade. There were African and Latin American issues as well, an important one of which was the increase of right-wing violence in El Salvador in which American nuns and other Americans were being killed. So all those were issues and problems that I had to be prepared to speak to every day.

Q: What was your impression of the State Department press corps?

TRATTNER: Mostly good journalists, and good people. When I arrived there, perhaps a dozen had already been covering the department for a long time. And some were there long after I left. They were mostly veterans, and they were competent. Among them was Barry Schweid, the lead reporter for the Associated Press, and pretty much the dean of the group. There was Barrie Dunsmore and Ted Koppel and Diane Sawyer of ABC television, Marvin Kalb and his brother Bernard Kalb, both of CBS and later NBC television, Leslie Stahl of CBS television, Dick Valeriani of NBC television, Roy Gutman of Reuters, Lars Eric Nelson of the New York Daily News, Bernard Gwertzman and occasionally Leslie Gelb of the New York Times, Murray Marder and Don Oberdorfer of the Washington Post, Karen Elliott of the Wall Street Journal. That was also the period when CNN came into existence, and it had a correspondent covering State. I've probably left out a few. Not all of those people were there the entire time that I was, but they overlapped and I knew them all pretty well. By the way, Bernard Kalb himself later became spokesman of the department in the Reagan period, did about two years there, and then quit to protest something he disagreed with about Reagan foreign

policy. What was that?—oh, yes, I think it was his view that the administration was waging a dishonest information campaign against Qadhafi of Libya.

In all, the regular daily press group, those who were there for every briefing and some of whom worked out of little cubicle offices in the department press room, numbered about 25 to 30. That encompassed a group of journalists representing foreign media that included Wolf Blitzer, then working for an Israeli newspaper. I particularly remember one day shortly after I arrived in the deputy press office director job when the late Lars Eric Nelson came over and introduced himself. He was a very fine journalist and became a great friend. We talked awhile and at some point, only half joking, he said "always remember what the difference between a diplomat and a spokesman is." And of course I asked what the difference was. And he said, "A diplomat is paid to lie *for* his country. A spokesman is paid to lie *to* his country."

I said he was half joking, but I've always remembered that joke because this was just a year or so after Watergate, and the American withdrawal from Vietnam, and journalists had just about completely stopped trusting government, in the way they had once, after World War II and in the 1950s and early 1960s. They had learned that government was no longer to be trusted, that government could and would lie to them when it chose, when it was convenient. Beginning probably with Bob McCloskey, this attitude of journalists grew to be a burden on spokesmen. Spokespeople, after all, have their own opinions about foreign policy and the good ones don't let it show. It's hard to speak publicly for something you privately oppose. McCloskey became spokesman in, I think, 1964, and stayed in the job until well into the Nixon Administration. That's remarkable, but it's clear that at times he struggled to remain publicly impartial, even though the job absolutely demanded it. At some point in the 1960s, when things in Vietnam were going badly and the Johnson Administration had been putting an unwaveringly positive gloss on the situation, McCloskey said something critical in a press briefing. I don't know his exact words, but the gist was, "I'll tell you what the government is doing in Vietnam but don't expect me to like it." The language he used may be the quote that later was cited widely as a great example of how to say something obscurely. But the meaning was clear, and it nearly got him fired. The story was that it enraged Lyndon Johnson, and that only the intervention of William Rogers, then the secretary of state, saved McCloskey's job.

But the reason I am telling the story is that this was the era when spokesmen had to learn that the press were going to be a lot more curious, a lot more skeptical, a lot more demanding than previously. The spokesman position had long since been a fulltime assignment, not the part-time, or collateral, job it once was. It was not a job I think a lot of people sought. Particularly if you were a career foreign service officer, you didn't want to ruin your career by getting into that boiler and possibly being cooked alive and damaging yourself for the future. But in my years in the department's press operation, I slowly came to the conclusion that the press corps, having been through the crises of confidence that Vietnam and Watergate represented, came through it as more mature individuals who had learned their lesson, too, and were able to work with the spokesman to do the jobs they needed to do. Except for one or two eccentrics or very ideologically driven people whose only goal was to focus attention on themselves, play gotcha with the

spokesman, or disrupt the briefing. But there were ways to deal with that, and the press corps often helped.

Q: I watched during the Gulf War these briefings at the Pentagon, and some inane questions that would come up from the press corps. "What does the King of Jordan think about this?'

TRATTNER: Well, I have written about that. The U.S. government should not speak for another government unless by prior agreement or with the consent of that government. But the U.S. government is one of the first sources journalists turn to when something major happens somewhere around the world. They think the U.S. government knows everything, and sometimes ask questions about which the U.S. government shouldn't be expected to be the first source, or to be a source at all. I always felt it is not our business to be first out of the barn to confirm significant happenings in which we are not involved, and that doing so could get us in trouble. Perhaps we can talk about them in a general way, but not to confirm or deny, or give statistics or other details. Maybe that doesn't apply to natural disasters, but it does apply for events caused by humans. When Sadat was assassinated, the American Embassy in Cairo was one of the first to be asked to confirm it, even before the Egyptian government had done so. I can understand the huge pressure on reporters to confirm a story like that, but I still don't think we have the right to precede the authorities of the country unless, and I repeat, unless we are the cause or have a direct role. Doing so can be embarrassing or infuriating, or politically risky. As I said, journalists came to us because they felt we were always in the best position to know what was going on. And we often were, but it doesn't confer on us the right to get out in front on these kinds of stories. In the Sadat case, the American Embassy wisely refrained from confirming his death until it was absolutely clear from Egyptian statements. It isn't the responsibility of the U.S. government to be the first word on everything that happens in other people's countries. It is true that in a situation like the recent one in Myanmar, there isn't an official source within the country to officially discuss what's going on. The Myanmar regime certainly wasn't going to say anything for days or weeks. Somebody has got to be in some position to be quoted. But in my view, that's an exceptional situation.

