Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs History Program

PAUL H. WACKERBARTH

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Chapter 1 – Early Life and Education

Q: Today is April 1, 2002, April Fools' Day. My interview today is with Paul H. Wackerbarth. This is being done for the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Let's begin with, when and where were you born?

WACKERBARTH: I was born in Hackensack, New Jersey, on June 20, 1942.

Q: Can you tell me something about the background of your father and then your mother?

WACKERBARTH: My father, Henry Phillip Wackerbarth (1903 - 1970), was a pharmacist's son from Jersey City, New Jersey. His grandfather was a doctor in New York City, born in Kassel, in Germany. His father went back to Germany, and studied medicine, but then took up pharmacy and established a pharmacy in Jersey City, right on the Hudson County Boulevard (now named Kennedy Boulevard). My father had two younger sisters, Emily and Katherine.

My grandfather, Henry John Wackerbarth, very much wanted my father, his oldest child, to eventually take over the family business. My father went to pharmacy school but felt called to the ministry. After a year at Columbia University Pharmacy School, he entered Hope College in Holland, Michigan, a denominational school of the Reformed Church in America. There he met my mother. Upon graduation in 1929 he went to New Brunswick (NJ) Seminary, where he got his Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1932. (Actually, his diploma read Rutgers University, which was founded by the Reformed Church and later became a state school.)

He was ordained and installed as pastor of the Third Reformed Church in Hackensack, New Jersey, later that year. In June 1932, he and my mother were married at her home in Spring Lake, Michigan. Third Hackensack was very much a struggling parish, but he was able to hold it together. In 1944, during World War Il, he volunteered to serve as a Navy chaplain. He was assigned to a military hospital at Camp White in Medford, Oregon. In 1946 he resumed his ministry at the Hackensack church. He semi-retired in 1969, taking a call as a part time Pastor at the Dover, New Jersey, Presbyterian Church. Sadly, he died in July 1971, in Dover Hospital from a massive heart attack. This was just as I was getting established professionally as a Foreign Service Officer, serving in Barranquilla, Colombia.

The church experienced a lot of growth during the postwar baby boom period and thrived; the Sunday School and Youth programs were very active. Once again, I would heartily echo Van Gogh's comments: my father was first and foremost a pastor and he was very important to the people he served so diligently. I believe he influenced many and brought faith, strength, and comfort to many who would not otherwise have found it.

Q: What was your mother's background?

WACKERBARTH: My mother, Esther Marian Mulder (1909 - 1983), was from Spring Lake, Michigan. She was the youngest, by far, of five. She went to Hope College, where she met my father, trained to be a teacher, and taught in Michigan for a year. During the Depression, teaching jobs—as all public service jobs—were hard to get, so she felt fortunate. She recalled being paid in scrip, which essentially were IOUs from the City, accepted as payments by local merchants, when it didn't have the cash to meet its payroll at that time. My understanding is that the scrip was later redeemed for cash.

So one didn't take a contract lightly, figuring that there was going to be another job around. This being the case, I imagine my father had to be quite persuasive. On June 23, 1933, they married, and she came east to New Jersey.

I remember hearing of my grandmother, Margaret Dobb Mulder, crying when she left because her youngest daughter was going so far away, and this occurred to us when we would go off to the Foreign Service posts, as we went off to South America for our first two posts. In those instances, I would say to my mother, "In terms of transportation time and ease of communication, it's not as far away as Michigan was from New Jersey in 1933." My Mom visited us at Christmas in Barranquilla, Colombia—our first post—and then again, in 1980, when we were serving in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

My mother was very, very supportive, and encouraging to my dad; I would describe her as a partner in the ministry. There was not a lot of challenge to gender roles in the church at that time, and I think she was happy in her supportive role. She did like working outside the home, mostly part time as a substitute teacher, but sometimes she worked a full school year or took long-term substituting positions.

Politics was discussed in our home, but not obsessively. I heard my parents say that sometimes their votes crossed out each other's as they voted for different candidates. I believe they both voted for Dwight Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956. They did speak

respectfully of Adlai Stevenson during both campaigns. However, one poignant comment I heard stands out in my mind to this day: the morning after Richard Nixon's "Checkers" speech during the 1952 campaign, while substituting, my mother silenced the teacher's room by saying of Nixon, "l trust that man as far as I can throw a grand piano!"

Q: Well now, did you have brothers and sisters?

WACKERBARTH: Yes. I had an older sister. She was born in Hackensack in 1939, so she was three years older than myself. She died in 1999. She attended Hope College 1957-59, then transferred to Wagner College on Staten Island in New York City. Her degree was in Medical Technology; she did pharmaceutical research in New Jersey and after graduation. She married my brother-in-law, Russell Meyers, in 1963 and they raised two daughters. She was a homemaker for most of their marriage. They lived in Frankfurt, Germany, 1964-67, when Russell was employed there as a U.S. Defense Department employee. Upon completion of that assignment, they settled in Laurel, Maryland, where Russell was employed at the National Security Agency at nearby Fort Meade. In 1979, they moved to Orlando, and in 1984, to State College, Pennsylvania, as Russell took positions in the private sector.

Our families got together frequently during 1974-77 when both families were living in close proximity in suburban Maryland. We visited her family in Orlando and State College from time to time, over the years, when we were stateside. Their younger daughter, Karen, was particularly helpful to us when we landed stateside in 1983 with two babies in tow. Sadly, Hilda died very suddenly in December 1999. At my sister's memorial service when she passed away in 1999, I tried to describe the background in which we grew up in Hackensack, New Jersey.

Hackensack is a very interesting place, sometimes wrongly maligned. I remember one time in 1991 in Poland, I was having coffee with former Vice President Walter Mondale while waiting to escort him on a call. I mentioned that we had common backgrounds having both grown up in a parsonage. He asked where I had grown up, and when I said Hackensack, New Jersey, his immediate reaction was, "Oh, I campaigned there; I'm awfully sorry." And I said to myself, "No, you've got it all wrong, Mr. Vice President; it was a good place to hail from."

Hackensack, New Jersey, in my youth was sort of a semi-urban community, and our church was small and often struggling. There wasn't a lot of extra money in our household, so I'd sort of describe my background as very spare, but yet very privileged. I was very privileged in the sense that I was brought up in an encouraging home; but more than that, I think because of my status as the pastor's son, I had a whole community that was interested in me and wanted to relate to me. One doesn't really realize these things until age 35 or 40, but a lot about who I am derives from the kind of community Hackensack was. Right now, I think Hackensack is ethnically about a third white or Caucasian, a third Hispanic, and a third African American, with maybe about three or four percent Asian. The mix in my time there was more skewed towards the white, but it was a fairly broad range of whites, as there was a large community of Italian Americans, a fairly significant Jewish community, and a healthy mix of everyone else. Also, the African American community was significant.

Q: Yes. What sort of industry was there?

WACKERBARTH: It was not so much an industrial city, although it was the world's leading manufacturer of soft-soled slippers at that time, and there was a brassiere factory. Yet it is the county seat of Bergen County, which attracts law offices and other administrative service functions. Before the advent of shopping malls in the mid-1950s, it was a major retail hub. The principal regional hospital—now a university teaching hospital—is there. It also was somewhat of a bedroom community. I would describe it as basically a lower middle to middle class small city, with some upper middle class neighborhoods and a row of mansions.

Q: Well now, what was it like growing up in a parsonage, because the Dutch Reformed Church is a pretty strict church, isn't it? I mean, I have a friend, an Englishman, who's a missionary for the Dutch Reformed Church, in Italy of all places. But you know, from what he describes, it sounds like something sort of from a Rembrandt painting, of these guys sitting around with frilled collars, laying down the law to the laity and all.

WACKERBARTH: Well, if you look at Rembrandt's background, you realize that he was also a very earthy sort himself.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: But as for the Reformed Church in America—which traces its roots to Calvin—I wouldn't quite describe it as a big tent, but it had its Eastern branch, and it had its Western branch. I often describe how my mother's older sister, who was about 17 or 18 when my mother was born, married a Reformed Church Minister, Uncle Ira, who was in the Western branch, and was much more of a strict Calvinist. The length of his prayers is a legend in our extended family to the 4th generation. My father was very much of the Eastern branch. He was a very pragmatic individual. He was neither particularly orthodox nor liberal. I remember he gave a eulogy at our Jewish next-door-neighbor's funeral service. The man was Jewish, and it was somewhat of an innovation, even in the 1960s, for a Protestant pastor to participate. In his talk my father described this man's spirit, his love of life, his commitment to help others. At his turn to speak the rabbi observed that the widow had said something such as, "Oh, my husband was not someone who kept the faith, or who was very observant." The rabbi, picking up on this and my dad's remarks, said, "Well, maybe this is somebody who did keep the Scriptures." I think this says a lot about my dad, as well.

I think my father believed that keeping the spirit of the Scriptures was more important than keeping the letter of the law. He was not at all orthodox by any denominational standards and his church did not serve a Dutch-American community. Hackensack was constantly changing. Folks, in many cases first- generation Americans, would move in, prosper, and move on to more suburban communities. Our church was called a Community Church, as well as the Third Reformed Church. My dad drew people into the congregation who might have felt uncomfortable going to another church because of their past. It was a very accepting, inclusive, forgiving congregation. I think that the congregation might not have been sustained in that community otherwise.

Hackensack, New Jersey, had three Reformed churches. Hackensack was founded by the Dutch in 1665. The city's First Reformed Church was founded in 1695. Later the Second Reformed Church was founded; it grew to be large. In 1858, the Third one was founded, for a German-speaking Dutch Reformed community. I believe a number of the original congregants were Swiss Calvinists.

By the late 1920s, the need for a bilingual church had run its course. In 1928, the congregation voted to put the church in a new community rather than have it downtown. In the early 1930s, at the height of the Depression, the experiment really ran into hardship. As mentioned earlier, there were three or four people in the congregation on the first Sunday my father preached. But gradually, and I think from my dad's very hard work, with equally stalwart support from my mom, they built a small, but strong, congregation where there was not a natural constituency.

I was explaining this to my cousin's wife, who grew up in a very orthodox part of the Reformed Church—how I recall in the 1940s, he wanted to buy a movie projector for the congregation. Well, he and I went to New York (which was a lot of fun) to buy it. When he got it going, the church would show religious films on Sunday to the Sunday School. But on Saturday he would show popular films—Laurel and Hardy, Three Stooges, etc., and any newsreel he could get. This would draw the entire community into the church. People didn't have two cars and didn't go to the mall to go to the movies. To catch a flick, one had to hop on a bus to go downtown. The parking was tight because that's where everybody was shopping on Saturdays. So, the idea that you could have movies right there in the community took hold as people got used to coming into the Church building. They would also come to the church for Scouts, and other community events, and it became a center of the community. Some of these people realized that there was a church there, and when they needed a church, they knew the pastor. He was somebody who they would see at PTA (Parent Teacher Association) meetings, see around the community, and they could relate to him. And I think that they also saw that it was a very accepting congregation. It was, I think, the first place in Hackensack to host an Alcoholics Anonymous group; and some of those people, again, became familiar with the church building, and its pastor and felt very comfortable. Some of them would come to him for counseling.

I recall that on becoming a Foreign Service officer, I wrote in my original essay that I grew up in a house where service was a very important value. I grew up in a home, in a church, in a community where openness, inclusiveness, and acceptance were also very important values.

Q: Let's talk about school. Do you recall your elementary school? What sort of things interested you most?

WACKERBARTH: I attended Longview School (now Hillers School), two and a half blocks from home. I would walk to school, including coming home for lunch. I was a good student, but not at the very top of my class. I was sick a lot in first grade and may have missed the lesson on how to hold a pencil. My atrocious handwriting haunts me to this day—not to mention driving to near madness my secretaries (now Office Managers) who over the years had to decipher my marginal handwritten comments on draft

documents. I was interested in a lot of things, but it was history and social studies that really grabbed my imagination. I remember my dad gave me an old atlas when I was in third grade, and I loved the maps. I was into drawing maps and flags. I remember wondering why the maps of Germany were different in an older atlas than a newer one. I don't think my fascination with science was as strong, by any means, as my fascination with social studies. My wife developed the same kind of fascination for nature growing up 10 to 12 miles away.

Q: Do you recall any books or authors that particularly intrigued you in earlier years?

WACKERBARTH: I don't know whether I really was so much of a serious reader in my earlier years. I probably overdosed on comic books and then sports magazines. I probably got a lot more out of those comic books than anyone could possibly imagine. I remember my oldest cousin, who's a distinguished scholar, never thought I was going to amount to much because I was too silly. I also liked perusing the encyclopedia and World Almanac.

Q: Yes. While you were at home and around the dinner table, were foreign events or political events a topic of conversation?

WACKERBARTH: Yes. My Dad loved to have the radio on in the morning, as he got up first and fixed breakfast. For example, I remember very clearly on June 25, 1950, hearing the news that the North Korean troops had gone into South Korea. We would talk about things at other meals too. My father was pretty much focused on his work, but he was interested in broader topics, as was my mother. I had a favorite uncle (my mother's brother) who was a teacher in Michigan where we'd go every summer and sometimes meet the cousins from Nebraska and Illinois. He never married but was very much interested in his nephews' and nieces' intellectual development. He was very interested in politics and foreign affairs and loved to initiate conversations about these topics. He was an encourager who would take us at our level of interest and move us further along. My cousins still smile when recounting how Uncle Fred sent each of us subscriptions to the New Republic just to make sure we were exposed to another point of view while attending our respective mid-western colleges.

Q: Where did the family fall, sort of, in the political spectrum, would you say?

WACKERBARTH: I would say very much in the center. I think that my paternal grandfather probably never had a kind word to say about FDR (Franklin D. Roosevelt), but I think my father, who clashed with his father, was much more open-minded and pragmatic. His family came from the merchant class and, like Margaret Thatcher, grew up living over the store; I think he could be described as a Thatcherite Republican—certainly an Eisenhower Republican.

My grandfather in Michigan had a general store. I think both of my grandfathers during the Depression probably wrote off a lot of debts. In other words, people needed stuff, and I think my grandfather in Michigan probably was infinitely less angry about having to do that. I think he was more a man of a social conscience, and I think he may have voted Democratic at times. It's hard to say! I mean, in Ottawa County (Michigan) where he came from, it seems as if almost nobody, but nobody, ever votes Democratic!

Our neighborhood was very pro Eisenhower. I often say that I was 14 years old (in 1956) before I heard someone say a kind word about Harry Truman. I heard a lot about "that man"! When I would wear a solid navy-blue tie, my paternal grandmother would ask me why I was wearing that "Harry Truman" tie. I recall the uproar at our school, when in April of 3rd grade the news came over that Truman had fired General MacArthur. I also remember well, in 1948, my first-grade friend and I were playing outside. A lady was walking back from the polls and said: "Well, you're not supposed to say who you vote for, but since everybody knows that Dewey's going to win, I'll tell you that I voted for Dewey." I do remember the next morning, hearing on the radio, the results indicating that Truman had been re-elected.

Also during the 1952 campaign, our class walked about 10 blocks to see Eisenhower pass through our neighborhood in a red Packard convertible. A TV was brought into our school auditorium for the first time, so we could witness Eisenhower's 1953 inaugural. Ike would serve as President from my 4th grade year until after my graduation from high school. Our community and our family were very pro-Eisenhower. He was perceived as a natural leader. He enjoyed the same kind of popularity that Colin Powell enjoys today. I think that both of my parents voted reluctantly for Nixon in the 1960 election, but voted for Johnson in 1964, and for Humphrey in 1968.

Q: Yes. Well then, you went on to junior high and high school.

WACKERBARTH: In 1954, I began my first of three years at State Street Junior High School. This was quite a contrast from Longview School, and I was an adolescent rapidly growing very tall. The last couple of years when my grandnieces and nephew have been going into 7th grade, I pulled them aside and told them that I found 7th grade to be a "Zoo," and then said with a smile, "Don't let the turkeys get you down!" Being tall, I was seated in the back with kids from lower class parts of town who had been left back a couple of times. Several were just waiting to turn 16 so they could quit school and take jobs like pin boy in a bowling alley. Academically, I slowed down quite a bit finding it easy to coast to "B's." In 9th grade—to my horror—my home room teacher, Miss Briscoe, called in my parents because on seeing my test scores, she thought they should know I wasn't "working up to my capacity." I would later learn that Miss Briscoe paid for summer school tuition for one of my classmates because his dysfunctional family could not afford it—this is the kind of community that nurtured me.

Q: Oh. What sort of subjects and activities were you involved in in high school? Was it in Hackensack?

WACKERBARTH: In September 1957, I entered Hackensack High School. There my classmates from State Street Jr. High would join students from Fairmount Jr. High, which served the middle-class part of Hackensack as well as students from the neighboring towns of Rochelle Park and New Milford.

Hackensack High School has produced at least four Foreign Service officers: George Knowles, Greg Mattson, Lionel Johnson, and myself. It also produced Ambassador John B. Morrow, the first U.S. Ambassador to Guinea in West Africa. He was African American and had been a professor of French in a historically black college in the U.S.

South. His brother served in the Eisenhower White House as an Advisor; their sister was a teacher in the Hackensack Public Schools. Their father was the janitor at the Hackensack Public Library as well as being a Methodist minister. The education of these three siblings was made possible by the oldest brother, who saved the money he earned in the Hackensack Hospital laundry so that they could go to college.

In 1968 when I was home from graduate school, my parents took me with them to the Mary McLeod Bethune Scholarship Awards dinner, which had Ambassador Morrow as the featured speaker. The scholarship was started in the 1940s with the idea of encouraging African Americans (and they were called colored at that time) from Hackensack to go to college. I remember Ambassador Morrow saying how much he hoped to see a graduate of Hackensack High School in the Foreign Service, and I think he particularly meant African American. As far as I know Lionel Johnson is the only African American Hackensack High School alum to serve in the Foreign Service. I think he did not stay for a full career, moving on to other positions in government and then into the private sector.

My academic interests were greatest in the social sciences, and that was my strongest suit. I was a star in my 12th grade American History class as I was designated a candidate for Advanced Placement, which I believe was new at that time. Tonu Parming, an Estonian immigrant who would head up the Foreign Service Institute Northeast Europe Area Studies course in the 1980s, was the other AP designee in the class. Our teacher Miss Oliver was stellar. I still remember her special units on topics such as immigration and financial history. I did fairly well in the sciences and got somewhat interested in that as well. In observing wildlife on my travels, I have found myself remembering what I learned in Miss Whelan's biology class.

With math, I would struggle for a while and then I would get it and do very well. Some teachers said, "Maybe you have a future there." My English grades were reasonable, but that wasn't the way I would get to really appreciate literature—that would come later in college. I sometimes reflect on the comment my senior composition teacher wrote in my yearbook. He said: "Keep improving as you did in my composition class, and you'll be another Hemingway." In my mind, I pair that remark with Stan Cleveland, my second Foreign Service supervisor, saying in my evaluation that I wrote with an excellent undecorated style.

On the extracurricular side, in high school I was on the track and cross country teams, albeit as an "also ran." Hackensack was very much a sports town. When I was growing up, high school athletes—especially football players—were royalty. I was hardly a natural athlete as I lacked good coordination. I think my body for many years grew too tall, too fast, for athletic skills to keep up. I tried out for Little League Baseball and was assigned to a team in the second tier "minor" league, which somewhat resembled Charlie Brown's All Stars. But I had a uniform, albeit second-hand, sporting the name of the car dealership sponsor—West Oldsmobile Rockets. In 9th grade I surprised myself, my classmates, and my gym teachers by doing fairly well on the State Street Jr. High Track Team. That year at the end of school there was a softball playoff which our gym class won, and I contributed a few key plays to the victory. Maybe my coordination was beginning to catch up a bit. I tried out for the Hackensack High School basketball team,

with the long shot hope that someone might try to harness my height and teach me some skills, but I really had no expectation of making the team. That proved to be right. At the end of 12th grade, there was an All-Sports Father-Son Dinner for graduating seniors who were on varsity teams. The coaches spoke about each team member. When my name came up, Track Coach Tom Della Torre—a local legendary figure, who was named New Jersey football coach of the century in the year 2000—said that although I wasn't a star, he thought I got a lot out of participation. Hearing that from him made me feel my efforts were worth it.

The only other extra-curricular activity in high school that I can recall was the Spanish Club. It was a lot of fun because the teacher-advisor Mr. Webster was open, friendly, and encouraging to students. Mr. Webster set an example that I recently followed—he went to court with a classmate who had been arrested for stealing a car. I don't know the details, but I was impressed that he would stand with someone without reference to what the person was accused of doing. I thought of this a few years ago when I went to New York City and attended court proceedings for my late sister's college roommate who was accused of a very serious crime.

Outside of school I was active in my church youth group. In my senior year of high school, I was President of the United Christian Youth Movement of Greater Hackensack, which was composed of youth groups from all the churches in the area. We promoted Youth Rallies, and I took the initiative to organize an inter-church basketball league.

As far as employment was concerned, during junior high I had an afternoon paper route, which, among other things, was a venture in small business, as I bought the papers for $.03 and sold them delivered for $.055–33 cents for a 6-day week. In high school, I worked at Wallachs—an upscale men's store—during a sale one summer. As a senior, newly minted driver's license in hand, I was a delivery boy for a pharmacy, not in Hackensack, but in the neighboring town of Paramus. I wasn't quite following in my father's and grandfather's footsteps, but when our son did a stock/clerk job at CVS Pharmacy during high school, we put in our Christmas letter that now there was a fourth generation of Wackerbarths to work in pharmaceuticals.

Q: [Laughter]

WACKERBARTH: Actually my sister also did pharmaceutical research as a Medical Technologist. That's a little bit of digression.

In the summer after my junior year in high school, I got a job at the Oxford Paper Company New York office. A member of our congregation helped me get it. This was very interesting to me because it took me into New York at age 17 and gave me a catbird's seat on how corporate business worked, from a New York office vantage point. I would go back to work there four of the next five summers—the last was after I graduated from college.

Q: What did you come away with, from this experience, looking at the Oxford Paper Company?

WACKERBARTH: It was quite an education with many dimensions. I was assigned to the Order Department. For starters I got a sense of how a large firm sets priorities and was organized to accomplish its goals. I also saw firsthand how a firm related to its satellite facilities, in this case paper mills in Maine, Massachusetts, and Ohio. Needless to say, good communication was essential. I particularly saw how messages transmitted outside of channels could really mess things up, sometimes royally, something that emerged as a key Foreign Service skill. Further, I noted the structure of hierarchies and how formal, and informal, relationships functioned within them.

One of the most enduring lessons was how the firm responded when things really got messed up. The highly respected Vice President for Sales notably emphasized that sales and customer service were one and inseparable. An example was his response when a badly needed order ran into trouble. He quickly organized a team, which he himself led, to go to the customer's facility and work beside its people to get things straightened out. I can think of broadly analogous situations that came up in my Foreign Service career where I may have drawn on this example of leadership.

I would add that I gained a lot from interacting with my very conscientious colleagues who took me under their wing. Most of them were not college graduates, yet they were very smart at what they did and, moreover, how they addressed their work. I learned where they came from, how their careers developed and where they wanted to go professionally. This gave me a sense of how to succeed working in an office setting. For example, I remember well the day the office's director posted a sign in the office saying, "Assume Nothing." I was also encouraged to get the most out of my college studies. Somewhat surprisingly our director suggested once that I investigate serving in the Peace Corps, post-college.

I would further add that I greatly benefited from observing, albeit remotely, the entire paper making process, from pulp inputs to deliveries to end users. The key word here is "process." New orders came into our office and were conveyed to the firm's three mills. During one of the years, the orders were conveyed by teletype. As a new system, it quickly became important that one and only one person give the final "OK" for the message to be conveyed. Telephone calls were discouraged. Unbeknownst to me at the time, this would be a precursor to my work in the Foreign Service, where I would also experience the need for communications discipline, and the hazards that occur when flouted.

The office followed, mostly passively, the progress of orders through the various stages of manufacture at the mill. Looking at the flow charts on the wall in our office, I could imagine, in my mind's eye, progress, or lack of the same, toward filling orders according to the customer's specs. The next step was tracking shipments from the mill to their designated destination. One of my colleagues had the specific task of tracking the odyssey of freight cars making their way across the country while being coupled with different engines at a series of roundhouses.

Our customers included large firms such as Doubleday, R.R. Donnelly, and National Geographic, with large printing plants. On the other hand, Moore Business Forms was an

interesting recipient to follow as they printed their unique product in relatively small plants scattered across the country.

One of the most notable projects to follow, as it passed through our office, was furnishing paper for a White House tour book authored by then First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy. It was published in 1962 by Doubleday.

I was already into reading the Times regularly. In high school, there was a program where one could have the New York Times delivered to one's homeroom for three cents a day. I developed a habit at that time of reading the News Index first, which is something I do religiously right up until now. From that, one got a sense of what the stories were. We were allowed to read our New York Times during study hall if homework was done.

I remember buying and reading a book called "Your Future in the Foreign Service." But I recall that my sister's roommate [Lynne Stewart], when I was in high school, came home from Hope College, and I asked, "You're majoring in political science—what's that, and what do you plan to do?" She said, "Oh, I plan to take the Foreign Service exam!" I once again said, "Oh! What's that?" And then she explained a little bit to me. Well, she herself never made it into the Foreign Service. She went and became a lawyer, a highly skilled and visible defense lawyer, studied under Kunstler [William Kunstler], and, among other things, was a defense attorney for the radical sheikh [Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman] whose group blew up the World Trade Center in 1993.

Yet I sometimes trace that as the first mention of the Foreign Service.

Q: When did you graduate from high school?

WACKERBARTH: I graduated in 1960.

Q: Sixty. Tell me, where were you going to go to college? It sounded like Hope College would be the obvious choice.

WACKERBARTH: That's where I ended up, and our son is a freshman at Hope College right now. My parents didn't push it. I applied to Princeton, Brown, Franklin and Marshall, and Hope. What I didn't realize in the process was that I was drawing myself a bit of a trap, in the sense that at that time three of the four colleges were men's colleges. I hadn't really focused on that, but one of the things my sister said, in choosing a college, was "I'm not boy crazy, but I'd like to be in a place where they're around." And I think that came home to me.

I was not accepted into Princeton. It was not a major disappointment. I hadn't been that strong a student as a freshman and sophomore, although I started to come up my sophomore year and had a very strong junior year, such that in my junior year, I wouldn't even have thought of applying to Princeton. By the beginning of my senior year, it was a realistic possibility. It's just very tough to get into Princeton from New Jersey because Princeton tries to be geographically differentiated.

I applied to Brown as another Ivy. I recall my visit there, and it was nice enough. But when I took my son there a year and a half ago, I said, I didn't remember it looking this

good. Brown did not offer a scholarship. My parents probably could have swung it. It didn't mean that much to me that I wanted my parents to go that much into hock for it. Franklin and Marshall offered me a scholarship, but by the time I learned of it, I had decided to go with Hope, and I never regretted it. I felt comfortable with Hope College. There were a lot of things drawing me in that direction. Among other things, western Michigan was a happy place for me, as we spent our summer vacations there. I'm still very much drawn to what has been described as America's 3rd coast—the eastern shore of Lake Michigan. I especially love the sand dunes there.

Q: Well, you were at Hope when? Was it 1960 to '64?

WACKERBARTH: Correct, yes.

Q: What was Hope College like when you arrived there in 1960? How would you cast it—its size, composition, thrust?

WACKERBARTH: At that time, it had about 1,600 students, predominantly from Michigan, but a very strong contingent from New York and New Jersey. Its constituency was the Reformed Church in America as it is a denominational college. We spoke before about the Western, more Orthodox, wing of the Reformed Church and the Eastern, more mainstream, wing. At Hope in the 1960s the college was sufficiently in tune with the Eastern mainstream to be comfortable enough. It's a denominational college that has always walked a fine line between aspiring to being a center of academic inquiry and excellence while encouraging spiritual growth and Christian faith. In recent years U.S. News & World Report has rated it 4th or 5th in the nation in undergraduate research right alongside Princeton. In my time, there was a mandatory chapel requirement, which was loosely enforced; and there were rules of conduct for women. For example, women had to be back in the dorms by 10:00 p.m. on weeknights and midnight on weekends. Women could not smoke in the dormitories or elsewhere on campus except for one room called "The Smoker." There was a guy from Wisconsin who had this 1960 Chevrolet convertible which he parked across from one of the dorms and he let it be known that any woman who wanted to go smoke in his car could do so. The idea of men smoking at Hope was never so much of an issue. I think in the Christian Reformed Church, which is an even stricter offshoot of the Reformed Church in America, smoking at its consistory meetings is still accepted. There were strict rules at Hope College against drinking, but there was drinking that went on. I wasn't much into that. It was more open than one would think. There was one legendary drinking party somewhere in the dunes that led to social probation for a number of members of the football team which decimated the 1961 season. In many respects, looking back, I see the early 1960s as an extension of the 1950s. When many think of the 1960s, they think of the late 1960s and '70s, with a significant number of people becoming radicalized and much more freewheeling in their social activities. I think probably by 1964 when we graduated, Hope students were more naïve and more socially conservative than the average of our peers, but not all that much out of the mainstream.

Q: What about dating? Did you date? Did you date much at all?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, I would say I dated casually—not a lot—as a freshman or sophomore. The pace picked up in my junior and senior years. Actually, I met my wife, Cindy, at a mixer in New Jersey before we went to Hope College, but we didn't start dating until our junior year, and then it was just a few dates. During our senior year we dated more or less steadily, but then broke off after she started teaching in Wisconsin the following year and I was in graduate school at Kansas State. In the winter of 1966, we got together again and had some great times, but she was committed to a teaching job in Teheran, Iran, and I thought the whole thing was over. But as things turned out, we would marry after she came home from that teaching job. That's a whole other story.

Q: Yes. Well, what about courses? How did you find yourself? Were you finding yourself pointed towards anything? I mean areas?

WACKERBARTH: Yes. Well, I thought I was going to be a political science major, but I was also very interested in history, especially American history. In my freshman year, though, I took a Western Civilization class and very much liked it.

I hardly abandoned Political Science for History—I've always seen the two subjects as part of a continuum. It was during the 1960 election campaign, which was one of the closest ones. I found all of this absolutely fascinating. I remember staying up all night helping out on the college radio station on Election Night.

When it came time to declare a major, I found myself being drawn towards history, and away from political science, although I did take a strong minor in political science. I did take some literature courses, and philosophy, and psychology, and anthropology as well. When I talked to my son and daughters about courses, I often recall a conversation with a couple of neighbors many years later, in which each of us said independently that if we had our undergraduate years to do over again, each of us probably would have taken fewer courses in our major and minor and more courses from a broader variety of disciplines.

As far as extra-curricular activities in college, I was interested in the International Relations Club's programs. Andy Sens, who would later be a Foreign Service Officer colleague, was President of the IRC my freshman year. For the first three years I was on the track team competing in the half mile (880 yards) and quarter mile (440 yards) events. For the most part I was an "Also Ran," but I did have one shining moment, one spring afternoon clinching our team's victory in the Mile Relay. We didn't have national fraternities, but I was involved in a local fraternity, the Emersonians (Phi Tau Nu), and served as vice president the second semester of my senior year.

Q: Well then, as you moved up to 1964, what were you looking towards doing when you got out?

WACKERBARTH: Possibly into law school. I pictured myself practicing in New York City, a place where I enjoyed working during my summers.

After my junior year, I participated in a special Hope College program called the Vienna Summer School, in Vienna, Austria.

Q: Oh!

WACKERBARTH: Actually, I was a little bit reluctant to go after this wonderful opportunity! It's hard to imagine now. My parents kept saying, "Wonderful opportunity! You just must do it!" And so, I said, "Okay!"

The program was structured so that you took courses for six weeks in Vienna, with a weekend each in Prague and Salzburg. The courses were taught by English-speaking Viennese about subjects that pertained to Austria. I took Art History, for example, and Nineteenth Century European History. The Art History teacher was a woman who had been a docent, schooled in art history, and worked out of the Kunsthistorisches Museum there in Vienna. We all took German Conversation as it was a requirement and I picked up quite a bit of the language. We lived with Austrian families with whom we would have our breakfast. We took our lunch at the school and for dinner we ate on the economy—usually at neighborhood "Gasthauses." The program was set to explore the city of Vienna and the area around. All this was preceded by a three-week study tour on college-leased buses. This part can be best described as a kind of "Grand Tour"—we motored through France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and what is now Slovenia, mixing in lectures and seminars as we took in the sights.

Well, I guess it was several weeks into this program that I realized how much I was enjoying the opportunity to relate to a foreign culture in its own terms. I specifically recall, during our weekend in Prague, having something akin to an epiphany. I laugh at myself when I tell the story now, but I saw this black '63 Chevy with a diplomatic plate, and I said to myself, "That's a diplomatic car." Then suddenly it clicked, and I thought, "Gee, wouldn't it be neat to be in the Foreign Service, and work for an embassy in a place like this!" So, I resolved to try for the Foreign Service.

The third part of the Vienna Summer School experience was Independent Travel. We were encouraged to set our own itineraries for three weeks, after which we would reconvene in the Hague. For the first two weeks of this time, several of us booked a touring trip, composed mostly of Austrians and Germans, to Russia—to Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev (then in the USSR). This idea seemed to fit nicely for me as I had studied Russian history, and the Russian language as a junior. Several of us got on a train and went from Vienna, through Warsaw, to Moscow, and joined this tour. The tour was highly structured, but because I had Russian, we could slip away from the tour, and find our way around the cities on the subway, to create our own tour, enjoying our own sense of adventure!

Q: Well, when you graduated, you decided to go on to law school, was it?

WACKERBARTH: Actually no, I decided on graduate school. I mentioned before my fascination with my Western Civilization course which was taught by Paul Fried; he was the person who was a driving force behind the Vienna Summer School, and so I got to know him better there. At some point early in my senior year he asked, "What are you thinking about for next year?"

I replied, “Well, I had been thinking about going to law school, but I’ve been having some thoughts about going to graduate school.”

He said, “Well, that’s good, because I nominated you for the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship.”

I could have fallen off my chair as I thought to myself, “Well, gee! It’s an honor to be nominated,” but I didn’t expect to advance in the competition. But it turned out that I did, as I was a semifinalist. The nomination steered me towards graduate school.

The Woodrow Wilson Fellowship was established to encourage people to go into college teaching. If you win the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, you can take its generous stipend to just about any graduate school you might choose.

I applied to several graduate schools and was accepted but didn’t get an assistantship or a fellowship as I had hoped. But sometime in April a letter showed up in my mailbox from Kansas State University, saying that they had heard about my Woodrow Wilson Fellowship participation, and as they needed teaching assistants in History, asked if I would be interested in applying.

At that time my goal was college teaching, and I thought a teaching assistantship would give me a chance to gain some experience. So I took the assistantship and went on to Kansas State, in Manhattan, Kansas.

Q: For how long were you at Kansas State?

WACKERBARTH: I was there for the 1964-65 academic year. I realized a couple of things after a year there. I really did enjoy the teaching. The way it worked for a teaching assistant is basically they have a faculty member give two lectures a week, and then there is a third session for discussion of the lecture material and readings, led by the teaching assistant. I liked leading those discussions. Actually, we covered a great deal of material that I hadn’t previously studied so I had to do a lot of boning up to keep up with the class. I was very much looking forward to the second semester of doing that because it would be covering the period from the French Revolution to the present, a period much more familiar to me. But just as the new semester was beginning, the department chair pulled me aside and said, “We have a Western Civilization 101 class again. [This was the course for which I led discussion sections in the first semester.] We have a certain number of students such that it doesn’t really work for the lecture/discussion section format. We want you to teach this course as an instructor.”

Well, to me this was a wonderful opportunity, and I had to really bone up on the material, but I loved doing it. I felt affirmed having the status of Instructor, and I really enjoyed the dialogue resulting from direct one-on-one contact with the students. This included interrelating with them, not only about the material and their grades, but also watching them come along and mature academically. The experience very much confirmed that college teaching was something I could love to do. Someone came that spring from the State Department to talk to Kansas State students about Foreign Service careers, and I found that interesting and filed that notion in my mind.

Kansas State was one of the original 1860s legislation Land Grant universities. Its full name at that time was the Kansas State University of Agriculture and Applied Science, but it also offered a Liberal Arts curriculum. My office and the classrooms where I taught were in Eisenhower Hall, named after our 34th President's brother, Milton, who had served as University President. The University and the town, Manhattan, Kansas, had a mid-1950s Eisenhower Administration feel to it, even though this was the mid-1960s and the winds of protest were starting to gather. I remember participating, with students, faculty, and townspeople, in a parallel march in support of the Spring 1965 Selma to Montgomery Civil Rights March.

There was a lot of diversity among my teaching assistant colleagues. Two were from England, having studied at Cambridge and Leeds Universities respectively. Others were from Australia and Greece as well as domestic colleges such as Creighton, Framingham State, and Southwest Missouri State. Although teaching is what I recall most, we were there to work at getting a master's degree. The quality of teaching was, by and large, excellent. The previous Department Chair had recruited several rising young scholars with Ph.D. degrees from Ivy League and other prestigious universities. I have tracked by way of the internet the outstanding careers of at least two of my teaching assistant colleagues. I certainly found the academic work challenging. During the year I was there, Kansas State received approval to offer the Ph.D. degree in History and I was asked if I would be interested in staying on as one of the first candidates. This was tempting, as was an offer of a teaching assistantship at the University of Oregon at Eugene—this was engineered by one of my professors. But after a year at Kansas State, I said to myself, "If you're really serious about this [and my interest was in Russian history], you really have to go to a major center," and so I decided to transfer to Indiana University.

Q: Yes, in Bloomington then.

WACKERBARTH: In Bloomington, yes.

Q: And of course, this is one of the preeminent schools of Slavic studies.

WACKERBARTH: Oh, absolutely! It's major league! For example, Bob Gates, who served as CIA Director in the Reagan Administration and Secretary of Defense in the second Bush and Obama Administrations, was in my History of Russian Foreign Policy class as a student. Ambassador to the USSR James Collins was just ahead of me. Several of my colleagues have become distinguished academics teaching at prestigious colleges and universities.

I was particularly drawn to Indiana's Russian and East European Institute, which offered an interdisciplinary approach to the region, offering courses in Government, Economics, Literature (in English translation and in Russian), Sociology, Anthropology, etc. The driving force behind the Institute was History Professor Robert Byrnes (father of Foreign Service colleague Sean Byrnes).

I was at Indiana University from 1965 to 1969. The first year I didn't get an assistantship or a fellowship, but my parents, at this point, were willing to support me. They saw that I was driven by seriousness of purpose and that I really wanted to go to the top school. I

was able to get an in-state tuition waiver after the first semester and then not otherwise getting financial support, l signed on as a resident assistant in the dormitory system, which gave me in-state tuition, plus room and board, and a stipend. So that covered my expenses at Indiana until I actually did get a fellowship in 1967. I majored in History, with a strong minor in Government. I also took courses in Russian Literature and Soviet-type Economics. I struggled in the Economics class as I didn't have much prior training in the field. In the Foreign Service I would take the very intensive Economics Training Program which credibly produced the equivalent of a strong major in Economics and sufficient literacy in the field to thrive, functioning as a Foreign Service Economic Officer, in 6 months. I would reflect on my struggle with Soviet-type economics when I served as Economic Counselor at Embassy Warsaw when Communism ended in Eastern Europe in 1989 and I was working alongside very savvy Polish economists newly embracing Western-type economics as practitioners.

In the History Department at Indiana, three regional fields of concentration were required to qualify as a Ph.D. candidate. In my second year I took a course in the Cuban Revolution, taught by Professor David Burks. He liked having a student versed in things Russian and Soviet, and we hit it off. Working with him I developed a strong field in Latin American History co-equal to my field in Russian History. He had served in the State Department for a short time in an exchange program, working on Cuba in the Intelligence and Research Bureau (INR) and he encouraged me to pursue a Foreign Service career. Among other things he would invite Foreign Service Officers to come to campus to speak and to meet with students. He tapped me as a guest when hosting lunches or dinners with the visitors. My third field was West European History. In that area I particularly remember a course in German History taught by Professor Leonard Lundin. I recall vividly that on the first day of class he read us something written by a British observer in the 1840s asserting that the Germans were "too poetic and pastoral a people to ever amount to anything in the industrial world."

I also recall several Government courses I took with Professor Bernard Morris on International Communism—the activities of Communist parties outside the Soviet Bloc. Before coming to Indiana, Professor Morris had worked in a unit on Communist Parties in the INR Bureau at State along with Herbert Marcuse, later a distinguished philosophy professor and dissident, as well as Edmund da Silveira (who would be my first Foreign Service supervisor). Morris did not speak of this himself, yet others told me that during the McCarthy period, he had been suspended because a secretary reported him for reading the "Daily Worker" (a U.S. Communist Party publication) on the bus, which he would be reading within the purview of his professional responsibilities.

In 1969 I passed the prelims (or comprehensive exams) for a Ph.D. in History, but never got to writing a dissertation as I had joined the Foreign Service in 1969.

I took the Foreign Service exam in the fall of 1965 and got my results in early '66. I'd fallen short by one point! One needed a 70; I got a 69. I was elated! I thought, "Gee whiz! I came that close?" Again, as I hadn't been that strong a student and came out of a somewhat obscure college, I knew the examination process was very competitive, and I found myself thrilled to have come that close.

Looking at the different categories, I observed that I had scored comfortably over 70 in all categories save one, in which I got a 58. I said to myself, "Well, that's okay...I'Il take it again next year." The written exam allowed a little room for maneuver in terms of allotting your time. I decided that in the next go-round I would spend more time in that category. So, I took the exam again in the fall of 1966 and when I got my results I found I scored a passing 71, having done just what I thought I would do—rearranged the time. But as it turned out, I got the same 58 in that one category, while scoring even higher in the other categories. [Laughter] To say the least, I was thrilled, but I had no illusions. I knew there was a tough process down the road.

A couple of months later someone called saying that Indiana University had one internship for the State Department for that year, the summer of 1967. That particular year they wanted to have the intern be someone who had passed the Foreign Service exam, and asked would I go for an interview at Indiana University with a professor who had served in the Foreign Service himself? I remember that the interview went well. I particularly recall what I believe was the clinching question. The interviewer posed the following scenario: "Supposing you're working at some office in the State Department, and they're having this conference of non-aligned countries and somebody's passing around a draft instruction that says, "You tell your country that they should not go to this because it will seriously prejudice our relations," and you don't think that that's the situation. What do you do?" Well, given my background in Soviet and Russian affairs (and the professor's), I said, "I believe this is a problem of 'democratic centralism'—a technique in Soviet decision-making"—and said, "You fight like hell for your point of view until the decision's made, but when the decision is made, then [as I would hear Secretary of State Larry Eagleburger put it at a later time] you salute and carry out the policy." Afterwards he said that in the State Department there's a lot of that kind of fighting like hell before the decision is made and sometimes it carries the day. His comment left me thinking that he felt I had an aptitude for Foreign Service work.

I don't know who the other people were who were interviewed, but in any case, I was awarded the internship; and so off I was in the summer of 1967 to be a State Department intern.

Q: Well, what was the internship like?

WACKERBARTH: The internship was in the Office of Soviet and East European Exchanges Staff.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: I thought it was terrific! I worked for terrific people—Boris Klosson, who was a somewhat distant figure turned out to be a very fatherly figure, and …

Q: He was a DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) in Moscow, wasn't he?

WACKERBARTH: I believe he was, yes.

The deputy director was Art Wertzel, who was also a DCM in Moscow. Wertzel was closer to me in the line of supervision, and very much took me under his wing.

I enjoyed conversations at the water cooler with office mates recently returned from first and second tours of duty.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: The internship program was structured well. We got to meet a lot of interesting people, such as Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was head of the Policy Planning Staff. He gave a talk to us as interns. I reminded him many years later what he said, and he said, "I said that?"

In 1991, he couldn't believe how prescient and astute he had been 25 years earlier.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: We also got to have a meeting with Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and we had a chance to ask him a question, as well as Deputy Secretary Nicholas deB. Katzenbach and a number of other luminaries in the department. Again, this very much confirmed my experience, confirmed my previous desire that, even though there was a lot of paperwork and a lot of frustration in moving paper around the building, that what one was working on was something that was just absolutely real and unique. I felt it was something I could relate to, and I could see that maybe it was a way in which one could make a difference.

Q: How, at this time, by 1967, was Vietnam playing on your life, and with graduate school, and all this?

WACKERBARTH: Vietnam to people in the class of 1964 was much different than to people in the class of 1966 or class of 1967. I had a student deferment. No one by that point had questioned student deferments. Vietnam first emerged in my consciousness in 1965 when I was at Kansas State, which is very near Fort Riley. One of my students, from when I was a teaching assistant in the spring of 1965, disappeared, and I never knew what happened to her until maybe after I was at Indiana. There I picked up a Newsweek magazine. They described someone who spoke of her husband going to Vietnam. It brought home to me that my contemporaries were facing changing situations. That described a young woman who had dropped out of school to get married. One would hear noises in the Student Union in 1965, that there was a lot of movement out of Fort Riley towards Vietnam. And I think, frankly, most of us who had student deferments didn't hear of any news that they would be challenged. Of course, it was up to the individual draft board.

One of the interesting things that I tried to explain to my kids about the demographics of Vietnam is that the pool changed dramatically with the people born in 1945, 1946, and on in the baby boom, such that the size of the pool meant that there were so many numbers to work with. Local draft boards operating on inertia didn't really see a need to change their rules. They had their pool to draw from, and they were very generous in giving out student deferments.

Initially my attitude towards Vietnam was conservative, although changing over time. I was schooled in Cold War diplomacy, so to speak. I recall very specifically I heard Dean

Rusk, speaking at the Indiana University campus, saying, "I was in the Oxford Union the night that the Union voted not to support King and Country in the 1930s, and the tragedy of that mistake is why I believe we can't do anything that suggests appeasement." I recall very vividly him making that statement, and I think that's essentially where I was. The historians I'd studied in modern Germany history and history of Europe were basically of the persuasion that if the countries of the democratic community had shown more backbone in the 1930s, maybe the tragedy that led to World War II could have been averted.

I think that there wasn't a lot of familiarity with Southeast Asian studies. Asian studies were still considered quite exotic. I recall the event of Suharto overthrowing Sukarno in August of 1965. I didn't really catch immediately how much that changed the Southeast Asian equation, the domino theory. We talked a lot about the domino theory and whether it was true or not. The Sino-Soviet breakup was still maybe postembryonic, but not that much postembryonic. I think some people on campuses, specifically Indiana, were certainly saying, "Hey, let's look at this in a more differentiated point of view." I was maybe a little bit slow to catch on.

My professor Robert Byrnes was the guru or the founding father of Soviet, Russian, and Slavic studies. The idea of an interdisciplinary approach, which I took up, tended to be on the conservative side. (His son Sean is a Foreign Service Officer, one of the finest officers I've served with.) I remember him saying to the student newspaper, "Well, a lot of Vietnamese Catholics and Democrats will die if we don't stay the course in Vietnam." I remember spring of 1966, the most popular record on the top 40 charts in the United States was Sergeant Barry Sadler's Ballad of the Green Berets. It sustained its popularity; for the year 1966 that was the number one selling song on the charts.

Q: Which is a very pro-war song?

WACKERBARTH: Yes.

Q: This is for the historical record.

WACKERBARTH: It was a song that drew attention to the Green Berets as a fighting force.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: And I remember coming back from winter break, from Christmas break in January of 1967, and a friend of mine picked me up at the airport and said, "I can't believe it! The number one song in 1966 was Sergeant Barry Sadler and the Ballad of the Green Berets."

Q: Yes. In 1967, while you were on your summer internship at the State Department, were you picking up any disquiet from the people you were talking to?

WACKERBARTH: Yes.

Q: About our role.

