

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

**JOHN VOGEL**

*Interviewed by: Fran Leskovar  
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**INTERVIEW**

*Q: Today is October 25, 2025 and this is a Fulbright interview. Can you state your name and spell it out please?*

VOGEL: John Vogel. V, as in Victor, O, G, E, L.

*Q: Perfect. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? Where did you grow up?*

VOGEL: I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, many years ago, and I grew up in a combination of Washington, DC and Westport, Connecticut.

*Q: Perfect. Where did you go to school?*

VOGEL: I went to college at Princeton University. Then I went to law school at the University of Michigan Law School.

*Q: Perfect. What was your first window into study abroad programs, international affairs and so on?*

VOGEL: I was always interested in international affairs, if you will. I had a very compelling professor at Michigan Law School in a seminar of international studies, and he convinced me that I should apply for a Fulbright scholarship. I said, "Well, I'm normally awfully competitive. I'm not exactly a numero uno student here at this school," but he said, "Oh, no, go. Apply to go." He recommended that I apply to the countries of Belgium and Luxembourg, because he said fewer people apply there. So I applied in Belgium, and I was accepted. I spent a year and a half on my Fulbright, working in Brussels. I was essentially a paralegal, to the general consul of the then European Economic Community, which, of course, you weren't even born when this was occurring.

*Q: \*laughs\**

VOGEL: This was, of course, the precursor of today's European Union. I had the opportunity to work on a number of really interesting projects, many of which dealt with the harmonization of intra community law and different countries' laws. So it was a transformative experience, in that it did whet my appetite for, and caused me to develop my intention to practice, international private law— that is corporate law— and my love for travel all around the world.

*Q: So what does Fulbright mean to you? What is the meaning of Fulbright, when you hear the word?*

VOGEL: It's a wonderful network. I have developed some very good friends in Fulbright. It's also a network for employment opportunities, for community service, and just in general, for meeting people who have similar interests to your own, that you can just enjoy, whether over a coffee, or a drink, or whatever.

*Q: What did you learn from the Fulbright program, which you were part of, about the world? What were the lessons learned, when you were serving as a Fulbright? What did you learn about the world?*

VOGEL: Well, as I said, I was in the middle of the European community, so I was particularly taken with the way the different countries and their different representatives managed to work together, or not, depending upon the topic. There were some rather difficult situations when it came down to taxation. It was a particular problem area. I was involved in one project involving the harmonization of different countries' taxes that didn't go anywhere, because nobody wanted to have lower taxes.

While, on the other hand, something like antitrust law was much easier because there was a common interest among the countries. I learned the importance of negotiation, the importance of dealing with each other, the importance of and the interest in transactional experience, which clearly led me to, and incentivized me to, practice law. When I developed my corporate law practice after that, in New York City and Washington, my Fulbright in Belgium was clearly an important background and informative experience for me.

*Q: How would you describe your contributions to the country that you were in, with your Fulbright program? As you said in Belgium, what are some of your contributions that, when you left the country, you would be proud of?*

VOGEL: As I was working for the general counsel of the EU— I helped him develop what he needed in his legal tasks. I think that I brought a certain bit of American culture to a number of the Belgians. I became very good friends with a number of citizens in Belgium just through the process. Many were Fulbrights. Many were not. I traveled around on student passes throughout Europe with the Belgians, and got to speak the French language quite well. I shared many of my American experiences of growing up the way things are done in America, which are not always the same as they were in

Europe. I think that may have raised a few eyebrows, but it was, I think, a contribution to them, and they certainly contributed the same to me.

*Q: Right. So, what is the value of a Fulbright program today in U.S. diplomacy and, I guess, under American businesses?*

VOGEL: While it may sound trite, the Fulbright program does promote understanding and trust, and that, of course, is important, not only at the higher political and diplomatic levels, but it's also critical when you have such a small world so interwoven—every company here is affected by a company there, literally around the world. For corporations who have to do business with each other, they have to understand how and why each operates. They have to understand how the people think and work. They have to understand and trust the people that they do business with—whether they're vendor or vendee or whatever their relationship is, there has to be that understanding and that trust, and without it, commerce is not well served.

*Q: So what are some of the lessons learned for future generations that are considering applying for Fulbright?*

VOGEL: I heartily recommend that they do apply. It's an exciting, thrilling experience to live in a foreign country. I particularly support the longer programs that the Fulbright Program offers. I know that they now offer some short scholarships, but to get to know a country, the people, to get to know how the people operate, how they live, why they live, their culture, you have to be there at least a year. I think it's a very formative experience. It's going to change the way you think. It's going to make you more interested in travel. It's going to broaden your interests and expand your horizon, and make you a better and wiser person.

*Q: All right, is there anything else that you would like to add?*

VOGEL: I can't think of anything right now.

*Q: I will end the tape.*

*End of interview*