Q: But your office always was questioning the guidance for accuracy and so on, and saying, wait a minute, do you mean this? Right?

TRATTNER: Right. That's what I did in this case. We had the right, the duty, to question guidance. This could be because we questioned the factual content of the guidance or because we thought it didn't answer the question it was supposed to answer, or it was badly written, or all three. Personally, if I was going to use guidance, I wanted to use language that could be understood by everyone. I didn't want to be use material written in bureaucratese, or riddled with deliberate obfuscation. And we sometimes got into arguments with people, and to resolve them we now and then would have to go to the assistant secretary of the bureau in question, or whoever was the acting senior person there, and say, look, when I take this to the secretary I know he is going to question this and ask who wrote it. So save yourself the trouble and do it right to begin with.

Q: What else about the spokesman job do you want to talk about?

TRATTNER: I guess there are a couple of things to add. First is the nature of the contact with the press. There was the daily briefing, which I've mentioned, where the spokesman was open to any question about any topic, and the briefing lasted as long as it took, until it was ended by one of the reporters designated by the group, usually on longevity, who would close it with a thank-you. As was the long-developed practice, all my answers were on the record, unless I specifically said I was speaking on background. On the record means the speaker can be quoted in his or her own words, and is identified by name and/or position. On background, the speaker's name and position cannot be identified in a story, and some tag like "senior state department official" must be used when quoting him. When television cameras were admitted to the briefing in around 1978, going on background was a potential problem, since the cameras automatically identified the spokesman unless they were turned off. So a solution was worked out. Whenever the spokesman wanted to switch to a background basis, he would say so clearly and, at least in theory, the cameras had to be shut off until the spokesman indicated that he was returning to speaking on the record. For this to work, the spokesman had to implicitly trust the camera people to respect the agreement. And they did, and I don't remember any problems.

So the briefing was one major form of contact with the press. But beyond the briefing was contact with journalists on an individual basis, and that was constant. Every day at least two or three of them would call me with questions about something I had said earlier in the briefing, or with new questions. And fairly often one or another of them wanted to talk with me about stories they were working on that they didn't want their colleagues to know about. A reporter working on something like that didn't want to reveal it to others by asking a question in the briefing, and so would want to question me privately. So once the briefing was done, a good part of the rest of the day would be occupied with conversations with individual reporters. And of course reporters would call me at home at any hour on any day if their need was urgent. During the worst parts of the Iran hostage episode, and especially as it neared an end, our home phone rang up to a dozen times at night or very early in the morning. The hostage thing was a human issue, Americans were being held, and the whole country became more or less riveted on it, helped enormously by the media. And the media themselves were at hair trigger. They were terrified that somebody else would get the latest hostage story first. We at State could say very little that was meaningful or satisfactory to them, because the situation was too sensitive. A few wrong or misplaced words could, at least potentially, mean real danger for the Americans held in Iran. I had to be exceptionally careful with answers I gave at the daily briefing or any other time. Because the White House was making it a practice of saying little, if anything, about the Iran situation, the State Department was the chief source of official information and statements, what few there were, and it was to State that reporters' questions were addressed. So the spokesman was in a spotlight every day. It was a trying, frustrating time for American diplomacy, full of enigmatic characters like Banisadr, the Iranian president, and Rafsanjani, who was speaker of the parliament, the Majlis. People who seemed at times to be trying to get the situation resolved, and at

other times not to be. Of course, neither of those guys had any real power to change things, even assuming they really wanted to. One of the hostages, Richard Queen, was released in about July, due to a serious medical problem, and returned home to great media attention. In fact, I and some staff had to go to Georgetown University hospital the day he arrived there, to deal with the press following him. So the situation with the hostages was a pretty intractable, immovable problem for most of the time, until about September of that year, 1980, when Warren Christopher began negotiating with Iran through the mediation of the Algerians.

Q: Talk about that period.

TRATTNER: Once Christopher began negotiating, or at least exchanging messages with the Iranians, the hostage situation became more fluid, and there were other related events, at the UN and elsewhere, that also tended to give things a sense of motion. That didn't mean there was a lot of additional information we could provide, but it raised the level of media anticipation. Christopher, of course, was in close touch with Washington from Algeria, and Arnie Raphel of the secretary's staff was with him. They were working with a few people from Treasury and perhaps other agencies, as well as getting the counsel of maybe two or three American lawyers in Washington, presumably specialists in the issues entangled in the kind of settlement Christopher was working toward, a settlement involving Iranian assets in the U.S. that had been frozen by the Carter Administration after the Americans were seized in Tehran. I was getting questions from reporters in Washington who were obviously picking up leaks from outside State about this process and who seemed to know, or thought they knew, more about what was happening than we did. That was a pretty awkward situation. I knew the Christopher mission had to keep things extremely close and was saying just about nothing publicly. But I cabled Arnie to make him and Christopher aware of this predicament, that I had to be in a position to respond in some fashion to questions about information coming from outside the U.S. government. I needed some sort of direct access to Christopher, because otherwise the department would be voiceless about what was happening in the middle of the most important developments of the entire hostage episode. Luckily, I had worked for Christopher and knew Arnie well, and they provided me with the access. It wasn't that I needed to consult them every day, and I only did so maybe half a dozen times. They could give me only the bare minimum, which was not exactly satisfying but enabled me to act intelligently. On maybe two or three occasions, as I remember it, their assistance enabled me to deny reports that were untrue.

Q: And from your point of view, what was the end of it like?