WACKERBARTH: Yes. This was interesting, and reinforced what I'd gotten from the professor who interviewed me for the internship—that there was room for dissent. The Open Forum emerged about that time in the State Department, and the State Department was coming to grips around the 1967 summer with how to deal with dissent. One of the features of the Open Forum is the dissent channel cable. I think one of the precepts for promotion was your enthusiasm about our policy in Vietnam. This was also the time that the CORDS (the Civil Operation and Revolutionary Development Support) program was getting going, and several people going into the Foreign Service were going, understanding that they would be part of the effort in Vietnam. I was a resident assistant in the dormitory and one of my charges was in an A100 class. We were having lunch with him, and he noted that within the Foreign Service there was a lot of disquiet about Vietnam; expressing it was fairly awkward. Yes, there certainly was an undercurrent. One of my intern colleagues was assigned to the Vietnam Desk, and at that time we were trying to institutionalize the democratization of the government of the Republic of South Vietnam. I recall her describing that that was a lot of the work of the Desk.

Q: This was a summer internship?

WACKERBARTH: Summer internship, summer of 1967.

Q: Yes. What happened next?

WACKERBARTH: Okay. In the midst of the internship, I passed the Foreign Service orals.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions that were asked?

WACKERBARTH: Well, I mentioned the first one earlier. The first question they asked me was, "Is there any medical reason why you can't serve anywhere in the world?"

Being in the intern program, I had a chance to talk to the other interns who were taking the exam and got a sense of what it was like. I had my answer ready! I said, "Well, I suppose low ceilings, because I'm six feet, four inches tall." And of course, they loved it! That broke the ice.

The next question was the one I answered before. They asked the relationship between the Reformed Church in America, which would be my background, and the Reformed Church of Africa, which was supporting apartheid.

Another question that I remember (and there were several other questions) was asked by an African American member of the panel: "Mr. Wackerbarth, do you think we should break relations with South Africa?"

I think I was able to answer his question because I'd been an intern. But I said, "Sir, I certainly convey a lot of moral reasons for doing that, but I think we must look at strategic reasons. The Six-Day War took place last month. The Suez Canal was closed. South Africa is important to us strategically for our shipping routes, both military and commercial." I think that this may have made a difference in the exam, in the sense that they saw I could see beyond the knee-jerk and could think in terms of broader policy.

They asked me a lot of questions about Africa, which I didn't really know very much about, and asked me questions about economics, where I didn't have that much background, although I did express some interest in serving in the economic cone.

That was the summer that de Gaulle had visited Montreal and had said too much, and they asked, "If you were Mrs. de Gaulle, what would you have told him?" I said, "Well, I would have told him 'Mind your tongue.'"

I can remember some of the questions. I did my last tour on the Board of Examiners, so the kinds of questions that they ask nowadays are significantly different than what they asked. They currently would not ask any question about my personal background, and certainly not my religious background, nor would they have asked a question which put me on the spot about race. I think because of my experience as an intern, I was up for it.

I might mention something in connection with the Foreign Service orals. One of my colleagues said, "Why don't you talk to your deputy director or director before you go to the orals, because, among other things, they may know somebody who's on the panel, not that they would influence them, but over lunch you might talk about what sort of questions are being asked. You might get some secondary insights." Well, Art Wertzel, who was very open to me, wasn't around or he was on leave. So I talked to Boris Klosson, whom I assumed was in the hierarchy, somewhat of a distant figure.

He said, "Well, I'd be very happy to do that," and he took about a half hour, forty-five minutes the night before the exam, and sat down with me, and offered me some insights, which stick with me to this day. One of them was don't be afraid of dead time. He said, "If you listen to an American radio or TV (television) station, people feel they have to be talking all the time because they're afraid of dead time." He said, "If you listen to a European station, sometimes if they run short of the hour, they'll just play some soft music, or there'll be silence." He said sometimes you can make your worst mistakes trying to fill dead time. I found myself over the 30-some years I was in the Foreign Service catching myself by remembering those particular words.

I had occasion when I was at Personnel to deal with Boris Klosson's son Michael. Upon greeting him I made special mention of how warm and helpful his father had been to me before I took the Foreign Service exam, and how much his advice and counsel had stuck with me. Michael said, "Well, a number of people say that about my dad."

Q: Well then, you went back to Indiana. They told you at the time you'd passed, or did they?

WACKERBARTH: They told me at the time I'd passed. They said that their numbers were difficult to balance, so it might take a while for me to get in. I said, "Well, that's all right. I'm in a graduate program, and I'd like to get to a place where I can break off and have something to show for it."

In November I got a letter making reference to the conversation, asking, "Would you be interested in our Leave Without Pay Program?"

I didn't precisely know what it was, but it sounded like what we talked about briefly at the end of the exam, and so I said, "Sure. Put me down."

They appointed me to the Foreign Service as a Foreign Service Reserve Officer as of November 1, 1967, and then gave me credit back to September 1 for the time that I had been an intern. I had no realization of the significance of all this. I recall the spring of 1968, spring break from Indiana. I came to Washington from New Jersey and went to Opening Day of the baseball season. It was right after the assassination of Martin Luther King, and the riots that ensued. Washington was in turmoil. I recall checking with Personnel. We set the time that I would join a class in 1969, which I did. I had some sense of how my employment at the Department of State would proceed.

Q: Well, then, 1969 is when you came in?

WACKERBARTH: I came in June 19, 1969. I was sworn into the Foreign Service on my 27th birthday, June 20th, by Elliott Richardson.

Q: Well now, you went immediately to an A-100 course?

WACKERBARTH: Right. Yes, I went right into the A-100 class.

Q: Yes. What was the composition of the course and of the class, and how did you find it?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, okay. It was a large class because it was the end of the fiscal year. That year, at that time, the fiscal year ended in June. I think 1969 was one of the lowest years in terms of intake, maybe until the mid-'90s. But suddenly at the end of the fiscal year, they had numbers they could play with. I think there were 60 of us in the class. About 15 or a quarter were USIA (United States Information Agency) Foreign Service officers, and the other 45 were State Department Foreign Service officers. About a quarter of them knew that they were going to go into the CORDS program (Civilian Operations and Revolutionary Development Support), which was essentially a pacification program. So there were about 30 of us who were signed up to join the regular Foreign Service. I believe there were three female members in the State contingent, and maybe three to five in the USIA contingent. You could say that there were eight women out of sixty; I think breaking it down to the USIA and State gives it a little bit more significance. I believe there were two African Americans in our class, one Hispanic, and one Native American (l think she was Native American or Hawaiian). There had been an effort, going back to 1967 at least, I think maybe previously, to get more and more minorities in the Foreign Service. Maybe a third of our internship program were dedicated slots to get African Americans into the internship program—this is 1967—to get them into the Foreign Service by offering them an opportunity to see how things worked.

Q: When you came in, or even when you were in reserve status, how did Vietnam fit into the picture? Was service in Vietnam put out as indication, if you came in, did you have to be willing to serve in Vietnam? Was that explicitly stated?

WACKERBARTH: Well, it was a very mixed bag. To some of the members in the class it was very explicit! It was not to me, and it was a little bit uncomfortable. A number of

people were told it was a condition for joining the Foreign Service. To describe the process—the Foreign Service works from the register, and when you pass the orals, you get on a register; you're assigned a number on the register, which bears a relationship to your score on the oral exam, which you may not know.

I think it was that way in 1967, and it's currently that way now. When they were trying to form the class in 1969, they went to people on the register and said, "Look, you know you're not that high on the register, but if you agree to serve in Vietnam, we can get you into a class which we're forming in June." I think that it was honest in the respect that they could get 15 extra places for that. They also noted, "After you serve in Vietnam, we'Il do our best to get you a good onward assignment," which is essentially a promise they couldn't deliver.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: Well, it was uncomfortable in our class when it was realized that some people were given this phone call and some people weren't.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: Interestingly, I found out many years later that my score on the oral was very high as opposed to my score on the written, which was just one point over the top, and that I was one of the people who was high on the register. I was offered leave without pay from the summer of 1967. This has been a benefit of time in service that I'm enjoying in retirement. At the time, it was an incentive for me to not give up the Foreign Service. I only found out about these circumstances much later.

Q: Well then, you came into the Foreign Service in 1969; how did you find the training?

WACKERBARTH: It was a mixed bag. The A100 class—some of it was just going around the circuit, hearing talking heads. Some of it was experiential, hands-on; it was very good. I particularly remember the negotiation exercise. It seemed as if they had stacked what they perceived as the real stars of our class into one group; I was in the group negotiating on the other side. Well, they came in and took an extremely radical position, and we essentially walked away from the table, forcing them to basically have to ask us to come back. It was sort of an exercise in gamesmanship, not what I think the trainers had in mind—

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: But I think our perception was that they had stacked the strong team against us, and we were entitled to play hardball, and when they assessed the results, they looked at our team and said, "You guys cleaned up." It's not a negotiating style I would necessarily emulate professionally, but I do recall it as a feature of the class.

The one thing I very clearly remember was they did give us a session on Vietnam, which was done by someone who was assigned by USIA to do the circuit, to go around and talk to groups about our policy in Vietnam. I think that they realized that this person was underprepared for the kind of experience that existed in our class. We had a couple of

people who had been field-grade officers, seen combat in Vietnam, people with background in Southeast Asia. One of my classmates said, "Well, basically we metaphorically tarred and feathered the guy and sent him out of the class on a rail."

Our class, as an institution, said, "Look! Vietnam's important to us." We went to our director and said, "Can't we do better than this?" They arranged a special session, which took place after the A100 class, with Ambassador Sullivan—he'd been Ambassador to Laos; he was a Deputy Assistant Secretary for Southeast Asian Affairs—in which we got professional and straight talk about Vietnam.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: Okay. The stage director of our clinical studies told a lot of war stories. It seemed a little abstract to us, but he would, among other things, say, "Do this, you'll get a leg up." Well, this led to our class designing a logo, which was then the pipe cleaner. The intellectual author of the logo was Jeff Davidow, the only member of our class to make career ambassador. We called him our dean or "decano" because he has had the most distinguished career. But he drew a logo for our class, which was a dachshund at a fire hydrant. And our class logo was, "Keep a leg up, keep a low profile." I think Jeff's sense of humor is part of the reason why he's been so successful in diplomacy. He's Ambassador to Mexico. He'd been Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, and Ambassador to Venezuela, and Zambia. He was just promoted to Career Ambassador. Well, I'm not sure if someone looking at our class (I think Jeff wouldn't object to my saying this) would have looked in the room and said of those 45 of us, this is the one who's going to be a career ambassador.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: It's interesting how that plays out.

Q: Did you have to meet a language requirement?

WACKERBARTH: Yes. The idea was you had to meet a language requirement, and the idea was to get this out of the way in the first post.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: I thought that Russian would be my language, having studied it at the undergraduate and graduate levels. I finished with the equivalent of third year Russian at Indiana, in a very strong program. I went to one of their summer workshops. I hadn't realized the mind's capacity to forget a foreign language unless you keep it alive, which is a hard lesson to learn. So I did not do very well on the Russian exam that they gave me. If I'd taken it again in 1966 when I came to Indiana I could have probably made the 3/3, but anyway, I didn't. So, I was assigned to Colombia and was put in Spanish. I'd had high school Spanish and the equivalent to two years of college Spanish. I thought I was pretty good, but I think I came out on a scale of 5, with about 1+. So they assigned me to Spanish Il. They sent me to Colombia to do Spanish language training.

Q: Okay. How did you feel about that assignment?

WACKERBARTH: I was happy! The way the assignments went—well, first of all, there was this whole thing about Vietnam, and–

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: There was a possibility that I could have been assigned to Vietnam. Many of my classmates objected. We talked about this in terms of the class in Vietnam. The people who were going to go to Vietnam were the people who were asked ahead of time and some from the remaining 30. Well, they were going to take males. It was clear that they were not going to take females, although one of the people who got asked if they would go to Vietnam in order to get a place was a female. So there was one female officer in the contingent of 15 that went to Vietnam.

Q: Who was she? Do you remember?

WACKERBARTH: Her name was Susan Jacobs; I lost track of her.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: So there was a little bit of tension. The other thing was—the other criteria was whether you had had military service in Vietnam, or military service, and I think that the standard was that they wouldn't ask somebody who had military service, particularly in Vietnam, to go again. Also, it was whether you were single or married.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: I got married that summer, and that was known when assignments were in consideration. I don't know what the factors were, but I think that tended to exclude me from those who were considered for Vietnam. Also, at Indiana, I did three fields: Russian history, European history, and Latin American history. At that time, they weren't sending junior officers to the Soviet Bloc.

Q: No. You kind of had to work your way up to be assigned there.

On another topic—tell me about the name Wackerbarth. It sounds like one of those names that's a big hotel or department store in Texas or something like that. I mean, what's the origin, and where does it come from?

WACKERBARTH: It's a pre-German name. In my travels, I found out quite a bit about its origins. I think loosely translated it is "the proud, courageous bearer of the broad axe." Another translation is "the proud courageous wavy-bearded one." My paternal great-grandfather emigrated from Kassel in Hesse, Land (state), Germany. I once called on my grandfather's cousin in Kassel during student travel in 1963.

Insight into my surname greatly increased when I received a letter in 1978, while assigned to the U.S. International Marketing Center in Cologne. The letter was from no less than Ruediger, Baron von Wackerbarth. We met over dinner the next time I was in Munich, and he explained some of the history of the name to me. He also gave me a copy of an article in a German genealogical magazine entitled "Einiges uber Die von Wackerbarth, (A few items about the surname Wackerbarth) which traced the origins of

the name back to 1138. Ruediger and his family were originally from Saxony. We concluded that though our ties were tenuous, it was good to be linked by our common surname.

I did learn a lot about Christoph Graf (Count) von Wackerbarth, one of Ruediger's ancestors. During the first years of the 1700s, he was in the service of August the Strong, the Elector of Saxony. Interestingly, when August was serving concurrently as King Stanislaus II of Poland, he named Christoph as his Ambassador to Habsburg Vienna. At another time, August would loan Christoph to serve as a military officer to Frederick the Great, Elector of Brandenburg, Prussia. This was when Frederick was seeking to unify numbers of German principalities under Prussian rule.

We learned, in the 1990s, another interesting item about Christoph. Items about the restoration of Dresden's beautiful (and iconic) Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady) noted that it was being rebuilt according to the original plans approved by Count Christoph von Wackerbarth.

As a reward for his diplomatic and military service, Christoph was given a retirement palace, Schloss Wackerbarth in Radebeul, near Dresden. Over the years, a wine business grew up there, and one of the wines produced there is called “Schloss Wackerbarth.” According to the New York Times Travel Section, Schloss Wackerbarth is THE place to spend a Sunday afternoon. It's a venue to sip wine and listen to jazz. We visited the winery in 1990 and 1991. Our family visited Schloss Wackerbarth a couple of times while assigned to Poland in the early 1990s. Once, we bought a couple of cases of the wine. For a while when we would go to a dinner party, it was a lot of fun to give the host and hostess a bottle of Schloss Wackerbarth. I should add that I would immediately issue a disclaimer, saying that, to my knowledge, I know of no direct relationship, but adding, in jest, that “after two glasses, the ties get much closer.”

During our assignment to Warsaw (1989-92), I served, ancillary to my duties as Economic Counselor, as Secretary-Treasurer of a Commission that issued humanitarian grants. On one occasion, one of the grantees told me he recognized my name immediately. When I drew him out on this, he explained that he had written his doctoral dissertation on 18th Century Polish-German diplomatic relations, focusing especially on the work of Christoph von Wackerbarth. When the Poles at the Foreign Ministry would stumble over my name, I would remind them with a smile that Wackerbarth is a great name in Polish diplomatic history.

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Chapter 2 – Assignment to Barranquilla, Colombia, 1970-71: President Richard Nixon; Secretary of State William Pierce Rogers; Ambassadors Jack Hood Vaughn and Leonard Saccio

Q: You were slated to go to Bogotá; how did you wind up in Barranquilla?

WACKERBARTH: While I was in language training, the Department went through another of a series of budget cutting exercises. The first one, during the Johnson Administration, focused on our deteriorating balance of international payments. Thus, it

was known by the acronym BALPA. In particular, this was in response to large scale purchases of U.S. gold by France. As I remember it, the conventional wisdom at the time was that the French, under President Charles de Gaulle, purchased large amounts of American gold, based on the perception that globally the United States was over-extended. I imagine they believed it was better to hold foreign exchange reserves in bullion, rather than in dollars.

In any case, in the autumn of 1969 there was a new budget-cutting initiative, similar to BALPA, called the Operations Reductions exercise, better known by the acronym OPRED. The upshot for me was the elimination or consolidation of Foreign Service positions worldwide, including a Junior Officer position at Embassy Caracas (Venezuela). The American Republics Affairs bureau (ARA) responded to the situation by assigning one of my classmates, Carolee Heileman, who was to go to Caracas, to the Bogotá position. I was assigned to Consulate Barranquilla.

I don't think the call was a flip of a coin. The story Ms. Heileman—the youngest member of our A-100 class—and I heard went something like: "We need somebody in Barranquilla, and, gosh, we can't send a young girl like that to a place like that." (Ms. Heileman and I have remained friends throughout our careers and into retirement, and reflect, in good humor, on the story from time to time). I had mixed feelings. I liked the feel of the assignment to Bogotá—the idea of being in an embassy and living in a major Latin American capital city. On the other hand, I had heard of advantages to being assigned to a small post. In any case, it was my first tour, and eager to be in the Foreign Service, I was prepared to go where they sent me.

Incidentally, my wife of six months was game for practically anywhere even though I had told her once (in error, as things turned out) that we might live in the United States for a few years before going overseas. That was the beginning of the ever-changing adventure in the Foreign Service.

I served there from late January 1969 until it closed in August 1971. It was a two-officer Consulate during that time. It fell to me to turn the key when it closed. It reopened again in 1978 and closed again in the 1980s.

Q: Could you describe what Barranquilla was like, and why would they be dubious about, in those days anyway, sending a young female officer there?

WACKERBARTH: One of my Norwegian friends in Barranquilla described the city as "boomtown," where every night was Saturday night, and every Saturday night was New Year's Eve. It was a coastal, salt-air, dusty port town. A sea breeze caused rust on just about any metal object that wasn't regularly wiped down. The breeze also caught emissions from a plastics factory that added pitting to the mix. Certainly, there were nice sections of town. The Consulate office was located in a not terribly attractive downtown area. There was a fair amount of petty crime in the town, as in all of Colombia, and for sure there were neighborhoods that I wouldn't have thought of entering during that time. (In a visit to Barranquilla in 2005, in another context, our group walked freely and safely in those neighborhoods.) Although hard to imagine by today's standards, I don't really

think, given the thinking at the time, that they thought they were being overcautious about sending a young female officer there.

Colombia historically has had a fair amount of crime. Moreover, violence was a political fact of life dating back to rioting that broke out during an Organization of American States meeting in Bogotá in 1948. During our time of service in Barranquilla, there was a pause in the post-1948 cycle of violence that characterized more than 20 years of Colombian history. From 1962 to 2016, Colombia was plagued by the FARC (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) insurgency—the longest lasting in the Western Hemisphere. Violence was not a major factor in our day-to-day life during the time I served in Barranquilla. Petty crime was.

During most of the year the weather was pleasant, although it could get quite hot in the middle of the day. The region was subject to heavy rainfall, particularly in September and October. Flash floods called "arroyos" were an issue. Locals would tell about arroyos so strong that they washed away cars that dared cross it or were parked in its path. There were several such incidents while we were there.

I remember my mother flying down to visit us, and as the plane passed over Cuba, she said to the passenger next to her: "Well, we're past Cuba. It looks like we're not going to get hijacked," and she added, "…now, if they would only stop kidnapping diplomats." To that her seatmate said, "… your son has nothing to worry about in Barranquilla. The Barranquilleros are fun-loving people who are not at all interested in politics!"

Q: How extensive was the Consular District?

WACKERBARTH: The Consular District was composed of several states on Colombia's north coast. The other important cities in the district were Cartagena to the west and Santa Marta to the east. Both were beautiful coastal places that attracted much tourism. It also included San Andres and Providencia, Colombian Islands off the coast of Nicaragua—quite distant from the mainland. The islands were originally inhabited by descendants of pirates and runaway slaves who intermarried with indigenous people. On the island of Providencia, there were three family dynasties—the Archbolds, the Newbolds, and the Robinsons. There, one would hear the local people speak a quaint 16th-century English. The Seventh-day Adventist church was an important institution. Many young men left to take jobs as seamen on freighters. One of my closest friends during my time in graduate school at Indiana University, J.C. Robinson, traced his roots to Providencia. (At the time of his death, he was Vice President of the University of California at Riverside.) San Andres would develop as a much more sophisticated place. In a measure to promote economic development and tourism, Colombia classified the island as a "Zona Franca"—a tariff-free area for certain consumer goods, especially electronics. Many Colombian couples would honeymoon there, spending their cash wedding gifts on a TV or stereo or both.

It was not only Colombian couples who honeymooned there. My wife, Cindy, and I spent a week there one year after we were married and one week before she started her teaching job at the Karl C. Parrish (English language, American-curriculum) School. It was our "honeymoon," delayed by entry into the Foreign Service the previous year. The beach

was wonderful. We rented a scooter and went around the island on a rainy day with raindrops dripping off our noses. We already had a TV and stereo, so we made no major purchases. Our one purchase there was plane tickets to the island of Providencia, where English was the common language. We landed on a grass strip. There was no tourism infrastructure, including no restaurants for lunch. So, we ate lunch on the porch of the post office with a view of the blue sky above the ocean. The wife of the postmaster fed folks such as ourselves. I remember it was a nice lunch consisting of fresh fruit, among other items, and that we were served raw milk. Afterwards, we rented some lethargic horses for an hour or so, seeing the home island of the Robinson family. The local folk greeted us with smiles and said "good evening" in mid-afternoon, speaking with what to us was a quaint 16th-century English accent. We did not see any orange groves or beaches, as we were on the rocky side of the island. It was a memorable day with a farewell in the late afternoon, taking off from the grass landing strip. This was just one of many very unique and special opportunities afforded us during 30+ years in the diplomatic service of Uncle Sam.

Q: Who was the Principal Officer?

WACKERBARTH: The principal officer was Edmund DaSilveira, a "Wristonized" Foreign Service officer. (That is someone in the 1956 Foreign Service reform who was transferred from the Civil Service to the Foreign Service.) He had previously been Deputy Principal Officer at the Consulate in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and then served as Principal Officer at the Consulate in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. He came to Barranquilla from a position in the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Department. After Barranquilla, he was assigned as Consul, and then the Consul General in Recife, where he remained until retiring.

Interestingly, during his time in the Department in the Civil Service, he once worked in the Intelligence and Research Bureau alongside Bernard Morris, one of my professors and mentors at Indiana University, and Herbert Marcuse, who would later gain national notoriety as a Marxist philosophy professor. (Among other things, Marcuse was mentor to Angela Davis, a well-known 1960s radical.)

Q: How was he as a boss?

WACKERBARTH: Ed DaSilveira was to the core a very decent person; he was very encouraging to me. To be candid, (and I believe he would probably agree with this), I don't think his training and prior career path was geared towards consular work in Colombia, which was mostly visa cases. So many of the applications were marginal, at best. As conscientious as we were in adjudicating them, I have no doubt that a certain number got by us and that it was likely we ended some legitimate dreams. We were overwhelmed by the visa traffic, and it was a tough job sorting out the good ones from the bad ones, particularly with the very limited resources for vetting that existed at the time. I believe this wore on Ed.

One of the most enduring pieces of advice Ed gave me early on was to default to my gut, that is, intuition instead of overthinking, when a quick decision was needed. In a visa

interview, for example, he urged me to ask myself the question: “Does this person strike you as someone who has reason to travel to the United States, and return?”

I would add that Ed and his wife, Emily, were gracious to the core. I couldn’t help but sense that, for them, heading-up Consulate Barranquilla was nowhere near as much fun as heading-up Consulate Belo Horizonte earlier. I once heard Ed say, in a candid moment, that he saw the world as passing him by. Yet, he and Emily were stalwarts who soldiered on, doing the best they could for the post. We remained friends, over the years, and saw this positive attitude when assigned to the American Consulate General in Recife, Brazil. Cindy and I will always cherish their friendship.

(As an aside, I might add here a story Ed once told me in a conversation reflecting on his Foreign Service experiences. It was about a time in Belo Horizonte that a man called on him one day. He described the individual as apparently mixed race and the father of a large family that included several multi-racial adopted children. What stood out in Ed’s mind was that the man talked on-and-on, and then excused himself without asking for anything. I thought at the time, and still think, this was a mentoring effort on Ed’s part. I took this to mean that sometimes it’s enough just to be there and listen.)

Six years later, the conversation would take on poignant meaning. It happened that the DaSilveira’s daughter, Nancy, was staying with us in Bonn, Germany, for a while that autumn, 1978. One November day, she received a letter from her parents, written at the time of the Jonestown mass murder-suicide in Guyana. During the blanket coverage of the tragedy, they realized that the perpetrator of the tragedy was the same Jim Jones they knew from their days in Belo Horizonte.

Q: Did you have any visitors of note, during the time you were there?

WACKERBARTH: Occasionally there would be “visiting firemen” from Washington. We were expected to participate in entertaining these visitors. Often, hosting a meal while serving abroad, particularly for guests of some distinction, is at a much higher level of sophistication than we would find here in the U.S.

Our first dinner party included two officials from Washington: Frederic Chapin—then serving as the Western Hemisphere Bureau’s senior officer for management—and his staffer John Tipton.

Our highly skilled live-in housekeeper, Cecilia, had major surgery that week, so she sent her sister, Edith, to fill in. To say the least, it was quite a scene. Clearly, she had no experience applying even the most basic dinner etiquette. As I recall, the food was excellent, but the service was like what would be described in the comic children’s book series, *Amelia Bedelia*. For example, the meal is supposed to be placed in front of the guest from the left side and removed from the right side. Coffee service should be solicited quietly one guest at a time, not shouted out “Who wants coffee?” It is customary to have a cup on a saucer, rather than a small salad plate. Our upstairs Dutch neighbor knocked on the door and joined as his wife was out and he didn’t have a key. All we could do was take this series of events in stride.

The next day, when it came out that this was our first dinner party, our Foreign Service guests howled with laughter. They thought it an oft-repeated first time Foreign Service happening. They totally understood our discomfort/embarrassment surrounding the preceding evening. They made it clear that they too had had some similar experiences at the beginning of their careers.

(Frederic Chapin would later serve as Ambassador to Ethiopia and then, Guatemala. His father was the first Director General of the Foreign Service and was appointed Ambassador to six countries. Frederic Chapin's cousin, Hope Cooke, who was raised in the Chapin residence, was, upon her marriage, the Queen Consort of Sikkim, until the monarchy there was abolished.)

To say the least, Frederic Chapin knew proper Foreign Service entertainment standards. We would serve as colleagues in Brazil when I was Consul in Belém and he Consul General in Sao Paulo. When serving in the Department, he would always greet me warmly. I count him as a mentor and friend.

In February 1971, Consulate Barranquilla was part of a U.S. Mission Colombia periodic inspection. It went well. Most notably, there was no recommendation that in any way would suggest that the post be closed.

As part of offering hospitality to the visitors, Cindy and I were asked to host a dinner with local people as our guests. One of the couples we invited had emigrated to Colombia from Spain in the late 1930s. He had a longstanding, close relationship with the Consulate during World War II; I think he served the Allies as a ship/plane spotter. The occasion went well enough, though there was one tense moment. Somehow the topic of the Spanish Civil War came up in conversation, evoking sharply different points of view. Fortunately, the Senior Inspector, Herbert Spivack, finessed the issue. Interestingly, Archie Lang, who had been a panelist for my Foreign Service oral exam, was a member of this inspection team.

Q: Who else was on the Consulate staff?

WACKERBARTH: We had a Foreign Service Resident Staff (FSRS) Secretary—Jean Noth. She had been assigned to the Consulate as the American Secretary a number of years back. She married an American citizen, Lloyd Noth, a shipping agent, during her assignment. At the end of her tour, she received an FSRS appointment and remained in her position until her retirement in 1970. She possessed a wealth of knowledge of the city and region. Moreover, she provided invaluable continuity to the Consulate. She was replaced by Harriet Skowronski, a career Foreign Service Secretary.

Among Foreign Service National (FSN) staff were Commercial Assistant Ernesto Prencke, three FSN consular assistants—Gladys Arocha, Maria Barba, and Judit Cuenca; a cashier—Amerigo Rios, a secretary/receptionist—Cecilia Benthan, and a driver—Humberto Llinas. We had a contract hire janitor Eduardo Llinas, the illegitimate son of an American Citizen. Ms. Arocha was named FSN of the year while working at Embassy Bogotá after the Consulate closed.

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

WACKERBARTH: First it was Jack Hood Vaughn, who had been Ambassador to Panama and an early Peace Corps Director. He would later serve as Agency for International Development Assistant Administrator for Latin America. He resigned his appointment as Ambassador in the spring of 1970. He left in a bit of a huff, claiming that the reason for leaving was that he received a piece of paper addressed to his predecessor. Well, for someone like him, who had been around the Department before, he would have understood that these clerical errors happen. One generally doesn't give up an appointment at that level for a reason like that. But then it came out that he was divorcing his wife and remarrying, and I think just about everyone in the Columbia Mission believed that was the reason. Succeeding him as Ambassador was Leonard Saccio, who had been a senior Agency for International Development officer.

Q: How did we view the government of Colombia at that point?

WACKERBARTH: Our policy was clearly supportive. Interestingly, during the periodic Foreign Service inspection, I was asked by one of the inspectors why I thought Colombia important to U.S. interests. It struck me that this was quite a big question to a first-tour consular officer mainly focused on visas in a constituent post. So, I took a deep breath and then I came up with the formulation that a stable, prosperous Colombia positioned in northernmost South America and within close proximity to the Panama Canal was essential to our national security.

This was a time of transition in U.S. Latin American policy. In the Foreign Assistance area, the "do everything" attitude of the Alliance for Progress characteristic of the Kennedy-Johnson era was giving way to the focus on the "poorest of the poor" emphasis of the Nixon-Ford years. Among other things, this involved finishing and phasing-out assistance programs in middle-income countries such as Colombia.

Our time in Barranquilla was during a pause in the inter-party cycle of violence ("La Violencia") characteristic of the late 1940s and well into the 1950s. The combatants were from one or the other of the leading political parties—the Liberals and the Conservatives. Party affiliation was much more based on family tradition and rivalry than ideology. A resolution to the costly dispute came about in July 1957, when former Conservative President Laureano Gómez (1950–1953) and former Liberal President Alberto Lleras (1945–1946, 1958–1962) proposed a "National Front" through which Liberal and Conservative parties would govern jointly. The presidency would be determined by alternating Conservative and Liberal presidents every four years for 16 years; the two parties would have parity in all other elective offices.

The National Front ended "La Violencia." and successive National Front administrations attempted to institute far-reaching social and economic reforms in cooperation with the Alliance for Progress. I believe some observers would rightly say that, in the end, the contradictions between each successive Liberal and Conservative administration meant the results were, at best, mixed. Despite significant progress in certain sectors, many social and political inequities and injustices continued.

The election scheduled for April 19, 1970, was the fourth and final election scheduled under the National Front arrangement. The Conservative candidate—and presumed

winner—was Colombian Ambassador to Washington and former cabinet member Misael Pastrana Borrero. Keeping faith with the National Front arrangement, the Liberals did not run a candidate. However, this time there was a new twist—competition from other parties was allowed. A former dictator, General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, ran as a populist, and yet another candidate, prominent north-Coast politician Evaristo Sourdis, also entered the race.

For us, Barranquilla on April 19, 1970, was a most interesting place to observe an election. Colombians vote by dipping their finger into an indelible-ink inkwell. After voting, many would gather in the main part of town in a fiesta-like atmosphere with its citizens singing, dancing, chanting their candidate's slogan and proudly brandishing their ink-stained fingers as a symbol of asserting their right to vote. I still remember the waves of disappointment among the crowd as their expectations for regional favorite Sourdis were dashed with successive waves of voting results. Enthusiasm for Rojas Pinilla was much less present, but reportedly disappointment in the barrios ran deep. Our housekeeper recounted to us how everyone on the bus she rode to work was angry at his lack of success. His campaign had reminded his constituents of perceived better times during his regime. Sourdis would die later that year. Consul Ed DaSilveira and I would attend his funeral at the still-under-construction Barranquilla Cathedral.

Q: News from Colombia is often the story of horrific violence. Can you offer any insights on this?

WACKERBARTH: That's a tough question. For my part, I can't say I have this totally figured out.

Interestingly, when I was on the Board of Examiners doing field examinations in New Orleans, in 2000, I ran into a Tulane University professor who asked me the same question. My reply was that I didn't know but conjectured that mountain people seem to have a propensity for violence. I'm thinking, for example, of the legendary "Hatfield and McCoy" disputes in our country, continuing over decades.

So a possible reason could be rivalries within regions defined by geography. Colombia's geography is dominated by mountain ranges. Populations tend to be clustered in valleys without facile land transportation between them. As a consequence, historically, there was not much communication and movement back and forth among the different regions' peoples. Add to this the tendency of political party affiliation to be defined by heredity more than ideology.

Q: That's interesting. Would you expand on cultural factors?

WACKERBARTH: The north coast of Colombia, embracing most of Consulate Barranquilla's Consular District, is culturally much more a part of the Caribbean than the interior. After all, it looks out to the sea. People in port cities would be naturally much more exposed to a variety of ideas and peoples than those of the rest of the country living in isolated valleys. For example, during my (unfortunately cut short) time in one of Barranquilla's Rotary Clubs, I rubbed shoulders with a very multicultural constituency. To be sure, the core membership was typically Colombian. Yet there were also

descendants of Sephardic Jews who sought refuge from the Spanish Inquisition in the Netherlands Antilles in the 16th century, emigrating later to Colombia. Additionally, there were also Jews who sought refuge from the Holocaust. Another ethnic group was descended from immigrants from the Eastern Mediterranean Levant, who came there at the time the Sultan started conscripting Christian Arabs into the Ottoman Empire Army. All-in-all, a multi-ethnic group united in a common purpose.

Another cultural factor unifying Costeños (coastal people) is baseball. Costeño Colombians, as others in the Caribbean region, love baseball more than soccer! In 1997, Barranquilla's Édgar Rentería drove in the winning run for the Miami Marlins in the final game of the World Series. Out of national pride, Colombians followed the games closely. Yet when a player on the Marlins hit a home run, patrons watching the action in bars tended to shout "Gol!", a soccer term. For these reasons, I can't really describe Costeños, including Barranquilleros, as typical Colombians.

Another explanation that I offer, on geography and ethnicity, is based on my having served the Honduras-El Salvador Desk at State (1974-76) and as Economic Counselor in Honduras (1979-83). Thinking abstractly, I believe that culturally, there are more "countries" (as defined by culturally unique populations in distinct regions) in Colombia, separated by mountains with historically scant land transportation links, than in Central America. In contrast, road transport within the isthmus, especially by bus, is quite efficient. One consequence is a surprising amount of inter-marriage between the people of the individual Central American countries, especially among elites.

I might add that Avianca, once the Colombian national airline, is among the oldest in the world. The Colombians, because of their geography, started using aviation for commerce and transport where buses and trains really couldn't do the job.

Q: What about the drug trade, which of course now dominates our policy?

WACKERBARTH: It did not dominate our policy at that time. What I can say, in retrospect, is that I believe we were seeing it emerge; we just didn't really know what it was. Hindsight is, of course, 20/20. One of our observations was an increase in visa applicants who came from a region near the Venezuelan border. They didn't seem to be established economically—a criterion for visa issuance—yet they had evidence that they had a lot of financial support behind them. Our focus in visa adjudication, at that time, was avoiding overstays.

At the time, Santa Marta Gold was considered the "Bordeaux," or the top-quality global vintage, of marijuana. So we did get a lot of young American travelers; a fair number of "hippies" came through Santa Marta. Some of them would become arrest cases, without detention. The routine worked like this: once detained, the arresting officer would refer them to a certain lawyer, who for a fee, would get the charges dismissed by a certain judge. It had all the elements of a "shakedown." We might not have known about this at all, if it weren't for a few of those caught up in this scheme coming by the Consulate to tell us about it.

Another insight on drugs came just after the Consulate closed in 1971. We had arranged, through a friend, for our car to be shipped by air freight to Bogotá, our presumed next post. The friend had a cousin in the airfreight business. We thought everything was set in place only to learn the next month that our friend's cousin had been arrested by federal authorities for transporting narcotics.

Q: Am I right that your focus on reporting meant marijuana and not cocaine?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, that is correct. Actually, our reporting on narcotics was limited to arrest cases. I don't think we really thought we had sufficient coherent information to report on patterns in drug trade at that time, nor do I recall that there was demand for reporting of that kind. When I checked-in at the Department, I don't recall anyone on the Colombia Desk asking if we were seeing any evidence of the drug trade. My take is that as a government, we hadn't yet figured out just what was going on.

Q: Were you or the Consul doing much in the way of political and economic reporting? Or was this pretty well taken care of by the embassy?

WACKERBARTH: As a practical matter, consular operations, especially immigrant and non-immigrant visas, constituted more than a full-time job. For better or worse, Consul Ed DaSilveira found he had to pitch in on adjudicating visa applications. From time to time, the Embassy would send officers, particularly political reporting officers, to get a sense of what was happening in domestic politics on Colombia's north coast. Also, the Air Force attaché once came to look at a large Soviet military plane that was transporting relief supplies to Peru in response to an earthquake there.

For his part, the Deputy Chief of Mission, Bob Stevenson, wanted me to get into reporting to the extent I could. He encouraged Ed DaSilveira to free me up from visas to write some reports. To Ed's credit, he agreed to this as best he could. In one instance, when there was a back-up at the port of Barranquilla, I interviewed several key players in the shipping industry and submitted a well-received report of my findings. (This was the first of many Foreign Service economic reports that I would write in my 30-plus years in the Service.) On another occasion, I reported how and why Barranquilla's once-vaunted water works was running into trouble. On yet another, I wrote about a dispute between agrarian reform-sponsored fruit and vegetable farmers and established cattlemen. Bob Stevenson very much liked my submissions. He was particularly interested in getting an economic reporting officer's perspective on Agency for International Development projects. I believe he wanted a sense of how much value we were getting from our economic assistance.

Over the course of my career, I deeply appreciated the interest and encouragement, not to mention the enduring personal friendship, of Bob Stevenson and his wife, Dorothy, derived from our time together in Colombia. I count him among my best Foreign Service mentors and role models.

(I might add here that earlier in his career, Bob Stevenson served in the State Department's Intelligence and Research Bureau [INR] Cuba with my graduate student advisor, Professor David Burks. Former Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger was

also a colleague; it was his second Foreign Service assignment. Eagleburger once told me that it was David Burks who encouraged him to apply for Serbo-Croatian language training and an onward assignment to Yugoslavia.)

I had a lot of assistance in identifying contacts for these reports from the commercial section FSN, Ernesto Prencke. He advised me on who to call on and about business practices in Colombia's north coast region. He gained this expertise by visiting many Colombian firms in order to prepare World Trade Directory reports. These reports were sent to the Commerce Department and made available to American firms seeking work with Colombian counterparts on importing or exporting products or services. I would sign off on the reports, sometimes editing them.

As he got out and around quite a bit, Ernesto was most helpful to me in explaining the informal as well as general dynamics of business practices in Colombia's north coast region. One of his most memorable remarks, in this connection, was the time he said to me ironically: "Mr. Wackerbarth, contraband is the only honest way to make a living in this town!"

Ernesto was also helpful to me in explaining local cultural practices. The one I remember most vividly is the Barranquilleros' love of Scotch whisky. The standard measure was to join the index and middle fingers together at the bottom of the glass and tell the pourer "dos dedos" (two fingers). In describing this, in jest, Ernesto would flash a big smile and hold the index fingers of both hands to encompass the whole glass.

Q: Did we see Colombia as being a bright light of democracy in Latin America at that time, as there were a lot of dictators?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, we wanted democracy to succeed. At that time, we were trying to break out of the cycle of dictators. For this reason, my sense was that Washington was happy that competitive elections were taking place in Colombia.

Q: Was Cuba playing any role there at all?

WACKERBARTH: As far as I can recall, I think it was relatively minor. I don't remember seeing any major evidence. I think whatever social unrest existed was due to local factors.

Q: Did Venezuela play any role?

WACKERBARTH: Venezuela shared a long common border with the Barranquilla Consular District. For reasons of proximity alone, it was important. Also, Venezuela was the only other country that had a professional consular presence in the district. For the Barranquilla political establishment, attendance at the July 5 Venezuelan National Day commemoration seemed as important, or more so, as attending our July 4 celebration. Having said this, it is hard for me to recall any specific conversations with Colombians about Venezuela; I can only recall occasional oblique comments about topics such as contraband.

There was ongoing tension between Colombia and Venezuela over an unresolved offshore boundary off the coast of Colombia's Guajira peninsula not distant from Venezuela's Maracaibo Bay. The underlying issue was possible oil deposits there. I recall reading about calls for military action in the press. I particularly remember a morning when our young contract janitor came into the office sufficiently fired-up about this that he was ready to enlist in Colombia's armed forces. After a few days of saber-rattling in the media, things settled down.

One of my first outings after arriving at post was to go with a U.S. Bureau of Public Roads engineer overseeing the construction of a highway that would eventually link Barranquilla with Maracaibo, Venezuela. We traveled to a beautiful untouched area east of Santa Marta. A key element of the project was a bridge crossing the Magdalena River at Barranquilla, replacing a ferry service characterized by long waiting times. A story I would hear was that for many years after the road's completion, it largely benefited drug traffickers.

Q: What was the situation, visa-wise?

WACKERBARTH: Among U.S. Foreign Service posts, the Barranquilla Consulate, during my time there, was described as a "visa mill" due to its high volume of visa applications there. Four days of a week we would arrive at the office in the morning passing a long line of non-immigrant (or tourist) visa applicants. By appearance, it seemed that very few of them would meet the criteria for visa issuance.

Colombia has always had a reasonably dynamic economy for the region. It was not a basket case, but rapid population growth and rural-to-urban migration produced prime candidates for immigration to the United States. I would describe that person as someone poor or lower working class, who makes it up to lower middle-class status, but then perceives him- or herself stuck there. That is somebody who has a lot of energy, ambition, and drive, and wants more, but finds him- or herself stifled by the more closed economies typical of Latin America. For them, the more open economy of the United States was very much an attraction. I perceive our plumber/electrician who has done a lot of good work for us at our home in Virginia is such a person.

Q: You mentioned four days a week. What happened on the fifth day?

WACKERBARTH: We set aside adjudicating visas on Wednesdays so that we could keep up with the back-office paperwork. This included, among other things, activities such as updating our non-immigrant application card files and reviewing the required documents for immigrant visa issuance. It also allowed time for citizen services tasks as well as commercial section responsibilities.

Q: Where were they going mainly?

WACKERBARTH: [Laughter] Interestingly, many were going to my hometown of Hackensack, New Jersey—a major Colombian immigration center. They were going, also, to Paterson, New Jersey, where my wife Cindy was born.

And, they were going to the borough of Queens, in New York City. A joke going around Colombia at that time goes as follows: Colombian President Pastrana and President Nixon were having a meeting, and things were going well. So Pastrana asks President Nixon: "When is the United States going to give us back Panama?" And to that, Nixon is supposed to have replied, "Ah, Mr. President, when is Colombia going to give us back Queens?"

The other areas most often stated on visa applications were Houston, Miami, and greater New Orleans.

Q: How did you go about adjudicating non-immigrant or tourist visas?

WACKERBARTH: Our task was to interview each applicant, essentially asking them to show ties to their own country that would indicate a reasonable expectation that they would return home after their trip. Drawing conclusions to that effect was, of necessity, subjective. We didn't have anything near the staff and time resources to verify bona fides. Many would come with letters stating employment, length of service and salary, but these were easily falsified. We were looking for something more concrete such as bank account statements showing balances over time, income tax returns, or documents verifying home ownership. A round-trip ticket was essential. These are criteria which would suggest having the means and incentive to travel and return home. It was an arduous process, and a visa officer had an average of three to four minutes per applicant to adjudicate. The outcome of each interview was noted on the application form and placed in a card file. Many of the applicants repeated their applications, some multiple times. Absent verifiable documentation, most of the visa applications would be turned down. Many would return one or more multiple times. The ratio of visa applicants seen to visas issued was wide.

In many instances, the applicants were assisted by a travel agency that might help them obtain a passport and coach them on the process and criteria. In one series of interviews, early in my tour, I noticed the same jacket with a Lions Club pin, worn by a different applicant, coming through the line for a third time that week, each time worn by a different person. I strongly suspected a travel agent loaned them the jacket for the interview. One of them protested (unsuccessfully) that his (alleged) Lions Club affiliation rendered him eligible for a visa.

Additionally, there were a few for-profit English language schools in town that would help with visa applications. Their track record on bona fides was at about the same low quality as those of the travel agencies. Ironically, a month or so after I had arrived at post, I attended a U.S. Department of Commerce trade fair for local travel agents in Barranquilla. It was promoting a wide variety of package tours and other offers on U.S. domestic airlines. The most telling comment I heard that evening was: "That's all well and good but try to get a visa from the U.S. Consulate."

Consul Ed DaSilveira questioned whether the event was necessary or desirable. His take was that the well and favorably known people in northern Colombia were savvy enough to know how to scope out travel bargains on their own. When their visas were up for renewal and showed a logical history of travel and return, and no entries in the Visa

Outlook Book, their applications were approved virtually pro forma. Generally, these visas provided for multiple entries to the U.S., for a four-year period.

The presence of a Pan Am sales office in Barranquilla presented us with an understandable conflict of interest between our mission to promote the sale of U.S. goods and services and our responsibility to carry out U.S. immigration law. The local Pan Am sales representative, Martin Dessau, cultivated a relationship with the Consul. This was most likely an item in his job description, as much as developing a relationship with local U.S. businessmen was an item in the U.S. Consul's. They would have lunch together from time to time in the context of their business relationship. Sometimes, Ed would come back to the office with a few Colombian passports and visa applications. The staff would check out these in the card file, which might show some to be persons well and favorably known and others who would be invited to join the daily line for an interview.

In one memorable instance, the Pan Am representative told Ed, on short notice, he had sold a sizable block of seats on short notice to a group supposedly invited to a conference of some sort in the United States. I think it may have been faith based. The group was described as "comprised of humble people," but also "folks who hang closely together." Ed was going out of town and asked me to follow through on this. A check of the card file indicated many with prior refusals, some of them multiple times over the years. I had to call the Pan Am representative and tell him that I couldn't approve the visas. This meant one of his planes would fly to the U.S. with a lot of empty seats. I suspected that the Pan Am rep's staff maybe was pulling a fast one on their boss. I appreciated that Ed backed me for calling it as I saw it.

In addition to the daily parade of non-immigrant visa (NIV) applicants, Consulate Barranquilla had a hefty immigrant visa (IV) flow. Although immigrant visa standards were complex, the workload was much more manageable. It also was much less subjective. The standards were clearly stated and often vetted in large part in the United States. Fortunately, I inherited a well-trained staff. Among other things, they could spread out IV appointments over a foreseeable available time without creating too long a backlog. Moreover, they would not schedule an appointment until it was certain that all of the paperwork was in order. In almost all the cases, the question of whether they met all of the standards required by law had already been resolved. My job essentially was to see the applicants, confirm that the paperwork was in order, and take their oath or affirmation that all the information in their application was correct and true as provided by law. Therefore, IV refusals were few.

Our visa issuance responsibilities were governed by "The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965" aka the Hart-Celler Act. Among other things, the Act abolished the quota system based on national origins that had been American immigration policy since the 1920s. The new law maintained per-country limits, but also created visa preference categories that focused on the immigrant visa applicant's skills and family relationships with citizens or U.S. residents. A friend, knowledgeable in the history leading up to the Act, once told me that the Justice Department—responsible for immigration at that time—estimated demand for Western Hemisphere immigrant visas at 5,000 per year. Needless to say, by 1970, actual applications far exceeded that figure. Those applicants

would define the work of Consulate Barranquilla and a number of other posts in Latin America and the Caribbean Islands.