TRATTNER: Towards the end of the hostage episode, the question of course had become not whether the Americans imprisoned in Tehran would be released, but when. The Christopher mission in Algeria had gotten past the point of probing the Iranians and being probed, and was clearly into talking details of a settlement, which would basically be Iranian assets for American hostages. But no real information was yet available. And the media, especially the television networks, were focused on being completely on top of the magic release moment, whenever it came. You can't imagine how revved up they

were and how much pressure they put into getting answers. For example, Ted Koppel by then was doing the ABC late-night half-hour news program called "America Held Hostage," which later became "Nightline." The show was totally devoted to the crisis with Iran. Ted knew me pretty well, had interviewed me on camera for the program, and I thought of him as a reasonably good TV journalist. As the Christmas season closed in, everyone knew the hostage thing was nearing an end, though no one had a clue even approximately as to when it would happen. Koppel or one of his people was on the phone every day from the last days of December well into January, wanting to know if I had heard anything, if I had even a fragment of an idea when the Americans would be released. But there was still nothing to say. I kept assuring him and everyone that when we knew something we would immediately say so. But it wasn't enough. It was constantly "What do you hear, John? Are they coming out yet?" And Koppel was typical of those who just weren't going to let themselves get beaten on this story. By January, an agreement had been reached with Iran that would include the release of the Americans. The U.S. obviously had made no official statements, but some details were inevitably leaking, more than a few. At that point, it would have been stupidity for us to say anything that might upset the deal, and most reporters understood that, despite their eagerness to know. A couple of days before the hostages actually came out, there was word they had been released. Koppel told me on the phone either in the late afternoon or middle of the evening that ABC had positive proof from good sources that the hostages had left, and were on a plane, on their way out of Iran, and asked me to confirm that they had left. I told him I could not confirm it, that we had nothing that said we could confirm it. He said he was planning to go with his story because his sources were certain. I told him if he went with his story that night, he would be wrong. Well, Koppel did go with his story that night on ABC, either on the early evening main news program, or on his own show later on. I can't remember which. He announced that the Americans were free and were leaving Iran, and he was wrong. Next morning, the Americans were still in Iran, and did not in fact leave for another two days. To my mind, Koppel had made serious professional error. I know how tense things were and how intent he was to have the story. Every other news organization was equally eager to pounce. Koppel felt he had it on good authority and probably felt that his source was just as good as the State Department. But in the event, his source was wrong and he put out an incorrect story based on it. A lot of viewers, including relatives of the American hostages, must have believed it and thought the crisis was over. But I noticed that ABC never put out a correction, never told its audience it was sorry to have misinformed them on a highly important moment with great significance for those relatives and families, not to mention the rest of the country. Also, there was just a chance that premature, incorrect stories like that could have prejudiced the entire thing at a very delicate moment with very volatile feelings involved. Now, mind you, Koppel was not the only reporter who got out a little of bounds during that time. There were three or four others. But that one little drama has stuck in my mind. I neglected to say earlier that while I was spokesman I permanently transferred from USIA to State. I hadn't worked in a USIA job for nearly six years and felt out of touch there and more attuned to State, and so I made the switch, from FSIO (Foreign Service Information Officer) to Foreign Service Officer.

Q: So the Carter Administration was coming to an end. What was that like at the State Department, and what did you do when it was over?

TRATTNER: People I had been working with on the seventh floor were all preparing for change. Some knew what their next jobs were, others did not, including me. There was a natural sadness that hung in the air, but this was the foreign service and change was accepted and inevitable. The Reagan transition people were everywhere. I continued as department spokesman, but expected to vacate the job at any moment. Finally, I was instructed, I forget by whom, to leave the position on Inauguration Day. The day before that was my last press briefing. I spent the rest of that day packing up my office and on the afternoon of the day Reagan was sworn in, with the television news full of reports about the release of the Americans in Tehran, Peter Tarnoff and I went down with Muskie in his elevator to the department garage, saw him into his car, and waved him away. Quite a moment. I still had no ongoing assignment, but by then I had been accepted for German language training at the Foreign Service Institute, to begin in early February. Right before it began, one of those speakers bureaus tried to recruit me to go on the circuit around the country talking about the Iran hostage episode. It would have meant leaving government to do it, but there was a sizeable amount of money involved. But I didn't think my value as a speaker on that subject would last very long, maybe six months, and then what? I did get a taste of what that life was like when I accepted an invitation to speak at the San Francisco Press Club, and did a few radio and television appearances while there. But back to German. It was a language I had always wanted to learn, and had tried briefly to learn when I was free lancing in Bonn. I figured it would be a constructive thing to do while the Reagan Administration found something for me to do.

Q: Was that a problem?

TRATTNER: The German training was good, and I did acquire an acceptable level in it. The pace was a lot more leisurely than what I had been doing, of course. So I enjoyed it, even though not knowing what assignment lay ahead was a bit unsettling. Not that I didn't try to get one. I interviewed with two or three newly named ambassadors who needed deputies or political officers, and I stayed in close touch with the State personnel office. Obviously I wanted to get a senior position, something that recognized my earlier experience and level of responsibility. That was hard to do in any circumstances, but it was clear that I was among a group of officers who were sort of a third rail for the new administration. We had been fairly prominent in the Carter days and so we were automatically radioactive in the eyes of the new people. They suspected us of liberal inclinations and therefore unreliable, so they didn't intend to put us in positions where we might oppose or undermine them. Mind you, we were all career officers, not political appointees. I could see that a couple of the new ambassadors I interviewed with were a little nervous about taking me on, afraid they might be criticized or upbraided or something. And the personnel office was plainly cowed, so much so they could hardly talk straight with me. I was left to draw my own conclusions. So I finished the German language course and graduated in June 1981, still with no job that I really wanted. Personnel did come up with an assignment as political officer in Athens, and if I had been

a younger FSO, it would have been right. If I had been ten years younger, Athens was nothing to sneeze at, especially since I had just transferred from USIA to State. But it involved another year of language training at FSI, where I had already been for half a year, and all that time without a meaningful efficiency report bothered me. So the personnel office assigned me to the Board of Examiners for an indefinite period, and I did that for a couple of months, long enough to see that this was not something I wanted to be stuck in for long. So I applied to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, to be a resident associate for a year. I had a recommendation from Les Gelb, who earlier had been the president of the Endowment, Carnegie accepted my application, the personnel office agreed, and I reported to Carnegie that September. For the year I was there, I was a media specialist, writing and speaking on the subject of media relations with government. The State Department paid my salary, as was the custom with such residencies, and Carnegie gave me an office, a secretary, and incidental expenses. I published a couple of magazine and newspaper pieces during that time, both in this country and in Europe, did some speaking and was on a few panels, and had a fairly decent year there, though it was another year without an efficiency report in a line assignment, and I was still facing the need to get one and move out of the ranks of people State didn't quite know what to do with. While I was at Carnegie, I was interviewed by Bart Giamatti, the president of Yale, for the position of university provost. He was a great guy and it was a good interview, but I found myself wondering why Yale would want someone with my background in that job, and wondering how much I wanted it, if it was offered. I think Yale had similar doubts, and they didn't offer it.