For the first month and a half of my time at the Consulate the phrase “immigrant’s skills” was defined by a clause named “Schedule C.” It listed a number of occupations defined by the U.S. Labor Department as “skilled” and “in short supply” in the U.S. Among these were auto mechanics and seamstresses.

In a country where high tariffs on imported autos meant older models, the cars were kept running for a long time by no small number of men who fashioned themselves auto mechanics. Also, Latin American women were well known for skillfully copying fashionable clothes from a pattern or even from eyeballing an advertisement. This resulted in a stream of immigrant visa applications from individuals claiming skills as auto mechanics and seamstresses. To screen them, my predecessor developed fundamental skill tests in the two categories. The test on auto mechanics knowledge was overseen by the FSN Commercial Specialist, Ernesto Prencke; the one for seamstresses was given by one of our FSN’s mothers—a woman well known locally for her skill in that area.

To our surprise—and relief—sometime in March 1970, we received a communication from the Department stating that effective immediately the receipt of Schedule C applications was suspended. The gist of that message was that from that point on, a Labor Department certification of an occupation strictly had to be reviewed stateside, as meeting the criteria “skilled” and “in short supply.”

One of the interesting twists of the new policy was that we received, from local Chinese restaurant chefs, IV applications with Labor Department certifications for short supply “Chinese Specialty Cooks.” In general, these were people who themselves had only immigrated to Colombia from Hong Kong a few years earlier. The U.S. destination of each of them—there were several—was Metairie, Louisiana. If there was any mystery to this—there wasn’t. I, as visa officer, not the Consul, would receive a letter from House of Representatives Majority Leader Hale Boggs’ (D-LA) regional office in Metairie requesting courtesies be extended to his “dear friend” Lee Bing during Mr. Bing’s upcoming visit to Barranquilla. I had been well-schooled during consular training to not be impressed or flattered by such correspondence. Also, I would never actually meet Mr. Bing. But, a few months later, I would receive another letter from Congressman Boggs, thanking me for the courtesies extended to Mr. Bing.

The visa interviews were pretty much pro forma, as the applicants had the Labor Department certifications and other required documents in hand. Also, I didn’t speak Chinese and the chefs spoke no Spanish or English. The language gap was filled by a local Sino-Colombian named Jose Yi.

At Christmastime 1970, my wife, visiting Mom, and I heard a knock on the door of our 3rd floor apartment. This was unusual, as visitors had to be cleared by the doorman, who should have called ahead. It turned out that the visitor was Mr. Yi, bringing us a package of gourmet Chinese food, complete with no less than a roast suckling pig with an apple

stuffed in its mouth. In terms of receiving gifts, this was well within the standards in place at the time. Still I would have much preferred not to have received it.

In the spring of 1971, shortly before the Consulate closed, I learned of Mr. Yi's arrest on charges of forging a Costa Rican visa.

At some point, I indirectly heard a comment, attributed to Mr. Bing, complaining that he would sponsor these immigrant chefs for his string of restaurants, but after staying the requisite year they "would just run away" and disappear to destinations unknown in the United States.

Incidentally, the Chinese food in Barranquilla was among the best we have tasted anywhere worldwide. Once, after going to an overly air-conditioned movie theatre with friends, we entered a local Chinese restaurant for dinner only to find the air-conditioning too cold for our comfort. We tried to politely leave but couldn't get away due to the protestations of the manager. There was no way he was going to not serve a meal to the American Vice Consul.

I should also mention that there was another variety of visa fraud going on in Colombia, including Barranquilla, during our time. Consul Ed DaSilveira told me that he had been shown, by authorities, a facsimile of a multi-colored U.S. visa stamp with his signature, alongside one that he had actually signed. He said he was hard pressed to identify the one that was actually his. The much-vaunted local skill in metalworking, dating back to pre-Columbian times, apparently had found yet another outlet.

Q: Were there any particularly memorable visa interviews?

WACKERBARTH: I can cite two. In one instance, an IV applicant was turned down on medical grounds—the examining physician found him ineligible on grounds of insanity, which was specifically proscribed by the law. This was hard for him to take, although the crank phone calls and letters we would receive from him, every so often, protesting this injustice, backed up the cause for refusal. Nonetheless, in February 1971, he scored a cogent point. The United States had shifted to commemorating President's Day on the third Monday in February. The applicant called me and said: "Mr. Wackerbarth, you say I'm crazy, but even I know that George Washington was born on February 22!"

Another highlight was working with Consul Ed DaSilveira on obtaining a visa waiver for Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez, (who would become the Nobel Prize laureate in Literature in 1982.) He was traveling to New York City to receive an honorary degree from Columbia University. García Márquez's links with International Communism were, at best, secondary, if not tertiary. He was associated with Prensa Latina, a Cuban News Service, as a stringer. His activities, during this time, were neither frequent nor major, yet sufficient to get him on the proscribed list. Thus, he needed a visa waiver as required by law. After obtaining the required clearance from the Department, Ed DaSilveira invited him to the Consulate to receive his visa. For all practical purposes, I was a fly on the wall during the interview. During the meeting, he was exquisitely polite. He graciously signed several copies of his books, while Ed signed the visa. (I didn't think to take in our Spanish language copy of "*Cien años de soledad*" [*One Hundred Years of Solitude*].)

However, after the interview, when he went outside, he made a really big deal with the awaiting press about the U.S. restrictions, especially from a country that champions freedom of the press.

García Márquez would be the third of 16 Nobel Prize laureates with whom I would share proximate space, with varying degrees of intimacy, in one way or another, over the course of my lifetime. The 16th was former Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, who was instrumental in bringing about a peace agreement with the rebel "Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia" to bring decades of violence to an end. I heard him speak in a large classroom at a program at the National Defense University.

Q: How did you serve the other population centers in the Consular District?

WACKERBARTH: As a practical matter, the press of business in Barranquilla gave us precious little time to get out and around the Consular District. Visa and passport applications and renewals were handled by certified mail. Often people resident in those places took care of these functions, in person, when in Barranquilla.

Shortly after his arrival at post, Consul Ed DaSilveira traveled to each capital city to call on key officials in each of the Departments in the Consular District. I don't recall his making any follow-up trips during my time there.

For the first six months of my time at post, every other week, either Ed or I would drive to Cartagena and hold office hours at the Binational Center there. As pleasant as it was to try to conduct business in a beautiful city, the concept proved impractical. We would meet with a familiar long line of callers. Most of them were seeking visas and their applications required consultation with our files. So, we made the decision to discontinue the trip in September 1970.

On some occasions, my wife Cindy would join me on these trips. While I was attending to business, which often went into the early afternoon, she would take in the beautiful city. We would join for lunch at an outdoor restaurant, "Club de Pesca" (Fishing Club). It faced the ocean and featured an exquisite large banyan tree. Frequently, we would order "sancocho," a stew made of fish and local vegetables. Cindy prepares this dish for dinner at home, from time to time, to this day.

Q: What other U.S. agencies had USG personnel in the district?

WACKERBARTH: The U.S. Information Agency Binational Centers (BNCs) in Barranquilla and Cartagena were both staffed by Foreign Service personnel. During my time at post, the Barranquilla BNC Directors were Ernesto Uribe, succeeded by Walter Whipple, who, in turn, was succeeded by Vincent Chiarello. The Cartagena BNC Directors were James Channing, followed by Harry Iceland.

In what may have seemed like a good idea at the time it was implemented, the Barranquilla BNC was located "a stone's throw" from the University. In my time, this took on a literal meaning as the building's windows had to be bricked over. This also meant that it was in prime space for anti-U.S. demonstrations. During a demonstration BNC Director Uribe went into the crowd and wrestled a flag facsimile from the

demonstrators. They seemed intent on burning it. I recall well that morning he came into my office to show me the homemade, crudely fashioned, properly folded (by him) American flag. After that incident, the Embassy petitioned the Colombian government for better protection at the installation.

In Cartagena, BNC Director Jim Channing was very much engaged in relocating the BNC to a Spanish Colonial building to blend in with the exquisitely beautiful architecture of the city.

The Peace Corps was very much present throughout the Consular District. Robert Arias was its regional Director. Volunteers were engaged in a wide range of projects. Among the most notable was the marketing of handmade folkloric handicrafts, particularly in Cartagena, a popular cruise ship stopover. Wall hangings fashioned as Christmas trees were particularly popular.

Also, Cindy and I became personal friends with volunteer Don Rabinowitz and his wife Irene. They were also newlyweds. Don had been assigned to work with a fledgling Colombian airline, Aeroconder, through the Peace Corps' MBA program.

I would meet several of the volunteers when they came into my office to inquire about immigrant visas for their Colombian fiancées. One of the volunteers, Alexander Somerville, married my Colombian FSN Secretary, Cecilia Benthan.

The U.S. Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration had a long-time resident U.S. citizen operating a weather station on San Andres Island. He was helpful to the Consulate, functioning as a *de facto* Consular Agent there.

The U.S. Navy had some trainers working with Colombian counterparts at Cartagena; I do not recall having much contact with them.

There was a USAID contractor working on a hydrology project. He was there with his family, but the Consulate did not have much contact with him or his project. We had him and his wife to dinner in our home, once.

Q: Was there much activity in the shipping and seamen area there?

WACKERBARTH: We did a lot of crew list visas, which were pretty much pro forma, as long as none of the applicants were in our card file listed as proscribed applicants. Grace Line passengers called at the Port of Cartagena. I don't recall much activity in that connection.

Q: What about Protection and Welfare cases?

WACKERBARTH: The first Protection and Welfare death case I had to deal with was that of a young man who was working on an offshore oil rig. His employers were putting him on a helicopter to go on furlough. Tragically, as he was tall and didn't keep his head down, in a windy moment he got hit by the helicopter blade and was killed. This happened just a few months into my first assignment. I think for every Foreign Service

officer, particularly those of us who have done consular work, the first death case we had to deal with will stand out in our mind.

The second one was quite bizarre. A young woman, in all likelihood high on some substance (though more recently I have learned of a disorder named transient global amnesia), showed up on the lawn of a house in town, scantily dressed. She was coherent enough to say, "Call the American Consul and tell him to take me away." So the occupants called the Consulate and I was dispatched. Frankly, I didn't know what to do. In the first instance I tried to establish citizenship. Failing that, I tried to at least get her name, without success. Seeing that I was getting nowhere, the person who called opted to turn to local resources. It turned out she was the daughter of a prominent Colombian family from Bogotá.

A third situation was also most unusual. An American woman, accompanied by her boyfriend, came to the Consulate seeking help in taking her son back to the United States. Her husband, apparently, had obtained a passport for the lad and had brought him to Colombia. I explained to her the complications of dual nationality and referred her to our attorneys list. This was standard consular practice at the time. In the course of her effort, things took a bizarre turn. The woman decided to reconcile with her husband and reportedly the family of three went back to the United States together. I can only imagine the reaction of her now-former boyfriend to this outcome.

I was once tasked with traveling by air to the city of Barrancabermeja, a fair distance upstream from the coast. I took an early morning flight there. I was instructed to carry out an interview of a Colombian young man, residing there, about his selective service status. While stateside, he had registered for the U.S. draft, only to subsequently return to his native Colombia. As it turned out, once there, I was able to reach him by phone. He told me his intention was to not return to the United States. My assignment complete, I arranged for my return. I do remember well the beautiful scenery in that part of Colombia as well as the tasty lunch composed of fresh local fruit and vegetables. I don't know if the matter could have been resolved by way of a telephone call from Barranquilla. In any case, I enjoyed traveling to this quaint regional city, which evoked images I had imagined while reading García Márquez's book, *One Hundred Years of Solitude.*

I also remember being called upon to physically verify that the recipient of a non-government annuity was still alive. I called on her at her home in Barranquilla. I wonder, sometimes, if nowadays, consular officers would provide this service.

Q: What other countries had official representation there?

WACKERBARTH: Venezuela and Argentina were the only other countries that had consulates staffed with personnel accredited to the Colombian government. There were a number of honorary consuls. In many cases these were expat businessmen. For example, the local Land Rover dealer, who was actually Jamaican, was the Honorary British Consul. The Danish and Norwegian Consuls worked together in an import-export business, as did the Swedish Consul. The German Consul was a shipping agent. In a few cases, expats offered their service as Consul to their country of origin or to a third country. In a couple of instances, Austria and Bolivia, these were refugees.

The accredited and honorary consuls belonged to the "Cuerpo Consular" (Consular Corps), which would meet monthly. It was essentially a social group. Consul Ed DaSilveira represented the United States. He did not particularly look forward to the meetings. The one order of business that came up from time to time was the awarding of Distinguished Service medals to each other. It was understood that the honoree would pay for the medal. However, in one instance, the Danish Consul somehow managed to receive the medal without paying for it. A long contentious meeting was devoted to deciding how to get him to pay-up. I never learned how this turned out.

The "Consulesas" (the wives of the Consuls) also met monthly for tea. Cindy attended a few of the meetings with Emily. She found she had little in common with these socialite women, who were old enough to be her mother. The Consulesas were always very well dressed, with heels and nylons which did not seem appropriate in this hot sticky Caribbean port city.

Q: Where did you live?

WACKERBARTH: After a couple of months of extensive searching, we were able to find a suitable 3rd floor apartment in an apartment building in Barranquilla's most fashionable neighborhood—El Prado. It took us longer than we thought to find a suitable place within our housing allowance. We were somewhat out-of-pocket by taking this place. Our first priority was security, given the frequency of robbery and other crimes, even in the city's best zone. We liked living in close proximity to the Consul's residence, Parrish School, St. John's Episcopal Church, the Baptist Hospital, and the international standard El Prado Hotel. There, among other things, one could buy the Miami Herald late in the afternoon. Our building had a "celedor" (doorman/watchman) who screened visitors. The basement garage was securely locked. There was air conditioning in two of our three bedrooms. A third had a vacant space where a room air conditioner would fit. The opening worried our housekeeper who couldn't rule out the capacity of local thieves, of local legendary repute, to somehow scale the heights. It didn't happen. We did not have hot running water, but our shower was fed by a rooftop cistern which sufficed for warm showers in the evening and cool ones in the morning.

When we arrived in town, we stayed in a nice efficiency apartment, in a complex near the Prado Hotel, that included a swimming pool. It served us well for the 2 1/2 months we stayed there, yet we were happy to finally settle.

Q: Was your wife employed outside the home?

WACKERBARTH: Yes. Because we, as just about everyone else, had live-in household help, Cindy looked for something meaningful with which to be involved. She complemented her high school Spanish and FSI Spanish quick course with a tutor shortly after we arrived at post. A teacher by profession, Cindy did some substitute teaching at Colegio Americano in the first months after arriving. In September 1970, she took a full-time teaching job at the Karl C. Parrish School. Under Foreign Service rules in force at the time, she had to ask Ed DaSilveira, as Principal Officer, for permission to take the position. He concurred. At the time, there was no provision for spouses of accredited consular personnel to be employed on the economy. As a consequence, the Parrish

School principal arranged for her to be paid from the library fund. Cindy wasn't comfortable with this.

The Parrish School students were the children of resident Americans, third-country expats and elite Colombians. The latter wanted their children to learn English well enough to attend college in the United States. They were willing to pay the higher tuition cost involved in sustaining the salaries and housing costs of qualified U.S. teachers. The school was certified as meeting U.S. standards. It received grants from the State Department. It had an active exchange relationship with the Huntsville, Alabama, school system.

The Colegio Americano was focused on educating the children of parents who wanted their children to take on leadership positions in their local community. In his memoirs, Gabriel García Márquez relates that his father wanted him to study at Colegio Americano. His mother, on the other hand, thought he should go to an elite Catholic school where he would "study alongside future Governors and Mayors." Mama prevailed. In his memoirs, García Márquez wrote that he wondered, from time to time, how things might have turned out if the decision had gone the other way. He said he would have liked learning English while young and gaining an understanding of the "Lutheran" way of thinking.

There also was a German school in the city. For some reason which I never determined, the teachers and staff were there under a unique bilateral arrangement that granted them privileges not available to accredited consular personnel.

Early on, we made friends with Margaret Rudd and her fiance, Humberto Serra. Margaret was sent to Colegio Americano by the Presbyterian Church. Cindy served as Margaret's matron of honor at their formal wedding at Barranquilla's First Presbyterian Church. I was happy to be there to sign a consular Certificate of Witness of Marriage. I could have simply attested to the validity of their Colombian marriage certificate, but it was nice to be present at the ceremonies.

Q: What can you tell me about your social life? Who were your friends? Can you tell me about the local community?

WACKERBARTH: Our social life centered around the Consulate-related staff, Consular Corps, St. John's Episcopal Church, Peace Corps friends, and teachers from the Karl C. Parrish School. There was no lack of social activity.

St. John's Church was held in a beautiful small building. Sermons were read from a book, "Best Sermons," with a priest coming quarterly from Bogotá to serve communion. Congregants, about 20, were mostly expats, diplomats, and an assortment of English-speaking persons. Several had lived in Barranquilla for years. The doors were always open, so we welcomed a street person on a regular basis. He just came and left with no conversation; he was just there with a bag that resembled a hobo bag.

There was a Baptist hospital and a small Baptist congregation that met at the hospital. An American missionary, Dr. Breeden, generally took care of our health needs at the Baptist Hospital. There were several U.S.-trained physicians in Barranquilla and

Cartagena as well. Some were married to American women who they met during their time in the United States. We socialized with several of these couples.

We attended many National Day commemorations hosted by the celebrated country's representative, including our Fourth of July reception. I think our event had a guest list numbering 150 to 200 people.

We were invited to a fair number of dinner parties. Some were hosted by people in the community with whom we had some kind of connection, others by resident American citizens. In a number of instances, it's fair to say, we were invited because of my position as Vice Consul.

One weekend, we were invited to go to the *finca* (ranch) of Karl C. Parrish and his wife, Ginny. It was located high in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, in a coffee growing region. The Parrishes were gracious hosts. On Sunday we rode in a Jeep, well up beyond the snow line. En route, we may have seen Juan Valdez (or his clone) on a donkey. From there we could peer down and see the beach in the coastal area of Santa Marta City. On our way home that afternoon, we made a brief stop at the beach. I can still feel, in my mind, my feet burning on the hot sand there. I sometimes reflect on being on a snowy mountain and in tropical heat in a matter of just a few hours.

Karl C. Parrish's father had come to Colombia from the United States several decades earlier than our time. His son, of the same name, was, among other things, a real estate developer in the part of Barranquilla where we lived—the Prado. The American-curriculum school bore the family name.

In October of 1970, I was invited to become a member of one of Barranquilla's Rotary Clubs. This one's membership was composed of men under 40 years of age. There was another Rotary Club composed of older gentlemen. Ed DaSilveira was a member of that one. Our Club was multi-ethnic, reflecting the diverse population of the city. A large proportion of my colleagues were active in the business community. My sponsor was the manager of a modest downtown hotel. Among other things, being a member helped strengthen my Spanish.

Q: How did you get around? Did you have a car?

WACKERBARTH: Consulate employees Jean Noth, Gladys Arrocha, and I rode to work in a taxi. We had an arrangement with its driver/owner to pick us up at our residences and return us home daily. Consul Ed DaSilveira was driven to work by chauffeur Humberto Llinas in the Consulate's Chevrolet sedan.

Yes, we had a car. Mostly, my wife Cindy drove it. We took delivery of a brand-new cinnamon-colored 1969 Ford Maverick with Blazer-plaid upholstery. It was Ford's lowest price offering that model year, yet quite classy for Barranquilla. It took quite a while to get to us. It was tied up with Colombian Customs for several weeks, pending completion of the necessary paperwork. On Saturdays, while waiting, we would go to the Customs compound by taxi and peer at our car. Due to restrictive regulations on the sale of cars by consular (as opposed to diplomatic) personnel, we were unable to sell our car in Colombia. As we were initially slated for transfer to Embassy Bogotá, we worked out

instructions to send it via air freight—inexpensive in Colombia at the time. As it turned out, our onward assignment was changed to Belém, Brazil (another chapter). We didn't see the car for 11 months. It was intended to be shipped to Trinidad, where it would be off-loaded and forwarded to Belém. However, the off-loading did not occur; it went to Kingston, Jamaica, instead. So, it had to be shipped back to Trinidad, where it would wait for an infrequent ship to take it to Belém, reaching us in June 1972.

Q: Did you get out of the city, from time to time? Where did you go?

WACKERBARTH: Yes. Earlier I mentioned our travel to San Andres and Providencia, as well as Cartagena and Santa Marta. One most interesting trip was to the Cauca Valley in Southwest Colombia, including the Cities of Cali and Popayán.

Our visit to Popoyán and our return by train through the Cauca Valley was most memorable. We stayed at the Hotel Monasterio, with no central heating. As the name suggests, in colonial times, it served as a monastery. Its conversion into a hotel was a beautiful example of historic preservation architecture, done well.

Our train ride back to Cali was most memorable. Out of the windows we viewed interesting examples of equatorial highlands trees and occasional flowers. The train itself was "vintage" to say the least. Most of its passengers were indigenous people. We noted one man who was barefoot, yet his feet were so calloused that they served well as shoes.

We traveled to Bogotá a few times. In one instance, I was there to attend the Ambassador's monthly meeting with American business leaders. (Consul Ed DaSilveira generally represented the Consulate at these sessions.) Cindy joined me twice. On our first trip we visited a Cathedral carved out of the interior of a salt mine. Another time, we traveled there with Cindy's former housemate. Among other things, we took a bus ride on a mile-long trail to a tropical Colombian village quite close to the equator.

Q: What about observing traditional American holidays?

WACKERBARTH: As would be expected from a Caribbean port city, elements of American holidays, such as Valentines Day, secular Easter traditions, Halloween, and Christmas were appropriated, particularly at the American-curriculum school.

I recall taking an afternoon off to join my fellow Rotarians in soliciting funding from local businesses for community Christmas lighting. As mentioned, the Consul hosted a large reception on July 4th. I especially remember that an international community organization hosted a traditional Thanksgiving luncheon that year. One of the guests took me aside simply to tell me how impressed he was that the United States had a national holiday simply for the purpose of giving thanks.

Christmas was indeed unique. Our building had colored lights strung across the outside cactus plants. Our Christmas tree was a large dead branch sprayed with Styrofoam. As newlyweds, we hadn't accumulated Christmas music of our own. We did purchase an album of Colombian carols sung by a children's choir. (We still play the songs here in the U.S. at Christmastime.) My mother visited us in Barranquilla that Christmas. As my

father had passed away several months earlier, we thought it was good for her to commemorate the season in a way that didn't evoke so many memories of my Dad.

Q: Were there any special celebrations during the time you were there?

WACKERBARTH: Carnival (Mardi Gras) was celebrated with gusto in the first three Foreign Service posts where we served: Barranquilla, Belém, Brazil, and Cologne, Germany (where I worked, though assigned to Embassy Bonn). In Colombia, we experienced the festivities in two different ways in 1970 and 1971. The Carnival of Barranquilla is considered one of Colombia's most important folkloric celebrations and one of the biggest in the world. The City's normal activities are paralyzed as the city gets busy with street dances and musical and masquerade parades. In 2003 UNESCO declared it one of the "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity."

We had only recently arrived when the festival came around our first year, February 1970. In fact, we were still in temporary housing. We decided to take in one of the parades on its appointed route. One of the things we most remember is people throwing cornstarch at each other.

The next year it was quite different. We were invited to a competition between a number of social clubs. It took place in the Hotel Del Prado. Several elite social clubs vied to present "comparsas" (a group of singers, musicians, and dancers who present beautiful, folkloric skits). As best I can remember, the costumes were elaborate and the dance routines exquisite. Our appreciation of Carnival was greatly enhanced by a course on the history and folklore behind its celebration taught by a cultural anthropologist professor from the local university.

One of the highlights of that course was a field trip to a mud volcano—one of the few in the world—off the road between Barranquilla and Cartagena. In some places we waded through mud up to our knees, but all of the participants took this in good humor. Nearby, there was a place where salt was extracted from the Caribbean Sea.

Q: You left there in August 1971, correct?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, correct. My tour was curtailed by the closing of the Consulate.

Q: When it came time to shut down Barranquilla, were there some protests?

WACKERBARTH: Oh yes! Of course! I've been through this in different places, in different times, and in different roles over the course of my career. This time, the decision to close was made very, very suddenly, and with precious little forewarning. There was no question that the civic pride of the Barranquilleros was deeply wounded. After all, in a country defined by mountainous regions, it seemed strange that the Consulate, on the coast, looking outward, was chosen for closure.

Journalists were quite vocal in expressing outrage. It seemed there was hardly anything else they could talk about. When it was pointed out that Barranquilla was not alone among U.S. Consulates across the hemisphere (also included were Belo Horizonte, Santiago de los Cabilleros, Dominican Republic, and San Pedro Sula, Honduras), the

critics were not assuaged. I specifically remember one reporter saying, “How can you compare Barranquilla to San Pedro de Sula!”

Q: To what extent did the U.S. Mission understand the reason for this decision?

WACKERBARTH: I don’t recall seeing much cable traffic explanation of the decision. What was said, I recall, was pretty generic. Reasons in large part were conveyed from the Embassy by telephone calls. Piecing things together, I think the decision was made for budgetary reasons. In the face of a global reduction of resources, the American Republics Bureau was trying to figure out how to spread its now smaller financial resources over the whole hemisphere. For this reason, and in the face of their high overhead expenses, such as local employees’ salaries, building operations, and maintenance, the Bureau’s budget just couldn’t afford to keep all its consulates open. I did hear a State Department official say that the Consulate’s visa workload was consuming too much time and other resources at the expense of other reasons to have a post there. The argument that the consulates earned the U.S. government a lot of money through passport and immigrant visa fees didn’t fly as that money was retained by the Treasury. It didn’t come back specifically to the State Department or the Bureau. (My understanding is that in current practice some funds derived from fees are used to cover some consular operating expenses.)

In any case, we learned, after the fact, that the decision had been in play for some time. Accepting the outcome was one thing; implementing it on short notice was another. Fortunately, the Department sent, on temporary duty, a talented, then-young Administrative Officer, Walter Notheis, to help with the operational tasks, such as employee compensation, ending a lease, terminating local employees, and disconnecting the telecommunications apparatus. To his credit, he correctly perceived that crowd management was a large part of our needs, and he pitched in on that, as well.

The Consulate was swamped with local people flooding the Consulate in search of consular services. A fair number were U.S. citizens wanting to make sure their passports were in order. A much larger number were local people seeking renewal of their valid visas. It was not that they necessarily had travel scheduled, but rather that they just wanted to have the visa in their passport. They were concerned about having to deal with Embassy Bogotá, (which took over consular services upon Consulate Barranquilla’s closing). In Barranquilla they were well and favorably known. In Bogotá, their application might not be distinguished from that of any other applicant. I don’t specifically recall how we dealt with first time applicants or those from whom additional documentation had been requested, but I do remember our pledging to do our best to accommodate all of them.

Q: When did you leave Barranquilla and where did you go?

WACKERBARTH: We left on August 14, 1971, on a flight to Jamaica by way of Aruba. I was detailed to Embassy Kingston for 30 days to help with a visa application overload situation. My experience there is the topic of my next Oral History chapter.

Q: May I ask you how you view, now, your assignment to Barranquilla in the context of your 30+ year Foreign Service career?

WACKERBARTH: Good question. Having done this exercise, I can affirm that I got a good start from my assignment to Barranquilla. It certainly benefited me directly in my onward assignment as Principal Officer of the U.S. Consulate in Belém, Brazil. Through a series of unforeseen circumstances, I went there as a Junior Officer in a two-grade stretch. Yet, I was able to perform well there, in large part because of what I had learned at Consulate Barranquilla.

Most notably in Barranquilla, I gained an understanding of how a constituent post functions as an integral part of a U.S. Mission. Also, I gained skills there as a reporting officer through the encouragement of my supervisor and the Deputy Chief of Mission, even though this meant diverting me from a very busy consular workload. Additionally, I picked up experience in administration, as my duties included supervising and evaluating Foreign Service Nationals serving in the Commercial Section and Visa Sections, as well as the Cashier, Receptionist, and Janitor. For example, in the course of my 18 months at post, I hired a receptionist, dismissed her after a short trial period, and hired a replacement. One of my regular tasks was to do a monthly audit of the Consulate's cash accounts. In carrying out these responsibilities, as well as adjudicating, I developed confidence in decision making. Additionally, I did a short stint as Acting Principal Officer. In one way or another, I would build on all of this over the course of my 30-year career in the Foreign Service.

I think it merits saying that Foreign Service consular work, in general, at this writing, is markedly different from what I have described. To be sure, junior officers still work the visa line and carry out other statutory functions. This is well understood by those going to their first or second posts. The difference is that today's consular function has grown to be much larger and more prestigious, taking on a variety of important new portfolios. Also, its work is funded, in part, from the collecting of consular fees.

Q: Can you tell me something of your family life during this time?

WACKERBARTH: Certainly. Including preparation, our time in connection with the Barranquilla assignment encompassed the first 24 months of our first two years of marriage. Recently, we heard a speaker say the first year of her marriage was nothing at all as she expected. Without looking at each other Cindy and I both nodded affirmatively to her statement, as if in unison. For us, it was quite a journey. I was sworn-in to the Foreign Service on June 20, 1969.

Two days later, I received a call from Cindy in New Jersey telling me she had arrived home earlier than expected upon completion of her three-year stint as a teacher at Tehran's American-curriculum Community School. I hopped in the car right away and drove to her family's home in northwestern New Jersey. (We had become engaged through an exchange of aerograms in early December 1968.) The whirlwind was now in motion. On July 25, Cindy underwent surgery to remove a cyst from her neck. The same day my assignment to Embassy Bogotá was announced on what is now called "Flag Day." We were married a month later, on August 23, 1969, at her family's church in

Washington, New Jersey. My father joined the church's pastor in officiating. The date had been set, in part, because my sister was due to deliver her second child late the next month. We deferred our honeymoon because my schedule was fully engaged in consular and language training. I had succeeded in negotiating a long weekend by convincing the Dean of the Foreign Service's Language School to cede a couple of days of Spanish Language Training so I could take a two-day Consular Training course later the next month. This was no small accomplishment. I recall the Dean's dryly remarking "We do believe in marriage."

In any case, on the morning of Tuesday, I reported for a training class that had begun late the afternoon before. Of course, the instructor called on me first, so I explained I had been on annual leave the previous day. My classmates howled in laughter. I don't recall that the instructor was, at all, amused. Early the next morning, our second one together in our new apartment, the phone rang during breakfast. We were puzzled because hardly anybody knew our new phone number. It was our brother-in-law calling to say that our niece, Karen, was born earlier that morning, August 27.

I had entered the Foreign Service in June with the passage of one of my pre-doctoral exams pending. The make-up exam was scheduled for early October. I was focused on preparing for that exam during most of the free time I had ahead of that date. In any case, Cindy and I traveled to Bloomington, Indiana, to accomplish that. I would return to Bloomington alone the next month to successfully pass the oral exam.

A few weeks later we received news that Cindy's dad had suffered a heart attack. She headed to New Jersey for a week. He lived for 20 more years visiting us in numerous overseas posts.

As I best recall, we enjoyed a nice Christmas with our families, who lived not far from each other in northwest New Jersey. We had booked passage to Cartagena, Colombia, on a Grace Line steamship scheduled to depart in late January. (Foreign Service personnel were encouraged to sail on American flag carriers as a concession to the declining industry.) A couple of weeks prior to departure we were advised to change our plans and fly to post, because the Ambassador had scheduled a visit to Barranquilla, and it was important for us to be present. As it turned out, there were no direct American flag carrier flights to meet the proposed schedule. This was resolved by flying to San Juan on Pan Am and onward to Curacao (then-Netherlands Antilles) on a Puerto Rican airline. The next day we went on to Barranquilla on Aerocondor, a non-IATA Colombian carrier. We landed in Barranquilla on a late afternoon flight only to discover that there was nobody there to meet us. We found our way to the Hotel Del Prado and checked in. The hotel staff somehow found the phone number of the Consul's residence. Ed and Emily DaSilveira and our predecessors, Vice Consul Micheal Mercurio and his wife Sharon were there with a nice dinner prepared to welcome us.

In late March 1970, I received a letter from my Dad advising that my Mom had suffered an incident resembling a heart attack. She recovered (and would live 13 more years), yet the tone of his letter was quite upsetting to me. The tone of the letter was distressing. I perceived that my Dad was uncharacteristically very shaken by the event.

On July 15, 1971, I received a call at the office, first thing in the morning, that my father had died very suddenly the night before. He suffered a massive heart attack while in the hospital for another reason. The medics got to him speedily, but there was nothing further they could do.

The situation was complicated by the fact that I was serving as Acting Principal Officer at the time. Fortunately, an arrangement was worked out for Embassy Bogotá consular officer Dickson Kenney to cover the post in my absence. So Cindy and I arranged a flight to New Jersey. I stayed there for five days before hastening to return to post. Cindy remained stateside for another week to 10 days.

I mentioned earlier that Cindy and I traveled to the Colombian Islands San Andres and Providencia in August 1970 for what we call our "deferred honeymoon."

I also mentioned that my mother joined us for Christmas, 1971. She arrived a couple of days before the holiday. We think this was good for her as it was so different, not evoking sentimental memories.

Cindy's parents came to visit us a few days after Christmas, so we had a couple of days of delightful overlap. This included an incredibly good New Year's Eve dinner that cost about $16-17 for the five of us. Part of this time, we stayed in the Consul's Residence, as the DaSilveiras were away on a trip.

In early spring 1971, we learned that we were pregnant. We were thrilled at the news even though it meant changing some ambitious travel plans. In May, Cindy was diagnosed with typhoid fever. We were informed early on that this would not affect the baby's health. Nonetheless, Cindy took leave from her teaching position for the rest of the school year. In June, she traveled to Washington, D.C., for medical consultation, again receiving reassurances (which proved correct). I joined her later that month on rest and recuperation orders. We spent the time visiting family and taking a delightful drive through New England.

We had no sooner returned than to learn that the post would be closing. As mentioned, the pace was frenetic. On August 14, 1971, we headed off to Kingston for 30 days temporary duty, changing planes in Curacao.

Our time in Kingston is the topic of yet another story which I will cover in the next chapter.

Q: Is there anything you would like to add to this interview?

WACKERBARTH: Yes. In February 2005, I had the opportunity to visit Barranquilla in an entirely different context. I was invited to join representatives of the Miami (Ohio) Presbytery, Presbyterian Church (USA), in an exchange with leaders of the Presbytery of Northern Colombia. In that context, I saw the north coast of Colombia, especially in Barranquilla and Cartagena, in a different light. For all practical purposes, during my time as a consular officer, I related professionally to people who, in one way or another, were looking outward towards the United States. In this context, I was associating with

Colombians who, even at the cost of potential risk to their lives, were advocating for the well-being of their fellow Colombian citizens.

Most notably, they were taking up the cause, essentially through Colombian legal channels, of as many as 3 million displaced persons thrown off their land by violence from either left-wing insurgents or right-wing vigilantes. Both sides, in this virtual civil war, financed their operations through raising cocaine. A United Nations representative stated, at the time, that: "…displacement was not merely incidental to armed conflict, but a deliberate strategy of war." I was impressed by the depth of the Northern Colombia Presbytery's willingness to take this stand even in the face of credible death threats.

During the visit, our group was hosted by congregations in all four quadrants of Barranquilla. In the time we were living in the city in the 1970s, I would estimate that 75 percent of our time, or more, whether on business or for social occasions, was spent in the prosperous northeast quadrant of the city. It was heartening to go into neighborhoods we would never have visited, meeting people in a variety of stations in life, all wanting to make their city a better place.

One focus of our visit was the Colegio Americano. I couldn't help but contrast it to the Karl C. Parrish School. As noted, my wife, Cindy, taught at both schools. The emphasis of Karl C. Parrish was to educate students in English with the idea they would relate outwardly as they became adults. In contrast, Colegio Americano's emphasis was to train leaders who aimed to make Colombia a better place.

I liked that emphasis.

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Chapter 3 – Jamaica – August 1971; President Richard Nixon, Secretary of State William Rogers; Ambassador Vincent de Roulet

WACKERBARTH: So anyway, we left, thinking we were going to go to Bogota. And meanwhile, I did a TDY [temporary duty assignment] in Kingston, Jamaica, where I spent a couple of years one month.

Q: You did what?

WACKERBARTH: I spent a two-year tour of duty in 30 days!

Q: Two-year [laughter].

WACKERBARTH: I say that in part because [laughter] I probably picked up enough shaggy dog stories in that one month of TDY to fill up the space of a two-year tour of duty.

Q: [Laughter]

WACKERBARTH: In Kingston under the madcap ambassador, Vincent de Roulet, who was one of the candidates for the absolute worst ambassador the United States has ever sent overseas anywhere!

Q: Yes. Well, let's talk about that time—your two years and one month. Tell me about the ambassador. What was his problem, and what was his background?

WACKERBARTH: He was the son-in-law of Joan Whitney Payson, who owned the New York Mets. He was very proud of the fact that he had never done an honest day's work in his life.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: He actually stated that. But the Whitneys, and by extension, Joan Whitney Payson, were very generous contributors to the Republican Party, and specifically the Nixon campaign in 1968, so de Roulet was given the ambassadorship to Jamaica.

For my part, l got off on the wrong foot. The reason why I got assigned there on TDY is that a minor riot had broken out. The visa lines got so long in Kingston that people got very frustrated waiting in line in the hot sun, only to be refused a visa. So at one point on a very, very hot day some of them just stormed their way inside. The Jamaican constabulary were called the Red Stripes because they wore blue trousers with red stripes on them, not dissimilar to what our Marine guards wear. (Red Stripe is also the Jamaican beer, and the expression in Jamaica is, "The Red Stripe gonna get you, mon (man)!") Anyway, they had this minor riot, and the word went up to Washington, "Send brawn, not brains!" and since I was twenty something, six-foot-four, and 200 plus pounds, I was the ideal candidate to send in to stare down the marauding visa applicants! I got off to a bad start, and it's a good story. The Consulate was closed, so we didn't have communications there. I was there in Barranquilla without the means to communicate with Embassy Kingston. Also getting to Kingston from Barranquilla was problematic. It turned out that there was a Lufthansa flight out of Bogota, and I thought it went once a week. I thought I was booking passage on that flight. At the last opportunity I sent a cable, saying I was coming on this particular flight. That's the message that Kingston got. Then I got a message from the local Lufthansa agent that the flight was canceled, so I switched to a different configuration, going in on ALM (Antilliaanse Luchtvaart Maatschappij NV), the Antillean Airline. I called the Personnel Officer in Bogota. I asked her to send a cable saying that I wasn't coming on Lufthansa, rather I was coming on ALM 971, or something like that. Meanwhile, Bogota had already sent into the breach Donna Downard (who later became a deputy assistant secretary in the consular bureau). This was her first assignment, and she was sent in advance. It turned out when the Lufthansa flight was expected, the people from Kingston went out to the airport to meet me, and of course, I wasn't there!

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: They were upset. They were sure that there was some sort of conspiracy to not keep them supplied with extra consular officers. Anyway, they sent a cable to Bogota: "Where's Wackerbarth?" And the Personnel Officer realized, Whoops! and sent a quick answer, "Wackerbarth's arriving on ALM 971," adding, "Allow Downard depart." They signed the cable with Ambassador Saccio's name, as is Foreign Service protocol. Ambassador de Roulet saw that "Allow Downard depart" and

absolutely hit the ceiling. He responded by sending a cable to Ambassador Saccio, signed from Ambassador de Roulet, through Assistant Secretary Meyer, with the subject "Who is running Kingston; Allow Downard depart?" The text of the cable was, "Who gave you authority to issue countervailing orders about Kingston? I will not allow Downard to depart until I have personally, physically verified the presence of Wackerbarth on the island of Jamaica!"

[Laughter] Well, you can imagine this cable became…

WACKERBARTH: It was passed around all over the Department.

Q: [Laughter] Oh, yes, yes, yes!

WACKERBARTH: Meanwhile I was absolutely exhausted from all of the complications involved in the quick closing of Barranquilla. I developed a toothache, which the flying exacerbated. I landed with my wife at the airport, and the person who was there to meet me sternly said, "Better call the head of the Visa Section." So I called ahead to the Visa Section. The head of the Visa Section (who was in the Ambassador's office when I reached him) very sternly asked, "Well, what happened?" And I explained. Then he gave me these very stern, cold answers, and said, "We'd better meet at the hotel." My wife had all to do to calm me down. I felt (in this state of exhaustion) I was coming to help them, and they greet me this way?

Bill Moody, head of the Non-Immigrant Visa Section, gets to the hotel, and says, "Hmm, let me buy you a drink. Let me explain! We have this ambassador! He was pretty hot under the collar over all this, and while I was in his office…l had to answer a certain way."

Q: [Laughter]

WACKERBARTH: Bill Moody turned out to be very helpful. I came into the Consulate the next morning. The ambassador would come in late in the morning, but he would always stop in the Consular Section, and he would come in to give us a pep talk. His pep talk—first of all, he would insist (and on this I was tipped off ahead of time) that even if you were in the middle of a visa interview, if the Ambassador walked in, you were to stand up and show respect for the Ambassador, abruptly leaving the visa applicant in place. In any case, he came over to me and said, "Where is he? I want to touch him!" Finally he was satisfied that I was there.

Another time he would come in and say, "Good morning, guys!" or "Good morning, boys! I hope you're giving it to them!" He would give us the "Italian signal." He made no secret about it. At one point, he said, "Well, how's it going, Wackerbarth, in the Visa Section? I sure hope you're turning down a lot of these people! If I hear that people I don't like are getting through, I'm going to call Fred Chapin, [who was the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Management in the bureau] and tell him to freeze that Political Officer assignment for five years!"

De Roulet had people he liked and didn't like in the Embassy. One of the things he did was, when he was in the U.S. on one of his many absences, he bought a set of red-,

white-, and blue-striped jeans in different sizes, and he got a lot of them! He would call people he liked into his office and have them try on the jeans and gift them. He invited us out to a movie, I think it was "Z," which he showed at his house. All the people who were there were sporting these jeans! Additionally, he assigned each of the members of the country team the name of an animal figure, and he got rubber stamps made so that in memos instead of initialing them, he would stamp them with the animal figure. DCM George Roberts was the cat. Nancy Ostrander, who had been the head of the Consular Section, was the rhinoceros. Ken Rogers was the bear, and there were others. One of George Robert's accomplishments as DCM was to get de Roulet to only use these for internal memoranda and not for items going up to Washington.

At another point he invited my wife, who was pregnant at the time, and me to a reception. He came over to me and said, "Is that your wife over there? She doesn't look all that knocked up to me!" [Laughter] This is why I said, "I spent a couple of years there one month!"

Q: Oh! Well, we've had some real problems with ambassadors in Jamaica, political ambassadors. Wasn't there one who didn't want the applicants to use our bathrooms?

WACKERBARTH: That may have been Turner B. Shelton in Nicaragua; he wouldn't let the FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals) use the bathrooms in the residence when there was an earthquake there.

During Congressional hearings on protection of U.S. business overseas exposure, de Roulet offered that in a 1971 conversation, as American Ambassador, he got Norman Manley, future Prime Minister, to agree there would be NO mention of the considerable U.S. investment in bauxite, while campaigning for the office of Prime Minister.

Manley got elected, and much later, in 1973, there was testimony on the bill that created the Overseas Private Investment Corporation. De Roulet, in testimony, said, "Well, there I am the Ambassador to Jamaica. We've got several hundred million dollars of exposure in bauxite and a Socialist government. Fortunately, I got the Prime Minister, when he was a candidate, to agree not to take on U.S. foreign investment in the bauxite industry when he was running for office." Well, this put the Prime Minister in the position of being in bed with the American Ambassador, who was not popular. Consequently, the Jamaicans responded by declaring de Roulet *persona non grata*. (I'm not a primary reporter on this part of the story, but I think the fact that it had its antecedents in something that happened while I was there is worth mentioning.)

Q: With an ambassador like that, how were things going within the embassy—morale?

WACKERBARTH: Morale was pretty bad. Just about everybody there thought they were stuck. It was an interesting phenomenon because there was a large consular section. Most of the NIV (Non-immigrant Visa) work was done by first- or second-tour officers. It was supervised by a mid-career officer. The IV (Immigrant Visa) work was done by people who were brought into consular work through a program where clerical, administrative, and technical personnel could apply for certain entry-level officer positions. Essentially, they were reviewing the Immigrant Visa applications. These were generally older people

who had previously done administrative, technical, and secretarial work now doing the Immigrant Visa work as officers. Contrast this with the Non-Immigrant (tourist) Visa applications. There, one was seeing 120 visa applicants a day in the line. One thing management did was build a pavilion which got applicants out of the hot tropical sun. Still, one wound up having about a minute and a half per visa applicant. Most of the time one could make a pretty quick decision on economic grounds. The Jamaicans, the ones we saw, with a few exceptions, were basically honest! Sometimes one could good-naturedly turn them down.

For example, an applicant would bring in a bankbook that would show $500 in the bank, but it would be a brand-new bank account opened up the day before. So, you'd say, "Gee! You know, where'd you get the $500?" The applicant would say, "I sold a cow!"; I would say, "Well, how many cows did you have?" The reply was, "It was my only one," and I would say, "Well, if you sold the cow, what are you going to do for income when you come back from your trip to the United States?" One would need evidence of sufficient economic ties to Jamaica to assure return, as opposed to staying illegally in the U.S. Globally, this is and was the standard for issuance of a non-immigrant visa.

Q: Do you remember any particularly notable non-immigrant visa applicants?

WACKERBARTH: I had a Playboy Club employee come through the line; interestingly, under occupation she listed "bunny." That was unique in my brief assignment in Kingston.

Q: You might explain what a Playboy bunny was.

WACKERBARTH: Okay. A Playboy bunny was a waitress at the Playboy Club. I think, by today's standards, they were well covered with a certain kind of bunny suit that had a cottontail. I never would have guessed what she aspired to, from her demeanor or appearance.

As far as our personal life was concerned, it was pleasant enough, and it certainly was an interesting time.

Our TDY home for the first week in Jamaica, August 1971, was an international class hotel, but after a week, we opted to rent a cottage on the economy. The weekends made up for the tedium of long days working the visa line, which involved too short interviews with applicants who clearly, sadly, didn't qualify. We took advantage of weekends to travel to different areas of the island. A trip to Ocho Rios was delightful. We climbed on large rocks, slid on rock slides where the river joined the Caribbean. We drove through the center of Jamaica to an interesting and beautiful botanical garden that had a variety of Jamaican spices such as nutmeg and allspice.

A Sunday train from Kingston to Montego Bay was memorable as at least two itinerant preachers boarded, preached, passed the plate, and disembarked. The train hit a donkey. One of the passengers described the event in a most colorful way. The passengers on the train, which stopped at every village, included Rastafarians.

It was a unique and memorable month for us.

With the approaching due date, we were happy to get to the U.S. to be prepared for the birth of our first child and then the projected assignment, Bogotá.

In late October I received the word that the onward assignment to Bogotá was canceled due to budget cuts. WHAT NOW???

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Chapter 4 – Assignment to Belém, Brazil, with Addendum, January 1972 to January 1974: President Richard Nixon; Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Henry Kissinger; Ambassadors William Rountree, John Crimmins

WACKERBARTH: So in January of 1972, with wife and 10-week-old baby, off we went to Belém, Brazil.

Q: You were there from when to when?

WACKERBARTH: January of ’72 to January of ’74.

Q: How did Belém fit into...I mean, what was it as far as Brazil was concerned?

WACKERBARTH: Well, actually it turned out that there was a specific reason, and then there were ancillary reasons, and I very much felt that part of my job description was to make a case for having a Foreign Service post there. DCM Stan Cleveland strongly emphasized that to me in our initial conversation.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: A very specific reason was the 200-mile territorial sea international agreement. At the time Brazil started seizing American-flag shrimp vessels that were fishing within the 200-mile waters, which we did not recognize. A member of Congress put a hold on the implementing legislation for the International Coffee Agreement as a way of protesting Brazil’s seizure of U.S.-flag shrimp vessels within the 200-mile limit. So we were under heavy pressure to get this worked out. Right about the time that I arrived, an agreement was negotiated. “Crafted” is the word, and I often think that this is very useful in explaining how you can resolve something with diplomacy.

The book *Getting to Yes* by Roger Fisher and William Ury basically says if one can’t resolve an argument, redefine the terms on grounds that one can resolve it. I think the 1972 Brazilian fisheries situation is a classic example of that. So we signed a conservation agreement with Brazil, in which we recognized Brazil’s right to conserve its natural resources in the shrimp area without reference to 200 miles. That emerged as their exclusive economic zone.

Brazil had very rich shrimp grounds. The shrimp basically huddle pretty close to the coast, because of the massive flow of the Amazon, and because of the fact that there are a lot of decaying leaves washing into the river system; some of this flows back into the coastal estuaries. This produces fantastic shrimp! So it’s a very fertile ground. At that time Brazilians hadn’t developed the industry very much, but Americans came down there quite a bit and trolled for shrimp. We accepted that Brazil could require a fishing

license for a foreign vessel to come into these economic zones, and that's basically the way we settled it. The agreement was supposed to have [been] written in a way that it couldn't be violated. But somehow or other, American shrimpers, in their inimitable style, figured out a way to come afoul of the Brazilian Navy in this particular area. And so that gave us some real important work to accomplish.

Q: What were you doing regarding that?

WACKERBARTH: It worked this way: if their Navy hauled in a vessel, it was my job to work with the vessel owner and captain to get the fine paid off so the vessel could be released, and that they could be quickly back on their way. It turned out that this was a complicated proposition, in part because of financial infrastructure. Northern Brazil didn't have a state-of-the-art telephone or telegraph service, and so one needed somebody to stay on top of communications to make sure that the fine got paid before the catch rotted away, losing its value.

Q: I mean did you find yourself dealing with a bunch of screaming seamen, or captains, or something like that?

WACKERBARTH: As it turned out some of the seamen were quite happy to have some time in port! This had to do with the fact that Brazil has always been a somewhat permissive society, and the ladies of the night are quite available in a port city like Belém; the cost on a sailor's salary made that quite a bit more attractive than being back at their home port.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: For my part I wanted to get the fines paid off and get these ships out of there; the captain, among other things, said, "You have to help me get my crew back on the boat!" I had to point him to a certain part of town and tell him to get 'em back because we really needed them to set sail at dawn.

I was particularly concerned with the political dimension. (It was the objective of the Embassy to make this agreement work, particularly to assure that the fines were paid, and that justice worked promptly, to avert economic loss.) I think the pressure was really more from the owners. Communication was difficult. Some of these ships were based in Paramaribo, Suriname; Georgetown, Guyana; or Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. Yet they were flying the American flag.

In connection with shrimp boats, later in my tour of duty I had an interesting case which was different. That is that one of these shrimp boats fell apart, leaving its crew stranded! I had developed a very good relationship with the Navy Admiral and also his Captain of the Port. I think it's useful for people who want to understand the Foreign Service for me to point this out. My Portuguese was good enough that my Portuguese was probably better than the Admiral's English; and so what we had to do—go through these negotiations for paying the fine and getting the situation resolved—I basically carried out the negotiations in Portuguese. I feel that this is a prime example of the value of language study because we were dealing with issues. In one case, he had a hot-buttoned Lieutenant Commander, who was spearheading getting these boats hauled in; and I had to say, "Well,

let's actually look at the map." I had in my file a map of these zones, to make sure that this ship was really in violation. Because we could do this in Portuguese, I always felt that he didn't have the added burden of having to struggle to make formulations in a foreign language, and he could feel more comfortable in addressing the issues. This makes a strong case for thorough language study.

In this particular instance, when the U.S.-flag shrimp vessel fell apart, the Captain of the Port called me and said, "We're going to do a search and rescue operation!" I responded, "Thank you!" because eight days, I think, is the time that they feel that one can survive at sea. After that time—it was after the eighth day—the Port Captain called me and said, "Look! We're doing everything we can." And I replied, "I understand." It got to be the weekend, and I ran into him going into the theater; he said, "Guess what! We've rescued part of the crew!" Well, he explained what had happened was the flow of the Amazon River system—if you take the top 20 rivers in the world, six, seven, eight of them are in the Amazon River system—is such that you have fresh water a hundred miles out to sea. So most of the crew members were able to grab parts, just pieces, of the sunken ship and hang on for more than eight days, drinking the fresh water. I remember it was Easter, and I remember sending a NIACT (Night ACTion immediate) to Embassy Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, asking them to inform the owners of the vessel of the news that some of their crew was alive!

Q: Yes, huh!

WACKERBARTH: I think the rescue took place quite by accident. I believe the flow of the river finally drove them in close enough that they could be found. The Brazilian Navy played it in the local press, taking credit for having carried off this miracle. I didn't mind. The men were saved!

Q: Absolutely! What was the Brazilian government like at that time?

WACKERBARTH: The military had taken over the Brazilian government in 1964. Essentially, it got harsher and harsher before it eased up. I know this more from history than experience, but this was a period of time when it was tending to get more harsh. In Brazil at that time, all governors, mayors, and senior officials were appointed, not elected. The mayor was appointed. I mean actually all of the governors. I had in my territory, which was the whole Amazon Basin, I had three states and three territories. Of course, the territorial governors would have been appointed anyway. But the two major states were Pará, which was where Belém was, at the mouth of the Amazon; and then Manaus was the capital of Amazonas, the other major state. The third state, which was in yet even a third time zone, way out in Acre, also had an appointed governor and mayor. I only got out there once.

The military was a very important institution. The Embassy defense attaché clearly had an important role on the country team. He was promoted to Brigadier General during the time I was there.

Q: Vernon Walters at the time?

WACKERBARTH: No, this was Art Morrah. [Vernon] Dick Walters had been there previously, including at the time of ’64.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: I didn’t get to know Vernon Walters until later in my career.

Q: You’re really talking about a huge territory, aren’t you?

WACKERBARTH: Absolutely! Half of the United States! I always said that it was half of Brazil in geography, four percent in population, and three percent in gross domestic product. There were three different States, in three different time zones, and three territories which also spanned the time zones.

Q: Well—

WACKERBARTH: What fascinating geography!

Q: Absolutely! Now, what about...I mean, what were some of the...I mean one always thinks of chopping down the Amazon forests. Was that an issue when you were there?

WACKERBARTH: I bet that I may have written the first Foreign Service report focusing on ecology and on the environment of the Amazon. It was an aerogram I wrote in Belém in 1972. I would encourage any scholar who wanted to understand what was going on there to request it through Freedom of Information. The title was the Trans-Amazon Highway; I used it as a focus for the whole Brazilian emphasis on the Amazon. It was considerable at that time.

The military government wanted to assert its sovereignty over the Amazon region. This was a continuing theme to successive Brazilian governments. Brazil had been very successful in building dirt roads out from their major cities, and one of the most successful was the Belém-Brasília highway. It was paved during the time that I was there. The capital had been moved to Brasilia in 1960, and this meant that then there was a magnetic center of economic development in the interior. There were highways to and from Brasilia. One of the most successful was the one to Belém. Previously when Belém wanted to get its groceries and its Antarctica beer, it had to have them shipped by coastal freighter up from the southern part of the country. The brewery in Belém was opened just before I got there. It's called Cerpa, which is Cervejaria Paraense, or the Para brewery. But the acronym that the Brazilians would use was that Cerpa really stood for “Cidade era roubado, pelo Antarctica” (which means the city used to be robbed by the Antarctica brewery) because they would control the supply of beer getting up there and could keep the price up. The Belém-Brasilia highway made it possible to send trucks with smaller payloads up to Belém and brought a lot of economic development in its wake.

Q: Were there any other consulates there?

WACKERBARTH: I believe there were four other career consulates: the Japanese had a Consulate General, a major post for them, because there was a fairly significant presence of Brazilians of Japanese extraction; the Portuguese had a consulate, and not an

insignificant post because many of the people from Belém had emigrated from northern Portugal (it was in some respects the most Portuguese of Brazilian cities); and the Colombians and Venezuelans had career consuls. Everybody else tended to have honorary consuls.

Q: Well now—what, other than fishing interests, were there? At one point, I guess it was Ford who was playing around with rubber, and all that. Was that going on still?

WACKERBARTH: No, actually no longer, but "Fordlândia,"—it is a great story that had lots of interesting ramifications. It was a story that was history, but I dealt with some very interesting offshoots. In my time, Daniel Keith Ludwig, who had once been cited as the richest man in the world, had an idea, not dissimilar to Henry Ford's, in which he was going to plant fast growing trees for paper pulp in the Amazon. He would ship it out from a strategically located distribution point through his shipping fleet to key paper pulp markets all over the world. He had made his fortune through something called National Bulk Carriers. He also carried out an experiment of growing oranges and shipping their juice in bulk, which was also unsuccessful.

Ludwig made the same mistake that Ford did, and that is that in the Amazon Rain Forest, Mother Nature grows a heterogeneous forest—that is, Mother Nature does not grow trees in stands, but rather intersperses different kinds of trees. Well, in a very hot, humid environment this means that if disease goes through, disease is not going to spread as quickly. In that process, disease is going to run up against disease-resistant plants in the way. Both Ford and Ludwig, who were extremely successful in business, missed this point. Ford found, growing rubber, that his trees were so disease prone that he was constantly fighting a battle. When Ford went into the Amazon (in part because being an Irishman, he didn't like the idea of having to buy rubber from the Brits—he thought that the Brits with their own plantations in Malaya controlled the market), he believed he could undercut them by developing an alternate source. So anyway, he had this idea, and invested a fair amount of money in Brazilian rubber. (This was after his son, Edsel, had died, and some people felt he was a bit in his dotage anyway, stuck on stubborn ideas.) He built a community called "Fordlândia," which by the time I got there was an agricultural research station. Actually there were two places. There was Fordland, or Fordlândia, and Belterra. So he had tried two ventures, but neither of them succeeded. Ford was a very close friend of tire manufacturer Harvey Firestone, a relationship which lasted for years. They did business with each other, and shared a mutual need for rubber.

One of the interesting offshoots about this is that Ford, being a Catholic, wanted to make sure that the religious needs of the people working the plantation were taken care of. He worked with the Franciscan Order and recruited the Order to supply missionary priests for Fordlândia. When the project broke up in the 1940s, the Franciscans made a decision that they were missionary priests, and they were not going to go back, but this was where they were called to work, and they were going to stay there.

By the time I got there in 1972, many of these individuals had become bishops in Dioceses throughout the Amazon region. As a lot of them were Irish Americans; they loved to talk politics. I got multiple copies of *Time Magazine* in the consulate mail. I didn't know how to stop all but one, so I gave them to the priests. They loved it. They

loved the contact with life back home. I'd go into these relatively remote parts of the Amazon Basin where I always called on the bishop—human rights was a big issue for us in Brazil—and we just started talking politics. We'd talk about American politics, and then we'd effortlessly move very comfortably to Brazilian politics. They didn't break any confidences, but the insights that they offered, from the catbird's seat on society that they held, were very useful for me to contribute to understanding what was happening in Brazil at the time.

Q: Paul, tell me a bit more about the priests. Where did the priests fit into this military regime, government, and all? I mean particularly being up in the Amazon, and far from the seat of power.

WACKERBARTH: Throughout Brazil, I think that the church believed that it should assert itself as a check and balance to the military government, that it was called to be an independent voice that spoke up forcefully on human rights. One of the bishops showed me the reverse side of the annual Diocese calendar where they had printed a copy of the 1948 U.N. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." This was a way to remind the people that Brazil was a signatory to a human rights document. It was subtle. The government, you know, couldn't object to the church publishing something to which they were an original signatory. That's one example of the church asserting itself.

It wasn't so much an issue up in the Amazon as it was in other parts of Brazil. At that time Dom Hélder Câmara was the Bishop of Recife, and I think Evaristo Arns was the Bishop in São Paulo. There was controversy and tension between the church and the military regime. I didn't see it so much in my district, but I certainly saw some examples.

Q: Well, were some of the younger priests subscribing to the then revolutionary theology?

WACKERBARTH: Liberation theology?

Q: Liberation theology?

WACKERBARTH: I didn't observe that much in my part of Brazil. I think if you asked my colleagues in Salvador and Porto Alegre (Alec Watson and Bob Gelbard), they probably would be able to speak more to that than I.

I had a very neat window on Indian protection issues in a couple of respects. One was that the Air Force Brigade Commander happened to be very pro-Indian. He didn't get the best assignment in the Brazilian Air Force, yet he was in an influential position in which he was able to basically play a role being supportive of Indian interests.

Another interesting insight was that he recruited, as the head of his supply unit, a missionary from the Wycliffe Bible Translators. Again, this is the way things operate in the tropical world. He did not trust his own people to be in charge of the valuable scarce supplies. There's just so much money in it, that he really wanted somebody he could trust. In certain respects, I think this was a bit of a Faustian bargain between the Protestant missionaries and the Air Force in the sense that they helped him out in this particular area. The missionaries had a lot of small plane flights throughout the Amazon region. There was a constant need for collaboration on the part of both entities.

I had a chance to hitchhike on one of those support flights—one of the most fascinating experiences of my life, of which I've had many—to actually fly deep into the Amazon to visit two tribes. One was a tribe that the missionaries had been working with, at that point, for 11 or 12 years. It was fairly developed. Another tribe was one with which they were just beginning to make initial contact.

Q: Well, what was happening with these tribes? Was there much you could do for them?

WACKERBARTH: Yes. Essentially, as Consul, I regarded this as a visit to constituents. As for the Indians, I observed that they lived above the rapids, by choice so they lived deep in the Amazon rainforest; their transportation infrastructure was basically riverine. That was changing somewhat with the construction of roads. The Indians' objective, historically, based on their initial 15th century contact with the white man, was to get as far away as they could, and particularly to get themselves situated above the rapids, where there was less chance they could be attacked.

The missionaries would build airstrips to go into these areas. Their purpose was to basically learn the language, so they could then ultimately teach literacy in that language. This was so that eventually the Bible could be translated into that language. Additionally they would give them some exposure to good health practices and rudimentary health care. They would, for example, barter handicrafts for diesel fuel in some instances. It becomes a very philosophical question as to whether this is good or not.

Q: Yes, well, it's either that or leave them unable to cope. Did you find yourself, did the missionaries use you, or you use the missionaries?

WACKERBARTH: We had a good relationship, and certainly we would talk things over. I think that they were happy that I was there. Mostly I would renew their passports and in some cases sign their kids up for the Selective Service (the draft) when they turned 18. I was invited to witness weddings, and I provided the consular verification of the marriage certificate.

Q: Yes, yes.

WACKERBARTH: Yes, there were lots of communities in the interior—I would seek these people out, and sometimes I would go to their homes to call on them. They had a school for missionary kids only, on an island near Manaus. I once went out to speak to an after-school assembly there. I worked very hard at having a good relationship with all my constituents. They weren't a major source of information on the society; interestingly enough, I think the Brazilian government tended to give them broad space. Maybe this was in contrast to the tension that existed between the Catholic church and the government nationwide.

Q: It later became a tension between the homesteader, or the small settler, or the claim jumper and the large corporations. I'm talking about within Amazonia, where you have big outfits picking on the small settlers, and all that.

WACKERBARTH: There wasn't a lot of tension in that area during my time. Actually, when I served in Brazil more recently, that became more of an issue. But it does lead me to describe one of the more interesting developments.

As part of Brazilian emphasis on the Amazon, they created incentives to get Brazilian corporations to invest in remote areas. Brazil very much wanted to assert its nationhood and sovereignty. That, as an aside, I've always said, one of the most beneficial pieces of assistance we ever gave to Brazil in terms of economic development was teaching them how to collect withholding taxes, which we did sometime in the late 1960s, early 1970s. Once the Brazilians figured out how to collect withholding taxes, they had more revenue than they really knew what to do with. So they started giving tax incentives for economic development. One of the ways in which you could get a tax incentive for economic development was to build a cattle ranch along the Belém-Brasilia highway. In many cases, individuals and corporations would buy land, in some instances very, very large blocks. They would cut down half the trees just to have cattle graze, really not so much to grow food or to turn grass into protein, but just to get the tax incentives. There was the Superintendency for the Development of the Amazonia (SUDAM), which was headquartered in Belém. This was an important institution administering these incentives. It's an example of a seemingly good concept really turning out to be a not so good idea in implementation. I think they're still dealing with the remnants of this.

You would have people installing ranches or factories only for the incentive. What made it economically viable was not its economic viability in and of itself, but only the tax break one got for doing it.

Because the Brazilian currency has historically fluctuated so much, Brazilians were always happy to get a stake in land which retained its value, even remote land, which was cheap.

Q: How about the reach of the embassy? Were you pretty much left alone?

WACKERBARTH: I was very much left alone. In fact, Stan Cleveland, my supervisor, was the DCM. William Rountree was the Ambassador. I went through Brasilia on my way there, and Cleveland pulled me aside and said, "Paul, the reason why we want to keep a consulate there is we want to understand the region. We want to know what's going on there. I want you to get out and around. I'm going to make sure you have the travel money to do that. If I call up and find out that you're not there because you're traveling, I'm going to be happy. I don't want you to hang around the office in case Brasilia might call!" I thought he was a very creative supervisor in that respect.

Q: Was there any sort of difference that one could note between that area and other parts of Brazil as far as particularly towards a unified Brazil or towards the military government?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, well, it was so remote that it was an area pretty much to itself. I didn't do a lot of political reporting because there was so much economic development-type reporting to do. I do remember that I would have conversations with the local political leaders, and those reports were well received. They didn't really add so

much to the flavor of politics as did the reporting that Alec Watson was providing in Salvador which was much more into the political flow.

Because of the isolation of the region, the people in my consular district were used to being left alone, and just hoped to get whatever resources they could from the government. They didn't so much get into the political issues.

Q: Well now, were there teams of Americans—scientific, economic, what have you—going into Amazonia while you were there?

WACKERBARTH: Oh, yes, very much so. This was a period in which there was a lot of U.S. foreign investment in Brazil. In the mineral sector, a very large vein of very high-grade iron ore had been discovered in the state of Pará, just before I got there. There was a strong contingent of U.S. Steel personnel. The prospecting there was done by that firm. Its stake was later bought out by the Brazilian Companhia Vale do Rio Doce (CVRD). The CVRD has essentially a 440-year plan for developing what they know they have, and they figure after 440 years, they'll take another look to see what they still have beyond that. The quality of the iron ore is outstanding, perhaps even superior to what's in the Mesabi Range of Minnesota. There were plans to develop a port to take this out. All this came through after my time.

But you also had people looking for bauxite, and some looking for oil.

Bordens had a catfish plant. The Amazon River basin is a place where one could get a 200-pound catfish, as there is an enormous quantity of decaying leaves getting into the river for food. It's quite a feast for wild catfish. A processing plant would cut them up into fillets, ship them, and sell them domestically and internationally.

There was interest in lumber extraction on the part of Georgia-Pacific and Louisiana-Pacific. However, broadly harvesting lumber in the Amazon is not considered economically viable, due to the heterogeneous nature of the forest, as well as the transportation and shipping issues. Nonetheless, there is a market for selective harvesting of certain specialty purpose woods, which grow heterogeneously in the forests.

There were a lot of people coming through as activity in the region drew a lot of varied attention. We talked about the TransAmazon highway, actually a dirt road across the Amazon region as a way of preserving sovereignty. The psychological dimension was not unimportant. Brazil won the World Cup in soccer for the third time in 1970. They were the first country to accomplish this feat for the third time. There was a broad national perception that nothing could stop Brazil—the country was on a roll!! The ability to build roads across the Amazon region was this flexing of the muscle they had. The leadership liked to think that they'd resolved a political problem. Political bickering wasn't going to stop them, and the country was soaring in economic development!

Q: Inflation hadn't…wasn't...

WACKERBARTH: No, inflation hadn't. I always tell people that I remember very clearly the day in which the Brazilian currency, the Cruzeiro, inconceivably at that time, floated upwards against the dollar. It was about the time of Nixon's devaluation of the dollar in

February of 1973. Brazilians were using what they call a "crawling peg," and that is in which they would adjust the exchange rate to meet a basket of currencies every two weeks or so. They were in the middle of an adjustment, and they didn't see any reason to adjust in the middle of the period downward to meet the dollar. This optimistic trend was about to end just as I was leaving in 1974 because of the first great oil crisis.

Q: Well now—at some point I've heard from others, but maybe these are from people who are farther south in Brazil, who were stationed there, saying there was concern sometime by the Brazilians about Americans messing around in your area, in the Amazon, and all that. You know, I mean the Americanization and almost taking over the place.

WACKERBARTH: Oh, this is going to be a constant theme—

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: And it very much was a characteristic of my second tour. One of the reasons the Brazilians wanted to assert sovereignty over the Amazon was that there was concern that they had this unknown area of natural resources. They really hadn't done much to develop it, or even assert control over it. It was a period of large foreign investment in Brazil. I think the conventional wisdom was that foreign investment was good. As I mentioned, U.S. Steel did the prospecting for the vein of iron ore, but found that they had to sell out to the Brazilian firm. Concerning Ludwig and his activities—I think there was always an undercurrent of suspicion or feeling that maybe natural resources were being whisked away.

Of course, the well-known story that everybody knows, about the Brazilian Amazon, was that the British Consul, a hundred years or so ago, shipped out rubber seeds in the diplomatic pouch. The Brits grew them at Kew Gardens in London, and then planted them in Malaya. They got very rich doing it. Consequently Brazilians are very conscious of their sovereignty.

Q: What about... did you...Brazil for years has prided itself on being a color-free society. What was your observation there?

WACKERBARTH: Well, of course as the Consul, I think the most interesting place where it came home to me would be when I'd be invited to military parades; and one could clearly see the color of gradation in first the enlisted people, and then the master sergeant types, and then the junior officers; and then as you got more senior, you could see an even clearer gradation of color. My consular district had more people of indigenous origin and many fewer Afro-Brazilians. If you count, I think Brazil is probably the second largest country in the world in terms of population of African descent, yet one doesn't see that so much up in the Amazon Basin area.

Q: Yes, I know sometimes when you end up with a Hollywood crew in your consular district, it can [laughter] be interesting!

How did you see itinerant U.S. media reports on the area? Did they present an accurate picture?

WACKERBARTH: There were some reporters who would come in wanting to talk through the TransAmazon story. For instance, sometimes there were reporters who came through, filed blatantly shallow stories that were misleading. I had one striking example, a *Newsweek* reporter who later distinguished himself on his reporting of the events in Santiago, Chile, in September of ’71. He came through Belém and wrote a report about the Amazon and U.S. investment. He interviewed—supposedly—a peasant, who gave his insights into the situation. The name of the peasant was José Curioso, which would translate as Joe Curious. (He was sort of like Snoopy’s Joe Boxer.) The USIS (United States Information Service) staff person told me there was no José Curioso. The reporter just invented this guy to provide so-called insights he supposedly wanted to add to the story.

Q: Yes. You left there in ’74?

WACKERBARTH: I left there in ’74.

Q: How did you see that area of Brazil? Were you optimistic or were you seeing problems, or how did...

WACKERBARTH: I was basically optimistic. Of course, I was in a position to see their problems as well. I felt that things could continue to improve. What happened just as I was leaving was the first oil crisis, and I think that put a major dent into Brazilian confidence. At that time Brazil was quite heavily dependent on imported oil. I felt the Brazilians were making progress in addressing the issues. I was not surprised that some of the things they tried didn’t turn out, but on the other hand I thought that they were on the right track on others.

Q: Well then, ’74 whither? Where’d you go?

WACKERBARTH: Back to Washington, [D.C.].

Q: What was your job in Washington?

WACKERBARTH: I was assigned to the Executive Secretariat of the Department (S/SS), a very prestigious place to be assigned.

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Chapter 4 – Belém addendum

Serving as principal officer in Belém, Brazil, was different from any other assignment I had while serving in the Foreign Service. For that reason, I am choosing to supplement what is covered in the interview with this potpourri of personalities, topics, and events.

There’s much to say about Belém. There was a tropical downpour most days in the early afternoon. Commerce came to a halt. Recently a 10-day review of weather showed no rain for 10 days and occasional temperatures reaching highs of 95° rather than the former 89°. At that time the population was around 500,000. It is now over a million. Noteworthy in Belém were the waterfront houses that were faced with ceramic tiles, we think for reasons of beauty and prestige as well as protection from humidity, salt, mold,

and dirt. Most European settlers hailed from northern Portugal, around Oporto. Belém has an opera hall. This one is a replica of Milan's La Scala. USIS was able with some frequency to schedule performances by visiting American artists.

There was an endless stream of personalities.

An American citizen, veteran of World War II, walked into the Consulate seeking to renew his Stateless Person Travel document. Working with the State Department Consular Bureau I was to see him leave the Consulate a couple of weeks later with a rightfully issued bright and shiny passport. Among the accomplishments of which I am most proud is that I played a role.

We welcomed Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalynn. They passed through Belém on a refueling stop from a goodwill visit to Brazil. We took them on a city tour, including a stop at the local market. There, I remarked to the governor that this place had been described as one of the more pungent markets in the tropical world, to which the governor replied, "It sure is!" We finished their Belém visit going to a nearby forest preserve, with rubber trees. The last stop was the airport. Nice folks!

Renowned musician Charlie Byrd played a concert through the auspices of the USIS. He was exceptionally well received. This was at the height of the popularity of the Brazilian genre.

Elton Jones, an American percussionist, also came through Belém on a USIS tour.

A different kind of celebrity was well-known ornithologist Roger Tory Peterson. The Lindblad Explorer had recruited him to serve as a bird expert on its Amazon River tour that year. We were invited for dinner on the ship with him. Afterwards it was fascinating to observe him as he listened to the sound of ant-eating bird calls performed by Brazilian-American graduate students, a married couple, experts in ant-eating birds at different levels of the Amazon forest canopy.

When Belém hosted national soccer tournaments, the hotels were full. We lived near the hotels in an airy apartment above the Consulate, an easy place to find on the city square. On a couple of occasions American citizens came desperately looking for lodging as the hotels were full. We had a separate guest room, and we were able to provide for them. Among them were nurses from the medical mission ship Hope that was in port at Natal and an Embassy wife from the Consulate General in Rio. We enjoyed their unexpected visits.

Belém, at the mouth of the Amazon, a major port city on the Atlantic Ocean, was a stopover for tourist ships and international fishing vessels. This had a number of ramifications. British Booth Lines based their South American operations in Belém. Occasionally cruise ships would make a stop. Cindy's Aunt Margaret, age 71, took a South American cruise that dropped her off for a family visit. (She returned to the U.S. by air.) This involved climbing down a ladder, getting into a tender, and being helped up a ramp to land. We were impressed!

Another port-related incident involved a planned visit by a team from the U.S. Weather Bureau scientific mission, Operation Magnet. Its objective was to obtain measurement of the movement of the Magnetic Equator. A U.S. shrimp processor friend provided a shrimp boat to reach the island where the measuring instrument was based.

Two large festivals took place in Belém. In October people from the interior came to the city to celebrate the procession and pilgrimage at the Círio de Nazaré. This was a procession of persons on crutches, in wagons, and much more headed by the icon of the Nossa Senhora do Nazaré, Our Lady of Nazareth. Carnival, not like Carnival of Rio de Janeiro, was a more rustic event just before Lent. Most notable to us was a brave national proudly marching in step to the music with a huge snake, anaconda, wrapped around his neck and supported by a horizontal stick.

In such a remote area, we enjoyed varied cuisines. Besides the usual churrasco with various meats on skewers, we enjoyed eating at awesome Portuguese and Japanese restaurants.

A large Japanese population was found on the Atlantic coast south of Belém, where they farmed black pepper. As in the U.S., Japanese Brazilians were interned in camps during World War II. At that time, the Japanese community adopted American baseball for recreation. The Foreign Service national USIS employee alerted me to the Northern Brasil Baseball Championship taking place in October 1973. He noted that the USIS library had a collection of World Series films for circulation. These were shown in the evenings during the championship competitions. Afterwards, whenever Cindy and I went to eat at the local Japanese restaurant, we were treated as royalty.

On the outskirts of the city there was a leper colony. Its chaplain was an American Redemptorist priest from New York, Father George. He would stop by the Consulate once a week to pick up a copy of Time Magazine. We became good friends, enjoying his company often for lunch at our home. He brought this special part of Brazil to us with stories of his experiences. He invited me to speak at the Colony. This was my first Portuguese speaking engagement. He connected the expatriate women of Belém to an institutional home for infants and children of parents at the Colony. This was to isolate these healthy children from leprosy. I understand that this isolation has long since been abandoned in northern Brazil as in the rest of the world.

During my second year at Post, an international academic interdisciplinary conference entitled Men in the Amazon was offered at the University of Florida in Gainesville. It was chaired by well-known anthropologist Charles Wagley. Participants from all over the globe were invited. I mentioned the conference to DCM Stan Cleveland who immediately responded that I should go and it would be funded. A collection of papers read at the conference was published. A number of regional Peace Corps Volunteers used their midterm travel allowance to attend.

Back to the Amazon region – on the road

My goal was to visit every state and territory.

Early in my tour of duty, the audacious sounding Trans-Amazon Highway was opened. I was one of the first foreign diplomats to ride on it. In reality it was a dirt trek for much of its mileage, yet it was a clear path eastward through miles of untracked forest. This opened the land for the settlement which followed. My first official report critiquing the agricultural and settlement aspirations was officially commended by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research at State. It was circulated throughout the U.S. Government. I would commend it to the attention of scholars researching the area at that time. Its reference number is Belém Aerogram A-2 1972.

I visited Amazonas State routinely at least once every three months plus for special events. The Amazonas State capital city, Manaus, was particularly important. Manaus was a duty-free zone which attracted commerce and tourism, providing employment for the people there. The United States was represented there by Consular Agent Marshall Whitlock, an American citizen married to a Brazilian national. He had a tire retreading business. Incidentally it was located near the world-famous Manaus Opera, built during the "Rubber Boom." Noteworthy in its history, the 19th century diva Jenny Lind once performed there near the banks of the Amazon at the edge of the jungle in this beautifully preserved functioning gem.

A routine feature of any visit to Manaus and other state or territorial capitals was a call on the Governor, the chief executive of the territories, the mayor of the capital city, and the bishop. This would be a two- or three-day visit.

On one of my early visits to Manaus, I arranged to visit an English language school on an island in the middle of the Amazon River for the children of missionaries serving in this region of Brazil. Coincidentally, one of the teachers there was an alumnus of my undergraduate alma mater, Hope College.

The principal economic activity of the region was mining. Products that were mined were bauxite, manganese, iron ore, and tin. The first mine I visited was in the Northeast, in the territory of Amapá. The first day I was there I made calls, as in other states and territories, to the Governor, Mayor, and Bishop. The following day I took a northbound train to a manganese mine, more importantly to the pelletizing plant, as most of the bulk ore had been depleted. The remaining ore was pelletized for shipment. I visited a tin mine in Roraima and a bauxite mine in Amazonas. In Pará I visited the Carajás iron ore mine in its early stage of development. The future of the Carajás output was still being prospected. The findings showed that the high quality iron ore there is expected to last at least 400 years. Currently more than 10% of the iron ore shipped worldwide has its origin at Carajás.

My Senior Foreign Service national provided insight and interest to the failed rubber extraction plantations of Henry Ford in Pará state. Fordlândia was first, and that is the one I visited. The second, with improvements of work and living situations, was becoming successful when Ford in 1942 decided it was all a failure. Two and a half million acres of forest were purchased for Fordlândia. The other plantation was Belterra. Nelson Teixeira, my most capable assistant, had worked and lived there. In any case, he told me stories of his life there. A major weakness of Ford's plan was that rubber trees

were planted in stands close together, rendering them vulnerable to the fast spread of South American leaf blight.

During the time I served in Belém, American Daniel Keith Ludwig, billionaire shipping magnate, made a similar mistake in the state of Pará by establishing a pulp paper plantation with trees in stands. In 1967, he purchased four million acres as he correctly projected a market for pulp. It was downriver from Ford's Fordlândia. Among other things, he constructed a 26-mile railroad, also 3,000 miles of trails and roads. The population peaked at around 30,000 inhabitants in 1982, eight years after my departure from the Amazon. He raised cattle and harvested rice to feed the population. Neither these nor other agricultural ventures prospered. His Jari Complex was sold in 1981 to Brazilian investors and more recently to a Brazilian company that planted eucalyptus and Australian pine which were better suited to the region, drastically reducing the required labor force. An article in Le Monde described the recent endeavor at Jari to be a success. (Source Wikipedia: Daniel K. Ludwig)

Midyear 1972 I received a call from our Consular Agent in Manaus. He told me the bizarre story that two 19-year-old young men were in his office who did not speak English or Portuguese. He was unable to discern why they came to him. The one clue he had was that they had documentation from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. From document clues the best guess was that they were Polish. I responded that I would contact a Polish Brasilian for help. When my contact spoke to them from my office, he was visibly incredulous. He was told that they had emigrated to the U.S. from Poland as refugees. They had found factory work, but due to boredom, they decided to hitchhike throughout North and South America. While in northern South America they acquired a small boat with the intent of traveling the entire virtually uninhabited Amazon River. At some point their boat capsized. They were picked up by a fishing vessel that dropped them off in Manaus, no small distance. They were directed to the resident U.S. Consular Agent, Marshall Whitlock.

Marshall and I agreed that he would put them up in his tire repair shop and forward them Cruzeiros (money) to carry them over until the situation could be resolved. I contacted the State Department Consular Bureau, asking them to contact the Polish American NGO who sponsored them. The response was tepid, at best. As time dragged on, an idea occurred to me. The State Department had recently adopted the TAGS system which more efficiently directed cable traffic to relevant offices. I could use this to direct the matter to both the Immigration/Refugee Affairs Office as well as the Consular Matters office. I asked them to work with the sponsor.

My message elicited a response, albeit cranky. They agreed to work with the Polish American NGO on the matter. In due course airline tickets were sent to the Consular Agent's office. Before handing over the tickets, the Consular Agent had them sign a note documenting receipt for food. Marshall and I breathed sighs of relief upon "wheels up," because it was over, or so we thought.

A few weeks later I received another message from Marshall conveying that a third young man, identifying himself as a companion of the first two, showed up at his shop. By this time Marshall and I figured we knew the drill, or thought so. We came up with

the idea of putting the young man on an Amazon River steamboat which would take at least a week. We had him sign for the cost of steerage-class (sleep on the deck in a hammock and partake of the lowest cost food). The idea was buying time to resolve the issue with him safely ensconced on board. We repeated our missive to the State Department and Polish American NGO. Unfortunately, this time the sponsor balked. I responded by writing a heartfelt gutsy letter imploring Washington actors to press the sponsor to reconsider, arguing that it would be inhumane to literally leave this young man "up an enormous creek without a paddle." I had him sign an invoice for his expenses with no thought that I would receive even a penny from him or his companions.

Note here, the gadabout adventurous teenagers repaid Marshall and myself, including a note of thanks. It gave me enduring respect for Polish people which served me decades later when I would be assigned Senior Economics Officer in Warsaw in 1989.

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Chapter 5 – Assignment to Executive Secretariat, January to April 1974

President Richard Nixon, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger

Q: What was your job in Washington?

WACKERBARTH: I was assigned to the Executive Secretariat of the Department (S/S-S), a very prestigious place to be assigned—theoretically very interesting with Henry Kissinger just having taken over as Secretary of State.

Q: I'm interested in what you observed and did at that time. 1974 you were in S/S-S (the Secretariat) from when to when? About 18 months or something like that?

WACKERBARTH: No, actually I did a very short tour. I was there from just the end of January to April.

Q: Yes. What were you doing?

WACKERBARTH: As part of my orientation to the Executive Secretariat, I interned in the Operations Center for a week. This consisted of rotations, a series of 48-hour shifts: a two-day rotation consisting of 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., a two-day rotation 4 p.m. to midnight, followed by a two-day midnight to 8 a.m. rotation. This was standard practice for someone assigned to that unit.

Among the things I observed there was that exceptionally special care was given to confidentiality of messages to and from the Secretary of State. They were only handled by senior Foreign Service officers assigned to the Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research with the highest level of security clearance.

When I settled into the Executive Secretariat office suite, I learned that the bread and butter/everyday work was staff studies. To save the Secretary of State's time, these were exceptionally careful reviews of memoranda or messages submitted for clarity. Included in this review was an examination by the Department's grammarian, a delightful gray-haired woman. Over time, throughout my career, if I needed to settle a grammatical

point I was working on, I would consult her as the last word on points of grammar at State.

I was a line officer. So basically what our team did was staff studies. That is, we would do a quality control, or final filter, on papers going to the Secretary of State and other 7th floor suite senior personnel.

Q: You know, looking at this, did you find, you know, really looking back on it, because I imagine at the time you're so enmeshed in the process, I've often wondered about the putting papers in the right order and all that, whether there isn't a blandization. I mean that the papers don't come out with enough hard-hitting things. I mean, did this happen or not?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, I can think of one staff study instance in which I got into a flap with some officers. I believed that the road map that they designed was too convoluted for someone to easily understand. The role of an S/S-S staff officer is basically to make sure that paperwork does not waste the very valuable time of the principals, particularly the Secretary of State. I think in this process, though, one can run into something that can be planned with the lowest common denominator.

Q: Was there the feeling that Kissinger was really in control?

WACKERBARTH: There was no question that Kissinger was in control. I guess the question was "Which Kissinger?" There was a public persona and a private one, and I think that we were part of the public persona in the sense of the ordinary staffing pattern on the schematic. I think that as things come out, it's clear that he operated a lot on the back channels.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: He used the code name NIACT Immediate Cherokee, which was the personal correspondence between him and special emissaries or people in the field. He used that considerably. As part of my orientation for the line, I did a week in the Operations Center, and saw, with no small frequency, special canisters with those messages. He was most definitely in charge, and I think the way one would see this was in his ability to tame the State Department bureaucracy.

Q: One looks at the bureaucracy of the State Department, and no matter how you slice it, it has upwards of over 150 countries to deal with, and the Secretary of State obviously can only concentrate on a couple of issues. Did you find that…there must have been a lot of life going on in the State Department other than the Secretary of State. I mean, decisions being made, things going out, etc.?

WACKERBARTH: Absolutely! Yes, I think from the perch that we had up in S/S-S, we only saw one part, and Kissinger very much wanted to influence personnel decisions where he could. I think in some instances, for example, senior staff were assigned a task of keeping issues on a back burner.

You're going to draw me into some observations I've made recently about the April 1974 OAS (Organization of American States) meeting, which took place in Washington and Atlanta. There were issues Kissinger really didn't want to address at that time, issues involving the Ford Motor Company's Argentina branch making sales to Cuba. In his inimitable style, he managed to let everybody get fussed over the Central America banana tax and basically let the discussion, the time, get used up discussing that issue so that they couldn't get to the more contentious matter on the agenda.

Q: Well, what was the deal? Wasn't it sort of the word of mouth that he didn't want to mess with General Motors?

WACKERBARTH: Well, I think the issue was basically just the complexity. I think he particularly just didn't want to get into a fight about expanding contacts with Cuba at that particular time. I mean, give the man a break! He was trying to achieve an orderly end to our involvement in Vietnam.

I think Kissinger especially wanted to emphasize the importance of Europe. In support of this, he declared 1973 "The Year of Europe," as he was trying to, among other things, follow through on arms reduction deals with the Soviets. He also was engaged in shuttle diplomacy, trying to maximize to our advantage the outcome of the Yom Kippur War, which had taken place the previous October.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: One of the more interesting projects I got involved in, from the S/S-S staff point of view, was that the Seven Sisters [heads of the major British, U.S., and French oil multinationals], or the seven major oil companies, most of whom were U.S. based, wanted to hold a strategic meeting with Kissinger. However, there were all sorts of antitrust implications about this, with all of the oil companies coming together to discuss common issues at one time. I remember finding fascinating the process of the staff work involved in getting all of this sorted out.

While I was assigned to the S/S-S I learned that I was to be included among the staff officers for Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Rush's delegation attending the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization Summit to be held in Wellington, New Zealand, in late February 1974. (Personal note: we had just purchased a house in Silver Spring, Maryland. Prior to the trip, our choice was to wait for occupancy upon my return.)

At the Summit, staff officers, of which I was one of several, were assigned to pick up communications and deliver them to the senior staff early in the morning, pick up outgoing messages in the evening, and pass them to the communicators for transmission.

This practice continued when after the Summit, the delegation engaged in an extensive good-will working tour of the South Pacific and Southeast Asia. This included Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea; and Canberra, Australia; followed by a weekend rest stop in Bali. The following week included working stopovers. It was Monday in Jakarta, Tuesday in Bangkok, Wednesday in Saigon, and Thursday and Friday in Manila. Our final stopover was Pearl Harbor, where Undersecretary Rush debriefed Admiral John McCain (father of Navy pilot Senator John McCain).

Q: Well, you were only there for about four months, so then what?

WACKERBARTH: Not long after getting back from the trip I was called into the Executive Secretariat Office to learn that I was being reassigned to ARA/CEN as Desk Officer for Honduras and El Salvador.

Then, I like to say, in the manner of a professional sports trade, I was traded to ARA/CEN for Larry Pezzulo, who was its deputy director, and an undisclosed future draft choice!

Larry and I were joking about this the other day. Robert McCloskey, who was Kissinger's Ambassador at Large, very much wanted Pezzulo as his senior staffer. The people in the American Republics Bureau said, "You can't do this to us. You're raiding us. You're taking our deputy director!" And so they worked out a trade, so to speak. I became the Honduras and El Salvador Desk Officer, a position I might well have aspired to for my third tour.

Q: How long did you have that position?

WACKERBARTH: Until July of 1976.

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Chapter 6 – El Salvador-Honduras Desk, April 1974 to July 1976

My tour began under President Richard Nixon, followed by Gerald R. Ford, August 9, 1974. Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State.

Q: You were Desk Officer for two countries that did not have diplomatic relations with one another. How did this work out as a practical operational matter?

WACKERBARTH: As Desk Officer my role was to assert the State Department's foreign policy interest in matters affecting our relations with Honduras and El Salvador, both individually and as related to each other.

As for policy matters, I don't recall many instances of them coming up. In the case of my two countries most of the policy initiatives took place, by preference, in the capital cities. I did try to relate to both on a personal level.

l would be fibbing if I said it was not without its challenges. I think the hardest part was operational. There were more than a few instances in which we were tasked with producing a separate document covering each of the five Central American countries. Inevitably, I was the last one to finish. Over time I simply had to accept that this just came with the territory in an otherwise good job and learned to just grin and bear it.

The countries were contrasting. Honduras was the poorest country on the Western Hemisphere mainland. I think only Haiti in the Western Hemisphere was poorer. At that time, it was a country of about three and a half million people in a territory the size of North Carolina. The country had many of the characteristics of West Virginia, in the sense that it was very mountainous; it was expensive to build roads, and the country

didn't have a lot of extra money for road building. Anyway, we had a significant USAID program. Those programs had received a new mandate to focus basically on just the poorest countries, which made Honduras important. The government initially was headed by an army officer, López Arellano, who seemed to move in and out; he'd taken power in a coup the previous year. Honduras produced coffee, bananas, textiles, and apparel.

El Salvador, in contrast, was a very densely populated country. During my time at the desk there were already about five million people in a rural-based country about the size of New Jersey; it was a country characterized by a very high work ethic. The expression one could hear in El Salvador was, "The last lazy Salvadoran died of starvation a hundred years ago!"

Q: Yes!

WACKERBARTH: In addition, El Salvador had very high productivity. For example, Texas Instruments had a plant in Taiwan, El Salvador, and Israel doing basically the same thing. Yet the one in more semi-developed El Salvador had the highest level of productivity.

I might add—I think a Salvadoran driving up the New Jersey Turnpike would wonder why they didn't plant corn on the median strip. "Why aren't you using this land?" Salvadoran agriculture is characterized by a lot of contour plowing. It's designed to absolutely get the most out of every bit of resource, whereas in Honduras, among other things, one tends to have the crops growing on the hillsides, and the cattle grazing on the land down below.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: On the other hand, Honduras was a very influential banana producer. Both United Brands, called Chiquita, and Standard Fruit, which trade under the Dole label, were very active there, and they were very important factors in the country's economy. In contrast, El Salvador took pride in saying, "We are not, repeat NOT, a Banana Republic." El Salvador was ruled by an "elected" president who essentially ruled jointly with an oligarchy of what they called the "14 families," who dominated industry, commerce, and land holdings.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: In 1974, we had to sort out a lot of issues; there was a lot going on. There were issues remaining from the 1969 Soccer War. We endeavored to encourage a definite peace agreement. The prevailing view is that the origin of the 1969 Honduran-El Salvador Soccer War was population density. In El Salvador those who were landless were running out of places to go. They tended to migrate over the border into Honduras, and with their work ethic, they were more productive than the Hondurans in the agricultural sector. This created certain resentments. At one point, the Hondurans tried to expel the illegal Salvadorans, and this further created tensions. They came to blows in August 1969 during playoffs for the upcoming 1970 World Cup; after one of the matches, a riot broke out, in which the host country fans were beating up on the Salvadorans. As a result, El Salvador militarily attacked Honduras. A consequence was that, among other

things, the Pan-American Highway was closed between Honduras and El Salvador, disrupting commerce. The Nicaraguans, specifically the Somoza family, bought some second-hand Staten Island ferries and ran the Staten Island ferries across the Gulf of Fonseca, where the three countries come together on the Pacific Ocean side. We clearly wanted to get the Pan-American Highway open. We'd hoped that the three countries could work better together. Earlier the three countries had been part of the five-country Central American Common Market, which had modicum of success. We were encouraging that, but it didn't happen during my tenure as Desk Officer. In addition to encouraging a peaceful settlement of this dispute (it's five years later) we also were trying to specifically deal with the military aspirations of both countries. The U.S. policy was one of evenhandedness. Both countries wanted to move out of the propeller-fighter aircraft age into the jet age. We wanted to do that in such a way that it would not upset the military balance.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: That is the history of one of the multi-faceted issues that I dealt with when I started.

Concerning Honduras, my tour of duty was dominated by two major events. One was Hurricane Fifi in September of 1974 when I was 5 months into the job, and then there was what they called "Bananagate," the first of a series of corporate bribe situations that broke out in the mid-'70s.

Q: Yes. Well, let's take the hurricane first. How were you involved?

WACKERBARTH: In September 1974 the major hurricane "Fifi" struck Honduras, causing massive damage and destruction. The Office of Central American Affairs (which included my desk) responded quickly. We addressed policy matters in our third-floor office suite and operational concerns in the USAID Disaster Relief Operation Center on the first floor. Working with USAID, it was all hands on deck, 24/7. Our main responsibility was to focus on coordinating the policy issues that would evolve over this.

Q: What was the Embassy response?

WACKERBARTH: I think our Embassy basically responded well. The ambassador was Phillip Sanchez, a political appointee with not a lot of experience in foreign affairs, but someone who loved people-to-people programs; if anything, it was more a matter of containing and channeling his enthusiasm and helpfulness.

Q: Oh!

WACKERBARTH: I specifically remember an instance in which we had an organization called the Foundation for Airborne Relief, and what they were seeking from the Federal Aviation Administration was a waiver of the requirement to have a standard Air-worthiness Certificate for their aircraft to fly in with help. This hit me hard, as I easily recall a year earlier Nicaraguan disaster when the beloved Roberto Clemente flew off on New Year's Eve from Puerto Rico in a shaky aircraft to assist in response to the disaster, leading to his death in a crash.

Q: He was a famous baseball player.

WACKERBARTH: Baseball player, Hall of Fame, Pittsburgh Pirate—once when in Pittsburgh I saw his statue outside the PNC Stadium.