Near the end of my year at Carnegie, I decided to take the offer of a position in the then-existing Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) at State. It was what they used to call an "over complement" job, or some such term, meaning it was not a job on the regular list of positions in an organization. I was not thrilled, because it was not a line assignment, just an add-on. Before I actually got there, however, the assignment was killed, and I believe it was because of a remark by Iowa Senator Jepsen. I was told that when he found out I was going to ACDA, he was heard to label me a "goddam liberal" and apparently objected to the assignment. I don't know that any of that is true, but I was told the story a few days after ACDA informed me that it couldn't take me after all. Around the same time, however, Arnie Raphel offered me a job in the Political-Military Affairs (PM) bureau at State, where he was the deputy director. Just to diverge a moment, Arnie was another of the group of senior foreign service officers who for varying lengths of time had not been able to get an assignment under the Reagan Administration that matched their experience and skills. They were in limbo. As I recall, Arnie spent a year in the Executive Seminar. He and his wife, Nancy, and my wife and I rented a villa on the island of Montserrat for a week; it must have been in the winter of 1982. And things eventually did improve for him. He became the deputy in PM under Admiral John Howe, and later I think he returned to his old haunts in the Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs bureau. In 1987, as I think I mentioned before, Reagan appointed him ambassador to Pakistan, a position he was superbly qualified for, and the following year he died in a plane crash with Zia, the Pakistani president. I remember these details because I think of him regularly with a feeling of real dismay. He did such good things and was admired by so many. His services and burial in Arlington were unforgettable testimony to that.

So, in the summer of 1982 Arnie invited me to work in PM, as a public affairs adviser. It was another over complement job, but at least it was a job in areas that interested me. One of them was the range of deterrence issues in the confrontation with the Russians on nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missiles. We did a lot of work on that, and I invested a lot of time learning the strategic concepts and terminology. It was pretty arcane stuff. Another lesser topic was "yellow rain," over which the Reagan Administration had worked up a head of steam. Yellow rain was the term for what the U.S. claimed was a harmful chemical agent used by the Soviet-supplied governments in Laos and Cambodia against insurgent tribes people who had been U.S. allies in the Vietnam war. Samples of the stuff, which was reportedly dropped by aircraft, were collected from foliage and trees in those areas and analyzed and found to be bee excrement. I remember that one scientist, or maybe several groups, who studied the substance said it occurred naturally in the region, and that seemed to weaken the administration's case.

Q: How long were you in PM?

TRATTNER: Three months. A new, private-sector outfit in Alexandria called IRIS had been set up to electronically supply information and intelligence to corporate, media, and government clients around the world. The operation was to be based partly on a global network of correspondents and partly on an exhaustive intake of material from major wire services and television networks. The correspondents were to gather every sort of industrial, economic, social, and political information according to the interests of clients and relay it to IRIS. All this smash-up of material would then be synthesized, edited and shaped into quick reports directly to the computers on clients' desks, with frequent updates plus analyses of topical issues like terrorism. It was to be a continuous, instantaneous, highly computerized service, and was bankrolled by a group of European shipping companies that had reportedly put up $17 million to get the thing started. Its senior managers were mostly former government people, some with CIA backgrounds, and it drew a lot of attention. Some called it a private CIA. A lot of people wanted to work for it, because it looked like an outfit that was really going to go somewhere with a very new idea. One day a friend I'd known at State who was working for IRIS asked me if I was interested. Well, I didn't think I was getting anywhere in the Reagan Administration, but had not been considering leaving government at that point. True, my salary had bumped up against the ceiling imposed by the Congress, and didn't look as if it was going to increase any time soon. The job IRIS was offering me was as chief of its correspondents network. I was leery of IRIS; it was still a start-up and didn't yet have a major client. But I began thinking I should take a chance on it. So in November 1982 I took retirement from State and went to work for IRIS. Soon it was evident that the organization didn't yet have a business plan or an experienced business manager, and that it had spent a huge amount of money on expensive equipment and services, and on a beautifully furnished headquarters suite. It had hired a couple of dozen very able people at good salaries, but continued to fail to sign up clients. And two months after I joined, its backers pulled the plug, and the company collapsed in January 1983. We literally had to run to the bank to cash our last pay checks before the creditors swooped in. As this was

happening, I got a call from Gail Corey, one of the people who had worked for Ed Muskie in the Senate and had gone with him to State when he became secretary. When the Carter Administration ended, Gail and one or two of the others returned to the Hill to work for George Mitchell, who had been appointed to Muskie's Senate seat. Mitchell had run for the seat in his own right in 1982 and was elected. He needed a press secretary and someone had recommended me to him. If I was interested, Gail would set up a meeting. It was an offer that came at just the right time. The salary would be less, but compensated to some extent by foreign service retirement income. I'd never worked in the Congress, and thought the experience would be useful. Mitchell wanted me to work for him for two years, and I wasn't planning on staying more than two, so that worked out right. I went to work for him in the spring of 1983.

Q: Talk about that.