Our office had to stand our ground to hold off various attempts to help, unfortunately not helpful at all. For example, The Foundation for Airborne Relief wanted to parachute paramedics to vaccinate against cholera even though there was no evidence that cholera existed there. We did not find useful disaster relief purpose in a number of instances. That organization was based in Orange County, California, and their congressman was Barry Goldwater, Junior; he went out to the Orange County Airport and held a press conference saying these government bureaucrats are trying to stifle individual initiative. That caused quite a flap and was detrimental to our efforts. That's one example of needed management.

Q: Yes, I was Consul General in Naples when we had a bad earthquake there, and we had all this second-hand clothing come from America and from Europe, and most of it ended up in sodden heaps on the side of the road, and then the television would come and say "These people are ungrateful," where actually by that time, Italy had a very fine clothing industry, and the kids were warm, and that wasn't a problem. But it harks back to World War II and the immediate situation where people would just donate/dump old clothes!

WACKERBARTH: Right, without understanding of logistics.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: Another issue we had was that donors would try to get the local National Guard to fly them down; for its part the National Guard liked to do this because it was good publicity—"National Guard Relief!" The problem was at that time the National Guard would bill the Agency for International Development for the flying time, which was quite expensive; money being scarce, the last thing in the world we wanted to do was give up scarce financial resources to fly supplies in. There was a lot of management that had to take place. If you clogged up the warehousing space near airfields with old clothes of dubious value, it made it harder to get relief supplies from organizations such as Church World Service, Catholic Relief, Red Cross, and others, who are very well organized to target the needs on the ground. We were basically trying to turn off these ad hoc efforts.

On another front, for several months, letters to congressmen about Hurricane relief were forwarded to ARA/CEN after our specific operational role ended. There may have been as many as 200. We developed a standard response describing the U.S. government's efforts with additional attention to specific questions. We thanked writers for their concern and outlined continuing ways to support the recovery. Responding to specific questions took a toll on the office at the cost of paying attention to other pressing matters. It was no small task. This was before auto-correct typewriters were available to ARA/CEN.

Q: Well then, what about the second one; what was Bananagate?

WACKERBARTH: Central Americans got hit hard by the oil crisis. They were looking for additional sources of revenue, and they came up with this idea of each country imposing a tax, which was not a good idea. Bananas are something households can live with or live without, and if the price gets too high, even by just a few cents, shoppers won't buy them.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: But also, this was a time when we were highly conscious of cartels because the Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries was just getting under way. The U.S. did not look kindly on a cartel at any time. Someone made a humorous remark about bananas and oil, and Treasury Secretary George P. Shultz sent a stiff message saying "This is not something to joke about! Cartels are not funny!"

Well, what happened in Honduras—to tell the story—l was driving home in early February of 1975 when I heard on the radio that Eli Black, the CEO of United Brands, had taken his briefcase to break the window on the upper floor of the then Pan American Building in New York City, and jumped out to his death. When I got home, I called the Country Director, David Lazar, and said, "I just heard that Eli Black committed suicide; I don't know what this means." In fact, we didn't know what it meant for a couple of months.

Well, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has a rule going back to the 1930s, after the 1929 Wall Street Crash, that anytime there is a suicide by the chief executive officer of a publicly traded corporation, there should be an audit. So, the SEC sent for an audit of United Brands books, which revealed that a one million dollar bribe had been paid to the Honduran Minister of Economy, basically to support withdrawal from the proposed banana tax agreement.

As I understand the story, Covington and Burlington was the attorney for United Brands. They came and asked that the findings of this audit be classified on national security grounds. Because it was foreign policy, (a national-security-grounds decision), the classification came to the State Department. The American Republic Affairs Assistant Secretary at that time, William D. Rogers, had been, among other things, an attorney with Arnold and Porter, a prestigious rival law firm. He took the issue up to Kissinger with the recommendation that while we would not divulge our knowledge of this finding, as it was not a matter of national security, it should not be classified.

All of this was done above the Desk level, so I did not learn that this was going on until several weeks after it happened. I was informed in early April of 1975. At that time, I got a call at home from Ken Bacon, a Wall Street Journal reporter, asking me to confirm certain facts. He asked me some questions about meetings with the State Department on this issue, to which I could say affirmatively that I knew nothing about the meetings in question. However, I now knew that he had the story. So again, I called my Country Director from home, and said, "I didn't divulge anything. but I know that they've got the story." Well, the story broke in April 1975 in the Wall Street Journal and caused the government of General López Arellano to fall. He had to resign. Technically, he had actually been installed by the Military Defense Council, a group of 25 or so officers in

Honduras, and so he resigned to them; they appointed one of their number, another general, Ramón Ernesto Cruz Uclés, as the President. This raised the whole issue of recognition. As we've seen from recent events, it's very tricky if we're too quick to recognize a government that has taken place when the circumstances are in fact extra constitutional.

Q: So then, did the change of government raise recognition issues?

WACKERBARTH: I remember working together with the legal advisors. We came up with an interesting solution—that is, since the Council of Ministers that installed López and removed him then installed his successor, we decided that the recognition issue therefore didn't come up as there was continuity in the procedure of filling the post.

Q: OK, let's move to El Salvador. Well, was there much migration from El Salvador at that time to the United States?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, there was a lot of pressure. The visa lines were long; there was a lot of pressure for migration in El Salvador, yet it was nothing like what it would become.

Q: What about opposition forces in El Salvador, because it wasn't too much later that you had an out-and-out civil war.

WACKERBARTH: Yes, right! I think to their credit, our Embassy people saw the storm brewing. There was a government party which supported a military president, and the question of fairness of elections was a rather serious one. I remember getting there on my orientation trip in the summer of '75; and meeting the Political Section Chief, Bill Walker, who would later become quite a figure in El Salvador as Ambassador.

Q: Whom I'm interviewing now!

WACKERBARTH: Walker told me a joke, and the joke gave me a signal that the military regime's legitimacy was in trouble. The opposition party was the Christian Democratic Party. I think they were earnest but were stifled by the control of the ARENA (National Republican Alliance) lead party. ARENA had military backing. One of the interesting features of this was that the military controlled the telecommunications system.

Q: Oh!

WACKERBARTH: Election results were transported over the telecommunications system, and the suggestion was that this was one of the mechanisms by which they assured that they had not only a majority, but enough of a majority to block legislation.

Q: Was there guerilla activity?

WACKERBARTH: I can't say there wasn't activity, but it was not at this time a major force. It was the opposition.

We knew that change was inevitable, that there was a gathering storm. We wanted to see if change couldn't take place with an orderly transfer of power. That was our objective.

I might point out that El Salvador had had a very violent putdown of an uprising in the 1930s which was on everybody's mind. I think the oligarchy—"the 14 families"—felt that their interests were threatened. Their response was to absolutely hang on as long as they could. They felt that giving an inch might open things up in such a way that they would not be able to control events. So, there was a very serious social time bomb in El Salvador.

Q: Well now, what was happening in Nicaragua at this time?

WACKERBARTH: Nicaragua was still under the Somozas.

Q: But the Sandinistas did not develop a real overt movement at that point…

WACKERBARTH: That's right. In December of 1974, I believe it was, that began to change. The venerable Nicaraguan Ambassador to Washington, Sevilla Sacasa, who'd been here forever and therefore was the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, was kidnapped, and that was one of the ways in which the fact that there was unrest came to the surface.

Q: Well, in this '74 to '75 period, was there any thought that this area might become a world cockpit of any great interest to the United States and all that?

WACKERBARTH: I think, again, that our analysis was this was a gathering storm. We needed to find a way to allow legitimacy to take place, or someone else might take control of events. It was awfully hard, given the distractions among the senior policymakers at State, to get them to pay much attention. Kissinger did travel to Central America in April of 1976.

I actually had a little fun with the memorandum for Kissinger. We each had to write a briefing paper for the five Central American countries, because he was going to meet the five Central American presidents (I think it was in San Jose). Even though they were written by four different people, they all came around looking basically like the same paper, and I sort of jokingly said, "You know, the paper I would really like to draw on is O. Henry's *Cabbages and Kings*.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: And so I said… "I'll give it a try." I wrote a briefing paper in which I described how Bananagate had paralleled the plot of O. Henry's *Cabbages and Kings,* and pretty closely. I used some colorful language. I described a lascivious swashbuckling dictator who ran the country in cahoots with the Vesuvius Fruit Company. Well, I remember when the briefing paper got passed up, up the line everybody loved it, because—you were talking before about the blandization of—this was anything but bland! I don't think Kissinger ever actually read it because I think if he had, it would have come back with a marginal comment, "This is great!"

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: It was fun to use O. Henry's *Cabbages and Kings*, as O. Henry himself had spent some time at Tegucigalpa.

Q: Oh, yes!

WACKERBARTH: He had passed some bad paper in New York and wanted to go to the nearest country that didn't have an extradition treaty with the United States. It would be the first of two times that I would draw on O. Henry.

Q: Cabbages and Kings—*it's a great story if you want to know what life was like at the turn of the century.*

WACKERBARTH: And the irony was that 75 years later it hadn't changed!

Q: It hadn't changed that much!

WACKERBARTH: And the irony was that O. Henry's plot got carried out as historical reality in 1975!

Q: Yes! You left there in '76. By the way, did you get any feel, or around you in ARA, about Kissinger's famous 1974 Chiefs-of-Mission meeting in Mexico City?

WACKERBARTH: Right.

Q: Kissinger was astounded at the lack of interest or knowledge by our Chiefs of Mission in Latin America about European Affairs. As a result, he started the Global Outlook Program, called GLOP.

WACKERBARTH: GLOP, yes. Well, that was very much on people's minds. What I was later to learn, when I was in Personnel, was that there was a lot of interest among the people who served in Latin America in becoming more global in their outlook.

The task of Kubisch, Kissinger's Assistant Secretary, was to keep things on the back burner. From Kissinger's point of view, I think he was so focused on Europe, and the world, and during this time when we were disengaging from Vietnam and Southeast Asia that he just couldn't understand how focused these people were on hemispheric issues alone. He then replaced Jack Kubisch with William D. Rogers, who remains to this day very close to Kissinger.

Q: I want to say you talked about Kissinger's lack of interest in Latin America. I remember at about this time, '75-'76, I was with the Board of Examiners, and we were able to make up questions in those days, and one of the questions I loved to give to young applicants of the Foreign Service was saying that "A well-known American statesman (i.e. Henry Kissinger) was quoted as saying, 'Latin America is a dagger pointed at the heart of Antarctica.' Would you comment on this?" And of course, a lot didn't see the humor, or you know, the—well, maybe it was an unfair question to ask but I think the quote does reflect how Henry Kissinger felt, and many of us in the Foreign Service too, frankly.

WACKERBARTH: Well, you made a comment before that the State Department has bilateral relations with, I think, like 160 or more countries. Of course, we love bilateral relations, but the fact of the matter is that for someone trying to manage the foreign relations of the United States, foreign policy can't be just the sum of bilateral relations of

160 countries. There must be themes. And I think what Kissinger was hoping for in that famous February ’74 trip to Mexico was that he would be meeting people who could see how Latin America fit into the global picture, and they got bogged down on what he felt were provincial issues.

Q: Yes. Well then, in ’76 you moved on?

WACKERBARTH: Well, yes, I did. I moved to the Economics Course.

Addendum—other items of interest:

Another “assignment” while I was serving on the Honduras-El Salvador Desk came when a minority candidate for the Foreign Service, Patrick Quincy, a Native American, was assigned to my supervision. Patrick was selected as a participant in the Department’s outreach to minority candidates as the first Native American candidate. He had lived and was educated at the college level on a reservation in Montana. Unfortunately, precious time was squandered in carrying out the administrative requirements to get him on board. Together we worked very hard to raise his skill level. Sadly, there was too little time and too large a gap for a person of potential.

Among other parts of my initiative early in his tenure, I arranged for him to join me in accompanying the U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador’s consultation with a senior National Security Council officer. This was a courtesy call. The Ambassador had arranged a limousine to take us there. Afterwards, Patrick noted that he was overwhelmed. At another subsequent event, he was an invitee to the El Salvador National Day reception. Patrick, interestingly, confidently engaged in meaningful conversations with African diplomats present. After his evaluation, through a third party, I got feedback from a member of the Board of Examiners’ team. Specifically, it was noted that someone had clearly worked very hard with this candidate, but even that wasn’t sufficient to meet standards at this time.

As a Desk Officer for El Salvador, I was asked to attend meetings in other bureaus, asserting our Office’s interest in broader foreign policy issues. In one notable instance in 1974, the first year of the Multifiber Arrangement (MFA), an international trade agreement on textiles and clothing was in effect. Essentially it assigned quotas in certain product categories. I attended meetings and negotiations. At that time, the Economic Bureau was strongly in favor of such arrangements. The first bilateral multifiber agreement was negotiated with Nicaragua without contest. By all accounts, it was a slam dunk for Nicaragua. It seemed the result with El Salvador was about the same until the apparel industry learned of the results. There, issues became contentious. After a series of meetings, it was concluded that the agreement was not in the best interest of El Salvador. It previously had seemed like a good idea.

In 1976 the position of Executive Director of the World Food Program was open. El Salvador had a strong candidate. I was tasked with asserting ARA’s case. ARA urged the International Organizations Bureau to support this candidate. It would put El Salvador in the international sphere, a small country to play a role on the world stage. This was an

opportunity to be supportive to El Salvador with a positive gesture. I was very disappointed that in the end, the State Department supported another candidate.

Another letter-writing occasion that was "just part of the job" came up in late February or March 1976. We received a series of letters from Congressman Ed Koch (NY-D) inquiring about the State Department's concern of threats to democracy, including human rights in Central America. ARA/CEN worked hard to provide a balanced response to these letters, including our willingness to take up concern with members of Congress. The letters on balance portrayed, if my memory serves, news of threats to democracy from both the left and the right. They included our efforts of appropriate initiatives for the strengthening of democracy and human rights.

In February 1976, while in Washington to attend the National Day of Prayer, the Chief Justice of the El Salvador Supreme Court expressed interest in visiting the U.S. Supreme Court. I was able, on short notice, working with the Protocol Office, to arrange a visit. It was my honor to accompany the Chief Justice of El Salvador to the United States Supreme Court. By coincidence, a decision was being read that day. After the decision was read, Chief Justice Warren Burger graciously invited his Salvadoran colleague to his chambers for coffee.

As well as Desk responsibilities, I worked on keeping up relationships locally. There were National Day parties to attend hosted by the embassies. There were other ways to open conversations and relationships. I had two country ambassadors to relate to: the Honduran Ambassador and the Salvadoran Ambassador. Lunches would occur at the State Department's 7th Floor Executive Dining Room with visiting officials. One example of additional instances—in the case of the El Salvadoran Ambassador Francisco Bertrand Galindo, Cindy and I put on a dinner party at our 1957 split-level brick home in a middle-class Silver Spring, Maryland, neighborhood, when the latter was in Washington on consultations. Also included was the Salvadoran Embassy DCM, also the new U.S Embassy El Salvador Political Counselor, Bill Walker, who served as US Ambassador there a decade later.

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Chapter 7 – Economics Course, German Language Training, and United States Marketing Center in Cologne, West Germany, during the Administrations of Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter; Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger, Cyrus Vance; Ambassador William Stoessel

WACKERBARTH: I moved into the Foreign Service Economics Course, the famous 26 weeks econ course.

Q: Oh, yes. How did you find it? You took it, that's what? Six, eight months or something.

WACKERBARTH: Yes, 26 weeks, right.

Q: How did you find it?

WACKERBARTH: The Foreign Service Economics Course was created in the mid-1960s out of the perception that the Foreign Service needed a cohort as literate on economic concepts and trends as the political officers were on its staff concepts and trends. It consisted of a series of academic courses taught by qualified faculty from local colleges and universities that would constitute a strong undergraduate major. Toward the end of the course participants took the Economics GRE. Test scores from the GRE were said to be confidential, yet it soon became evident there was a lot of leakage. I did well enough to function in assignments as Chief Economics Officer at three embassies and the Mexico Desk over my remaining years in the Foreign Service.

Among other things, the course included a trip to New York City for a series of meetings with potential users, such as bankers, private sector business leaders, and economic analysts, to gain their perspectives.

Well, I often say the opportunities the Foreign Service has given me for personal growth are unprecedented in any other sector of society, with the possible exception of the military, where one also has an opportunity to grow. Essentially, I got a strong major in economics, and a really thorough grounding in six months of very, very hard work.

Q: Yes. How did you do? I'm told that it's the math side that usually knocks most of our guys down.

WACKERBARTH: Yes, I struggled with math. Interesting thing though is that with each math course I got a better grade,

Q: Yes

WACKERBARTH: So, I believe I astounded my professor and myself by getting an A in Econometrics!

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: But I struggled with it at first. My tendency with things academic often is to struggle for a while, and then I get it, and then I do very well. And that was my experience with the course.

Q: So this put you out and about what, at the end of '76? Was this when you were—

WACKERBARTH: At the end of '76, beginning of '77, it was a tough time to find a job in the Foreign Service, when most of the positions rotate in the summertime.

Q: Yes. So what happened?

WACKERBARTH: Well, after going around, knocking on doors, I wound up taking an assignment to the United States International Marketing Center in Cologne, West Germany. It wasn't precisely the U.S. Trade Center, but it was a new institution which was attached to the embassy in Bonn. It replaced the former Trade Center in Frankfurt.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: This was a new concept in trade promotion. I was a little bit of an odd man out in this operation, but I was willing to give it the college try. So I studied German the first 20 weeks or so in 1977 and went off to live in Bonn and work in Cologne.

Q: So you were working in Cologne from '77 to when?

WACKERBARTH: Till September 1979.

Q: How did this work? I mean because later this would have been very much in the province of the Department of Commerce.

WACKERBARTH: Let's address that later.

I think I was the only pure State Department person on the Trade Center side. We shared offices with the Commercial attaché and the Deputy Commercial attaché, who were State Department officers.

Q: What sort of work were you doing?

WACKERBARTH: My title was trade promotion officer. Essentially, I was the support staff for U.S. presence at U.S. pavilions in German trade fairs. One has to understand the role of the trade fair in Germany is markedly different than in the United States; here you hire a hall, put up some cardboard, and have somebody in a booth. In Germany trade fairs are very elaborate productions. They're like the World Cup or World Series in different product categories, and you're not only targeting the German audience. People will come literally from every corner of the globe to go to the German trade fairs because—

Q: Just like the book fair in Frankfurt.

WACKERBARTH: Right.

Q: Because I mean this is "the" world book fair.

WACKERBARTH: This is where it all comes together, and we would pick certain target product categories, for example in the American Hardware Manufacturers Association Pavilion, and provide staff services to the U.S. exhibitors.

For established U.S. firms, the Department of Commerce assessed a fee, about $2,000. There was a discount for "new to market" firms. For the purpose of citing an example, I would choose Steve Jobs, who had launched Apple Computer a few years previous. The Trade Fair offered him visibility in Europe. Yet more importantly it provided him a space where he could interview local candidates who might represent his products in their markets.

I remembered him as a somewhat brash, confident young man dressed American casual, in contrast to the Germans wearing well-tailored business suits.

Q: How did you find the support from the embassy?

WACKERBARTH: We had a good relationship with the embassy. We were off campus, based in Cologne. However, the U.S. Department of Commerce had a stationary trade center in Frankfurt in which they invited people to come there. But by 1976-'77, it was clear that the German trade fairs were where trade promotion took place.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: In many respects, we were on our own, which has its pluses and minuses. I learned the art of working with the Embassy's Foreign Service nationals in administrative positions. One of my colleagues at the Trade Center had been a Foreign Service national working for USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture) at the embassy in Madrid, who then immigrated to the United States working in the agricultural private sector for a while, then took this job with Commerce. He coached me in how one gets things done in a large operation like Embassy Bonn. This is basically like a lot of things in the Foreign Service; it's building personal relationships. One finds, if you can build relationships, it's a lot easier to get support.

I think that Americans operating in Europe need to have this sense of the importance of long-term relationships, that price is not the only consideration. We're used to a market in which price can make quite a difference. Everybody knows that there's pressure to buy a certain product at the lowest possible price. I think that there's more focus on relationships in Europe. I think among the countries of Europe there's more of a tendency to stifle competition in subtle ways, such as cartelization, or saying that the market belongs to the established players.

Q: Yes–did you find yourself—how did you find running American sales techniques as opposed to say German buying or sales techniques? How do they mesh or not mesh?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, it's a good question. I think you'd almost start with the concept of the product. At that time, particularly in the technological areas, we were focused on the technology, whereas the Germans might be more focused on the hardware.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: I remember a conversation with one of my German contractors. He was saying that from his vantage point one of the great things the United States had was this concept of venture capital—the idea that if you had an idea you could go out and find people who were willing to buy stock in your idea and take a chance, whereas in Germany you would have to go to one of the three big German banks and work your way through the bureaucracy, and sell them on the idea of financing it, making it much harder for a new player to break into the market.

Q: Did you run across restrictions? I'm thinking of Comcon (Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls), and other things about having products, American or German products, ending up in Soviet hands. Was this something that you encountered?

WACKERBARTH: This was not really a big issue. I remember for our sporting goods show we had a motorized hang glider, and I remember the commercial counselor at that

time saying, “If we could only sell it, there would be a lot of interest in this product in East Berlin!”

Q: [Laughter]

WACKERBARTH: That’s the best answer I can give you to that question.

Q: [Laughter] At these trade fairs, were there Soviet products shown at all?

WACKERBARTH: Not a lot because they weren’t terribly competitive. The Multi-Category Leipzig Fair might have been a better venue.

Q: Yes, yes. Did you feel at the time doing this—did you feel that maybe the State Department should let go of the commercial side and turn it over to Commerce, or not?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, well, like it or not, that’s what happened. It was clear that the State Department was neglecting the commercial side. On the other hand, the International Marketing Center had its own stationery and its own logo that we developed; we tended to put in very small print that we were linked to the Embassy. We wanted to function as an entity of our own. Drawing visitors out, we would do some market research, “Okay, why did you come to our booth?” They’d say, “Well, I was invited by an officer of the Embassy of the United States,” which made the argument for keeping it closer to the Embassy.

Yes, I would describe State Department's attitude towards trade promotion as one of neglect.

In fact, just as we were leaving Bonn and Cologne in '79, the move to create the Foreign Commercial Service became reality. In fact, a number of my colleagues were Department of Commerce personnel who had been detailed to the Department of State to run the Marketing Center in Cologne.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: For my part, I felt a little bit isolated in this particular position.

Q: In 1979, how did you get—I assume you went back into the Foreign Service line.

WACKERBARTH: I saw in the spring that they were looking for someone to be the Economic Section Chief in Tegucigalpa. This was at the same time that the news was coming that they were going to break away the commercial function and form a Foreign Commercial Service, and I saw it as in my interest, if I was going to stay with the State Department side, to get myself in a good established State Department position. I knew Honduras, having been the Honduras and El Salvador Desk Officer, and I felt this was an opportunity to do what I really wanted to do and to give my career a boost at the same time.

Right. Well, I volunteered to be the Economic Section Chief in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: I could have stayed for another two-year tour in Germany. I liked living in Bonn. I liked going to Munich, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, and Essen for single-category trade shows, but I realized that I was treading water professionally.

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Chapter 8 –Tegucigalpa, Honduras–Economic Counselor, 1979 to 1983

President Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan; Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Edmund Muskie, Alexander Haig, George Shultz; Addendum by Cindy Wackerbarth

WACKERBARTH: I arrived in Tegucigalpa October 12, 1979. I served under Ambassador Mari-Luci Jaramillo, appointed by President Carter; Ambassador Jack Binns, also appointed by President Carter; and Ambassador John Negroponte, appointed by President Reagan. I was there until July of 1983, so it was just short of a four-year tour of duty.

Q: Yes. What was the situation in Honduras when you got there?

WACKERBARTH: There was a lot of tension about things not directly Honduran. The Somoza government in Nicaragua had fallen to the Sandinistas in July of 1979, and the situation in El Salvador seemed precarious, characterized by a lot of tension. My initial impression was that while things in Honduras seemed to be okay, regimes which seemed well entrenched quite suddenly were fragile.

An interesting offshoot of these tensions was that people from Nicaragua literally got in their cars and drove across the border to Tegucigalpa and started renting houses. As a consequence, housing was scarce; we found ourselves out of pocket for our housing.

One of my first tasks was to host an Overseas Private Investment Corporation trade mission. An article had recently come out in *Newsweek* about tensions in Central America; the number of people participating in the mission dropped dramatically. We had to make a decision whether to keep the event going or call it to a halt. We kept it going, but it was clear that it was a hard sell.

Q: Who was our ambassador when you got there?

WACKERBARTH: When I got there, it was Mari-Luci Jaramillo. She was a political appointee, the first Hispanic woman to serve as an ambassador to a Latin American country.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: Ambassador Jaramillo was a very gracious lady. She ran the embassy like a computer company research facility over which she presided while encouraging creativity.

Her background was that she was an educator from New Mexico. She had an interesting relationship with the Honduran president, Policarpo Paz Garcia. He was a military general who had come up through the ranks and had been installed by the Security

Defense Council, which functioned as the Head of State. He only had a sixth-grade education, as had his predecessor. Ambassador Jaramillo was brought up in New Mexico, in a middle-class family; her Spanish reflected this. The President identified with her as also a person who came up through the ranks. As a consequence, they had a wonderful personal relationship. Ambassador Jaramillo accompanied him to his meeting in Washington with President Carter.

Q: What were the economic issues that you were dealing with particularly?

WACKERBARTH: Initially, it was just simply coping with the circumstances. The price of coffee went up in the ’70s, and Honduras had done well there. The price of bananas was holding its own. Honduras had some silver, which in 1979-1980 experienced an artificial high run. So they were trying to basically maximize development, while they had to come to grips with the fact that this prosperity was delicate. They were faced with the second oil shocks later in 1979, and this gave the economy quite a jolt. Overall they were faced with decreasing foreign investment because of the unrest in Central America.

Q: At this time, late 1979, how would you describe the situation with the two fruit companies, United Brands and Standard Fruit?

WACKERBARTH: In a previous chapter I described how a million-dollar bribe to rescind a tax led to a change in government. In my conversations with company officers I perceived a desire to get back to normal business relations. In this connection I might say that to a certain extent they historically have gotten a bad rap.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: I worked with both banana companies over the years. The fact of the matter is they were responsible for a lot of infrastructure development that otherwise wouldn’t be there. One of my friends, an Italian-American-Honduran banker, said, “What this country really needs is a third fruit company!”

One of their main companies had been in Honduras for about a hundred years. They built housing and schools which the workers’ children were allowed to attend; they had a certain amount of health care. They developed things like a bank, for example, so that they could handle their payments, which over time became independent. They developed a brewery, because after all, it's hot there. Additionally, they developed some ancillary industries.

The banana companies were probably too big in the country to be healthy, and we had the instance in 1974 of an attempt to bribe the Minister of Economy with a million dollar bribe. I did have to deal with a tax issue, in which they were playing hardball, and we had to be an intermediary to get both sides to be realistic. The fruit companies were basically in transition during my time, trying to get out from owning so much of the land themselves and more towards setting up people who may have worked for them as independent producers, who would own their own land. The independent producer would own their own operation, and sell their produce to the companies under contract, meeting strict specifications. The companies could always threaten to reduce their presence, and the government would have to listen. This was not always a comfortable situation.

Also interestingly one found key people in the government who'd grown up in the fruit company. For example, the president of the Central Bank was someone who was of lower-middle-class background. He'd gone to the fruit company school, had gotten a scholarship through the Latin American Scholarship Program of American Universities (which was funded through U.S. foreign assistance), and he earned a master's degree from Vanderbilt University. He worked his way up through the Central Bank bureaucracy and became its President. So one could grow up in the fruit company environment and become socially mobile.

Q: Yes. What about unions?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, this was fascinating in Honduras, because the banana workers were unionized, and everybody basically accepted this. In the 1950s there was a banana workers' strike—a strike by the workers for unionization and a wage-benefits package. The difference between this strike and what would usually happen in a place where a company like United Brands held the economic power was that the merchant class, which mostly had its origins in Palestine and Lebanon, gave credit to the strikers, allowing the strikers to hang on. This Christian-Palestinian-Lebanese contingent dominated the commerce of San Pedro Sula, the commercial center and second largest city. It was never forgotten by the banana workers, to whom credit was extended until the strike was won. To the banana producers, the Honduran workers were like members of the UAW. This may have been a factor as to why the fruit companies liked the idea of independent producers. The companies respected the unions, which wielded a lot of influence.

Q: Did you have a labor officer in the Embassy?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, we did. When I got there, the second officer in the political section was a labor officer. He would do some political work as well.

Q: Were we seeing any reflection in the labor movement, or elsewhere, of Cuban influence?

WACKERBARTH: There was not so much Cuban influence in Honduras. Throughout my time we were touting the Honduran example of the benefits of having a strong, free trade union movement in the country as an antidote to Communist influence. Honduras was our champion. I know that Peter Grace of Grace Company would make this point with people in business, small business councils such as the Business Round Table. I think he served on the board of the American Institute for Free Labor and Development, which was our instrument in supporting free trade.

Q: How did you find your counterparts in the Honduran government, your points of contact?

WACKERBARTH: It's interesting because you'd have good people to work with, but they would move in and out of the government. Also they had very little staff support. I must say two of the most eerie experiences I've had in the Foreign Service were when the Minister of Finance calls me up and says, "What do I do now?" It's a hell of a responsibility to take a call like that! [Laughter]

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: But even more eerie was when the advisor to the Honduran president asked my advice in writing the talking points for his President in talking to my President, Ronald Reagan. l felt understandably uncomfortable about this.

Q: You were there until '83, and by this time our hostility, or the mutual hostility, between Nicaragua and the United States was in full bloom.

WACKERBARTH: Right.

Q: How did that reflect, from your perspective, in Honduras?

WACKERBARTH: I was the Economic Counselor, and in many respects I was in my own foxhole. Although I didn't have a lot of insights into specifics, one could feel tension growing. On the Fourth of July 1982, guerillas blew up the power plant, and the power was knocked out in Tegucigalpa. That was clearly overt. There would be firefights. My friend, the Italian-American-Honduran banker, was kidnapped on December 18, 1980; I certainly remember that day with icy clarity. We would have threats on U.S. personnel; U.S. personnel were fired upon. I think we had more injuries due to friendly fire than hostile fire on the Embassy part, just because there were a lot of people with guns, and when you get a lot of people with guns, accidents take place.

There was a lot of tension in the Political Section, which grew at that particular time, less so in the Economic Section. Our two-person Econ Section worked very closely with our counterparts in the Agency for International Development, which had a huge presence.

Q: Did the operation of CIA and [Oliver] North…, was that apparent while you were there?

WACKERBARTH: The fact is that there was a big presence. It was clear that something was going on. Oliver North would not emerge until later. During that time, I think he was still just carrying the "football" (code instrument) over at the NSC (National Security Council).

Q: Who came in as ambassador when Reagan came in?

WACKERBARTH: Mari-Luci Jaramillo left in the summer of 1980 to become Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs in the State Department. Jack Binns came in as Ambassador. He got there in October of 1980, and was there for about a year. Between the departure of Ambassador Jaramillo and arrival of Ambassador Binns, events were making it necessary to run the Embassy as a tighter ship. Ambassador Binns rose to the occasion. As primary Econ Officer, we had a positive relationship. In particular, I encouraged him to accept an invitation from the Society for Commerce and Industry, essentially the leading private sector organization of San Pedro Sula. In that connection I wrote his speech. I received helpful assistance in that regard from USIA Director Cresencio Arcos. Ambassador Binns' speech was well received and was printed in the national press.

During Ambassador Binns' tenure, there was an ongoing dispute between the Honduran government and Texaco over the price charged for oil and gas. Texaco notably played hard ball. I worked closely with the local Texaco representative on this.

When Reagan came in, he appointed John D. Negroponte as the Ambassador. So I was there for just about four years, working for three different ambassadors with three different styles of operation. Elections were held shortly after Ambassador Negroponte arrived, November 29, 1981. Despite local and international rumors that the election might be characterized by disruption, when Election Day arrived they came off admirably. International observers including Senator Jesse Helms (R, NC) confirmed the quality of the election. To confirm that voters had voted and only one time, proof was offered by a finger dipped in an inkwell.

Q: How did Negroponte work, operate; what was his operating style?

WACKERBARTH: Ah, he was clearly a bigger player than Honduras had ever seen as a U.S. ambassador. He and I hit it off very well early on, and when I was sending in my onward assignments for reassignment in the 1982 cycle, he persuaded me to extend. I took him up on that. Essentially he was hiring me to operate the Economic Section foxhole and to operate it well. I think it's quite fair to say that he was promoting economic development, and saw me as someone who worked very well with the AID mission, but someone who had a sense of Honduras' economic situation and circumstances. Ambassador Negroponte was someone who had served in Vietnam at the time of our withdrawal in 1975. He was determined that this not be repeated in Central America. I think Tom Enders, who'd come in as Reagan's Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, very much wanted Negroponte in the job.

Q: Yes. Well, did you have the feeling that you'd been dealing with Central America, and all of a sudden Central America was moving up in interest as far as the apparatus in Washington was concerned?

WACKERBARTH: Oh, yes, there's no question it was high profile, and for that reason it was energizing to be on the front lines. I felt challenged by the opportunity. One of the reasons I liked working with Negroponte was that he gave me a lot of latitude. I liked the idea that my cables became frames of reference for discussion in Washington.

Q: How about staffing?

WACKERBARTH: We were attracting better people. Central America historically had a hard time attracting good people. This was one of the reasons—

Q: One looked up Cabbages and Kings and the consular officers who were sent down there. [Laughter]

WACKERBARTH: Right, but in 1979, I saw myself as having fallen behind my class. The opportunity for me to get a stretch assignment as the head of an Economic Section in Tegucigalpa was a big boost. Under today's grading system I went into the job as an FS-3 to an FS-2 job. It was upgraded to an FS-1 job while I was there, and I was in fact replaced by an FS-1; l was promoted with a big boost towards my next promotion by

being there. One counterpart, as political counselor, went on to be ambassador to Vietnam; and so we were getting higher level officers to serve in Central America at that time. There were officers who would move ahead in the broader Foreign Service. Despite multiple tensions, it was a good place to live and work.

As part of the U.S. response to the increasing area tensions in the late ’70s, we put bright talented personnel as ambassadors in Nicaragua, El Salvador particularly, as well as Honduras. They became identified, probably unfairly, with the Carter Administration policy. I’m thinking of Larry Pezzulo in Nicaragua and Bob White in El Salvador. I think the idea of putting Binns into Honduras fit in this category, although Mari-Luci Jaramillo had been very effective. I think probably our colleagues in Nicaragua hoped that somehow or other we could cajole the Sandinistas to stay in line. We may have hung on too long in that respect. With the Reagan administration we put big time players in these embassies, experienced ambassadors such as Deane Hinton and Tom Pickering in El Salvador, among others, in the 1980s; Fred Chapin, Ambassador to Guatemala, went in immediately when the Reagan administration came in. Tony Quainton went to Nicaragua. So we had experienced people who were used to dealing with tough situations.

Negroponte into Honduras—I think the traffic was good, back and forth. I can’t really think of major coordination issues. Certainly, we found in both Honduras and El Salvador that free elections actually worked towards our advantage in the sense of getting legitimacy for the regimes that were trying to hold the line against the insurgency.

Q: Did Belize play any part? I mean did Honduras ignore Belize?

WACKERBARTH: Belize was not a big issue at this time. One of the interesting things is that Belize in many respects is somewhat of an economic sub entity of Honduras in the sense that the major Honduran bank was the major bank in Belize. One of the things we financed through the Overseas Private Investment Corporation was to have the Mack Truck representative and the Caterpillar representative open up subsidiaries in Belize, with U.S. support and financing.

Q: While you were there, did you get any major visits—presidents, vice presidents, secretaries of state?

WACKERBARTH: Well, yes, President Reagan visited in December 1982. He visited San Pedro Sula. Because the 707 Air Force One couldn’t land on the landing strip in Tegucigalpa, we didn’t have the presidential visit there.

Ambassador Vernon Walters came to town as a special emissary. I remember I was asked to host a luncheon for the private sector, which I was happy to do. I remember that morning, I learned that a workman had showed up outside my house to work on the electric pole outside; the housekeeper called me to say, “This guy’s here; and I didn’t know why he suddenly showed up.” I wasn’t going to take a chance, so I remember going to the administrative officer and saying, “Let’s call the electric company, and get this guy to work somewhere else that particular day.”

Also, we had a number of congressional delegations who would come through; some were critical and others were supportive of our policies in Central America. They were always quite interesting.

Q: Did you feel that you were getting the residue of those who protested the Vietnam War?

WACKERBARTH: I remember this question being fixed in my mind. I wondered if the political education of the critics ended in 1975? Did they feel that 1975 was good because the U.S. stopped participation in Vietnam, without reflection as to what happened in Vietnam after 1975? Central America is a lot closer. Central America is within a couple of hours flight of the United States, and I think that this point was lost on a lot of people. That's why I say that their political education may have ended in 1975.

Q: Because we're in 1983—

WACKERBARTH: Right.

Q: Did you see a possible change in Honduras towards a democratic form of government, or was this kind of almost—

WACKERBARTH: Well, Honduras actually made the transition to democratic government during the time I was there.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: Elections were scheduled first for the parliament in 1980, and then for the presidency in 1981, and they were held on schedule. I was an election observer in 1981, one of the more interesting things, or I was, shall I say, an escort to a number of U.S. congressmen who served as observers in 1981. So we actually went around to the polling places with credentials, which we could use to drop in unannounced and observe their making decisions on the process. One of the congressional observers said he couldn't imagine his own constituents managing, judging, as well as these Hondurans were—a point that came back to me as I saw how we tried to sort out the Year 2000 Election in Florida.

Roberto Suazo Cordova was elected in a competitive election in the fall of 1981. One of the more interesting things was that during the election campaign, the suggestion had been floated that the Embassy might brief the candidates on U.S. assistance programs. Well, this got delayed, and suddenly, very, very late, very close to the election, this briefing was going to take place for the liberal party candidate. I remember asserting that it was just too late and too close to the election for us to brief one candidate. If we'd done it several months earlier, it could have been a mutual thing, but it put us in the position of being too closely identified with one of the parties with our assistance programs.

I think the worst trouble I ever got into in the Foreign Service happened to me twice in Honduras, and that was the enthusiasm of my Honduran counterparts. In the first instance, I was a narcotics coordinator, among other things. It was pretty tough to be both, as the economic section chief as the profile was rising, and to be the narcotics

coordinator, because it consumed a lot of time. The visiting DEA people were in town, and we went over to talk to the military officer who was in charge of the Honduran narcotics program. He wanted to show off, so he parades us before the President. I tried to hold this off, because ambassadors are very jealous of their prerogative of anybody in the Embassy meeting with the President. Anyway, I wound up being drawn into a meeting with the President, and then having to go back to the Embassy and confess that this had happened. Ambassador Binns was not amused, but I think he did understand the circumstances.

Well, darned if this didn't happen again with the narcotics assistance people and the new President Suazo Cordova early in his administration. I had to make this mea culpa again, this time to Ambassador Negroponte, who was furious, but I think he did come around to recognize that this was all in the nature of the way things are done in Honduras and the way they happened in this instance.

Yes, it was quite a tour of duty.

Q: Well, we'll stop at this point, but put where you're going. We're now at 1983. Where did you go?

WACKERBARTH: I went to be the economic officer on the Mexico Desk in the State Department.

Q: Okay. Good.

WACKERBARTH: And I always said that when people say, "Well, how do you feel about this?" I say, "Well, I'm adding three to six more digits to the size of the economy I'm dealing with, and hopefully not a commensurate increase in my problems!"

Honduras Addendum By Cindy Wackerbarth

Tegucigalpa had a group of fun-loving officers at the time we were assigned there. Sometimes the "sleepy" posts are the most fun.

There were trips to the beach at Tela where the banana company had formerly owned guest houses which were large enough for two families. It was a lazy, relaxing place of respite. The palm trees lining the beach made for a pleasant shady scenic location. Local young people climbed the palm trees for the coconuts which were then used for drinks. Fish restaurants in grass-roofed huts made for outstanding food. Ethnic Garifuna women who lived nearby came along the beach selling coconut bread. We took the family hammock to tie among the trees. Returning to the city we would pass four mountain ranges. At one elevation there were pineapples growing abundantly and fresh pineapples for sale from vendors along the road. At another elevation there was coffee, and at another bananas. We would pass Lago Yojoa, an internationally famous bass fishing lake where we could get a fish meal, lakeside. Of course, there were cows, chickens, and children in the road from time to time; a highway it was not.

Nearby Tegucigalpa there were a few quaint traditional villages.

There wasn't a lot of employment for non-employees, so dependents volunteered at orphanages, participated in the American Women's Club, and pursued hobbies. There were two homes for children where individuals volunteered. One was in Valle de Angeles run by an English missionary couple. The other was El Hogar de Amor y Esperanza, a very well-run home for street boys started by a USAID couple associated with the Episcopal Church. It functions today with many additions such as a farm, technical school, and schooling for the boarding students and neighborhood children. The students are being trained for local leadership with the latest technology, and it now has a Honduran director. It is supported by donors in Canada and the U.S.

The women of the International Church assembled a bi-lingual cookbook called Exquisito. The type was hand placed, so a member went daily to check the English type. The proceeds benefited various needy organizations.

Peace Corps was represented. A group from the International Church went to a Peace Corps Volunteers village for the inauguration of an "Estufa Loraine," a stove that used a smaller amount of wood. Carrot greens were introduced as a reasonable additional nutrition to omelets. There was food, a pinata, and music. A good time was enjoyed by all.

Trips out of town included historic sites such as the Copan Mayan ruins near the Guatemalan border. The Caribbean coast has a few nearby islands. One of them, Roatan, is an international scuba diving and snorkeling location. We went to Roatan one time and on another occasion, we flew into La Ceiba and took a boat to a different small island leased by a USAID couple where our communication to the next island for outside help, if needed, was a bonfire to be burned at noon. The island was surrounded by coral reefs. There was a Japanese-style house with open sides where the adults slept. Suzi and our visiting niece Kris slept in hammocks until we realized they were potentially in danger from falling coconuts; they then slept inside too.

The Pope visited Honduras while we were there. The road to Suyapa was covered in a carpet with designs of colored sawdust (think rose petal carpet). He rode in the "Popemobile" through throngs of worshipers.

Then there is our own 1982 Baby Story.

Our daughter Suzi was born in 1971, and we hoped for siblings in her future. It didn't work out the way it does for many couples. There were two infants who did not live, one in 1975 and the other in 1978. There were miscarriages too, so when we got to Honduras, we knew there would be a chance to adopt. (When adopting it is important that prospective adoptive parents agree on the many parts of the decision that will affect the family forever.) We were firm in our desire to adopt while in Honduras. There was a time that Paul would say, "Yes" but Cindy would say, "Not now." Finally, there was a day in 1982 when both agreed that it was a good time. Cindy went with two teachers from the school, who also hoped to adopt, to register for adoption at the Judge for the Protection of Minors office in Tegucigalpa.

Time passed and each of them had received a child.

We anticipated that we would hear from the office soon. So on March 30, 1982, we had a lot going on. Cindy was going out to lunch with a friend. Paul was at the Ambassador's home for a working lunch. Just as Cindy and Donna were leaving for lunch at 11:30 there was a phone call that a baby was available, and Cindy should come then. She asked Donna if she was game. She was, so off they went. Cindy expected to be directed to the nearby maternity hospital, but the baby happened to be at the Judge for Protection of Minors' office in the center of the city. In Tegucigalpa, at that time it was rush hour as much of the downtown workforce headed home for lunch. There was no parking as it was midday rush hour, and this was a major street. There was drama with a policeman who was tasked with keeping traffic going and the streets cleared. Cindy and Donna were sternly told to move on, that there was no parking there at that time. Cindy said, "This is an emergency!" It made no difference. There was lots more conversation as one might expect in this place and situation. The conversation stopped when there was a fender bender down the street and the police had to attend to that. Cindy says that it was a "God thing." So good friend Donna stayed in the car, and Cindy quickly entered the office. Inside, they handed Cindy a tiny bundle, a small girl with huge beautiful brown eyes who had been at the maternity hospital. The question asked several times was, "Do you like her?" The response: "Yes, but I need to speak with my husband." There seemed to be some urgency in the office to send Cindy and baby off. She was then told that she could return the baby after 2 p.m. if it wasn't all right.

As Cindy walked out the door, she was asked, "Have we done a home study on your family?" No, they had not.

So, Cindy hugged the little girl close and left. Donna held her and Cindy sped off while the policeman was still attending to the accident down the street. They headed for the Embassy where it turned out that phone service was out of order in the city, and there was no way to communicate with Paul. His secretary came out to the car and was the one to tell Paul to hustle on home when he returned, but she didn't say why. So, Donna and Cindy went straight to a well-known nearby pediatrician for a checkup who saw them right away. Very uncomplicated! This little bundle was deemed to be healthy. Cindy and Donna went home, pulled out an empty drawer, lined it with pillows and towels. The baby slept soundly. No Paul, no word, Suzi came home from school, had a snack, no Paul, no word. Cindy didn't say a word about the baby. The housekeeper wouldn't look at her. (She chose to work for us because we didn't have small children.) Finally, Cindy had to show Suzi the little girl in the drawer which was safely placed on a twin bed in the extra bedroom. Suzi was entranced. She said, "She's the most beautiful baby I've ever seen. Can we keep her?" That is the very moment that Paul showed up to hear those words. The decision was made in that instant.

We still wonder. Was the office closing for lunch, so they couldn't keep this tiny baby with brown engaging eyes there then? Why was the baby not at the maternity hospital anyway?

As it turned out, the adoption process which included three home studies, one for the U.S. and two for Honduras, took until July. We considered two Honduran home studies to be impressive.

By the way, we were blessed again with a biological son, James, in December of 1982, nine months after the arrival of Elizabeth Ann. The question is, "Which one came first?"

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Chapter 9 – Mexico Desk, Economic Officer, 1983-1985, ARA/ME (Bureau of Inter-American Affairs/Office of Mexican Affairs)

WACKERBARTH: That is, ARA/ME (Bureau of Inter-American Affairs/Office of Mexican Affairs); Ronald Reagan was the President, and George Shultz the Secretary of State.

Q: Yes.

And you have what? The Mexico Desk?

WACKERBARTH: That's right.

Q: The economic desk?

WACKERBARTH: I'm the economic officer.

Q: This thing must have—I mean you talk about multifaceted interests, responsibilities, and all. I mean you must have—yes, I mean we have so many ties to Mexico, and most of them are economic in nature.

WACKERBARTH: Well, yes. Developmentally it was a good assignment in terms of my coming along as an officer in the Economic Cone. Particularly big issues, such as finance and trade, were important in Mexico, particularly at that time.

Mexico in 1982 had undergone one of the collapses in the economy that takes place from time to time. The United States had quite a major role in putting things back together. I started at the Desk just about in time for the 1983 meeting in Baja California between President Reagan and the newly elected President de la Madrid. Though I was involved in the preparations, I didn't have a lot to contribute at that point substantively, but I did a lot of the staff work. A couple of interesting anecdotes came out of those preparations.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: President Reagan called a cabinet meeting and had the whole cabinet there. As he went around the room, Treasury Secretary Donald Regan briefed particularly on the whole status of the financial package. There were petroleum issues. Ambassador William Emerson Brock III, a former senator from Tennessee, was the USTR (United States Trade Representative), so there were major issues on all sides. He heard the brief from all points and the chairperson said, "Now Mr. President, do you have any questions?" And interestingly enough, he said, "Yes. How are we doing on San Diego-Tijuana sanitation?" As a former governor, he recognized that that was the U.S.-Mexico issue with the most volatility. We were always conscious that there were 105 electoral votes along the United States-Mexico border, and I think one of the unique

features of being on the Mexico Desk is that one has to be much more attentive to domestic politics than one would in other areas.

In fact, environmental issues were genuinely significant. An interesting anecdote that came out of that involved a letter from then Congressman Trent Lott, who was representing the Gulf Coast district of Mississippi, asking that the issues related to the problems of shrimpers out of Gulfport and other Gulf Coast sites be addressed at the meeting. The agenda was so full of issues that we finally decided the only thing we could really do in that instance was to write a polite letter, which I drafted, saying "Dear Representative Lott: I'm sorry, but as you know, there are so many issues. We'll be happy to work with the Mexicans on resolving these issues if all these shrimpers would just be patient—"

Q: Shrimpers?

WACKERBARTH: Shrimpers. Shrimp fishermen.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: … but we really can't get it on the agenda this time." Well, several weeks later we finally get to see the transcript of the meeting, and we find that President Reagan didn't just follow the script; at one point he said to President de la Madrid, "Mr. President, I come to you with my hat in my hand. Is there anything we can do for the Gulf Coast shrimpers in the Gulf of Mexico?" And I thought that was interesting, because it says a lot about the very strong constituent orientation that now [Senate] Minority Leader Lott had at the time in support of U.S. shrimpers. It was interesting in the way issues got addressed at these meetings.

Q: In the first place, let's get a feel. Within Washington, within our State Department, Mexico obviously had the Secretary and Undersecretary, but who was in charge of Mexican Affairs?

WACKERBARTH: In this case, it may very well have been the Country Director, George High. He reported to James Michel (later on ambassador to Guatemala, one of the finest people I've known in the State Department). I would also say that about George High. Jim was the Deputy Assistant Secretary. He would meet with us periodically when his schedule permitted, but he pretty much would pick up on the recommendations. Now I put a big caveat in this, because the ambassador at that time was actor John Gavin. John Gavin fancied himself to be a super ambassador, and placed the ambassadorship to Mexico to be a very high-profile post.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: As for the ambassadorships, the governor of Massachusetts William F. Weld was nominated for the position, but he did not fill the position. Gavin's predecessor had been the governor of Wisconsin, Patrick Lucey. So we've had some very high profile people in the job over the years.

Ambassador Gavin liked to remind people that he had been president of the Screen Actors Guild, as had President Reagan, and sort of suggested that they were very tight personally. Whenever he would come to town, Gavin would meet with Cabinet officers. The suggestion was that he, as ambassador to Mexico, would be meeting with them as an equal. Among them were members of the so-called "kitchen cabinet" of President Reagan. There had been a lot of turmoil involved. George High's predecessor, as Director of Mexican Affairs, had been removed from the position. The scuttlebutt was that it was because Ambassador Gavin asked that he be removed from the position.

Q: Who was that? Do you remember?

WACKERBARTH: Frank Crigler, who was later ambassador, I believe, to Somalia.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: Shortly after I got to the Mexico Desk, the Economic Counselor in Mexico was suddenly transferred to Madrid. The Mexico City Embassy itself was an interesting operation. George High had been the Deputy Chief of Mission. He had previously been Deputy Chief of Mission and worked under Ambassador Sayre in Brazil and then stayed on under Ambassador Langhorne Motley. Motley came up as Assistant Secretary. George took the position of Director of Mexican Affairs. Motley and High had a very outstanding working relationship in the department, yet the scuttlebutt was very much that the relationship between George High and Ambassador Gavin was less than felicitous. The joker in the deck was someone named Donald Lyman, who had been a Desk Officer in D.C. In Mexico City for all practical purposes he was de facto Gavin's Special Assistant. When George High moved out, Don Lyman moved into the DCM's residence. People sometimes say they would see Lyman and High walking down the street, and they would say, "Oh, there's George High and the DCM." I think George High, an extremely capable and loyal career officer, was put in a very difficult position.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: So he sought the opportunity to transfer out of that position. The acting DCM was the agricultural attaché, John Montel. To be sure there was an atmosphere of intrigue. When papers would go forward, nothing would go up without being reviewed in Mexico City either, which is really not necessarily a bad way of doing business, but it was interesting in describing a relationship. I think Tony Motley, as Assistant Secretary, was not entirely comfortable with this.

Incidentally I often will say that one of the interesting features of the Reagan administration is that they sent Tony Motley, whose mother was Brazilian, to Brazil, and John Gavin, whose mother was northern Mexican (from Sonora), to Mexico. For a while I would draw a parallel between the pragmatic Brazilians and the dogmatic Mexicans, and say, well, we wound up promoting the half-Brazilian to Assistant Secretary because he had that Portuguese-Brazilian pragmatism, whereas our ambassador to Mexico somewhat had the dogmatism, which we associate with Mexico. That formulation would haunt me ten years later when I went to Brazil because the Mexicans had become more pragmatic, and it seems like the Brazilians were becoming more dogmatic. But I often

sometimes say that in a Brazilian bullfight, you don't actually have to kill the bull; you just show that you have the prowess to do it, whereas doing the coup de grace to the bull in a Mexican bullfight is very important. We always cite that as an example of Brazilian pragmatism versus Mexican dogmatism.

Q: Well, with Gavin there, at your position did you find this a problem, or was he way above your pay grade and didn't bother you?

WACKERBARTH: No, actually, well… [laughter] through a stroke of good fortune relatively early in my tour, his wife, Constance Towers, who was a television actress (she starred in soap operas), showed up in town to meet him. They were going to borrow someone's apartment, but she didn't have the address and didn't know what the arrangements were, and so she called up in desperation. I picked up the phone and said, "Look! Whatever happens I'll come out and pick you up, and we'll get this all squared away. I'm not going to leave you."

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: Okay. We're talking about a relationship with Ambassador Gavin and my rescuing his wife. Anyway, every time that Ambassador Gavin would come into town, he would straightaway stop by and say, "Mrs. Gavin sends her regards."

Q: [Laughter]

WACKERBARTH: And so that's good. I'd been in the Foreign Service by that point 14 or 15 years, and l knew that the one relationship you always pay attention to is the one with the ambassador's wife.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: Or the ambassador's spouse, as in the case of Ambassador Jaramillo, during my time in Honduras.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: In any case, we had a good relationship. On the other hand, I knew that there were certain conventions that were unique to the Mexico Desk, and the fact of the matter, as I said before, clearing papers with an embassy before you send them forward is not necessarily a bad idea, particularly in these days of facile communications.

Q: Well, how would you do it? I mean you would draft up… I mean what sort of thing would you do?

WACKERBARTH: Well, we might send a draft, for example, by classified fax. We didn't have the classified e-mail transmission we have now, but in any case we wanted to make sure the Embassy knew what we were saying.

Q: What were the issues that you found yourself dealing with?

WACKERBARTH: Well, I would say that trade, interestingly enough, was the issue in which I put the most time. Moreover, George High pulled me aside early in my tour and said one of the things he really wanted me to accomplish was to reestablish positive, constructive working relationships with the other economic agencies in D.C. They had gone to seed, and I think in part it was a function of working with Ambassador Gavin. It also made a lot of sense operationally. This was a way of coming across as constructive, but it was also a way of State becoming more of a player, and this worked quite well.

In the larger context of things, it doesn't seem like much, but during the time that I was in the Desk, we worked out a trade agreement with Mexico. It was over the rather arcane issue of how we would handle contentious trade disputes—disputes over things like dumping, and countervailing duties, and similar trade complaints—but it became a vehicle for us to share information!

One of the formulations I had about Mexican history was that in 1979 Mexico made a monumental decision not to join the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. I likened this to the U.S. Senate's decision in 1919 not to ratify the Versailles Treaty.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: It was in a sense a decision on the part of Mexico to turn inward at a time when they probably should have been looking outward. Three years later their economy collapsed, and I often cite February 28, 1985, as a turning point in Mexican history. It was my wife's birthday, and I decided to take the day off so we could go to lunch on the Chesapeake Bay. Deputy Director Jim Lanburg covered for me. So the next day I came in as expected and said, "Jim, what happened yesterday when I was out?" He said, "Well, I went to a meeting at USTR, and they described how the Mexicans have decided to join the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and want to establish a framework for a new commercial and economic relationship with the United States." I exclaimed, "Jim, the course of Mexican history has just changed!" When he heard that, he said, "Paul, you're not given to broad sweeping statements. Explain it to me!" So I explained that this was a watershed for Mexico in the sense of beginning to look outward. We worked very hard to get that agreement on how we would deal bilaterally with trade disputes, such as dumping and countervailing duties, done. An important part of it was that Ambassador Brock was moving from being U.S. Trade Representative to Secretary of Labor, and we wanted to get the matter completed before he transferred to Labor, which we did.

Interestingly enough, among other things, we were able to engage Paul Volcker, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank, as an ally. Volcker very much was a player in Mexico at this time, and he saw very clearly the relationship between trade and finance. In 1982 a number of key U.S. banks, including Citibank and Bank of America, among others, were probably overexposed. Volcker, from his perch across the street at the Federal Reserve, realized that when Mexico catches a cold, the U.S. banking system would be in danger of being exposed to pneumonia. For that reason he was very much focused on Mexico. I think he realized that if Mexico was going to be able to pay its debts, it had to become an exporter. I think he heard us when we briefed him and told him "Look, the course of Mexican history has changed. They're reaching outward."

Incidentally I recall that I probably was the first person in the federal establishment to answer a question about NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) because we were beginning negotiations with Canada on a bilateral free trade area. I got a call from Vice President Bush's office; I remember I was sitting out in the common area working at a word processor, not in my office, in the middle of the day. He said, "Hey, Paul, can you take a question about Mexico and its free trade area?" My initial reaction was "Mexico and its trade area? What are they smoking?" Anyway, I gave the answer, which was one I could think of. The response was, "Well, this is something that could happen, but a lot of things will need to happen before this takes place!" And I was surprised over the years to see how quickly those things that had to happen, in fact, did happen.

Another point on Volcker—I think one of the most personally rewarding (l was going to say just fun) papers I got to do was at one point in 1985 when James Baker moved from the White House to be Treasury Secretary. Volcker asked George Shultz to host a small dinner in his small eighth-floor dining room for the Mexican Treasury Secretary Jesús Silva-Herzog (later Ambassador to the U.S.A.), Secretary Baker, and Chairman Volcker, with Secretary Shultz as host. Well, as this was a private in-house meeting, I didn't have to do major clearances with Treasury (Treasury and State did not have widely divergent positions), but particularly in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, even though we were very much on board with the fact that debt had to be paid, we wanted to get the message to all players, "Look, there are relationships that are important. There are issues beyond the relationship simply as debtor to creditor, and we should think of these relationships in the long term." Usually when I was dealing with finance, I was basically providing political background, background on the players, which was very useful to the Treasury officer, who was the drafter of the first instance. This was an opportunity for me to be the drafter of first instance.

Sometimes my kids will ask me who are some of the people I admire most in the world, and Paul Volcker certainly stands on this list. Incidentally, my parents knew his parents; his father was the city manager in Teaneck, New Jersey, a town right across the river from Hackensack, New Jersey, where I grew up. I've always thought of him as one of the best examples of the Civil Service.

Q: Were we doing much to promote commercial ties, outside of setting the framework? I mean did we get involved in the specific getting Campbell's Soup in there, or this sort of thing, or was that pretty well taken care of by…

WACKERBARTH: Well, we worked at it. Trade, of course, was the province of the newly established Foreign Commercial Service (U.S. Commercial Service). Yet again, we conscientiously worked very closely with the Commerce Department, particularly on Mexico. The only specific one I can think of in which we played a role was a very small one. Senator D'Amato (R-N.Y.) wanted to help the Jewish community in Mexico City get kosher wine for Passover; this was basically good constituent services.

We had a good relationship with the Mexican Commercial Ministry, which was more interested in trade policy than so many specific products. Mexicans were opening up, and we tried to take advantage of it. It was interesting to see the transition from being a

closed, import, substitution, high-tariff economy to being a more open one when their currency was under stress.

One of the issues was that Mexico went online as a major oil producer when oil was selling at about $40 a barrel, but in the early 1980s, it dropped down into the teens. I remember it being $16-$17 a barrel. This was part of the reason why the Mexican economy collapsed. Yet among other things, when it collapsed, they still had a hangover from buying all sorts of stuff, which they felt they could buy forever, betting that oil would go up from $40 a barrel.

Issues were more in the area of trade disputes. One of the interesting ones was that they minted a coin, which was worth a couple of cents, which was the same size as our quarter; it fit in places like laundromat slide-coin receptacles. It also worked at the toll booths on the Connecticut Turnpike. Well, Connecticut soon thereafter just did away with toll booths, so that obviated the issue there, but I remember going to the Treasury Ministry on behalf of the Rio Grande Valley Vending Machine Association.

The area of greatest cooperation was along the border. In my briefings, I might draw from the beginning of the play *Fiddler on the Roof*. When they introduced the cast of characters, they would introduce their beloved rabbi, and say they have a tough question for the rabbi, which is, "Rabbi, is there a proper blessing for the Czar?" And his answer is, "May the Lord bless and keep the Czar—and keep him as far away from us as possible."

Well, that was the attitude on the border—may the Lord bless and keep the administration in Mexico City, and keep them as far away from us as possible. Well, the cooperation on the U.S.-Mexican border—it was something actually to behold. It worked well.

I might insert here that ironically when I was in Warsaw I wasn't the chief proponent, but I was the Executive Secretary, of something which was the Polish-German-Mexican-U.S. border symposium. The purpose of this event, which was promoted by a Mexican, was to illustrate to the Poles and the Germans the benefits of having a close working relationship on border issues. I think, going back to when I was in grad school, if you told me that 20 years later I would be involved in a conference in which the Mexicans wanted to tell the Poles and Germans how good it was to have positive relations with the United States, I probably would have said "What are you smoking?"

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: The Foreign Ministry was problematic. One anecdote that was interesting, the 84 Olympics, our Secret Service somewhat cavalierly took over some radio frequencies, which were, in fact, being used by the Mexican electric company for its own communications. These were frequencies around Tijuana and near the California border. When we learned that we'd hijacked the frequencies, the Mexicans were actually very decent about it, and said, "Well, look! We want to be cooperative." Well, in writing the thank you note for doing this, I had to deal with the question, do we send a thank you note to the regional office in Tijuana, or do we send it to Mexico City, to the

headquarters? And we decided to opt just to send the thank you note to the regional office in Tijuana, to keep it low key.

The other example I cite (this is somewhat long, but I think it's a great story) is that I think it was in 1984 or 1985 we found out that there had been a minor, but not insignificant, nuclear accident in Ciudad Juárez, across from El Paso. The mayor of Ciudad Juárez was from the local opposition PAN party (Partido Acción Nacional—National Action Party), the local ruling party, different from the larger ruling national PRI party. Interestingly enough, what does the mayor do when he has this problem with a nuclear accident? He goes over to Fort Bliss, Texas, and says, "Look! Can you guys help me deal with this?" He doesn't go to his capital in Mexico City!

I might describe a little bit about the story because I think it's interesting. I think it says a lot about the U.S.-Mexican relationship. What had happened was somebody bought a second-hand nuclear medicine machine, which was basically decommissioned from a hospital in the United States. They didn't quite know what to do with it, so they just stored it in a garage in Ciudad Juárez for a while. Somebody breaks into the garage and steals this thing, puts it in a pickup truck, and they take it to a foundry in Chihuahua, Mexico. Chihuahua, Mexico, is several hundred miles south of Ciudad Juárez. It's basically melted down into scrap and used to make pedestals for restaurant tables and rebar for construction.

Well, this rebar—it turns out that they were doing a little construction project at the Los Alamos Proving Grounds in New Mexico, and so they purchased some rebar, which happened to come out of the Chihuahua foundry. Well, as it passes through the gate, the Geiger counter at Los Alamos goes ape, and all of a sudden they realize that this guy had a truckful of hot rebar! [Laughter]

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: And so, they basically traced it back to Chihuahua, and somehow or other they got the story back. Well meanwhile, there was concern that some of the pellets may have fallen. They assumed the pellets did fall off the machine and into the truck; unfortunately, kids were playing on the pickup truck and got sick, so I decided that there should be a survey to make sure there were no hot pellets out there.

Well, this created a bureaucratic dispute between the Fort Bliss people and the Department of Energy. The Department of Energy people realized that they had an opportunity to run a real live drill—so that they could test their ability to respond to a nuclear accident.

The Mexicans wanted to be helpful to the guys at Fort Bliss as their positive relationship with Ciudad Juárez would be enhanced. Guys would be on liberty from Fort Bliss. Sometimes they'd get a little too much tequila, and there would be accidents, but they had a good functioning relationship with the authorities in the, I'd say, "sister city" of Ciudad Juárez. They wanted to just keep that working relationship going. Their idea was basically to take a Huey helicopter and have a guy with a Geiger counter just fly over.

The Department of Energy wanted to do a more technically disciplined operation, the kind of response that they'd been trained to do, when they eventually got to do it.

Well, an interesting sidelight of all this is one day I come back from lunch, and I would always find diplomatic notes from the Mexicans in my in-box. They would just sort of show up, like they almost knew I was going to lunch. This was the absolute classic diplomatic note because it said, of course, The Embassy of the United States in Mexico presents its compliments to the Department of State, United States of America, and has the honor to refer to a nuclear incident that has taken place in the Rio Grande Valley. The text basically said, "We understand that the United States may want to survey its territory in that part of Texas to see if any nuclear material might be there. If in the course of doing this, you should happen to overfly Mexican territory, we will not have any objection, and by the way, we would be pleased if you would share your research findings with us." This gets me back in a long, convoluted way to your point about the Foreign Ministry. The Foreign Ministry did not want to put itself in the position of asking the United States specifically to cooperate, even on an issue which was so much in their own interest.

There's always been a sovereignty twist, and the old expression is, "Pity poor Mexico, so far from God and so near to the United States," a reference to the anti-clericalism of the Mexican revolution. The Mexicans were very skilled at exercising their sovereignty. I would find that the Brazilians would have the equal skill. I suppose it might apply to the Mexicans. What I used to say about the Brazilians was that they were so well trained to defend their national interests, they couldn't advance them. I think that, in fact, the Mexicans were trying to figure out how to advance their national interests while asserting their sovereignty at the same time. The foreign minister was Bernardo Sepúlveda, a very skilled diplomat. George Shultz didn't like meeting with him, but George Shultz knew that the Mexican-American relationship was one of our most important ones. I think I once counted that they met 17 times during the couple years that I was on the Mexico Desk; I think in general, most of the meetings were constructive.

Q: Did you get any feel for the effectiveness of the Mexican Embassy? Some embassies are much more effective because they learn how to work the media, and work Congress, and all, and not depend strictly on the State Department. Did you get any feel for that?

WACKERBARTH: They were better than average at that time in this respect. They would get much, much better later. Particularly, they moved a key officer from their economic commercial ministry to be in a position in their embassy, parallel to our Foreign Commercial Service representative, except that he was very focused on trade policy and working with USTR. We basically coached them on the importance of key players, particularly the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee on these legislative issues. Countervailing duties were a tough question. Dumping and countervailing duties are where you're not allowed to sell a product in international trade differently than what is sold domestically. This basically prevents countries from deeply discounting their export account as a way of covering costs, and then protecting the price domestically, and skimming off a large profit from their domestic component. We had very elaborate legislation. We have a bureaucracy in the Department of Commerce, which makes a determination. One question is: are you selling this product below cost? But there's a second level, and that is, is the fact that you're doing that actually causing

injury to U.S. business and labor, and particularly workers? The second is actually much harder to demonstrate. After the collapse of the Mexican economy in the early ’80s and the change in the exchange rate, we were getting a lot of these cases.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: And so I think it was important that we get an agreement on this.

Q: Did you find that there you maybe had to use restraint, or get aggressive or something in dealing with? There were so many of these cross-border agreements between cities, between counties, manufacturers. I mean whenever you think about it, I mean it’s really, I mean you’re right in the middle of a whole situation with Commerce and all, and did you find that you had to tread carefully or otherwise it would be said, “These God damned feds are messing up again! We got this all set up, and just stay out of it!” I mean, did you?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, well, I guess this goes back to what I was saying, that we had to be very conscious of the fact there were 105 electoral votes along the border, and that we had to do a lot in terms of constituent relationships. Frankly, from a Foreign Service standpoint, I don’t think this is unhealthy. I think part of the problem that the Service has is that we’re so isolated from domestic relationships, and I think it ties in with certainly what then Congressman Lott was doing in terms of constituent services for the shrimpers.

Q: What was the problem with the shrimpers?

WACKERBARTH: Well, basically it was that Mexico was enforcing territorial waters; it came down to the question as to whose waters were these, anyway.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: I think Mexico had, in fact, signed off on the Law of the Sea Convention, which we never did, but I think we basically agreed to follow it. To be sure, this left a lot of room for harassment.

Q: Yes. Let’s see. You were there from ’83 to—

WACKERBARTH: Nineteen eighty-five.

Q: Are there any particular issues that come to mind that were difficult that you had to deal with?

WACKERBARTH: Law enforcement harassment was a big issue in Mexico, just simply the Mexican federal police shaking down people who would drive across the border.

I mentioned trade and finance. As Desk Officer I didn’t do the bulk of the environmental work, but that was always a presence. One of the issues that I enjoyed doing, or I remember felt challenged doing, was cross border trucking.

One of the interesting things was that, as a matter of policy, we were promoting the Caribbean Basin Initiative. This was at a time when Central America was very tense, and this was a way of helping out the Central Americans with trade and investment.

But actually what occurred was that there was tremendous growth in what they called maquiladoras; the term comes from the maquila (by definition, it means the value added when a product is taken to a mill, and is then taken out of the mill). Some examples might include textiles, leather goods, and electronic goods. The components might be manufactured in the United States, but the assembly, which was labor intensive, would take place in Mexico, and then be shipped back. In that particular time there was tremendous growth in this concept.

(I once heard of a U.S. official, whose father was Costa Rican, and his mother was American, who was conceived on their honeymoon in Acapulco; he liked to say that he was assembled in Mexico with U.S. components.)

One more issue that I remember was the broomcorn cartel.

Q: The what?

WACKERBARTH: The broomcorn cartel.

Q: Oh, yes, yes. I heard of it!

WACKERBARTH: Now, in the United States, I think by 1985, the only brooms anymore that were natural fiber were made by the blind.

Q: Yes!

WACKERBARTH: And the Mexican broomcorn guild (or growers' association) got in cahoots to try and set the price!

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: Of course, I remembered from my days of being on the Honduras-El Salvador Desk that George Shultz had no sense of humor whatsoever about any kind of cartel, and so I remember having to take on the Mexican broomcorn cartel! I remember Jim Michel congratulating me for resolving it, and he said it was "a clean sweep!"

Q: Did your desk have anything to do with immigration and emigration?

WACKERBARTH: We had a consular desk officer. There were two people that held the position during my time, and we were very much focused on the then pending immigration legislation. My role was to supply the economic dimension to it, which was not insignificant. I mention this because the typical Mexican immigrant was not necessarily the poorest of the poor. More likely he or she was a lower-middle class person with a lot of ambition, who found his- or herself stifled by the stratification structure of Mexican society. This person really saw this as an opportunity to break out of this, by coming to the United States to work hard. When I learned that President Bush referred to this Mexican immigrant work ethic in his annual Fifth of May or el Cinco de Mayo

speech the other day, I recalled it was something I was certainly aware of when I was on the Mexico Desk. President de la Madrid was also very conscious of this and realized that Mexico was exporting some of its most industrious people to the United States.

The other thing that was interesting with Mexico was that Mexico has a northern border and a southern border, and they were very careful not to address issues related to the northern border which might compromise their ability to assert their sovereignty on the southern border.

Q: Drugs.

WACKERBARTH: Drugs, yes. Thugs!

Q: How about that?

WACKERBARTH: Again, it was not specifically in my account. During my time there were a couple of very tragic incidents, particularly around Guadalajara. There was the murder of a DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) agent named Camarena. There was also the murder around Guadalajara of a Mormon missionary who was going door to door; he had apparently wandered into a drug den. They may have thought he was somebody else, and he was killed. It was a very ugly set of circumstances to be working with. How significant drugs were in the scheme of things, I don't know, but it was obviously an issue to which we paid a lot of attention.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: On the Desk, we had a political officer, consular officer, and economic officer, and someone who worked border issues who focused on most of the environmental issues. So we had four desk officers, a deputy director, and a director.

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Chapter 10 – Washington: Career Development Officer, 1985-1987; National War College, 1987-1988

Q: So '85 comes along. Whither?

WACKERBARTH: I went over to work in Personnel as a Career Development Officer; Ronald Reagan was President. George Schultz was Secretary of State.

Q: You did this for two years?

WACKERBARTH: I did it for two years, yes.

Q: What did you do? I mean a Career Development Officer—they keep changing how the system works. What was a Career Development Officer doing?

WACKERBARTH: Basically, my job was to broker assignments for mid-level Economic Officers and to address other career issues that would come along; there were some significant ones that came along. Mostly I was brokering assignments. Essentially, I would tell my Officers, "Look! I'm like a stockbroker. I can't tell you whether the

market's going to go up or down, or whether you're absolutely going to get your prime assignment, but my ear is attuned to the market and your best interests. I have certain contacts with whom I work; I can give you the best information I have so you can draw on it to give it your best shot."

I might describe a little bit more about the process. It was a little bit like playing bridge in the sense that every September a list of the positions that would be open in the summer cycle went out, and one could bid. An Officer had to bid on a minimum of six positions and no more than 15. Essentially it was the Bureaus who would select from the list of bidders, and would submit their preferred candidates to twelve Officers representing five regional and seven functional Bureaus having a stake in staffing overseas positions. This group, the Panel, would be chaired by the Director of Personnel or his or her Deputy.

In many cases, that's all that was involved. In many instances, an Officer would bid, the Bureau would want that candidate, and the paperwork was processed. In other cases, there was quite a bit of brokering to do. Chips and dip never come out even, as anyone who's given a party knows.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: The brokering would sometimes be quite interesting. In some cases, I would see something that the Bureaus might not see themselves and I would make that known. In these cases, a Career Development Officer could actually create opportunities.

Q: Often the assignment process is so critical to a person's career. They talk about trying to make fairness for the promotion system, yet my experience is that if you don't ... no matter—let's say that you're a competent person, but on the promotion panel, they're judging you by how they perceive the job to be. If you're dealing in economic issues in Geneva, you're not going to get the same attention as dealing with economic issues in Lebanon, or somewhere during a civil war, etc. If the place is a hot spot and you succeed, it is noted.

WACKERBARTH: Yes. Well, of course this would be one way in which Career Development Officers could encourage taking tough assignments. I could point to my own example of bailing out of a trade promotion position in Western Europe and taking over a stretch assignment as Economic Section Head in Tegucigalpa.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: I would point out that what one wants to do in considering an assignment is to project forward what your performance evaluation is going to look like. The fact of the matter is, if you're doing the job as the top guy in Tegucigalpa as opposed to being one of several people in a large European Embassy, it's going to read a lot better. The point I would make over and over to my Officers was that promotion really is about showing how in what you do, you are better able than the next guy to advance U.S. interests, at the next level. Sometimes there are assignments where it's much easier to demonstrate proficiency than others.

I would run into some interesting things in the process of doing this. In one case, I was able to staff a position in Lagos, Nigeria, that seemed like nobody would want. Yet I found someone who had three kids in medical school, and that provided financial incentives for going there.

I enjoyed the brokering process, and I went away from that job thinking that I did some good. That said, I might mention here one of the less pleasant things I had to do was deliver low-ranking statements to Officers who were identified by a selection board as being in the lower ten percent of their peers. It was a tough thing to deal with! I would ask them to come in to discuss the matter, use the opportunity to just sit down, and talk it over.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: Okay. Well, we were talking about personality disputes, and these are things that come up in the course of things. But it seems like the point I would almost always have to get back to is to say, "Hey! You know, the boss is not always right, but he or she is always the boss; you've got to get that straight. You know, that in the immediate instance, the job is what the boss says it is, within checks and balances."

Q: Did you see any change between how you felt your attitude was towards assignments and all when you first came in and now dealing with it? In other words, were people a little more choosey, or was it a little hard to get people to go places and all that?

WACKERBARTH: I think that it may have been the beginning of it getting harder. The open assignment system was still somewhat young, yet I think people were basically familiar with it. I served on the five-year rule committee, and certainly that was a place where these issues would come up. At that time, the rule was that one could not serve more than five consecutive years in the United States. Well, we were up against changing social mores.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: That rule was written when everybody pretty much wanted to get overseas because living was better. Yet one of the things that emerged in full flower by the 1980s was the double, the two-spouse income.

Q: Yes, yes.

WACKERBARTH: In some instances, a spouse would have a good U.S.-based job, and it would be tough to give up the momentum in that job to go overseas for their spouse's Foreign Service position. Being on the five-year rule committee, one had a chance to see a lot of creativity in people trying to work angles to avoid going overseas.

Q: Yes. How much did you find it at your level? Was there interference from the Seventh Floor Principals?

WACKERBARTH: I think in part there was less at this time because we had a very strong Director of Personnel, Bill Swing.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: I remember a couple of instances in which the Panel basically didn't do what the Principals thought they should do, and Swing didn't much like this, but he backed us! I remember writing a couple of letters for Director General George Vest's signature, and the communications went out to high-powered recipients as I wrote them.

When Swing was promoted from Director of Personnel to the position of Deputy Assistant Secretary, I was selected to give the toast to him at a reception. I remember saying—he had been Director of Personnel, Chairman of the Panel that signed off on assignments—and I started out by saying, "Mr. Former Chairman"; I could see him wince, thinking, "Here it comes!" But I, in fact, reversed, then said, "Well, you know, you're expecting me to roast you. I'm not going to do that. I remember a couple of instances in which we did have pressure from above, and we drafted something that resisted that pressure, and then you backed us! Those are the qualities we most want to see on the Sixth Floor."

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: I do remember one instance. It involved a very high-profile couple in the Foreign Service, where one spouse assumed even though this Officer was out of cone, that they were going to get a certain position in an embassy, for which I had an Officer who was in cone. This candidate had served in some tough places. I remember being called by a very relatively senior Officer, saying, "Are you sure that you want to be in a position where people on the Seventh Floor are getting mad at you?" And I said, "Well, this Officer hasn't done the appropriate homework for his assignment. In fact, I've never met the Officer." I said, "It would seem to me if this Officer would want to have a claim for the job, they ought to at least carry out the courtesies of checking in with the players." That's about as far as it got. That Officer got the job, yet I was able to leverage that to get something that met the needs of the Officer who was disadvantaged.

Well, it's...the fact of the matter is that the Secretary of State is entitled to run the Personnel system and to assign whomever he or she desires for whatever position. It's basically delegated through the Undersecretary of Management, to the Director General, and then to Personnel, and finally to the Panel. I describe the Panel as one of the great legislative bodies of the Western world, and felt that, functioning well, it wasn't perfect, but a lot of good decisions came out of it.

Q: In '87, off you went.

WACKERBARTH: National War College.

Q: Aha! You did that for a year?

WACKERBARTH: Yes. I did that for a year.

Q: How did you find it?

WACKERBARTH: It was a great year! The National War College's mission is to educate joint, interagency, and international leaders and warfighters by conducting a senior-level course of study of national security strategy. This prepares graduates to function at high levels of strategic leadership in a complex, competitive, and rapidly evolving strategic environment. I think it was a wonderful opportunity to look at the world from different perspectives, from the top down so to speak, look at it strategically, and also to build relationships with military men and women from all of the Services plus a large number of civilians. Interestingly, one of my colleagues and good friend was detailed from the Library of Congress. Part of the curriculum included exceptional national and international speakers. There were field study trips to all corners of the world. I traveled to Egypt, Jordan, the West Bank, and Israel, where we met with high-level leaders. In Jordan we were received by the Crown Prince. We didn't go to Jerusalem because of the First Intifada. Health and physical fitness were strongly emphasized for all participants. It was an enriching experience which was an opportunity to interact with national security professionals who might have a different point of view but who also cared deeply.

Q: You got out of there, it'd be '88, I guess?

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Chapter 11 – Warsaw, Poland, Economic Counselor: August 1, 1989 – July 1992. President George Herbert Walker Bush, Secretary of State James A. Baker, U.S. Ambassadors John Davis, Thomas Simons, 1990 – 1993.

WACKERBARTH: I moved on to Polish language training and Polish Area Studies en route to an assignment as Economic Counselor at our Embassy in Warsaw, Poland. I took Polish and Polish Area Studies for 44 weeks starting in August 1988.

Q: How did you find Polish? I think Polish ranks up at the upper end of the Slavic languages as far as difficulty goes.

WACKERBARTH: Yes, it's a tough language. You don't have a lot of cognates to fall back on, as you do in Spanish, and Portuguese, and even German - the other languages I had studied at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI). Also there are a number of cases to learn. I did have the Russian I had studied at Indiana to draw upon, but that had been too distant in the past to be of much help. When I took my first exam in Polish after four months of intensive study, I determined that, in a lesser span of time, I had been further along in Portuguese, and decided that Polish was harder than Portuguese by a factor of about four.

I also took Polish Area Studies concurrently. This class met 1/2 day a week during the same 44-week period. It was an interdisciplinary course covering history, literature, culture, politics, the economy, and life and society in Poland in general. Knowledgeable academics and others would hold lecture/discussion sessions under the direction of a course coordinator. Coincidentally, the incumbent of that position was a student at the Russian and East European Institute at Indiana during the time I was there.

Early in our language and area studies course we were visited by a recently returned Foreign Service colleague who welcomed questions about the posts and the country. My

question was: “What’s the best thing about Poland?” Our colleague’s answer: “The Poles!”

One of the highlights of the course was a Polish Christmas dinner put together by the teachers, all of whom were native speakers. Among other things, there were also opportunities to meet their families, which was interesting. I recall the husband of one of the instructors saying forcefully that he would return to Poland when Poland was free. I’m certain he had no expectation that would happen in a matter of months. As far as I know he remains ensconced here in Virginia, overseeing his prosperous construction business.

In April 1989, while still in Polish Language and Area Studies training, I was invited to participate as a commentator in a symposium on Poland at Pennsylvania State University in State College. My task was to tie together two papers on Poland’s economy presented by economics professors at U.S. universities. This was a challenge in and of itself, but all the more so as the then-current U.S. Ambassador to Poland, John Davis, was present. I was pleased to hear him tell me I did a good job as he would be my boss in just a few months.

The title of the symposium was “Instability in Poland.” The conference center staff–consistent with the format for all such events—placed a sign at the entrance saying, “Welcome Instability in Poland.” I doubt that anyone present realized how pregnant that marker was in meaning, but participants eagerly lined up to have their picture taken next to the placard.

Q: When did you arrive in Poland and how long did you serve there? Who was Ambassador there and who were some of the key officers during your tenure?

WACKERBARTH: We arrived on August 1, 1989, and were there for a three-year tour ending on July 6, 1992.

John R. Davis, Jr. was Ambassador. He went to Embassy Warsaw towards the end of 1983 to serve as Chief of Mission/Chargé d’affaires. After the Communist Government nastily put down Solidarity in December of 1981, we withdrew our ambassador and did not have relationships at the Chief of Mission level until 1988. Davis, who had had two previous tours in Poland (as an economic officer and as Deputy Chief of Mission), went there without the rank of Ambassador and served in a very, very dismal time. For example, Solidarity Leader Lech Wałęsa was put under house arrest and a number of the Solidarity leaders were thrown in jail.

Davis, from his extensive prior service, knew the country and the Poles well, and perceived his job as basically trying to keep a modicum of good relations. The State Department’s Undersecretary for Political Affairs in the Reagan years, Larry Eagleburger (later Deputy Secretary and Secretary of State), emphasized the importance of keeping at least one lane of traffic or channel of communication open for possible positive breakthroughs even as several other lanes were closed off due to the awful state of relations. Picking up on this, Ambassador Davis was basically looking for areas of cooperation. Meanwhile, his wife, Helen, working out of their Residence, arranged for

humanitarian visits to the spouses of the political prisoners (mostly wives). As I understand it, Ambassador Davis vigorously exercised his right to meet with Poles from all branches of society. I heard him say more than once that the 1970's Commission on Security Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) accords gave him "a hunting license."

Among other ways we did this was a program in which we would make publications like Newsweek available to people we knew who were key players, so that they would not lose contact with the outside world. Among the recipients was Prof. Leszek Balcerowicz, who would become the Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister in the first Solidarity-led government. Also because food distribution took a big hit, we made surplus U.S. agricultural commodities available to the Poles, using the Roman Catholic Church as our point of distribution, working with Polish bishops, clergy, and Catholic lay leaders in this endeavor. This was a way of getting assistance to the Polish people without going through the Polish government.

Between 1983 and 1987, we and the Poles addressed areas of concern such that in the fall of 1987, during a visit by then-Deputy Secretary of State John Whitehead, it was determined that relations had sufficiently improved to allow for an exchange of Ambassadors. Davis was appointed to the restored position early in 1988. Shortly after President George H. W. Bush took office in 1989, newly appointed Secretary of State James Baker announced that Ambassadors in place could serve the full normative tour of duty (2 1/2 to 3 years). This enabled John Davis to serve as Ambassador until the summer of 1990. He was succeeded as Ambassador by Thomas W. Simons, Jr., who held the post until 1993.

The Deputy Chief of Mission, in my time, was Darryl Johnson (later Ambassador to Lithuania), until he was replaced by Michael Hornblow in 1991. Terry Snell was Political Counselor until 1990 when Dan Fried (later Ambassador to Poland) replaced him. Tony Perkins, who also arrived in 1992, was Consul General, Mark Lijek was Administrative Counselor, and Colman Nee was Science Counselor. Bill Joslin came on board as USAID representative in 1990. Tim Carroll joined as Peace Corps Country Director in 1990. Terry Snell served as Acting DCM during times of absence of either the Ambassador or DCM until June 1990. I filled in as Acting DCM intermittently from June 1990 until July 1992. I also did a few short stints as *Chargé d'affaires* during our time in Poland.

Q: What was the situation in Poland when you got there in 1989, and particularly what were some of the issues you were dealing with as Economic Counselor?

WACKERBARTH: Now that is a big, if not enormous, question. As I like to say, the world turned right side up (emphatically not/not upside down) during my time in Poland. We got to Warsaw just in time for the last three weeks of Communism in Poland. As Economic Counselor I was very much on the front lines of the U.S. (and allied) response to a remarkable opportunity.

For the purposes of clarity and efficiency I think it best to address my response in several parts:

If I may, let me first provide some of the historical background.

Secondly, let me review the financial situation and how we addressed it.

Thirdly, let's go over the specific matter of Poland's debt overhang.

Fourthly, we should look at investment and trade issues, especially intellectual property rights.

Fifthly, let's do an overview of U.S. assistance, which includes, among other things, the Polish American Enterprise Fund, the Joint Commission on Humanitarian Assistance, and the Peace Corps.

Q: Tell me about the historical background.

I might back up a little bit to describe how this all took place. Actually when I was in language training in the fall of 1988, a series of strikes occurred in coal mines. The situation was quite reminiscent of the strikes that had taken place in 1979 and 1980, which led to the emergence of Solidarity.

To get the strikers to back off in the fall of 1988, the Communist leadership agreed to meet with Lech Wałęsa and other Solidarity leaders in what they called a "Round Table." The issues that were going to be discussed were fairly narrow in scope: (1) recognition of Solidarity as a legal trade union, and (2) backing that by allowing the right to strike. This served to give the conversations meaning and focus. Even though these were limited, finite issues, some people criticized Wałęsa for even being willing to go to the table to broker them. I recall reading, while still in Polish Language classes, a quotation from Wałęsa (speaking characteristically in the third person) saying something like: "Lech Wałęsa is very nervous about going to the Round Table, but if he can get recognition for Solidarity backed by the right to strike, he will have accomplished something." Very much an intuitive thinker, Wałęsa relied on his instincts and accomplished much more in the talks.

The talks began in January 1989 and dragged on for several weeks. At one point in March of 1989, when it appeared the talks were breaking down, the Minister of Sports (later President), Alexander Kwasniewski, came into the meeting and posed a question along the following lines to Solidarity leader Adam Michnik: "What would you think if we moved from a single-chamber parliament (the existing Sejm) to a two-chamber parliament by adding a Senate. The Communists and their allied parties would retain a two-thirds majority in the one existing chamber (the Sejm), while competing in an open election for the other third. All 100 of the seats in the new chamber (the Senate) would be competed in an open election." Michnik, the spokesman for the Solidarity side, replied "that would be a very, very interesting proposition." It was agreed to set elections, which would assure the Communists that they would essentially have veto power over anything, as they would hold two-thirds of the seats in one of the two chambers. They also figured that they could probably garner enough seats in the other chamber to hold off any change among the freely competed votes. Jaruzelski would continue to serve as President.

There was a sixty-day election campaign period. Elections were held on June 4, 1989 (coincidentally on the same day as the Tiananmen Square demonstrations were forcibly put down in Beijing). In a Polish election, voters are handed a slate of candidates, and

you basically cross off the ones that you don't want. Anyway, the result was, as far as I know, the only instance in electoral history where the incumbents ran unopposed and lost! [Laughter] What happened was the Polish people voted a hundred percent of the competed Senate seats for Solidarity (actually there was one independent). In the election for non-competed seats in the Sejm, more than half the voters also crossed off the names of the Communist or allied Party candidates and Solidarity picked up all of the competed seats. One candidate, whose name was Zywdiewski (or something like that), beginning with the letters Z-Y-W or something, wound up getting in because people's pencils broke before they could cross his name off. [Laughter]

Well, this created a political crisis in Poland in the summer of 1989. In July Wojciech Jaruzelski was elected President by the Sejm by a single vote margin; he was the only candidate. The lead negotiator at the Round Table for the Communist side, Czeslaw Kiszczak, was designated to be the next Prime Minister in a Jaruzelski Presidency. Although he wielded a strong hand as Minister of the Interior, the word was that he was respected by Solidarity as an honest broker. He was named to the position on August 1, 1989; coincidentally this was the day my family and I arrived in Poland for me to assume duties as Economic Counselor at the American Embassy.

As it turned out, given the Communists' dismal performance in the parliamentary election, Kiszczak was hard-pressed to find anyone who really wanted to serve in his cabinet. From time to time we hear the question: What if you gave a party and nobody came? In this instance the question was: What if you tried to form a government and nobody joined?

During the first three weeks of August 1989 the Embassy was trying to discern how this political crisis would be resolved amid very fast moving events. Meanwhile, one of the first things Ambassador Davis asked me to do, just a couple of days after arriving, was to check out rumors that had gotten out to the news media that the Poles were starving to death just as they were asserting their independence. He tasked myself and Agricultural Attaché John Harrison to go out to the marketplace and find out exactly how much food is out there.

Q: What did you see?

WACKERBARTH: We saw a lot of food! We were able to report that there was abundant food in the marketplace. Meat, fresh fruits and vegetables, and canned goods were in generous supply. There might have been more than would have been found a couple of weeks earlier because price controls on agricultural products had been lifted on August 1, but it is unlikely that was the only reason. Interestingly, in our travels we encountered CNN which was also covering the story.

Q: Please continue on the historical background.

WACKERBARTH: A broader concern for Ambassador Davis and the U.S. Mission was whether the Soviet Union would intervene as it had in Hungary and Poland in 1956, in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and again in Poland in 1981. The Poles were saying metaphorically that so much depended on whether there would be a chill or warm breeze

from the East (meaning would the Soviets intervene?). Also, bear in mind that the Polish elections on June 4 took place the very day that the Red Chinese had gone into Tiananmen Square and brutally put down the revolt there. I recall him saying to me in a conversation: "Paul, I feel like Sisyphus. I've pushed this rock so carefully up the hill, I don't want it to come rolling down on top of me." My take on this is because he was such a friend of Solidarity and had such credibility with them as he was so intimately involved with the Solidarity leadership, he didn't want to be in the position of leading them on or leading them into a situation which might be a trap. Things seemed different, but would Lucy pull the football from placekicker Charlie Brown as seen in autumn Peanuts comic strips since time immemorial? That was the question.

Ambassador Davis has described in a public forum (and that I remember very, very distinctly): how he came into the country team meeting and asked: Are the Soviets going to intervene? He then proceeded to poll those present on the question. As I recall it was not unanimous that they would not intervene.

In 1999 I would attend a lecture on the End of Communism by the last Communist Prime Minister, Mieczyslaw Rakowski, at George Washington University. Ambassador Davis was also present. In the Question-and-Answer period Ambassador Davis asked Rakowski about an August 1989 telephone conversation with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. The call opened with Gorbachev asking the open question: "How are things in Poland?" At GWU, Rakowski recounted how he straightforwardly described to Gorbachev the political crisis Poland was experiencing. Rakowski said the tone of Gorbachev's voice went up when he asked: "Do you mean you might LOSE?" To which Rakowski said he responded: "Well, yes." Gorbachev then reportedly said something like: "Well, that's interesting" and closed the conversation with courtesy pleasantries. Ambassador Davis described that call as "the dog that didn't bark."

The political standoff was resolved in classic European Parliamentary practice. The Communists had long ruled Poland along with the Peasant Party and the (so-called) Democratic Party. In mid-August the Peasant Party broke ranks with the Communist and formed an alliance with Solidarity. On August 19, President Jaruzelski asked journalist/Solidarity activist Tadeusz Mazowiecki to form a government; on September 12, the Sejm voted approval of Prime Minister Mazowiecki and his Cabinet. For the first time in more than 40 years, Poland had a government led by non-Communists. When he appointed his Cabinet, he retained the Communist Party Ministers of Interior and Defense among others, as well as the Communist President of the Central Bank. The hold-over Ministers of Defense and Interior were replaced in a Cabinet reshuffling in July 1990. In 1992 Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, a law professor and member of Solidarity, assumed the Presidency of the Central Bank.

In December 1989, the Sejm (Parliament) considered the government's reform program to rapidly transform the Polish economy from centrally planned to free market, amended the Constitution to eliminate references to the "leading role" of the Communist Party, and renamed the country the "Republic of Poland."

In October 1990, the Constitution was amended to curtail the term of President Jaruzelski. In December 1990, Lech Wałęsa became the first popularly elected President

of Poland. He named Jan Krzysztof Bielecki as Prime Minister, who served until October 1991.

Poland's first free Parliamentary elections were held in October 1991, drawing more than 100 parties with no party garnering more than 13% of the vote. Jan Olszewski—the candidate of five minority parties—succeeded in forming a coalition government which lasted until June 1992 when it was replaced by a coalition led by Hanna Suchocka.

In 1992 Embassy Warsaw's Political and Economic Sections received from the State Department a Group Superior Honor Award for outstanding reporting. The Award stated that it was specific to reporting on the 1991 Parliamentary elections, but friends in the Department told us that those submitting the nomination used the election as a vehicle to acknowledge a steady stream of reporting going back to the beginning of the transformation.

About the same time, Mark Canning, a USIA Junior Officer Trainee, rotated into the Economic Section for several weeks. We assigned him to develop an in-depth report on the state of the Polish private sector. This topic had long been of interest to us and Washington. When Commerce Secretary Mosbacher visited Warsaw in 1989 he asked for meetings with the Polish private sector. I recall Commercial Attaché Edgar Fulton quipping: "Well, there are 1,000 Zapiekanki (a Polish sandwich) street vendors, but I'm hard pressed to think of anyone else." When Canning joined us, we were two years into the transformation, and we wanted to document as best we could what had transpired. We knew about cottage industry entrepreneurs under Communism and saw evidence of businesses sprouting up all over the place. We also discerned that there was a significant portion of the Polish population who had a strong vocation for entrepreneurship. So we were glad to have Canning, unburdened by day-to-day responsibilities, to do the research.

Canning did a stellar job of finding out what was going on. He wrote up his first draft, which was circulated around the section for comments based on each member's personal experience. As this was taking place, Canning came to me with understandable frustration that the report was not getting out. He recounted how when serving in the Political section he would write daily reports on the atmospherics of the election campaign and they would go right out. I explained that in the Foreign Service there is a case for doing spot reporting such as he did for the Political section and reporting on long-term trends. I added that the latter had a long-term shelf life while the former's was short term. Not so long afterward the report went out. Several weeks later we received a first-person cable from the Department, from no less than Robert Zoellick, then Undersecretary for Economic and Business Affairs (now President of the World Bank), commending us for providing an outstanding report on a topic of great personal interest to him. I believe Canning's internship in the Economic Section served him well, as it did us.