TRATTNER: Mitchell is another of the very bright guys I was lucky to work with, and that's especially clear in his activities after he left the Senate, where he has earned a national and international name as a diplomat and as a wise man on things like steroids and baseball, and in much else. When I began with him, he had just been elected to his seat after serving in it for two years as an appointee. In my time there, his main committees were Environmental and Public Works, and Finance. He focused a lot of energy on environmental issues, especially acid rain, and on trade issues affecting Maine. I advised him on his media relationships, which were largely confined to the Maine print press and television and radio, and two reporters in Washington representing Maine daily newspapers. I wrote a regularly appearing signed column for him for Maine weekly papers, did one or two op-eds on environmental subjects that got published in national papers, helped him now and then on issues with international dimensions, such as Canadian-U.S. matters like fishing rights and lumber. I traveled in Maine a couple of times to touch base with editors and television stations. I went with him to visit the Canadian prime minister, Brian Mulroney, in Ottawa, for a discussion on acid rain, a visit coordinated with me by American diplomats in Ottawa. And I tried to help Mitchell achieve recognition through the national media, which for a still relatively new senator was rough sledding. I remember a press conference in the Senate press gallery attended by only one reporter. It was just that too much else was going on, and getting media attention was tough. The effort didn't get very far. But Mitchell was already gearing up not only for re-election in 1988 but for higher office in the Senate. And he did both. He was Senate majority leader for about six years spanning the later Reagan and early Clinton periods. Clinton offered him a Supreme Court appointment, and Mitchell declined, saying he wanted to stay in the Senate to push health care legislation.

Q: Cultural overlap has always been a Canadian concern. I mean too much American advertising.

TRATTNER: There has been a lot of cultural interconnection across the Maine border because there are still many people in Maine who have French ancestry and some of them still speak French. A lot of Canadians, particularly from Quebec, come to Maine in the

summer and winter. They think the beaches of Maine even in February are better then the streets of Montreal, even in February, which is probably marginally true.

I basically enjoyed the two years with Mitchell, and did learn to a certain extent the ways of the Senate and the legislative process, and the big differences in approach and method between the Congress and the executive branch. A completely different set of games to play, and maybe that's why I also felt I was never able to fully bring to bear my skills and knowledge in that job. In the spring of 1985 I was recruited by yet another start-up private firm, a public affairs consulting outfit in Washington that wanted me to direct its writers group. I had also been sounded out by a friend about a job at the World Bank, and that was still in process, but had not developed as my two years in the Mitchell office came to a close. I accepted the consulting firm offer, and joined it in May of 1985. And then, about two months later, the World Bank post was offered to me, but it was too late.

Q: Was foreign affairs maybe a major focus of the new consulting job?

TRATTNER: Not per se. Foreign affairs came into some of the things I did there, however. Remember that at this point I am no longer in government, much less in the foreign service, so maybe this is where you want to end the interview.
Q: Well, that's all right. Dealing with Washington and all that, I think is interesting. I would like to pick up that connection. Let's talk about many other things.
TRATTNER: Well, this firm's work required a lot of writing for clients, such as reports, analyses, proposals, op-ed pieces. I ran the writers group, which wasn't a big task, and my own writing focused mostly on international topics, such as South Korea's car manufacturing industry or the U.S. relationship with Mexico. One of our clients was the International Financial Corporation, part of the World Bank concerned with private investment in developing countries. The head of the bank traveled often, seeking support from bank members, and two of us accompanied him once on a trip to Toronto and environs. There were numerous other projects I worked on, such as a paper on the pros and cons of the flat tax. The firm also did a lot of typical grass roots work, marshaling support around the country on behalf of clients who favored or opposed legislation that affected their interests. In theory, the support or opposition we drummed up was then reflected to the Congress and was supposed to influence given legislative outcomes. For example, we developed a big grass roots campaign for a group of clients in the restaurant, hotel, and convention business in an unsuccessful effort to keep the Congress from lowering the tax deductibility level for business entertaining expenses. We signed up a prominent former political figure as the upfront, public leader of that project, and I traveled all over the South and Southwest with him and without him. Some of the other work I was involved in there was right and worthwhile, but I also began to feel uncomfortable with the idea that the firm was basically for sale to anyone with the money to support or oppose any issue, and did not draw a bright line of its own anywhere. In 1987, we parted company, and I joined a nonprofit organization, the Council for Excellence in Government. .

Q: Okay, but I want to go back for a minute to Senator Mitchell. Where did he fit on the political spectrum?

TRATTNER: George Mitchell was a liberal Democrat. Not a flaming liberal, but not a moderate, either. Somewhere in between, I'd say. He had excellent political instincts, and a wide circle of close friends in Maine and elsewhere, and came to be very well liked and respected in the Senate. He was articulate and fairly easy going. Some time after I left, he was elected to head the Senate Democratic Campaign Committee and oversaw the return of the Senate to Democratic leadership, about two years before he himself became the majority leader.

Q: Where did the opposition as you saw it, come from on the acid rain problem?

TRATTNER: From the electric power utilities and the coal mining companies and their powerful lobbyists in Washington. And from some Republicans and Democrats in the House and Senate.

Q: OK just one other point. Did you get any feel for Maine politics, the Maine media? I mean was this a different animal than you were used to?

TRATTNER: Well, obviously Maine is a rural state, with a small population. Young people have tended to leave. But I think Maine today is quite politically sophisticated. It has a healthy history of balance over the long term between the parties. And it has sent a number of distinguished people to Washington. There have been some duds, too, but my impression is that most of them were state-wide, not national politicians. As for the media, Maine has two main daily newspapers, in Portland and Bangor, and a handful of dailies in smaller cities, plus a fair number of weeklies. There were one or two iconoclastic or alternate media weeklies or monthlies, but think they no longer exist. When I worked for Mitchell, Portland had two or three television stations and Bangor, I think, also had one. None of these media, in my view, was anything out of the ordinary, but they certainly served the state satisfactorily. That was the situation then, but I don't really know in any detail what it is today. It was easy to get Mitchell on Maine television when he was there, which was regularly and often. It only took a phone call. Mitchell liked to appear personally on those stations, and sometimes in addition I taped Mitchell's public statements and phoned them in to radio stations in Maine. The Bangor and Portland papers had correspondents in Washington. The Bangor paper was Republican and its reporter of that era was kind of an antagonistic guy who sometimes seemed to try to play gotcha with Mitchell.