The Polish United Workers' Party (Communist) dissolved itself in January 1990; most of its property was turned over to the state. Within a year its headquarters would become the home of the newly formed Warsaw Stock Exchange. A new party—Social Democracy of the Polish Republic—was created in its place.

Q: I've talked to people who knew somebody who was in Poznan about the time you were there, maybe a little earlier; he was convinced that there were at least three dedicated Communists in Poland at the time. I mean, did you find that Communism had stuck at all?

WACKERBARTH: There might have been two more.

[Laughter]

Dissolving the Communist Party in January 1990 went quickly and there was hardly a trace left behind. Shortly thereafter the Embassy's Political section put in a report that there were more members of the Chess Players Association than members of the Communist Party at that particular point.

When Solidarity took over the reins of government, it made a rule regarding civil servants. They could retain their positions provided they did not occupy policy-level positions and were loyal to the new government. In our experience working with these people, we found virtually no reference to ideology. Rather we found they were pragmatists.

So I would concur with the view conveyed to you.

This brings to mind Polish President Wojciech Jaruzelski. While in Area Studies training, the instructor put out an alternate formulation on Jaruzelski and Martial Law. Without endorsing the idea, he said some people believed that Jaruzelski acted decisively in declaring Martial Law in December 1981 in order to forestall a Soviet invasion and possible occupation. He added that some might say this was a patriotic act. My reaction at the time was that this just seemed too far-fetched because, among other reasons, Martial Law had been imposed with a very heavy hand with widespread jailings, holding of people under house arrest, and travel restrictions.

By mid-year 1989 the situation looked different. A grand bargain had been reached at the Round Table talks which provided for Jaruzelski to serve as President while Solidarity gained the right to participate in elections to the degree that it could effectively function as an opposition party. In the ensuing months he showed he would keep faith with the compromise. In July he was elected to the Presidency by just one vote. Solidarity deputies in the Sejm did not vote for him, but also did not try to torpedo his election. In August, he acceded to the shift in political power and asked Solidarity's Tadeusz Mazowiecki to form a government. In October 1990 he accepted a Constitutional amendment terminating his presidency.

In July of 1989 President Bush visited Warsaw. At the time people were looking ahead to Poland being governed by the grand bargain reached at the Round Table in April. This meant Jaruzelski would be President working with a Sejm composed of two-thirds Communist and affiliated Party members—enough to veto any legislation—and a Senate virtually totally controlled by Solidarity. During the visit President Bush extended an invitation to Jaruzelski to visit Washington.

I recall the visit of a colleague from Embassy Beijing's Economic Section early in 1990. He was changing planes *en route* to Geneva to participate in trade talks. In our conversation I asked him why he thought Deng Xio Ping so readily gave up just about everything he had worked for by sending troops into Tiananmen Square. His thoughtful answer was that first and foremost Deng was a man of the Party and he just could not bear to see the grasp of the Party slip away. I replied that I found that interesting because in Poland, Jaruzelski faced a similar situation at about the same time in 1989.

By the fall of 1991 the fact of the invitation to Jaruzelski to visit Washington was awkward, but still out there. Ambassador Simons arranged to call on the former President with a view toward coaxing him to decline. I was serving as acting DCM at this time. In an informal chat with the Ambassador, I told him about my conversation with our Embassy Beijing colleague. When he returned from the call, the Ambassador said to me: "Paul, I quoted you." I about fell out of my chair, unable to think of what I might have said. The Ambassador told me how Jaruzelski had agreed that the invitation no longer had the same meaning and graciously declined. The Ambassador went on to say that he ended the call by telling Jaruzelski my story, ending with the short sentence *"Pan wybrał Polska"* (You, sir, chose Poland).

I very much remember to this day the day in January of 1990 when I was driving down Ujazdowskie Boulevard on the way to the Embassy and saw the red flag that said "Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains" was no longer there. I purchased a copy of the last edition of the Communist Party newspaper—*Trybuna Ludu*—and sent it to a Polish American friend in Virginia as a memento.

Q: What was happening on the financial front during this period?

WACKERBARTH: While the inconceivable—Poland's Communists transferring power peacefully to Solidarity—was taking place, the Polish economy was in serious disarray. Economic disintegration was more advanced than anywhere else in the Soviet bloc. There was a virtual failure to create any economic value at all in the country, no less improve the standard of living or even satisfy the peoples' basic consumer needs. Workers would joke about their wages saying: "We pretend to work, and they pretend to pay us." Also, shoppers would take their pay and rush out to buy goods of any kind that they could, because goods did not lose their value as fast as currency. In the face of all this there was a desperate urge on the part of the Communist leadership in its last months to somehow find political and social equilibrium. One might argue that indeed it was the absolutely awful state of the economy that motivated their willingness to hand over the reins of government.

One clearly identifiable indicator was the near-free fall of the exchange rate. In our own household experience, our first purchase of złotys —the Polish currency—(after arriving on August 1, 1989) was at a rate of 8,500 złotys to the dollar. Ten days later we got 10,500 złotys for our greenback. Ten days after that we got 13,200 złotys. Inflation was rampant at about 640% annual rate. This was bad enough, but it seemed as if there was no stopping it. In this environment the economy was essentially dollarized. Poles, when they could, turned to parallel (or black) markets to purchase foreign currency, goods and services. (Actually these markets functioned with remarkable efficiency, but this was no

way to sustain an economy over the long term.) For example, medical doctors working at government clinics and hospitals for the equivalent of $20 a month would treat patients in off hours for hard currency payment. Needed medicines were imported legally or otherwise from Germany in exchange for Deutsche Marks. As an example, a Polish physician living down the street from us had the equivalent of more than $11,000 taken from her house in a burglary.

A Polish friend of mine wrote a book: "The Distorted World of Soviet-type Economies," which describes the situation in the Communist period. In his Preface he tells a story about taking an American to an ice cream parlor, at about two o'clock in the afternoon. The place was just bustling, and the American observed that if it was this busy mid-afternoon, it must really be hopping when people get off work! My Polish friend replied saying *au contraire* (on the contrary). He explained that what happens is these people are basically goofing off from their job. "Most of them have some sort of a private business—usually some kind of cottage industry—going, and after work they get very, very serious and focused on production!"

While the Embassy had a pretty fair grasp of the gravity of the economic situation, we gained a great deal of insight into both the problem and the proposed solution during a call on Ambassador Davis by (then) Harvard Economist Jeffrey Sachs. (He now directs Columbia University's Earth Institute.) Dr. Sachs told us he had been contacted by the Communist leadership six months earlier. They had learned of his success in taming inflation in Bolivia and looked to him for advice. At that time Sachs said he declined, saying he couldn't work for a government that outlawed Solidarity. A few months later (post-Round Table) he signed-on as an advisor to Solidarity.

He began his brief with what I thought was an absolutely brilliant exposition on the history of hyperinflation and its consequences. He said he could clearly foresee the Polish situation deteriorating into one of the five worst instances of hyperinflation in history. I can't recall whether he actually said it, but it was certainly on my mind that the consequence of hyperinflation in Poland could have the same result as occurred in Germany in 1923—the inability to back a currency creating the kind of insecurity that was fertile soil for a demagogue. The point struck home; we did not want the Third Polish Republic to suffer the same fate as Germany's Weimar Republic.

Sachs then described the proposed antidote he had worked out with Solidarity counterparts. It is best described as "shock therapy"; its key element was setting a target exchange rate at the outset equal to the goal where it is believed it should be a year from now. Interest rates would be set high enough to support the target exchange rate rather than the more orthodox method of raising them incrementally over time. This way people could make planning decisions confident that the exchange rate would remain stable. Also, the country's borders would be open to the free flow of imports, meaning domestic products had to compete. As for state enterprises, they would be required to operate as businesses. They would no longer be able to borrow złotys—a currency with no backing—from the Central Bank to cover expenses. Previously these had been covered by loans to state-run enterprises. These were loans which no one ever really expected to be paid off. This was tough medicine because payrolls were among these expenses. In

many briefings I would describe the program using as an analogy having the dentist drill both sides of your mouth without Novocaine.

After the meeting, as we waited for an elevator, I asked Sachs if Solidarity Chairman (later President) Lech Wałęsa had been briefed on the proposed program. He replied that his Solidarity counterparts had taken it to him in Gdansk. After being briefed, Wałęsa had said something like: "It's tough, but we've got to do it—a tough program for a tough people." (Political cover from Wałęsa would prove essential to "shock therapy's" success). I then suggested Poland's current situation was similar to the time in September 1787 when a newsboy called out a question to Benjamin Franklin: "What's it going to be, Mr. Franklin, a Monarchy or a Republic?" Before I could complete my sentence, Sachs finished it for me: "...a Republic, if we can keep it!"

Q: Now, as we (the United States) saw things breaking, here you are at our Embassy in Poland and an Economic Counselor. We must have been thinking of what can we do to help this country get going and all. What sort of things were we proposing?

WACKERBARTH: We were very much seized with this, of course, when events happened so much faster than we anticipated in August of 1989, but the proposals came from the Poles themselves (with advice from Sachs who was working for Solidarity and not the U.S. Government). Fortunately, the Poles were organized for a decent response, because I recall my friends, working the issue back here in Washington, describing the atmosphere in September 1989 of people sort of gyrating in a flurry of activity, trying to figure out how we were going to be able to respond to the situation with the resources we had.

I remember the anticipation we had, when Prime Minister Mazowiecki was putting his Cabinet together, as to who would be the Finance Minister. My Deputy, Jack Spilsbury, and I had lunch with our principal contact at the Finance Ministry in early September and he shared with us the names he and his colleagues heard as possible candidates. I recall saying to him, whoever it is, we would like to put in a plug that there would be a bilateral meeting between the new Polish Finance Minister and our principals during the upcoming mid-September IMF (International Monetary Fund)/World Bank meeting. (Poland, like all other IMF and World Bank members, would be represented by their Finance Minister and Central Bank President, whoever that might be.)

Well, the person they named was Leszek Balcerowicz. He assumed the post on September 12, concurrently taking the position of Deputy Prime Minister. I think that he proved to be a very fortuitous choice. He had a sure-footed vision of what he wanted to accomplish. Also, he was energetic—he had been a middle-distance runner in college—and very down-to-earth. In the last months of the Communist regime the Polish Government had purchased a small fleet of Lancias (an Italian luxury car) in a deal that raised a lot of eyebrows and questions around the time. Balcerowicz declined using one; instead, he would travel around town in a well-weathered Polish Fiat. As an aside, I might mention once again how during the bleak period in the 1980s when Poland was under Martial Law, we made Newsweek magazines available to Polish contacts. Balcerowicz was one of the recipients. Then-Economic Officer John Cloud (later

Ambassador to Lithuania) would personally deliver a copy to him and chat about economics in Balcerowicz's spartan basement office at the Warsaw University.

We did not expect that the Poles would be able to come up with an economic plan in the short period of time before the IMF/World Bank meetings, but in fact, they did. I recall I was in Ambassador Davis's office when my deputy Jack Spilsbury knocked on the door and said, "I have a copy of the economic plan." I found myself more instinctively than thoughtfully blurting out to him: "Jack, is it coherent?" because the previous regime had been showing us economic plans right and left, seeking our support in getting one approved by the IMF, but their plans all seemed incoherent and inadequate. There were just too many fuzzy spots in terms of how they were going to bridge key gaps. This was on a Friday afternoon. We basically were able to get the program into English and into a cable over the weekend because the IMF/World Bank meetings, I think, were actually going to start in Washington on Sunday afternoon, September 17.

Well, the fact of the matter is, that Balcerowicz travelled to Washington with his plan. This meant that there was something tangible that the Bush administration could actually latch on to that had a coherent program behind it. A key element was to create a $2 billion stabilization fund with money provided by the United States and our Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] partners. The idea was that this would be something the Poles could draw on in the event there was a run on the złoty. The Stabilization Fund had an escape clause, so that if it looked like there was a serious run on the currency and there were serious policy problems, then payments would stop and there would be an emergency meeting of donors for the purpose of addressing the underlying problem. The United States was able to get our OECD partners on board. I think they were glad, as we were, that there was a coherent program, and that we had something that we all could work on together. During the time Balcerowicz was in Washington, Sachs was helpful in arranging key meetings to shore up U.S. political support.

Q: What were the elements of the Balcerowicz plan?

WACKERBARTH: The Balcerowicz Plan, which is based on the concept of "shock therapy," involved the sudden release of price and currency controls, withdrawing subsidies to state enterprises, and immediate trade liberalization. The large-scale privatization of previously public-owned assets was a longer term goal.

Job number 1 was stabilization of the economy. This meant, among other things, ending high inflation and establishing a truly convertible currency. Specifically, this meant setting the exchange rate at 9500 złotys to the dollar right away and having the Polish Central bank prepared to sustain it.

This would be accomplished by a process of liberalization. Prices would be freed from controls, private economic activity would be legalized, the borders would be opened for the free flow of exports and imports, state enterprises would have to behave as businesses operating the same way as their private sector peers, and a national commercial code would be re-established. The latter would involve passing 10 new laws. The Commercial

Code in effect during the period between World War I and World War II would provide a foundation.

Privatization: Over time, assets owned by the Polish state would be transferred to private ownership with all deliberate speed.

Poland's economy would be harmonized with the European Community (which would later become the European Union).

Social benefits such as health care and pensions, among others, would be reformed.

In public statements, Balcerowicz would defend its velocity and reach by saying: "You don't jump over a chasm in two leaps."

Q: What role did the Embassy play in this shock treatment plan?

WACKERBARTH: We did not have a direct role, as it was a Polish plan drawn which was not a result of our advice and counsel. It was developed by Polish economists working with advisors such as Sachs and Stanislas Gomulka, a London School of Economics economist. Our position was to be supportive. This is the Polish plan, including key institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Our leadership in putting together the Stabilization Fund was key.

In connection with this supportive roIe, I would add that in early December 1989, the United States sent a large, high-powered, 50-member delegation composed, among others, of three members of the Cabinet, a number of CEOs from Fortune 100 (Fortune Magazine's list of the top 100 companies) Corporations from different sectors of our economy. The senior Cabinet member was Agriculture Secretary Clayton Yeutter; also included were Secretary of Labor Elizabeth Dole and Secretary of Commerce Robert Mosbacher. Another member was the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, Michael Boskin. Additionally, several distinguished academics were on board. Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady was notably absent. My colleagues and I could only speculate as to why he was not included. Our best (educated) guess was that he did not want confrontation on Poland's foreign debt overhang. We regarded the inclusion of Boskin as a way of finessing Brady's absence. Jeffrey Sachs asked our help in getting himself named to the delegation. We conveyed this to the State Department, but did not obtain concurrence. The answer came in an awkwardly worded cable. It started out with a standard pro-forma statement of regret. But then in a sentence—that appeared to be a last-minute add-on—the message said: "The inclusion of Dr. Sachs is neither acceptable nor desirable." The scuttlebutt was that Sachs had ruffled some feathers in counseling other debtor nations.

Essentially the Poles used the visit to explain what they were trying to do and why they were following the course chosen. Addressing this group was an opportunity for them to garner broad U.S. support, as well as making the case for investment.

December 1989 was an intense month in terms of moving things along. Providing logistical support for a planeload of high-powered political leaders, executives, and academics was quite an effort in and of itself, but there was a lot more going on.

In mid-month, IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus came to Warsaw to confer with the Poles. After the bi-lateral meetings, a meeting, hosted by the French Ambassador, was scheduled so that Camdessus could brief the OECD Ambassadors or their representatives. There was logic in having the French take the lead as France had hosted the Group of 7 (countries with the largest economies) earlier that year and Camdessus, himself, was French. However, the French Ambassador added a formidable complication in insisting that the briefing take place in the French language. I was tapped to represent our Embassy, accompanied by Helen La Lime, a consular officer who was virtually fluent in French (as I don't know French). She protested that she didn't know much about economics, but I assured her that if she just wrote down what she heard, things would turn out alright. Camdessus began his talk saying he understood the language of the briefing was French and that he would comply, but noted this was somewhat awkward as his briefing notes were in English. Looking around the room I could see that I was not the only person present stoically pretending to understand. For example, the Japanese Ambassador was visibly straight-faced. I especially took note of the pained expression of my Australian counterpart whose Foreign Minister was due in town the next day. So after the meeting I invited him to come back to the Embassy with me to review Helen's transcript. Because of her good efforts we were both able in a timely manner to inform our principals as to what Camdessus had said.

Christmas day fell on Sunday in 1989. In accordance with local custom, government offices and Foreign Embassies dismissed their employees midday on Friday. On Thursday evening, after the Embassy had closed for the day, the Polish Central Bank General Counsel brought a document received by FAX from the U.S. Treasury Department. It was an agreement on the U.S. contribution to the Stabilization Fund and it needed the signatures of the Polish Finance Minister and Central Bank. Time was of the essence as the next week in Washington would be short. The problem was some of the language was garbled in transmission. Our initial idea was to call Washington and ask them to re-transmit. But we were unable to get a dial tone even to reach the international operator to place the trans-oceanic call. Able to direct dial phones throughout Europe, we tried calling a colleague's friend in Paris who might call Treasury and ask them to contact us, but that didn't work. Our next ploy was to send the agreement to Washington by cable and have them cable it back to us by morning. This meant that the duty communicator would have to come into the Embassy to transmit it. After waiting for his arrival for some time we called his home and learned he was coming in on the city bus, as his own car had not yet been delivered.

The next morning we received a reply from Treasury and were able to get a clean document to the Central Bank President, who signed it quickly. Balcerowicz, on the other hand, said he needed Council of Ministers concurrence, which he expected by mid-day. As the Embassy was closing down, we checked with the Marriott Hotel Business Center to be sure there would be an available FAX machine. Hour after hour passed with no word from Balcerowicz. Finally, after 8 p.m. we received a signed document. However, when we went to FAX it, the Marriott couldn't get a dial tone. The Central Bank's General Counsel called his Vice President who in turn contacted the Deputy Minister of Communications, imploring him to get a dial tone to the Marriott Business Center. The

document was transmitted just in time to allow for the release of funds and enable Poland to implement its new Economic Program with the Stabilization Fund backing it in place.

The Program went into effect on January 1, 1990. Within a couple of nervous weeks, the shelves of stores filled up. Prices rose. For example, the price of a standard package of meat rose from 1000 złotys to 5000 złotys. This may seem steep, but the new price was competitive with the informal (black) market price without the hassle. Unemployment surged. State enterprises couldn't sustain employment levels with their products having to compete with imports and nascent Polish private sector businesses. It would be a stretch to say that the austerity program enjoyed broad popular support. At best there was what I would describe as "stiff upper lip" acceptance, based on grudging realization that transition involved some pain. And the Poles were no strangers to hardship as they had endured it under conditions where they could not choose their leadership. The economic program was backed by 45% of the population at the outset, but dipped to 21% in 1991. In the face of potential discontent Lech Wałęsa's political cover was of the utmost importance. He sought and gained election to the office of President in late 1990.

The Polish economy in fact shrank. GDP dipped in 1990 and 1991, but caught up to the 3rd quarter 1989 by July 1992. It would advance 2.6% in 1992 and continue to ascend at a respectable average rate of 4.5% per year. In 1990 GDP per capita was estimated at 30% of most advanced EU countries. It is now 45 %. At this rate by 2030 Poland's economy would be 70-80% of EU's most advanced economies. Growth continues even during the current "Great Recession." In 2009 it would be the only country in Europe to have its economy grow.

In September 1990, Economics Nobel Prize laureate Milton Friedman visited Warsaw. I was named Control Officer, which meant I was in charge of coordinating arrangements including preparing a guest list and seating chart for a luncheon with Polish Officials at the Ambassador's residence. Friedman was in general quite supportive of the Polish post-Communist stabilization program, but at the luncheon he reportedly got into a disagreement with Polish Finance Minister Balcerowicz—the architect of post-war Poland's economy—over exchange rate policy. In my mind, I attribute this to the difference between theory and governance. Balcerowicz was undertaking a tough program, but he had to navigate its political limits.

I also made a special effort to introduce Friedman to my friend Deputy Finance Minister Stefan Kavalec. Friedman and his wife Ruth had done a television series on freedom and I thought he should meet someone who was willing to put himself on the line for his beliefs. When imprisoned during Martial Law in the early 1980s, Kavalec sent for economics books so he could use the time to learn a new discipline. Kavalec told Friedman he had been a mathematician before that time. Friedman said he started out too as a mathematician. On a personal level, Milton and Ruth Friedman were the nicest people you would want to know. They were down to earth and virtually without pretense.

Monitoring the Polish economy, and the financial sector in particular, would dominate the work of the Embassy's Economic section for the remainder of my tour of duty. The Polish government and the IMF worked out a stabilization agreement. This was important because most international assistance including some U.S. programs was tied to

compliance with this agreement, so we would focus on how well the Poles were coming along in meeting targets, holding our breath and crossing our fingers at times. The Fund sent a resident representative who assumed duties in September 1990. The World Bank followed suit in early 1991 by sending a resident representative to oversee its assistance programs which included a stabilization plan. We maintained close contact with both organizations as well as our colleagues from OECD embassies.

We would also pay careful attention to the pace of privatization (slow), inflation, and the exchange rate as well as the Polish Government budget. And we were interested in institutional transformation in areas such as health and education. In 1991 the Warsaw Stock Exchange opened with the traders wearing red braces (suspenders) mimicking their Wall Street counterparts. The Exchange would be housed in the former headquarters of the Polish Communist Party, because it had first-rate communications facilities, something unusual in Poland at that time.

(Please see below for more in-depth discussions of such matters as debt relief, bilateral assistance, and trade and investment issues.)

Q: You mentioned that the pace of privatization was slow—may I draw you out on that?

WACKERBARTH: I believe this was a case where conscientious governance intersected with politics. That's not to say that the political players were not conscientious. It's just that different social values were at stake. In the first instance the national conversation was largely among parties wanting to do the right thing. Their objectives were not necessarily mutually exclusive. Later (after my departure in 1992) I understand the scoundrels—in many cases ex-Communist apparatchiks—figured out how to play the privatization game to their advantage.

From a governance standpoint there was a desire to get the proper value out of the medium/large and large state enterprises and to transform them into viable private businesses strong enough to compete in the new post-Communist economy. International consultants were contracted to carry out the valuations. This was by definition a slow, laborious process. But also the fact that the enterprises were owned by the Polish people needed to be forthrightly addressed. So there was the question of how to transfer ownership into the hands of all citizens. And this discussion was taking place in a climate of deep economic recession, very high unemployment, and the opportunity for the public to participate in free and fair elections for the first time.

In 1990 the Polish Congress passed a law converting state enterprises into corporations with a view of transferring their ownership as businesses on a case-by-case basis once valuation could be determined. The law also provided for liquidation by auction, a methodology that was applied to medium/small and small firms. The latter process moved ahead much faster such that by the end of 1990 an estimated 70% of small businesses had been privatized. At the same time new small private firms were sprouting up quite rapidly. Small business private sector growth was one bright spot in an otherwise pretty dismal economy.

In 1991 the authorities settled on a method called "mass privatization." The idea was to create six investment groups which essentially functioned as mutual funds. One share in each of the investment groups was distributed to every Polish citizen over age 18 such that each received one share in each of the investment groups. The investment groups would hold 60% of the shares—to manage on behalf of the citizen holders, as I understand it—30% were to be retained by the Treasury, and 10% of the shares would go to workers for free.

The Polish Government set ambitious goals for the speed of privatization. The expectation was that implementation of these goals would be a quick success. These efforts notwithstanding, the privatization of medium-large and large enterprises moved slowly during my time serving in Poland (1989-1992). It would take much more time than envisioned for new institutions to take hold and for the populace to figure out how to invest.

Q: Now, looking at Polish industry, one always thinks of the shipyards and all this. What was our estimate at the time? Did we see them becoming responsive to sort of the new economics of the world service industries, or did we think that they were going to be non-competitive?

WACKERBARTH: Well, we saw the future in privatization, but I think we probably overvalued the Polish industrial capacity. What we learned once we started going out and visiting the firms was that, as a practical matter, it was probably easier to start over and to build a new factory rather than to try and reconfigure the old plant equipment on a profitable basis. (In this context, please see below under discussion of Foreign Investment, GM's experience with a joint venture with Polish auto maker FSO.)

I recall during my year at the National War College (1987-88), a speaker estimated East Germany's industrial capacity as on a par with that of Great Britain. Once the Berlin Wall came down it quickly became clear that this was fiction. I think this applied to much of Poland's industrial base as well.

There also was the fact that markets shifted. I remember visiting a tank factory which manufactured M55 and M72 tanks for export to Warsaw Pact allies. My colleagues in the Defense Attaché's Office told me that these vehicles had a good reputation. But the image that sticks in my mind was that the facility had unsold tanks all over the place. It reminded me of when I came back from a tour of duty in 1974. It was during an economic downturn. After shopping around, I visited a dealership in Arlington, Virginia, that had cars parked in every nook and cranny including some straddling the sidewalk. Needless to say, I knew I could get the deal I wanted on a new Dodge. But the problem with the tanks was that however good their quality, there were no longer any buyers at any price.

On your specific mention of shipyards—that's an interesting story. The Gdansk Shipyard is rightly iconic. It was the place where Lech Wałęsa jumped over the wall launching Solidarity in 1980. In the spring of 1989, the Communist government slated it for closure. But in May 1989, Barbara Piasecka Johnson, Polish-born Johnson & Johnson pharmaceutical fortune heiress (wife and one-time caregiver of J&J heir J. Seward

Johnson) told Wałęsa she was prepared to invest as much as $200 million into the Gdansk works. Wałęsa, at the time Solidarity's leader, hailed the plan to place the state-owned shipyard in private hands as being "at the heart of Polish reform—a model for other industries." In June 1989, she signed a letter of intent saying she would buy a 55 percent stake in the shipyard by December 31, subject to its books and operations being in shape. The shipyard's workers reportedly were convinced that with her money and enthusiasm and with their expertise, hard work, and comparatively low wages, the yard could compete with the best in the world, even South Korea's fabled low-cost shipbuilders. But then Mrs. Johnson's accountants moved in and made a determination that the shipyard could only be profitable by paying low wages to half the workforce and the deal collapsed. My understanding is that the shipyard now functions as a museum. On the other hand, the shipyard at Szczecin was successfully privatized, but would go into bankruptcy several years later.

To answer your question, overall, I think that the real key to the value of Polish industry was not so much the worth of the plant and equipment, but in the value of the opportunity of gaining a foothold in an emerging market.

Q: Were there other examples of shock therapy—good, or bad, or what—elsewhere, you know, because we're always looking for models of other places?

WACKERBARTH: Well, the Polish Communist regime, most likely in desperation, contacted Sachs in early 1989 because "Shock therapy" had arrested inflation in Bolivia. After the Round Table talks, Solidarity would take on Sachs as an advisor probably for the same reasons. Also, something akin to "Shock Therapy" was applied in Pinochet's Chile by the "Chicago Boys" (acolytes of Nobel laureate Milton Friedman, mostly from the University of Chicago). Sachs' efforts to apply the model in post-Communist Russia fell flat on their face for all practical purposes. I have not studied these examples closely and would refer anyone seeking a more in-depth answer to this question to Sachs' book "The End of Poverty."

As far as much of the Polish population was concerned, the extent of their knowledge of Bolivia was learning how to say Caramba! And they would ask: "What does Bolivia have to do with us?" After all, it was an innovative strategy, and the waters were pretty much uncharted.

I might add that in February 2001 I had a question from a student, a very astute student, from Santa Clara University asking: Why did Solidarity pick this? How could a labor union choose such an austere program and one that would lead to large-scale unemployment? (The student was writing her senior paper on the transformation in Poland). In my reply I told her I thought the real answer was the experience in Germany (actually also in Poland) in the 1920s. I think what was foremost on peoples' minds in Warsaw in 1989 was the history of the 1920s German currency, the old Reichsmark. There are iconic pictures of people taking wheelbarrows full of money to the supermarket in those days. As the Reichsmark fell apart in the early 1920s, the perception was that if the Weimar Republic couldn't maintain the value of the national currency, it effectively couldn't govern, creating fertile soil for the rise of a demagogue. This history was not lost on Solidarity. Its leaders did not want the Third Polish Republic to suffer the fate of the

Weimar Republic. After all, I strongly believe one of the reasons the Communists walked away from leadership was that the economic situation was basically so desperate that the Communists saw no advantage in being identified with its failure or collapse.

Q: What about the foreign debt overhang and debt relief?

WACKERBARTH: Poland entered the post-Communist period with a $42 million debt overhang. In 1989 Poland was unable to service this debt. This posed a second threat (in addition to financial stabilization) to the nascent Third Republic. There was real and present danger that payments could seriously cripple the economy as occurred with the Weimar Republic in Germany in the 1920s. The debt had its origin in 1970s loans by Export-Import-type banks to finance industrial expansion, which never paid for itself as projected. Opposite to most debtor nations, three quarters of the debt (or about $31 million) was owed to governments, as the loans in most instances came from institutions similar to the U.S. Export-Import Bank. Loans from these Government Export Financing banks supported the import of capital (or production goods) into Poland during the (Communist leader Edward) Gierek era in the early 1970s.The other quarter or about $10.5 million was owed to private banks. Germany had the largest share followed by (interestingly) Brazil. The U.S. was in a distant fourth place.

For years, creditors, including the U.S., were staunchly opposed to giving Communist Poland any break on repaying this debt. And this attitude did not immediately evaporate with the 1989 political opening. Buttressing this was the concept of "moral hazard," perhaps best described as a situation in which a party insulated from risk behaves differently from how it would behave if it were fully exposed to the risk. It arises because an individual or institution does not take the full consequences and responsibilities of its actions, and therefore has a tendency to act less carefully than it otherwise would, leaving another party to hold some responsibility for the consequences of those actions. U.S. Treasury Under Secretary David Mulford long was well-known in Washington as a point man for this stance.

The Embassy understood that this was U.S. policy, but also thought that Poland's remarkable political transformation was another dimension that ought to be taken into account. So we would send in reports basically documenting how much of a problem it was to have this debt overhang. Well, finally, in early 1991 there was a breakthrough. As with many things, it came in a round-about way.

In the summer of 1990 Congressman David Obey—who I believe is of Polish extraction—visited Warsaw with a Congressional delegation. At that time, he chaired the powerful House Foreign Operations subcommittee on Foreign Operations. In scheduling a meeting with the Delegation, Balcerowicz strongly expressed his general preference for smaller meetings with key players. This was counter to Obey's strong preference to have every Delegation member present. After quite a bit of back-and-forth on this, Balcerowicz in the end agreed.

This turned out fortuitous for Poland. Upon his return to the United States, Obey put a hold on funding the new EBRD (European Bank for Economic Development), a measure very important to the Treasury Department. Obey's condition for releasing the hold was

the rescheduling of 70 percent of Poland's foreign debt. So the hard-nosed Mr. Mulford audaciously set out to reschedule 70 percent of Poland's debt with government creditors.

In February 1991 Mulford stopped in Warsaw *en route* to a G-7 Sherpas' (Undersecretaries who prepare agenda items for their principals at G-7 and other Summits) meeting, requesting that he call on Wałęsa. Prior to the meeting he asked Country Team members how to best relate to Wałęsa. Political counselor (later Ambassador) Dan Fried likened Wałęsa to President Reagan in the respect that while Wałęsa wasn't much on details, he had the knack of intuitively identifying trends, seeing them sooner and with greater clarity than just about anyone else.

As we walked into the room, the Polish President, unaccompanied by staff, was wearing a shirt and tie under a jacket which neither matched nor coordinated with his trousers. His shoes were of the basket-weave variety. Seated next to him I felt like we were just a couple of working-class guys slogging down beers at a local pub. That was until Wałęsa got up to speak and the room seemed to rapidly fill with his charisma.

When Mulford explained his effort to secure rescheduling for $17 million, Wałęsa, who had not been briefed, pointed out that Poland's official debt was $31 million. Wałęsa then exclaimed: "You're giving me a car with only three wheels!" Mulford politely explained that securing support for rescheduling as much as 70% of the debt was pushing the envelope beyond the realm of the possible and that he would have to press hard at the upcoming Sherpas' meeting to get Poland's other creditors to concur. The meeting ended cordially with Wałęsa thanking Mulford for his good efforts.

Mulford went on to the several-day Sherpas' meeting. There Mulford would repeatedly set out his debt rescheduling to his G-7 counterparts. In the first instance, Mulford reportedly answered every protest on their part by saying "...but, we're going to do it." By the end of the Sherpas' meeting Mulford had worn down staunch opposition as the other six countries concurred**.** Actually Mulford only got rescheduling of 60% of the debt from his Sherpa counterparts. In order to get the additional 10%, he won agreement for debt-for-nature swaps. Those who knew Mulford for a long time were pleased, but more than a little surprised that he had morphed into an environmentalist.

By the time Mulford returned to Warsaw, Wałęsa had been informed by staff what a good deal Poland was getting and was quite pleased.

A few months later, Wałęsa was in Washington where one of his meetings was with Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady. During the meeting Mulford gave Wałęsa a present. When he opened the package, he saw that it was a toy model of a 3-wheeled car. [Laughter] Also during that meeting, Ambassador Simons chimed in with the comment that "except for Mrs. Mulford" (who was not present) "all the friends David has left in the world are in this room." [Laughter]

In Germany there was reportedly some rear-guard sniping over the agreement. When Obey heard there might be some hesitation on Germany's part, he put out a press release saying he was contemplating a resolution to reopen Germany's WWI debt.

In the spring of 1991, the Paris Club (composed of government creditors) formally agreed to the $17 million debt rescheduling. Later the London Club (composed of commercial bank creditors) rescheduled their share of Poland's debt along the same lines. We heard back from the Paris Cub meeting that Brazil initially objected to being told it must go along with what was agreed among the G-7 but backed off when reminded of its own substantial indebtedness.

Q: What role did U.S. investment play in the transformation?

WACKERBARTH: In the 1990s supporting U.S. investment in Poland and other countries in the region was seen as development policy as well as support for U.S. business. Deputy Secretary Eagleburger's formulation was that financing for development in the 1990s would have to come from direct private investment. In the 1950s development capital was provided on a nation-to-nation basis, in the 1960s the money came from international development agencies such as the World Bank and regional development banks, and in the 1970s it came from sovereign lending by large commercial banks. The 1980s was described as a "lost decade" in development financing terms. Now it was time for U.S. investors to step up to the plate. Among his efforts in support of this concept, Eagleburger promulgated a "Business Bill of Rights" and stated that American firms should know that their government is interested and active on their behalf and that business people should know that the State Department is their friend and ally.

Poland was not totally devoid of foreign investment—including U.S. direct foreign investment—prior to 1989. Poland's Communist government took measures to attract foreign investors as early as the mid-1970s, but the response was scant. Ethnic Poles living outside Poland as expatriates—"Polonia"—were specifically (but not exclusively)

targeted in these efforts. One Polish-American had a venture providing animation for Hanna-Barbera; another had a brickyard. In the 1980s foreign investors were encouraged by tax concessions, the gradual removal of restrictions on repatriation of profits, and allowing foreign firms to participate in joint ventures. Still, by 1989, direct foreign investment's role in the Polish economy is described as insignificant.

In August 1989 a big American nameplate appeared in Warsaw with the opening of the 518-room Warsaw Marriott—the chain's 500th hotel. The Marriott Corporation had a one-third equity stake in the venture, but actually put up no cash. It received the equity in exchange for a link to its reservation network and participation in its highly respected training programs. A veteran Marriott executive, Haile Aguilar, was tapped as Manager. I don't know whether Marriott took this into consideration, but the choice struck me as propitious as Aguilar started with the chain as a busboy in Los Angeles and worked his way up through the ranks. This may have given him an edge in relating to his Polish work force. Concerned that experienced employees might find it difficult to transition to Western standards, Aguilar decided to start from scratch. So the criterion for getting a coveted job at the Marriott was to never ever previously have worked for a Polish hotel. "We figured it would be easier to train them ourselves from the start than to try to get them to unlearn the work attitudes they had before, and we were right," Aguilar said at the time. My observation was that Aguilar was anything but a top-down manager, but rather one that would listen to subordinates and take their suggestions into account. In any case, during my time in Warsaw, seasoned international travelers, American and European, repeatedly told me that service at the Marriott was on a par with or even better than at any hotel where they had stayed in Europe.

With the onset of Poland's political transformation in 1989, interest in the market began to develop among American firms. Initially, we perceived a certain reticence on their part to stake a claim. One exception was Procter & Gamble. At a dinner in January 1990, I was able to draw out the Procter & Gamble CEO on why there was so much emphasis on Poland for his firm. He explained it this way: "If you look at the world, you can see the market share is tied up pretty tight. Procter & Gamble can only make incremental gains—fractions of a percent—in most of the world in market share; but a whole new part of the world is opening up, and we want to be there on the ground floor." I think Procter & Gamble was more astute than a lot of U.S. investors who seemed to be taking a wait-and-see stance in the early post-Communist years. We were concerned that American firms not lose out to their competitors who seemed quicker to plant their company flag. What we kept saying in our briefings was: Look, the Polish economy may not be that big a deal now, but it will become one; and when it becomes one, the people who basically laid their foundations now are the ones that are going to benefit from it. I used to describe a nation of 38 million repressed shoppers who suddenly had money in their pockets that was all of a sudden worth something.

Starting about mid-1990 the pace of U.S. investment picked up dramatically. Later that year the American Chamber of Commerce was started. It would grow rapidly to more than 160 members by 1993. At that time American firms were described as the most active foreign investors in Poland. Half of the Chamber's large current membership was active in Poland by 1995.

The value of Direct Foreign Investment overall or by an individual country is hard to measure. One report puts Direct Foreign Investment in Poland in 1989 at $89 million, growing to $300 million by 1992 and $2.5 billion by 1995. An estimate placed it at $163 billion in 2008. A chart prepared for the American Chamber of Commerce in Poland put cumulative U.S. direct investment stock in Poland at about $100 million in 1992, $1 billion by 1995, and reaching $15.6 billion by 2008. The Chamber states that the cumulative value of U.S. direct investment in Poland currently could exceed $20 billion.

Numerous American trade and investment missions would visit Warsaw during our time there. Mentioned above is the December 1989 delegation composed of four members of President Bush's Cabinet. In the Spring of 1990 a similar delegation, led by former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, would visit. A year later there would be an investment mission led by Wall Street financier and former Deputy Secretary of State John Whitehead. Commerce Secretary Mosbacher brought businessmen with him on his visits. The Overseas Private Investment Corporation brought out potential investors as well. In addition, there were numerous state and local trade missions. On the State level I recall specifically visits by Illinois Governor James R. Thompson and Maryland Governor William Donald Schaefer. It is hard to measure the impact of these visits, but they sure kept the Embassy and our Polish counterparts busy.

Two particular U.S. ventures stand out in my mind: General Motors and Gerber Baby Products. They also serve as illustrations of the opportunities and challenges involved in investing in the newly transformed Polish market. In February 1992, General Motors would sign a $75 million joint venture with the Polish State-owned firm FSO to produce Opel cars in Warsaw. The arrangement called for the creation of a new company with FSO's stake consisting of its land and buildings. As I remember it, General Motors put up a new plant in the firm's parking lot.

GM essentially was starting from scratch on Polish turf without reference to their partner's prior production. I had visited the FSO plant in June 1990 and was frankly appalled by some of the production methods. I still carry an image in my mind of a woman dipping a metal part barehanded into a container containing a thick brown liquid. Moreover, even though Poland was just pulling out of a very deep recession, GM observed that the already existing brisk market for imported cars rendered manufacturing a domestic one up to Western standards a risk worth taking. GM also took note of restiveness in the Polish Parliament which posed a potential threat to financial stability yet expressed publicly a willingness to take on that risk as well. The other major Polish auto maker, FSM, had already signed a cooperation agreement with Fiat S.p.A. of Italy to produce a subcompact for sale in Western Europe and Poland—the Cinquecento.

In the winter of 1992 I was invited to attend the launching of a new venture stemming from the purchase of the Alima fruit juice state enterprise in Rzeszow in Southeastern Poland by Gerber Products. Gerber reportedly made the investment to obtain a lower cost plant for making processed baby food for the European market and introducing its products to the Polish and other East European markets. The initial price worked out with Polish Privatization was said to be $25 million; Gerber reportedly went on to invest another $60 million in upgrades over the next several years.

I recall the event as a very festive occasion. Although Rzeszow is a small industrial city (pop. about 185,000) with several factories, I felt as if I were in a single plant company town. The mayor and other community leaders as well as the Alima employees were near-exuberant to have an enterprise that would sustain employment there. Gerber is based in a very small town, Fremont, Michigan, and I noted that similarity. Nonetheless I came away with a gnawing sense that expectations might be too high as the community seemed looking for a paternalistic relationship from Gerber not characteristic of a U.S. business.

Gerber's introducing a new product into a post-Communist market and its efforts to transform a formerly socialist work force have been the subject of several books and articles and numerous Business School case studies. On the marketing side it had to carve out a niche for a product—processed baby food—that consumers didn't know they had any need for. In order to acquire fruit and vegetables for their product that met the firm's global taste standards, it needed to have local producers change fertilizer inputs (in the case of carrots) and introduce new varieties (of apples). Sanitation standards for raising chickens had to be upgraded and workers had to cease smoking tobacco on the production line. Gerber hired as its product development manager a Polish academic who gained familiarity with U.S. Food and Drug Administration practices while on a fellowship at Rutgers University. She applied similar standards to Gerber production at the Alima-Gerber factory.

A 2004 prize-winning book by sociologist Elizabeth Dunn—Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of Labor (Culture and Society After Socialism)—addresses how labor and management struggled to adjust to the new order. As stated in the publisher's book description: "Alima-Gerber instituted rigid quality control, job evaluation, and training methods, and developed sophisticated distribution techniques. The core principle underlying these goals and strategies, the author finds, is the belief that in order to produce goods for a capitalist market, workers for a capitalist enterprise must also be produced. Working side-by-side with Alima-Gerber employees, Dunn saw firsthand how the new techniques attempted to change not only the organization of production, but also the workers' identities. Her seamless, engaging narrative shows how the employees resisted, redefined, and negotiated work processes for themselves."

Checking trade directories, I find Alima-Gerber is very much a going concern in late 2011. It was acquired by Nestlé in 2007.

Just prior to departing post in July 1992 I asked our summer intern to do a report on two new American investments. Southwestern Bell launched cellular telephone service that month and McDonalds opened its first restaurant in Poland. As I signed off on the cable report, I thought these investments were symbolic of how much Poland had changed in the three years of my tour of duty as Economic Counselor at Embassy Warsaw.

Q: And what about trade?

WACKERBARTH: Poland's trade was heavily weighted toward the Soviet bloc prior to 1989 and since then has been reoriented toward Western Europe. Now its principal trading partner is Germany, accounting for more than a quarter of both exports and

imports. Five European countries account for about a third of two-way trade. China accounts for about 6% of imports. In preparing the Economic Trends Report for 1990, we were dismayed to learn that the largest U.S. export to Poland was used clothing.

Trade expansion was an important theme of the first Bush administration's foreign economic policy. This was based on the view, held by most economists, that trade is the most significant factor in promoting growth, in addition to providing income and profits and employment opportunities in the exporting country.

Among the initiatives that came out of President Wałęsa's visit to Washington in March 1991 was a "Trade Enhancement Initiative for Central and Eastern Europe." In announcing the initiative President Bush said: "The economic transformation of these countries will depend greatly on increased trade and access to world markets." In my mind I link this with a concept attributed to Under Secretary of State (now World Bank President) Robert Zoellick that it was important to "anchor the Central and East European countries to the West through trade." In May 1991 a delegation of working-level officials from USTR, the Commerce Department, the International Trade Administration, and the State Department (there may have been others) came out to Warsaw on a fact-finding mission.

In July the Initiative was formally announced by the White House. It called for expanded market access for countries in transformation by liberalizing quotas on textiles by renegotiating bilateral agreements, on cheese by increasing country access for cheeses covered by the quotas, and adjusting quotas on steel. Additionally, it invited submission of petitions for new products under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP—duty free) program and pledged to review previously rejected petitions. Also, it offered technical assistance in preparing GSP petitions. Further, the United States pledged to take precautions that U.S. agricultural products' subsidies avoid displacing agricultural exports from Central and East European countries. And the Initiative committed U.S. help in building the export performance of countries in transformation through targeting technical assistance toward setting up export and investment promotion programs and export financing programs meeting Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) guidelines. Another dimension was additional training in management and marketing and advice on tariff restructuring, customs service operations, and standards development. Moreover, President Bush said he would urge G-7 partners to take parallel measures at the upcoming July 1991 London Summit.

The week after the Trade Enhancement Initiative fact-finding team was in Warsaw in May 1991, USTR sent another team out to Warsaw to meet with Foreign Ministry Officials on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). We wondered why USTR had to send additional people on trade issues in successive weeks. We thought the USTR official already in-country could also discuss IPR issues. However, I don't think she even mentioned the topic until we asked her about the upcoming visit. For our part, the fact was we didn't understand the gravity of the IPR situation. Washington had not alerted us. USTR was responding, as required by law, to a petition from U.S. industry that the Poles' failure to meet IPR standards was causing financial loss. This was highly predictable under the circumstances. During Communism, sneaking in pirated music and motion pictures from the West was an assertion of freedom if not a patriotic act. There was a

brisk and near-open trade in these media as well as knock-off fashion-labeled clothing at informal markets. Polish officials in the Solidarity Government recognized the need to put an IPR regime in place. Indeed, more than six months earlier a Deputy Foreign Trade Minister told me that Poland would follow through on this because "if it wanted to be part of the West, it would have to bring things up to the West's standards." But reforming IPR did not make the shortlist on anyone's agenda during an exceedingly busy time.

USTR's quasi-standard response in these instances is to work out a plan for reforming the IPR regime with the offending government. Tagged as negotiations, there in fact is very little room for USTR to offer concessions, although sanctions could be forestalled by showing progress. Poland was represented in the talks by the Foreign Ministry's Western Hemisphere Director Zbigniew Lewicki. Unlike most of his Foreign Ministry colleagues, Lewicki had no prior diplomatic experience. He came into the Ministry from an academic position as Head of the American Studies Department at Warsaw University. The upshot of the May 1991 visit was Lewicki taking note of what needed to be done on the IPR front. In October Lewicki traveled to Washington and told USTR officials he would fix things. Essentially, he over-promised and upon return to Warsaw found he could only under-deliver. His initial offer exceeded the political limits and he had to retreat from it. My recollection is that in a subsequent Warsaw meeting he yielded something short of what he said he would do when in Washington. Meanwhile, in a conversation with Ambassador Simons, a highly respected Deputy Foreign Minister described his perception of USTR's negotiating tactics as "on a par or worse than the Soviets" as it seemed USTR was pocketing concessions and then coming back wanting more. I recall Ambassador Simons saying to me: "Trade is what you do to your friends."

If my memory serves me correctly, in 1992 the Polish Government made commitments on IPR sufficient to forestall U.S. sanctions. In the 1990s Poland passed legislation with a view toward bringing its copyright, patent, and trademark regimes in line with World Trade Organization standards.

A December 1993 conversation in Brasilia with Poland's Ambassador to Brazil about Polish Christmas carols somehow got on to the topic of IPR. The Ambassador told me that Lewicki had asked her to report on U.S. negotiations with Brazil.

In December 1996 I participated in a seminar on negotiations at the Foreign Service Institute. The USTR chief negotiator was one of the scheduled speakers. As a courtesy I left her a message the day before, saying that I would be present. She chose to discuss talks with Poland and Brazil as the core of her presentation. In the case of Poland, she admitted as mistakes not getting a high-level USTR official to engage our Ambassador on the importance of the issue and incorrectly gauging the ability of her Polish counterpart to deliver on what he was promising. I would add that State Department and USTR working-level officials could have given us a better "heads-up" on what was coming down the pike.