Q: Okay, so after Mitchell you joined the consulting firm, which we have already talked about. When did you leave that job and what did you do then?

TRATTNER: Around the middle of 1987. The Council for Excellence in Government, which was a nonprofit, had a book it wanted written and hired me to write it. It was only a temporary job, and would end when the book was published. Well, I stayed with the Council for most of the following 17 years, with a year out to teach.

Q: Tell me how that happened, and about your work there. Did it have a foreign policy or international dimension?

TRATTNER: It did, among several others. The Council at the time was about four years old, with a two-person staff, hardly any money, and a mission to improve the management of government. In those days, that meant the federal government; the scope has expanded since then. It was conceived by a career civil servant, Mark Abramson, who quit his job in order to run it as its first president. Its first members were a group of former senior political appointees who believed good management was as important as good policy and wanted to help advocate it. Today, former service in the senior politically appointed ranks of government is still the basic membership criterion, and there are now several hundred members. As the organization grew, it was able to get sizeable grants from foundations like Ford and Carnegie. The Council is nonpartisan, and eventually put itself strongly on the map with its experience-based, down-on-the ground approach, as opposed to the think tank image. Over the years, it broadened its program portfolio, and now pursues its goals with conferences, publications, training programs for new senior political appointees and promising career federal employees, advocacy of and support for electronic government, promotion of getting out the youth vote, and many others, too many to discuss here. Quite a few programs actively use the experience and insights of its members, which is another unique ingredient in its approach. In 1986 or so, the Council decided to publish a book that would provide much more information about senior political positions in government than was available in the so-called "Plum Book," a congressional publication issued every presidential election year It lists all political positions in the federal government, including the so-called Schedule C jobs. About 1,500 positions in all. Beyond a position's grade, salary, and incumbent's name, the Plum Book isn't very informative. The Council believed that a book with more information would be very useful to the people who made the appointments to those jobs, as well as the appointees themselves, the Senate that had to confirm most of them, and the media. The jobs we're talking about here are subcabinet jobs—the under secretaries, deputy secretaries, assistant secretaries, agency administrators, and chairs of regulatory agencies. Jobs nobody knew much about but which were absolutely critical for the day-to-day operations of government and required people with the requisite experience and knowledge, not just political hacks and friends of the president. The list included at least half a dozen positions at those levels in the State Department and additional positions in the foreign affairs community in the Pentagon, at the CIA, in the Commerce and Agriculture departments, and at Treasury. We did not include cabinet positions themselves, believing that sufficient information about them already existed. Plus the fact that presidents know their own minds for appointments at that level and aren't inclined to take outside advice.

The Council came up with a name for this publication, <u>The Prune Book</u>, and hired me to write it in time for publication just before the 1988 elections. I had been recommended by a vice president of American Express who had been a client of the consulting firm I was working for, and knew my work. I joined the Council in the spring of 1987 and set to work on the book. I won't take time to describe the production process, except to say quickly that it was a very painstaking operation that focused on the 115 senior appointed

positions we judged to be most critical to good government. It involved about 450 individual interviews with people who currently held the jobs, plus people who had held them in the recent past, plus people whose work brought them into contact with the jobholders and knew what they were all about. Each job profile in the book ran three or four pages, describing the qualifications necessary to perform well in it, the issues and problems the job dealt with, data on budget and staff size, and others in government with whom the job's occupant worked most often. We provided a list of those who had held the job going back eight or ten years, and an index of 70 or 80 additional jobs that merited profiling in the book but for which there was no space. Staff of the Council did most of the work of interviewing all those people. Writing the book in time for the publisher's deadline was truly hard work, nonstop. The direct-source, straight-from-the-horse's-mouth kind of research on which we based the book was the key to its appeal. That and the fact that 1988 was the first election in 20 years where an incumbent president wasn't running for re-election, and that gave the political appointments process more importance and potentially opened it to a wider field of candidates for the jobs. The media got excited about the book, and once it was out we had an incredible run of articles and broadcast interviews including national newspapers, network television, and a flock of radio interviews from all over the country. Later, we collected a fair amount of evidence that the book actually helped appointers and appointees understand the jobs in question. Some good evidence came from interviews we did with members of the staff of the Office of Presidential Personnel who, they told us, had used the book pretty extensively, even binding parts of it into their own guidance manual. And the book sold pretty well, and also found its way into many college and municipal libraries. We gave a copy of the book to every U.S. senator. A group in New Jersey produced a state version of the book, with the same format and research method. At their request, I advised them on it, but was glad not to have to write it.

Q: So what happened then?

TRATTNER: Well, the Council asked me to do another book, about how to survive in government as a political appointee. We used the same interview procedure, though not as extensively, and the book came out in the spring of 1989. It was snappy in style, with humor, and enjoyable to write. It also proved popular, and we later were told that the first Bush administration was giving a copy to every new appointee. The Council was still hard up for operating funds by the time that book was done, and I left to decide what I wanted to do next. In that interim, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative interviewed me for a position as a media adviser or some similar title. It was something I thought would be interesting, and relevant to my background, even though I wasn't sure I wanted to work in the George H. W. Bush administration. I didn't get the job, in any case, and was told frankly it was because I didn't have the right political credentials. I didn't waste a lot of time regretting that one.

Meanwhile the Council had improved its financial situation and asked me to rejoin as a vice president in the fall of 1989. In the next several years, I did a lot of writing on many government subjects, including three more Prune Books, two of them about presidentially appointed positions in the areas of science and technology and financial management. We

had not exactly planned to do any more Prune Books. The first one had required some strenuous fund raising, even though the book's publisher assumed the costs of printing, distribution to bookstores, advertising, etc. But then the Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology and Government came to us in late 1989 and offered to finance a book about positions in those fields, and the five big national accounting firms, or maybe it was six at the time, told us about a year later that they wanted to support a book on financial management jobs. Not long after I finished the second of those, around the summer of 1992, the Bill Clinton campaign queried us on whether there would be a new 1992 presidential election year book. They sort of couched it in terms of, "You are going to publish a new Prune Book, aren't you?" Well, we had just put out two books in 18 months, the science book and the financial book. We didn't have money to do another book or time to raise the funds to pay for it or write and produce it in the normal way, with a publisher and all that. But that kind of query from the Clinton group carried a sort of mandate, in the sense that we felt we had to put out some kind of book to respond to that level of interest from people who might shortly be in the White House. So we quickly put together a soft-cover Prune Book for 1992, largely containing updated profiles from the previous books. Like the first book in 1988, it covered the most important jobs across the range of federal activity. I got a lot of invaluable help on that book from two women on the Council staff. Right after Clinton was elected, I was asked to be part of the transition team for USIA, and spent about a week away from the Council doing that. A bizarre thing happened while I was there, in the form of a New York Times story by Gwen Ifill. The story was about people who might become part of the new administration, and said among other things that I was probably in line to be the deputy secretary at State. I was pretty surprised, of course, because I had heard nothing about it. It didn't happen, obviously, and I never heard a word from anyone about it. Just one of those things.

Q: So your foreign service and international background was useful in some of that Prune Book writing?

TRATTNER: Yes, very useful. I profiled at least six or seven State Department positions, some of them in more than one book. Going into those interviews for the books and in writing them, it was really a comfortable feeling to know ahead of time what the State Department was all about, and how the other agency players fit into the issues and decisions of making foreign policy, and what the problems were that they had to deal with. And there were other projects at the Council for Excellence in Government that related to international affairs. But before getting to that, I should note that after six years at the Council, things had begun to get old, or I was getting a bit stale, or both. The Council had embarked on a sort of jag in which everything it did had to relate to the need for accountability in government. Sort of like management theory gone wild. It didn't much appeal to me, and I had trouble connecting the things I was doing to accountability, though I certainly recognized its value as a principle of good government. And I think the Council was beginning to think my projects were marginal to that. At any rate, the Council and I agreed to go separate ways in the summer of 1993 and I signed up to teach for a year at the graduate level at the School of Communication at American University. I was a resident associate there, working for Sandy Unger, the dean of the school, whom I

had known earlier when he was with National Public Radio. At the school, I taught a seminar on public affairs, and in the spring semester convened an international conference at the university on the issue of government and its relationship to the media. The focus was on Eastern Europe and Russia, where an entirely new relationship was emerging in the new democracies of that region. I was able to bring journalists from those countries as participants, together with their counterparts from the U.S. and two or three western European countries, and recruited speakers like Hodding Carter and Roy Gutman, who had just won a Pulitzer for coverage of the Bosnian war, for Newsday.

When the year of teaching was finished, the Council for Excellence in Government asked me to do some writing and advising work. In my absence, the leadership there had changed. Patricia McGinnis was the new president and had substantially changed the Council's operations and outlook. She and I met and talked about her goals with the Council and what she wanted me to do, which was mainly to bring what she viewed as needed skills to the task of communicating the Council's mission and activities. There was a sizeable writing challenge there, which appealed to me, and she represented a refreshing new direction and energy for the organization. So I agreed to return to the Council and work for her part time. The part time inevitably became full time, and after some months, I again became a vice president there.

I did a great deal of writing for the Council on subjects not related to foreign affairs or foreign policy and that work gave me a reasonably broad knowledge of the federal government. But I also operated in another dimension there, and that was dozens of briefings I did for foreign visitors to the U.S., a good many of whom came here under the auspices of State and other federal agencies. These people were journalists, businessmen, teachers, government officials at the national, provincial, and city levels, people concerned with management of government, ethics in government, all kinds of teachers at the university and lower levels, students. Their interest was American government, and to a lesser extent, American society in a general way. This began with an occasional meeting with a visiting individual or group, and then it just grew. The Council became a regular stop on the Washington foreign visitor circuit. At the height of it, I was getting calls maybe two or three times a month requesting briefings, and I almost always did them. Most of them I did alone, but often I'd bring in other staff colleagues because a surprisingly large number of visiting groups wanted to hear about the Council itself in addition to other topics. At least half a dozen groups of visitors asked me if we could help set up a Council for Excellence in Government in their own countries. My answer was always that we'd be delighted, but didn't have the money for it, unless they were able to fund it. Since most of those requests came from the developing world, there was never any money available. Those briefings were a sort of extracurricular thing I did, not really related to the Council's mission, and I really enjoyed them. Many questions about American government and Americans were quite sophisticated. Some of them were quite penetrating and critical questions about the failures of U.S. foreign policy in various parts of the world. Why we did this, why we did not do that. I listened to one or two real lectures along the way, and I defended where I thought it was credible.

Q: How many briefings or how many people do you estimate you saw?

TRATTNER: I've been asked that before, and the best estimate is about 175 briefings, and about a thousand people all told.

Q: Were they all in English, and what countries did your visitors come from?

TRATTNER: They were in English. A lot of people understood it well enough, and for those that did not, there was an interpreter or interpreters accompanying them, often from State. They came from all over the world. My files showed that they represented 70 countries, including China, Russia, Vietnam and other communist or former communist countries, many from Latin America, maybe half a dozen from Africa, a fair number from the Middle East and South Asia—India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Syria, Israel—and from all over Europe.

Q: Like everyone else, my experience in the international visitor scene is that this is probably our strongest foreign policy asset, getting foreign leaders or presumptive leaders in various positions to come here to visit us. What was your experience?

TRATTNER: Well I agree with you. Because the U.S. has one of the dominant roles in the world, and will have for some time to come, many people overseas want to come to the U.S. and see what it's all about. And their reasons vary; their jobs have some kind of international dimension and they come here to improve their job knowledge and performance. Teachers, business people, government people, media people. And some are just naturally curious. I think the international visitor concept, whether it is operated by government or by a private company or a foundation, is very productive and beneficial to both visitor and visited. It is one of the most effective ways of showing people from other countries what the United States is, what it does and what it hopes to do. I have enjoyed being part of the process. It was probably USIA's most powerful, most effective program, and it is still operating, managed by the Department of State. I am still today now and then contacted by some of the sponsor organizations to come and talk to a group of visiting foreigners. Most of these groups spend serious time in Washington, They visit the Senate. They attend a State Department press briefing. They see other federal agencies. And a variety of other visits of that type. Then they travel the country, visit industrial sites, talk to corporate managers, spend time in a newspaper office, visit a nonprofit organization, talk to mayors and city council people.

Q: I would like to go back to the Prune Book. You were interviewing people who were put in government for political reasons or maybe for professional reasons in these jobs. But you must have run across a significant number of people who were quite poor in their jobs. So how did you deal with this?

TRATTNER: The most important underlying point we were trying to make with those books was that merit, that is good credentials, experience in these areas, had a very important place in considering a person for one of the jobs described. Merit could not be the only criterion, obviously, but it should be a weighty factor in deciding whom to put in those positions. Maybe you supported the president's campaign, maybe you contributed

money, maybe you were on the campaign staff, maybe some senator is giving you a big recommendation. All those things are okay, but you should also have some expertise, or training, or experience, that will allow you to successfully handle the job you're being given. That is, merit. We were under no illusions that we could persuade presidents and White House personnel offices to give merit a completely equal and durable place in the appointments process, but I think we shoved it up a few notches. Every administration has its share of unprepared or incompetent appointees, some more than others. There will always be ambitious but unqualified, and sometimes downright stupid, individuals who want jobs and somehow get past the vetting process all appointees undergo. And people who just want to shine up their resumes with a government job, who see public service as just a path to higher positions and greater riches in the private sector afterward. In the book about surviving in government, I told the true story of a new political appointee, just arrived in his job, whose first question to an aide is, "OK what time every day do I see the president?" Now you asked how we dealt with these kinds of appointees. Well, that was the whole point of the Prune books, to point out that competence and knowledge in these jobs is extremely important and that people who can't demonstrate those qualities should never be appointed.

Q: Are you doing any other internationally oriented things now?

TRATTNER: I am currently a member of the board of the Public Diplomacy Council (PDC), which is an organization of former diplomats at both State and USIA, plus academics and non government organization leaders. Its mission is to strengthen and reshape public diplomacy as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy. Part of public diplomacy is informing and influencing people abroad, the mission of the old U.S. Information Agency. It's done with exchange programs, international broadcasting, films, libraries, lectures, exhibits. A very important part of this is sustained person-to-person contact. All this is something the U.S. has always been pretty good at, but we could do it a lot better. What has not been so effective is the other vital mission of public diplomacy, which is to learn from the same foreign publics, and to use what we learn in the content and conduct of our foreign policy. Public diplomacy ideally is a two-way street, with real, ideology-free dialogue between Americans and everybody else. It's not a government-to-government operation. It is government-to-people. And I have to say that the foreign policy disasters of the Bush administration has made the job of public diplomacy infinitely harder. I say that because it is a fact and is evident everywhere. Now as we look ahead to the coming presidential election, and depending on the results, there may be a real opportunity to reform and strengthen public diplomacy, and the PDL will be working in many ways to help make that happen.

Q: In this public diplomacy side of your activities, how did you view the problems of dealing with the Muslim Islamic world after 9/11 and the security aspects and getting young people from the Islamic world to come to the United States? Did you see this as something you were concerned with?

TRATTNER: Yes, centrally. Clearly the public diplomacy effort, if you can call it that, of the Bush Administration has been focused chiefly on Afghanistan, the Middle East, and

other Muslim regions of the world. This was of course necessary and correct, but it has neglected important public diplomacy efforts in other parts of the world. There doesn't seem to have been a long-range strategy for the non Muslim world where, in several regions, people's access to ideas and information from the outside is blocked either by a neutral or unfriendly media environment or a neutral or unfriendly political environment, or both. This absence of focus on such parts of the world was epitomized by the steady reduction of programming and resources of U.S. international broadcasting, whose central fixture is the Voice of America, and which includes Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and some of the other specialized radio stations. Incredibly, for example, there was a proposal—actually, a decision—to eliminate English-language broadcasts by the Voice of America (VOA). Can you imagine Moscow eliminating Russian from its international broadcasting, or the French knocking their own language out of their broadcasting? The resources diverted from VOA English and other broadcasting to non Muslim areas would go mainly to operations established after 9/11 and focused on Muslim audiences, such as Alhurra, the U.S.-sponsored television station. Happily, in late 2007, efforts by the Public Diplomacy Council helped turn aside, at least temporarily, the cuts that were proposed for VOA and the other radios. That's a satisfying outcome.

At the Public Diplomacy Council, we have worked hard to examine and elaborate these issues, with public forums and publications where problems are debated and solutions suggested. I suggested earlier that we feel very strongly that the time has come for a far-reaching overhaul and reform of the entire U.S. public diplomacy effort—that public diplomacy has in fact become a central instrument of U.S. foreign policy and must be conceived of and managed as such. In that context, I'm currently writing a chapter for a book on U.S. international broadcasting that the Public Diplomacy Council will publish next spring. I like doing this kind of work, because it rewards a desire to put effort and accumulated knowledge and experience into a very worthwhile project. Of course, in the case of a book or some other kind of public advocacy like this, you can never measure the results or know whether or to what extent you influence people. But now and again you get evidence that you've reached some minds that have something to do with the direction in which policy goes.

Q: Thank you very much, John.

TRATTNER: Stu, it's been fun, and thank you.

End of interview