Although trade liberalization was a cornerstone of Poland's economic transformation, it was not perfect or complete. In 1992 the Ministry of Foreign Trade undertook to parcel out information technology import licenses among the leading firms of its trading partners. When we went to the Ministry to make the case for an openly competitive

regime, we received assurances that the policy was taking care of firms such as IBM and Hewlett-Packard. I recall pointing out that much of the innovation in the IT industry in the United States came from small start-up firms, many of which grew to become major players (e.g., companies like Microsoft and Apple who exhibited as New-to-Export/New-to-Market at the German trade fairs that I staffed 1977-79). In that connection I mentioned that Michael Dell, then 24 years old and just beginning to expand, had recently met with President Wałęsa.

One of the more interesting encounters on the trade front involved an initiative undertaken by some enterprising Americans to sell in Poland beer produced in Pittsburgh under the label "American Beer." Its label sported an American bald eagle poised to strike. A container load was brewed, canned, and put on a ship, which was on the water when the Polish Government slapped a tariff surcharge on imported beer. We went to speak to the Ministry of Foreign Trade which took a rigid stance on the tariff despite our arguments that this small shipment already on the water was a *de minimis* special case. In an effort to engage an alternate approach, we called on the Chief of Customs. He told us too much foreign exchange was leaving Poland to buy luxury brews. I explained that this was not "designer" beer, such as Becks or Heinekens sipped by yuppies, but rather that it was Iron City—a genuinely proletariat beer quaffed down by steel workers. His response was memorable: "Proletariat, what's that!" he exclaimed. We went away from the meeting with no assurance that the problem would be fixed; at least we had another affirmation that Poland's transformation from Communism had advanced.

Q: What was the nature of U.S. assistance to Poland through all of this?

WACKERBARTH: The United States was providing economic assistance to Poland well before the 1989 transformation. As early as 1965 the United States started funding the Polish American Children's Hospital in Krakow through the U.S.-based Polish American Congress in collaboration with Project Hope. Previously I described how during the period when Poland was under martial law in the 1980s, the U.S. provided surplus agricultural commodities, which were distributed through the good offices of the Roman Catholic Church. The underlying principle behind our efforts was to provide aid to the Polish people without going through the Polish government.

The concept of aid to the Poles, but not through the Polish Government, would continue to be applied to most of our programs after the 1989 transformation. A USAID official explained recently that as a matter of worldwide policy during the first Bush Administration, USAID was to not channel any funds through any government that couldn't absolutely guarantee virtual total accountability for their use. Also, during the 1990s USAID was functioning more like a holding company supervising contractors rather than making direct U.S. government payments. My recollection of the initial fact-finding visits by USAID officials in the fall of 1989 through the winter of 1990 is that they were essentially defensive in posture. The questions asked were more like "How can we avoid getting into trouble with this?" than "What opportunities are here for programs?"

U.S. assistance to Poland was provided by Congress mainly through the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act of 1989, which authorized a $928 million assistance

program for Poland and Hungary. SEED programs in Poland were designed to support the Polish Government's economic reform program and the country's rapid transition to a free market economy.

I recall describing the concept of aid to the Polish people without going through the Polish Government during a lunch with my friend Krzysztof Bielecki in the fall of 1990. He grasped this with great enthusiasm, exclaiming: "That's a wonderful idea!" What he didn't know at the time was that President Wałęsa would shortly name him Prime Minister in just a few weeks. In that office, he took a different view of the concept.

From 1989 until 2000 when the USAID Office in Warsaw closed, approximately $1 billion was obligated to fund dozens of projects. These included the $200 million contribution to the Stabilization Fund and the U.S. share of the $31 million restructured debt to governments (described above) as well as the $254 million Polish American Enterprise Fund (described below) and bank privatization which were initiated during my tenure. These are credited with achievements helping pull Poland out of the 1990-91 recession and transforming key financial structures. There were dozens of later programs which are described as aiming to: "stimulate the private sector at the firm level, build a competitive, market-oriented financial sector and encourage effective, responsive, and accountable local government," according to a USAID report. For a comprehensive list of USAID projects in Poland, please go to http://www.usaid.gov/pl/listof1.htm

One of the unique aspects of our East European assistance program was the role of Deputy Secretary Lawrence Eagleburger who was named Coordinator for East European Assistance by Secretary of State James Baker. He was actually Co-coordinator, along with the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors and the Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, but there was no doubt who was in charge. Later the Administrator of the Agency for International Development would be brought in as an additional Co-coordinator. The arrangement was very much Eagleburger's creation. He felt assistance, especially in newly post-Communist Eastern Europe, had a very important policy dimension. His view was that just as some people say war is too important to be left for generals, to borrow a phrase, he thought that development was too important to be left to the USAID bureaucracy. Eagleburger appointed Ambassador Robert Barry of the State Department to manage assistance coordination on a day-to-day basis. In this post Barry hung in there tough as a gatekeeper.

One of the advantages of the arrangement was that there was a Review Council, which admirably was able to hold the line on excluding extraneous projects, in general, and granting country clearance for travel to Poland, in particular. This meant that every Tom, Dick, and Harry who had a pet project couldn't just count on routinely gaining travel authorization to travel to Poland to advance their proposals, but rather would have to pass muster on consistency with overall objectives before getting the go-ahead. Importantly, this served—in many instances—to prevent wasting the (scarce) time of our Polish counterparts.

One of the elements of this discipline was the insistence that only communications by way of cables cleared with all interested parties would have official status as a document. During one of his visits, Ambassador Barry specifically counseled us not to let USAID

have a FAX machine in its office. Communicating only by cable importantly was a way personnel in the field could operate confidently on the understanding that the communication had been properly vetted among Washington offices and agencies. I remember a few phone calls from U.S. government personnel saying they had arranged a contact with a party in Poland. I was glad I was able to refer them to this process. This is not to say that we were totally effective in holding the line on private and public sector visits. (See below for more in-depth discussion of this.)

USAID did not have any resident presence for the first year I was at post. So I managed the U.S. assistance account in addition to my duties as Economic Counselor. I believe my previous experience in Tegucigalpa—where I developed a close relationship with the USAID Mission—stood me in good stead while undertaking this task. By the spring of 1990 the Embassy leadership realized that having the Economic Counselor also take on oversight of this burgeoning assistance program in addition to myriad other responsibilities was an unworkable approach. Yet the Embassy wanted to be assured that the policy dimension would be taken into account in delivering assistance. Our preferred solution was to have a mid-level USAID representative with an office in the Economic Section. The incumbent's job would be to coordinate assistance programs, working in concert with the more senior Economic Counselor and reporting to the Ambassador through him. This was designed to keep policy control with the Ambassador without him or her having to contend with the influence of another agency. The State Department Inspection Corps team endorsed this approach in their report on their periodic inspection of the U.S. Mission to Poland in the spring of 1990.

Things did not work out that way, however. In Washington USAID prevailed in naming Bill Joslin, a very senior (FS-MC) officer who had headed the USAID Mission in Jamaica to the position of USAID representative at Embassy Warsaw. He would have an office separate from the Economic Section. At post we had some understandable concerns about effective coordination of assistance policy under this arrangement as well as the asymmetry in its chief's personal rank in relation to other Embassy Officers. There was also concern that his house not stand out in opulence in comparison to those of other members of the Country Team so as to create confusion as to his role. These concerns were allayed when we learned that Joslin and Ambassador-Designate Tom Simons developed a good working relationship in Washington while preparing for their respective assignments.

One of the first things Ambassador Simons made clear when he arrived at post in September 1990 was that stewardship of the AID program was one of his top priorities. He did not want to learn that any U.S. assistance to Poland was being wasted during his tenure. In this connection he mentioned the good relationship he developed in Washington with incoming USAID representative Bill Joslin. Early on, the Ambassador made it clear that he wanted me to keep my oars in the water on assistance issues as part of my job as Economic Counselor. Among other things, he asked me to compile a list in spreadsheet format of all known U.S.-based assistance—from federal and state government entities as well as private initiative. The list I prepared turned out to be quite comprehensive, surprising me as well.

I was not majorly concerned about the rank asymmetry because of my prior experience at Embassy Tegucigalpa. There I headed a very small section in a post with a large USAID presence and was also quite junior in rank to the USAID Mission. Nevertheless, I was able to work out a productive arrangement with my USAID colleagues, while keeping the Ambassador abreast of USAID projects and their policy implications. Bill Joslin and I made it clear to each other from the outset that we both wanted this kind of productive arrangement in Poland, and I think we did. He did get a much larger house arranged by FAX by USAID staffers ahead of his arrival. In the end this made virtually no difference.

Q: Tell me about the Polish American Enterprise Fund.

WACKERBARTH: Just after the April 5, 1989, Round Table accords, as policymakers sought a response to this political opening a proposal emerged for a $5 million Polish American Private Enterprise Fund. By the fall of 1989, when the political opening had blossomed into a complete transformation, the Enterprise Fund would grow to a $240 million grant as U.S. Congress members strove to outdo each other in response to events in Poland. This was a new initiative in foreign assistance based on the concept of directly helping the Polish people without reference to the government. It would be an independent entity, the Polish American Enterprise Fund (PAEF), managed by a Board of Directors composed of an equal number of Americans and Poles from their respective private sectors. In 1990, USAID disbursed the $240 million grant to the PAEF, which over time turned it over to private citizens in Poland, many of them venture capital investors. Their mission was to invest the money in fledgling businesses in Poland to help the country transition to a free market economy.

Fortunately, the Embassy had some input in its implementation program. For example, we were able to make recommendations for choosing Polish directors, among them future Prime Minister Jan Krzysztof Bielecki. Also, the American directors, who were drawn from Wall Street, initially thought they should dispense the grant in increments of $20-50 million to selected Polish firms. Fortuitously, we were able to explain to them that the capacity of the nascent Polish private sector to borrow was between $25-125 thousand. In response the Fund initiated a “small window” program of lending for businesses of that size, which proved highly successful. Defaults were few and far between. Moreover, in a September 2000 USAID statement it was noted that the PAEF was the first grant foreign assistance program in history to return a significant amount of money, $120 million.

According to the September 2000 USAID statement, “The PAEF invested $181 million in 50 medium-size companies, 15 of which by that date were listed on the Warsaw stock exchange. It started a small business loan program that made 7,000 loans totaling $272 million to small businesses, launched a microenterprise fund that made 30,000 loans totaling $50 million, established a mortgage bank that financed 3,000 residences with $40 million, and raised $262 million in non-U.S. Government capital for investment in Poland. It converted its staff into a permanent venture capital manager in charge of three private investment funds plus the PAEF. They invested over $700 million in Poland, including reflows of capital.” It was estimated this number would probably reach over $1 billion in three more years.

With the PAEF as the model, ten Enterprise Funds were established in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The USAID statement describes these Enterprise Funds as a powerful developmental tool because they provide both capital and technical assistance to small and medium businesses and, working with the Government of Poland and other donors, combined direct support of business with reforms in the legal, institutional, and regulatory environment for business with dramatic results.

Q: I had some experience in this area in 1994 when I went to Kyrgyzstan—one of the newly independent states that formerly had constituted the Soviet Union—for three weeks there to talk about setting up a consular service. While there I was struck with how the recently emerged Central Asian countries were filled with academics and others from America, all of whom had pet projects and ideas. I mean a cheese person would come out, and assert that the road to salvation was through bigger and better cheeses. There were also a lot of up-in-the-air, academic-type exercises by people going out there. Maybe some of their ideas were good in general, but completely unsuited to the country. Were you running across this sort of outpouring?

WACKERBARTH: Oh, very much so! Yes, there was such an outpouring. All manner of Americans and other nationalities, private and some official, paraded through Warsaw with their briefcases burgeoning with projects. Different elements of the Embassy—the Commercial Unit, the Agricultural Attaché's Office, The USIA Public Affairs Office, the USAID Representative's Office and, at times, the Economic Section—from time-to-time would meet with these folks. In some instances, there was political pressure from the U.S. side to hear out their ideas. In too many cases the meetings were a waste of time, because the supplicants hadn't done their homework, especially on suitability to the country or region. And we didn't have any funds to dispense anyway. But we would patiently hear them out and try to sort out what had merit and what didn't. Some years later a Fulbright scholar, who was resident in Poland at the time, would describe the "countless short-term consultants" who would lodge at the Warsaw Marriott for several days or weeks, offer quick words, promises, and advice, and then disappear. She adopted a nickname coined by the Polish press for these fly-in, fly-out consultants—"the Marriott Brigade Syndrome."

Q: Yes. As we were looking at this, what were we seeing in Poland? I mean I imagine there was a fairly solid agricultural basis, which always helps for stability in a way. I mean the people aren't going to starve. Right?

WACKERBARTH: That's right, but that didn't prevent rumors from emerging in the U.S. and international media that the Polish populace was in danger of starving and might not make it through the first winter after the political transformation. I'm remembering that in the fall of 1989, when overproduction of pork in the United States was hurting the U.S. domestic market for hogs, someone came up with the idea of sending hams to Poland "to alleviate starvation there." The hams were sent and absorbed into the Polish market, but at a time when there were plenty of Polish hams available to feed the populace and even export to the United States. (This would be the second time in my career that I would see U.S. meat go to a country eager to export its surplus to the U.S.; the first time would be with beef in Honduras after Hurricane Fifi in the fall of 1974.)

I mentioned earlier that one of the first things that Ambassador Davis had me do in August 1989 was to go out with the Agricultural Attaché to food markets and report our findings and we found a lot of food. Fact was there was enough production that season (1989) and the subsequent seasons we were there (1990-1991). But the farms were quite inefficient.

Q: Yes. Had they over-collectivized?

WACKERBARTH: Well, actually Poland's farms, for the most part (75-80%), weren't collectivized. Stalin never succeeded in accomplishing this goal in Poland. Hence his famous quote: "Imposing Communism in Poland is like putting a saddle on a cow."

In the early 1990s Polish agriculture employed about one third of the national workforce, but contributed only 8 percent to gross domestic product. Unlike the industrial sector, Polish agriculture remained largely in private hands during Communist rule.

Private farms were occupying three-fourths of the land and accounted for four-fifths of agricultural employment and production. But they had a very serious problem with distribution. These 2.8 million farms were small and often fragmented. Farmers lived in villages and went out to work on their land which was usually not adjacent to their houses. Moreover, their farming practices were all too often antiquated. They would often produce some food for household consumption and some for commercial sales, but the amount of food that went to the market was relatively small and added to the national problem of distribution. Imagine a dairy truck driving through the countryside and picking up only three or four cans of raw milk from each unit and taking it to a processing plant for packaging.

Distribution was inefficient at every level. Processing plants had to deal with railroad and trucking schedules which were not coordinated with production. And retail sales were atomized to a lot of Mom & Pop or neighborhood stores. Supermarkets began to spring up in Warsaw toward the end of our time there. The U.S. Business Roundtable took it upon themselves to take on distribution in Poland in this period. Among other things, personnel from the Union Pacific Railroad worked on developing computer software to synchronize farm-to-market transportation.

On collectivization, there were 5,000 state farms established during Communist rule. These were larger consolidated units. Most of them were in western Poland where the Communists gained former German territory after WWII while losing territory to the Ukrainian and Russian republics of the USSR. We personally knew a family that was relocated to a farm near what had been named Groenburg in what was formerly Germany from territory ceded to the USSR in the former Eastern Poland.

Q: You mentioned the Joint Commission on Humanitarian Assistance. What is that?

WACKERBARTH: The Joint Commission on Humanitarian Assistance was created in 1989 several months ahead of the 1989 political opening. It was derived from an initiative by Maryland Senator Barbara Mikulski. As mentioned above, the U.S. distributed surplus food to the Polish people during Martial Law through the Polish Roman Catholic Church. The Auxiliary Bishop of Katowice, Czeslaw Domin, who had a

wonderful gift of administration, oversaw the distribution from the Polish side, impressing Sen. Mikulski in the process. At some point he must have mentioned his dream of building a home in the mountains for children from Katowice suffering respiratory illness. As I understand it, Senator Mikulski proposed legislation which provided for the sale of surplus U.S. agricultural commodities in Poland with the proceeds going to fund Bishop Domin's project. A member of Senator Edward Kennedy's staff, Mark Talisman, learned of her proposal and got the Senator to add funding for the proposed Institute for the Jewish History & Culture in Krakow. These two projects were incorporated into the American Aid to Poland Act of 1988, which also provided for supporting other developmental and/or charitable ventures. The Act called for a Joint Commission to implement the provisions. (link to Act: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:United_States_Statutes_at_Large_Volume_102_Part_2.djvu/333)

Ambassador Davis asked my predecessor, Howard Lange, to set up the Joint Commission structure. The Commission was composed of an equal number of Americans and Poles from Government agencies and non-Government Private Organizations. One of the first things Ambassador Davis asked me to do upon my arrival in Poland in August 1989 was to make this structure operational. I was also asked to serve as the Commission's Secretary-Treasurer. Agricultural Attaché John Harrison was immensely supportive both personally and by making available his staff as we worked out the nuts and bolts involved in implementation. In this connection we asked for guidelines from USAID hoping to draw from their experience with this kind of operation. USAID replied that the responsibility for these programs was being passed to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). When we asked there, we were advised that USDA had not yet absorbed the function, so we were on our own for all practical purposes. This set up what appeared to be a perfect storm for a civil servant's worst nightmare—managing public funds with no guidelines.

I was also concerned that with the złoty rapidly losing its value (as mentioned above), the receipts would not be sufficient to fund the mandated projects—Polish Catholic Church humanitarian programs benefiting children and support for the Research Center on Jewish History and Culture of the Jagiellonian University of Krakow. Well, there were certain delays in getting these commodities—butter and sorghum—delivered to Poland, sold through wholesale and retail outlets and then have the funds work their way through the archaic Polish banking system. This turned out to be quite fortuitous because (as described above) the Poles put their new economic program in place on January 1, 1990, and that was about the time the money was flowing in. The new Polish economic program was based on very high interest rates to stabilize the currency. This meant that instead of having money that was worthless to work with, we had money that was earning a very high rate of interest (50-60% per annum). It didn't make sense to disperse it all at once to the mandatory projects—construction projects involved letting contracts and buying materials over time—so while we were waiting for disbursement, we were earning a lot of interest from having it in the bank. Also, the Commission's diligence in reviewing project requests at our monthly meetings kept expenditures at a measured pace. All of this was somewhat awkward as people in Washington would see our balance sheets and ask: "Paul, can't you guys spend some money?"

Another initial concern was that our Polish counterparts were also an unknown factor. This worry was quickly allayed. As we got into reviewing projects, we soon observed that the Poles on the Commission were not about to let their compatriots pull any fast ones. They were also supportive in working out operational rules. I had seen these sorts of funds operate in my experience in the Foreign Service over the years. What would happen too often was that some person or organization would apply for a grant from discretionary funds under control of the Ambassador. If approved, the first thing they would do would be to set up an office, and buy some office equipment such as computers or typewriters. They might also purchase a vehicle. Only then would they go out looking for projects. I didn't really want to set up that kind of program and was able to get strong concurrence from Commission members on all sides in this assertion.

We set as our first priority getting money to the projects that were designated in the legislation in a timely manner. Then we focused on what we would do with additional funds which, due to the high interest rates, were considerable. So we set a rule that, in the first instance, we would typically only give money to an organization that already had its office set up and was only spending about a quarter of its own expenses on administration (although we would go as high as a half in certain instances) and that the money we granted would be project oriented. We also had a mandate that we could not use the cash from the sale of the commodities for our own administrative purposes, but we could use the interest this earned.

I must say that I viewed all this work as a major pain, especially during my first year at post, because it took a lot of time and was a diversion from my principal job as Economic Counselor during a time when there was major activity on that front. Believe me there were massive amounts of after-hours work involved, much to the chagrin of my family. My part of the Joint Commission workload eased considerably after June 1990 when USDA sent out an officer, Judith Phillips, to oversee the Joint Commission at the same time that I was able to hire an exceptionally capable young Pole, Tomasz Pulkowski, to serve as the Commission's operations manager. Pulkowski's position was funded, as required, by interest earnings. Over time, the Commission was able to draw further on interest earnings to buy a vehicle for Pulkowski to use to visit the funded projects and hire additional staff. And there still was plenty of funding left over from principal and interest to support many projects.

For my own part, I look back on my work with the Commission as a contribution to my professional growth. It also proved profoundly helpful to me in better understanding of the country where I was serving as it took me into parts of Poland and its economy and society that I would not have otherwise encountered. For example, in March 1990 I was asked to speak (in Polish) at the dedication of a project bringing water to a rural community. In June of that year, a Roman Catholic Technical School in Oświęcim, Poland, which had applied (unsuccessfully) for a grant, invited me to attend the blessing of a set of church bells obtained from a decommissioned church in Brooklyn, NY.

Attending that ceremony was a happy note on a day when we would also visit the Auschwitz (Oświęcim in German) forced labor camp and the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

On September 6, 2011, at a ceremony attended by the Polish President's Agricultural Advisor and the U.S. Ambassador to Poland, a nature trail composed of American tree species was dedicated as a living tribute to members of the U.S.-Polish Joint Commission on Humanitarian Assistance at a Botanical Garden in Warsaw. Retired USDA Official Judith Phillips, (who oversaw the Commission's work after 1990) spoke at the ceremony, noting that: "The Joint Commission proved to be an effective development model and an example of strong public-private partnership. The success rate of the Joint Commission projects was very high, thanks to the dedication of the members and the commitment of the recipients." She added that: "It's gratifying today to witness the results and know that the majority of the programs and businesses supported continue to thrive."

Q: You also mentioned the beginning of the Peace Corps in Poland. Tell me more.

WACKERBARTH: The launching of a Peace Corps program in Poland was just about the last thing I expected while preparing for my posting as Economic Counselor at Embassy Warsaw. Yet within less than a year into my tenure the Peace Corps was very much present, with 125 volunteers on the ground. As it turned out I would be present at the conception. In October 1989, Peace Corps Director (later Senator) Paul Coverdell visited Warsaw. He had just been in Budapest where he signed a historic agreement to place volunteers in Hungary. He decided to travel to Warsaw for an exploratory visit, expressing interest in potential projects in agriculture, small business, and environment. I was assigned as his Control Officer. Riding in from the airport, I reviewed his appointments with him and then asked about English teaching, a Peace Corps staple. He replied that since his visit was exploratory, he thought about just looking at non-traditional programs, but added that he would be willing to do a meeting on English teaching if we could set one up. The Embassy protocol secretary was able to arrange a meeting at 6:00 p.m. with the Deputy Minister of Education. As we walked into the Ministry, I explained to Coverdell that this particular building had served as Gestapo Headquarters during WWII.

What took place as we walked into the room is almost indescribable. The energy in that room was absolutely electric. The Deputy Minister, with consummate vigor, wasted no time in getting right down to the point. He wanted 500 volunteers and he wanted them in place in six months. His mission was to change the principal foreign language taught in Polish schools to English from Russian, and he saw the Peace Corps as one way to accomplish this. Coverdell, understandably non-committal, replied that this was most interesting and promised to look into its feasibility. As we walked out of the building we were both speechless, reflecting in our minds at what had just happened in the meeting. We separately realized that a Peace Corps program had materialized without any spade work on the U.S. side. In a later conversation Coverdell told me that thoughts raced through his mind as they did mine—that here we were in Warsaw which just a few months earlier would have been paired with "Pact," and now we were coming out of a building associated with some of WWII's worst horrors, and we had a Peace Corps program virtually in our pocket. Is it too much of a stretch to conjure up an image of JFK smiling down as he observed the proceedings from the heavens?

Not too surprisingly, the Deputy Minister's targets were overly ambitious, but not by so much. Coverdell apparently managed to get his staff to energetically follow through on

the initiative. So in June of 1990, less than nine months after the October meeting, we welcomed 125 Peace Corps English Teachers to take up assignments in Poland. President Bush gave the "Poland 1" cohort a personal send-off as they departed the United State for their assignments. One of the new volunteers had been Director of the Peace Corps in India in the mid-1960s; Lillian Carter, the mother of former President Jimmy Carter, was one of his volunteers serving there then.

In 1991 programs were added in agriculture, environment, business development, and health. The English Teaching Program would be substantially bolstered after Polish American entrepreneur (he grew Mrs. Paul's Fish Products as a business) and philanthropist Edward Piszek pledged to pay for matching every English teacher the Peace Corps put in place with an additional volunteer. (In 1990 the cost was estimated @ $24,000 for two years.) As a result, the Poland Peace Corps contingent became the second largest worldwide in numbers of volunteers.

In 1990 Peace Corps veteran Tim Carroll was assigned to Warsaw to direct the Program. As the Peace Corps overseas enjoys considerable autonomy from American Embassies, my association with the program, once underway, was, at best, peripheral. But as we did at our other posts with a Peace Corps presence, my wife and I enjoyed relating to the volunteers and their projects on a personal level. And I will always cherish being present in that near-magical moment of Peace Corps Poland's conception.

Q: Were we making any effort to educate a new managerial class, you know, to be helpful; and also at a different level, you know, move these kids coming up in the computer world, and this sort of thing, which was just beginning to take hold?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, we certainly did in our public affairs programs. To me, the interesting thing was that there was so much spontaneous enthusiasm in these directions among the Poles themselves. The Poles were getting into computers however they could. They also wanted to get the English language. They welcomed whatever contact they could have, and they took advantage of the smallest opportunity and leveraged it into quite something.

One of the interesting public affairs programs that took place was a management seminar conducted with whatever resources we could cobble together at post. I was initially skeptical of this, as I was concerned that maybe we were over-selling something that wasn't all that much. What we had amounted to some Small Business Administration videos and drawing some speakers who happened to be traveling around the area.

Well, my skepticism was misplaced. When I observed the event, what struck me was that it was not only greeted with enthusiasm, but also it was very quickly oversubscribed. I think the Poles took a healthy look at it. They knew what it was, accepted its limits, and decided they could work with it.

Q: Let's turn to the regional scene—how did the events of November, December 1989 hit you all?

WACKERBARTH: I think there was expectation that change was only a matter of time, but my take is that we were surprised with the speed in which things happened and the

way in which things happened. In retrospect I believe that there was softening of the Wall that was taking place in stages.

I was still in Language and Area Studies training in April 1989 when I opened up the Washington Post one morning and read that Hungary was dismantling its Western border with Austria.

This would take on added significance in August when, at vacation time, hundreds, if not thousands, of East Germans drove their Trabis (Trabants—the iconic East German small car) to Hungary. Instead of going home, they chose en masse; it seemed to drive across the border to Austria and freedom in the West. There is a famous photo of hundreds of Trabis lined up at the crossing point.

What stands out in my mind is that the Hungarian regime informed the Soviets that they were essentially giving these people safe conduct, but did not ask permission to do this.

In September, something similar happened in Warsaw, albeit on a smaller scale.

I remember being out at the airport in the waiting area for official visitors and one of my West German colleagues was also there. When I asked him how things were going, he replied: "Well, to be honest, it's chaos! ...we have all these people crowded into the Embassy." He then said: "… on an immediate basis, this is a big mess, but these are very, very attractive people...these are people who are industrious, energetic, ambitious and want to advance, but they're just so stifled by the Communist system. You can't help but have some empathy with them, even though you would rather they just run away."

Q: Yes. Was there concern at the time that maybe East Germany and West Germany might reach a modus vivendi where they would unite, but be neutral?

WACKERBARTH: I don't recall this being an option. I don't recall that formulation being present in any of my conversations.

I do recall very, very specifically October 6, 1989, which was the East German National Day. For some reason both Ambassador Davis and Darryl Johnson, the DCM, couldn't attend the East German Embassy's reception so I was asked to represent our Embassy. I've been to many National Day receptions over the years, but never have I been to a weirder or eerier one. I think it's the only time I ever went to the last National Day reception of a country without anybody specifically knowing it! [Laughter] But a lot of people were suspecting it. Gorbachev was in Berlin on that day, and everybody was keeping one eye on a TV screen watching the news to sort of try and figure out what he was going to say.

Interestingly enough, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl was in Warsaw on November 9th and 10th—the night and morning after the Wall came down. November 10th was an American holiday, as the 11th, Armistice Day or Veterans Day, fell on a Saturday. We had the day off and I remember taking my wife and kids to the zoo that day. As we were coming out of the zoo, we saw the Kohl entourage going the wrong direction towards the airport. Our household effects had just come so we didn't have our TV hooked up yet, so we were a little bit behind the curve on the news, and we wondered what was going on.

Until that time the much-anticipated Kohl visit to Warsaw had kept getting postponed and postponed. The thinking in Warsaw was that he was being very careful about what gesture he could carry in his briefcase for Poland, and waited until he believed he could take something really forthcoming. Whatever that was apparently was overtaken by events, as he, like the rest of us, had no idea that momentous changes were going to happen so fast.

We found out that the Wall had come down that evening when our Polish sitter came by to stay with our children while we went off to a reception at the home of an Argentine Embassy colleague.

Q: Were you finding any disquiet among your contacts in Poland about the reunification of Germany?

WACKERBARTH: Only until you got to about the third sentence in a conversation. Basically the first sentence would be an exchange of pleasantries, the second, What's new? and the third: Let me tell you about my disquiet about Germany! [Laughter]

For understandable historical reasons, the Poles take international security matters very seriously. What I found amazing was the quickness in which Poles—even at the man-on-the-street level—perceived the shift in their security interests due to the change. The Poles would say: "We have historically had good relations with Germans. It's the Prussians, who are next to us, who had always been the problem...and then of course our real problem is the East—700-pound gorilla, the Soviet Union." By November 1989, instead of having the 700-pound gorilla to the East—who had proven to be much weaker than had been perceived just a few weeks or months ago—now suddenly there was a united Germany to the West, which was perceived as the new 700-pound gorilla.

Moreover, Chancellor Kohl was very cognizant of German domestic politics and wasn't ready to just immediately proclaim that things would dramatically change. But even after it was apparent to everyone that things had changed, he still hedged for a while. I remember Ambassador Davis coming to a meeting saying that he had listened to Kohl speak the night before. What was most interesting was that for some reason or other Ambassador Davis didn't turn the TV right off. Instead, he watched the news and the weather. And he noticed the weather map was drawn from the 1937 boundaries! [Laughter]

Q: What about Czechoslovakia?

WACKERBARTH: Czechoslovakia, I believe, was part of a whole process. The expression that was going around was: Poland 10 years, Germany 10 months, Czechoslovakia 10 weeks, Romania 10 hours, or something like that. But I think that the Poles basically felt, and I think quite rightly so, that it was their willingness to challenge the system that set this process in motion. It was interesting to me that the falling dominos that dominated so much of our thinking in the 1960s did not turn out to be the Southeast Asian nations but rather the East European members of the Warsaw pact.

I really think the roots of the successful transformation in East Europe in 1989 date back to the courage Poles drew from Pope John Paul II's visit in 1979—especially that he could draw a million congregants to an unannounced public Mass with no publicity.

Q: What about Poland's neighbors—especially those sharing a common experience such as Hungary and Czechoslovakia as well as Germany and the former East Germany? How did they look upon each other, as things opened up? Did they see certain things in the other countries to emulate or to approach with caution—particularly the economic and the political side?

WACKERBARTH: Even though each country's transformation was the product of distinct dynamics, Poland, Czechoslovakia (which was one country at that time), and Hungary were grouped together as the three countries where Communism fell first. In February 1991 their leaders formalized this as they held a Summit meeting at Visegrád Castle in Hungary and began a policy coördination process. Periodically, the Visegrád group would meet together on matters such as how to relate to the European Union, and how to eventually apply for membership in the European Union.

In addition to working together towards joining the West, the three countries also worked in concert to develop trade, commerce, and investment among themselves, including lessening any barriers to these areas, including immigration.

On another front, The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) formed parallel relationships with those three countries, basically bringing them into the OECD as Partners in Transition.

In briefings I would describe Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia as being in three different places on the transformation curve in 1989. Hungary had been on a gradual slope continuum towards change, going back to 1969. The Hungarians enjoyed a fair amount of freedom and autonomy that derived from the advantage of not having a Slavic language. This made it difficult for the Soviets to keep track of what they were up to. In 1989, descending this gradual slope rapidly accelerated. Czechoslovakia after 1968 had been isolated and had not had a lot of contact with the West, but Czechoslovakia had a very strong industrial base—particularly in the Czech Republic. In the 1930s, Czechoslovakia had the highest standard of living in Europe. I think that the factories and equipment in Czechoslovakia were really worth something, whereas in Poland they were really not worth very much at all. Poland's advantage among the three countries was the amount of direct contact its people had with the West.

The former East Germany was folded into West Germany without much reference to what was happening among its neighbors to the East.

However, in the spring of 1992 I participated in a unique forum: The Polish, German, U.S., Mexican Border Symposium in Zielona Góra, a former German city (Grünburg) near the border with Germany. The Symposium was the brainchild of a dynamic Mexican, Jorge Bustamante, who had done considerable research on U.S.-Mexican cross-border cooperation at Mexico's Colegio de la Frontera Norte in Tijuana. Bustamante believed there was a lot in common between the U.S.-Mexican border

experience and what Germany and Poland would experience as neighbors. The Symposium included seminars on topics such as water rights, managing pollution, labor issues, cross-border trucking, law enforcement and the like. It did not deal with immigration. At one point early-on a Senator from Berlin questioned what Germany and Poland could learn from Mexico. I think most of us in the room detected a patronizing tone in his intervention. Bustamante replied in the strongest terms that the research showed there was quite a bit that could be learned.

After the symposium I thought to myself that if someone had told me in the mid-1960s, when I was a graduate student, that 25+ years later I would be a participant in a forum organized by the Mexicans designed to demonstrate the benefits of a good relationship with the United States to the Germans and Poles, I would have thought my interlocutor was smoking something funny.

Q: How did Poland respond to the Gulf War? This is when Iraq invaded Kuwait, and the United States and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) responded to that.

WACKERBARTH: I remember the beginning of the Gulf War quite well. Let me just say for starters that the Poles seized on this as an opportunity to expand coöperation with the United States. This had both a strategic dimension as well as a genuine desire to show gratitude.

Interestingly the first person who told me that Kuwait had been invaded by Iraq was Liz [Elizabeth L.] Cheney, who more recently served as a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. Her father, Richard Cheney, was Secretary of Defense at that time and later Vice President (2001-2009). Liz was there on TDY for USAID and staying at the Marriott Hotel; I was Acting DCM. She popped into my office that morning and said she just saw on TV (at the hotel) that Iraq had invaded Kuwait. I recall that we took some additional security measures for her as the daughter of the Secretary of Defense.

Working with the Poles on Iraq/Kuwait was an interesting—and productive—exercise to say the least. The Poles had a very skilled diplomatic corps. Many of its members were nominally Communists before the Party dissolved in January 1990. As I mentioned earlier when Solidarity came into power in late August 1989, it made a rule throughout the government that Communist Party members could stay in their positions provided that they were loyal to the Solidarity government, and that they were not in front line policy positions. This meant we were working with experienced professionals knowledgeable on the region as we worked together on this issue. As *Chargé d'Affaires*, Darryl Johnson asked me to attend no small number of diplomatic receptions so that Polish diplomats—particularly the Deputy Foreign Minister whose portfolio included the Mideast account—would get to know me as the acting second ranking Embassy officer and one who might assume the post of *Chargé*.

On Poland's Middle East policy, the Foreign Ministry's Deputy Director of Middle Eastern Affairs was a very knowledgeable and skilled diplomat who had previously served as Poland's Ambassador to Iran. We became each other's point of contact between our two governments as Poland chose to cast its lot with the United States.

In military terms, the Poles supported our effort by sending a hospital unit to the front. My recollection is that Czechoslovakia sent one as well. The word was that Czechs had been wanting to fight on our side going back to World War Il and never quite got the chance. I believe the Poles similarly welcomed the opportunity to be militarily allied with the United States. As newly emerged democracies, joining us had an ideological dimension and as I mentioned before genuinely reflected gratitude. But, to be sure, there was a strategic dimension to this as well.

The way things eventually evolved was that after the 1991 Gulf War, Poland served as the protecting power for the United States in Iraq representing our interests there. Among other things, this provided employment for Polish Communist diplomats who had served the previous regime. To the extent that I know, this arrangement served us well.

Q: Now, as an economic analyst, how did you figure what the impact would be on Poland, and severing ties with Iraq, and all?

WACKERBARTH: Well, the Economic Section looked at the Poles' economic ties to Iraq, which were considerable. I think we calculated their exposure at about 1.15 billion dollars. Polish engineers had done a lot of construction projects in Iraq; also, there was some oil work taking place.

On the trade front, Iraq was not a major account for Poland, but it was what I would call an incremental trade account in the sense that it was nontraditional business. My recollection is that conventional armaments comprised a significant portion of Polish exports to Iraq, but there were also other products. In any case, everything that they could add in exports to a nontraditional partner like Iraq was gain, and giving this up was loss.

This is to say that changing partners in the Middle East was not without cost to the Poles. Essentially, they were willing to give up a lot of their assets there and joining us also may have raised issues in terms of protecting Poles who were resident in Iraq.

Q: Yes, but in a way a country such as Poland didn't have much choice, did they? I mean the way things were set up, they didn't have the choice of being able to continue to trade with Iraq, did they?

WACKERBARTH: I think that's a fair statement. However, I don't recall that formulation ever coming up.

Q: Were you there when the Soviet Union came apart?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, I was.

Q: I mean when was this foreseen, and how was Poland, and how were we responding to that?

WACKERBARTH: Were the Poles taken by surprise? It's a tough question. I think everybody was aware that things were changing. They had changed fast in Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe. It's just that it was difficult to discern the extent of change, its timing and the process it would follow. One indicator was trade which had changed

dramatically—Poland was now looking much more to the West in its trade. Previously they made a lot of deliveries to the former Warsaw Bloc partners, and they would take products, but it was also done with funny money. After 1989 suddenly they were in a situation where their money had to have value, and this whole system of funny money collapsed!

In the winter and spring of 1991, we saw the Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—assert considerable independence at some risk. My Deputy Jack Spilsbury was Duty Officer in February 1991 when the putative Lithuanian Foreign Minister frantically rang the doorbell at the Ambassador's residence late in the night out of concern for a Soviet intervention in his country.

In my mind the catalyst date for change in the USSR would probably be August 19, 1991, when the failed putsch (sudden overthrow of a government) took place. I remember DCM Mike Hornblow was on vacation in Latvia at the time, and I asked him when he returned: What was it like to be in the USSR when this took place? I added another question: Did you have the experience of visiting one country and coming back from having visited four? He replied that it wasn't quite like that as he basically watched the whole thing on CNN from the hotel in Riga. [Laughter]

One of the interesting things we did in Warsaw was an exchange in platform or paddle tennis with our colleagues in Moscow every summer. In 1990, the first year I was there, a team from Moscow came over to Warsaw, and we hosted a family. Then in June 1991 we had a return match. We took the train over to Moscow. As we were a family of five, they put us up in a transient apartment. The walk from the apartment to the platform tennis courts took us past the Russian parliament (which is not in the Kremlin). I remember our son, who was nine years old at the time, asked: "Dad, what's that blue, red, and white flag?" I said, "That's the flag of Russia." And he said, "Wasn't the Russian flag, the red flag with the yellow hammer and sickle?" So I explained that there was a Russian Federation, which was almost like a nation within the USSR. We actually were home in the United States on August 19, and I remember watching CNN with our 9- and 10-year-olds, and they could even at that young age identify the precise location of the Russian parliament. I remember my wife's aunt being very, very impressed.

Q: Yes. Was there a feeling that the Russian menace had sort of ended? I mean because you had a Ukraine and a Belarus there, which were not the same as having a unified USSR—

WACKERBARTH: Right. Well, this, of course, emerged a little bit later. I think the very loosely constructed Newly Independent States arrangement was created in late 1991 or early 1992.

I recall one of my officers in the Economic Section who had been out at the airport told me a story about the Ukrainians who were also there. They had gone out to meet their trade delegation, and they had the Ukrainian flag there, but they couldn't remember whether the blue went on top or the gold went on top, and they got in a big argument over that question.

Q: [Laughter]

WACKERBARTH: But to get back to the Poles—we talked about Germany earlier. As I mentioned, when I got there in 1989, everybody was concerned about whether it would be a warm or a chill wind from the East—a metaphor for Soviet intervention, a very real possibility in their minds. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the focus, at almost every level of Polish society, shifted to the question: What are we going to do about being next to a strong Germany?

Q: While you were there, were there still Soviet troops in Poland?

WACKERBARTH: No. I don't recall that there were any Soviet troops in Poland as such. In fact, I'm not sure there ever were, once World War II was over. There certainly were Soviet troops in East Germany.

In fact, my candidate for the photo opportunity of the decade, if not the century, was during Pope John Paul Il's June 1992 visit. He particularly focused on northeastern Poland this time. I wanted to have somebody catch a photo of his entourage waiting at a railroad crossing while a Soviet troop train was heading eastward from Germany. My caption would have been a quote from Joseph Stalin: "How many divisions does the Pope have?"

Q: [Laughter]

WACKERBARTH: Because in fact, the Pope's moral authority proved to be stronger than Stalin's divisions that time.

Q: Well now and when you were acting DCM or on the country team, were we having problems or concerns with Christian missionaries running all over the place, because again, once these places started opening up, I mean you had from snake handlers on up looking at Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union as being fair hunting ground?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, there were some missionaries operating there, but I don't recall any incidents of the kind you describe. I think what was witnessed in other parts of the former Soviet Bloc was quite different. Poland was anything but a religious vacuum; it was a very, very Catholic country.

The interesting thing in Poland was that during the Communist period, church attendance as a percentage of society probably exceeded that of the Bible Belt in the United States on any given Sunday. I recall accompanying a congressman to a fairly crowded Mass one Sunday at 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon. And this was not a result of scarcity of churches. There were many new churches in Poland, and more were under construction. It was apparent that this was one of a series of services that started early that morning.

An important part of this fervent devotion was because the Poles saw the Catholic Church as a repository of the Polish nation during the Communist period, as they had during the partition period from the 1790s until 1918. Now the situation in the Catholic Church would change in Poland dramatically during our time there, because as soon as the Communists ceded control, Poles who had worked so closely with the Catholic Church

suddenly distrusted its power. They would talk about priests having too much economic, social, and political influence. Again, it was this rather dramatic sea change in public opinion.

Yes, there were parts with missionaries operating there, but I think what was witnessed in other parts of the former Soviet Bloc was quite different.

Q: Well, this has all been most interesting. Was there anything we haven't covered, do you think?

WACKERBARTH: I might add that in January 1992 on a chill damp drizzly afternoon I represented the Embassy on the receiving line at the airport for the visit of South Africa's President Frederik de Klerk. Ambassador Simons was recuperating from an appendectomy and DCM Michael Hornblow was out of the country. De Klerk came to Warsaw in advance of a crucial plebiscite on ending apartheid in South Africa. Meeting with Wałęsa in Poland was a way of bolstering his position. I had shaken hands with Wałęsa several times previously, but I still felt the aura of his presence. To this day the feel of De Klerk's handshake is still etched in my mind. Interestingly it reminds me of that of former President Jimmy Carter. Intuitively, I think both handshakes conveyed moral strength. As the two statesmen moved along it occurred to me that I had just shaken hands with a man instrumental in ending Communism in Eastern Europe and then with a man endeavoring to end apartheid. I would recall the time a few years earlier that my daughter came home from school asking me what I would wish for if I had ten wishes. My answer after thinking about it for a while was that the world's so-called "intractable" conflicts—as we described them in our studies at the National War College—would be resolved, and listed among them Soviet Communism's hold on Eastern Europe and apartheid in South Africa. And there I was at the cusp of witnessing the ending of two of them.

Just prior to our departure in early July 1992, President Bush made his second visit to Poland. At the last minute it was determined that families of Embassy Country Team members could be present on the receiving line. We were placed after members of the Polish Cabinet, representatives of key Polish institutions, and the resident Diplomatic Corps. I was thrilled that our whole family could meet a sitting American President. But what I remember most was the very human smile that Lech Wałęsa had on his face when he spotted our son Jimmy who was nine years old at the time and the first child on the receiving line. I still hold the image of that smile in my mind.

On July 8, 1992, our family would depart Warsaw for good. Thus ended a tour of duty that was as exhilarating as it was exhausting. If nothing else, it affirmed my colleague's comment at the beginning of Polish Language and Area Studies training that the best part of an assignment to Poland is the Poles. It was an honor and a privilege to work alongside so many valiant people striving to take back their country and getting it right in the process. For me, and I imagine for my colleagues, this was especially so as the Cold War was a national obsession as we were growing up.

Because of asymmetrical tours of duty, the entire Economic Section of U.S. Embassy Warsaw turned over that summer. Ambassador and Mrs. Simons hosted a farewell

reception in our honor. We were pleased at the turnout which included such friends as (Former Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister) Leszek Balcerowicz and (Former Prime Minister) Jan Krzysztof Bielecki among so many others. I recall coming away from the event realizing that when you are working as hard as all of us did on so many common endeavors, you don't realize the depth of friendship that is developing.

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Chapter 12 – Broken Assignment: Zurich, Switzerland; Assignment to Private Sector Executive Exchange, 1992-1993; President George Herbert Walker Bush, Secretary of State Warren Christopher

Q: Good. Well, you're leaving Poland, and whither?

WACKERBARTH: Right. Okay, in the first instance, I was assigned as Consul General to Zurich, Switzerland, and this seemed like a very happy arrangement.

The U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland Joseph Bernard Gildenhorn very much had asked that the Officer assigned be an Economic Officer with financial experience. The Ambassador was a political appointee who'd come out of the banking sector and felt that we weren't getting enough reporting value out of having a Foreign Service post in Zurich. The previous Consul General had been a very fine Consular Officer, who did a lot in terms of Swiss-U.S. ties, but had to get the message that what the Ambassador was really looking for out of the post was economic reporting. The Consul General responded, and reporting picked up and everybody was happy. Clearly, they wanted somebody with a financial and economic background in the next bidding cycle. I was selected. Our family went to Zurich in February, and we checked out the residence. In April I got a call from Washington Personnel saying, basically, that we had lost the post to the White House, as the White House intended to put a political appointee into the Consul General position, so they would be breaking my assignment.

Well, this shouldn't have been done. Laws were stretched and regulations broken.

Q: Yes, that's quite unusual!

WACKERBARTH: It's very unusual! To the best of my knowledge, the only place this ever actually happened before in the Service was in Bermuda.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: And to my knowledge we've never been able to assign a career Foreign Service Officer to be the Principal Officer in Bermuda again.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: But suddenly it was very late in the assignment cycle, and I was out of an assignment; plus I had to deal with the major disappointment of having had an assignment in which I'd had a lot of good communication with the post, that was anxious for me to move in, and get started with the job they wanted to be done. Actually, the

hardest part was coming home and explaining to my family that this most irregular process had occurred.

Q: Who went there? Do you know?

WACKERBARTH: Well, the man's name was Simms, who was a publicist from South Carolina. I think that this was part of the 1992 election year, the idea of the administration strengthening itself in—

Q: This would be the Bush administration?

WACKERBARTH: It would be the first Bush administration, yes. Actually, Mr. Simms never got there. Probably it wasn't what he had in mind. He had been a military officer in the 1960s in Europe, and he thought that as Consul General he was going to get something akin to a battalion and have a large staff working for him. I learned that what he really had asked for was Munich, and that wasn't available.

One thing I would say for the experience, from having gone through this, was the support that I got from colleagues, who closed ranks and realized that this was not an assault just on one person, but rather an assault on the Foreign Service as a whole. Yet it was a difficult thing to go through. Part of the difficulty was then finding me an assignment.

Among other things, I was in what we call a six-year window—that is, you have six opportunities to compete for promotion across what they call the Senior Threshold, from being an 0-1 officer, which I was, to being a Senior Foreign Service Officer. I had used up three attempts in Warsaw and was very much interested in doing a program direction job as well as an interdisciplinary job to basically show a contrast, that I could not only lead a significant-sized Embassy Economic Counselor position, but that I had versatility in other areas. As it all turned out, I was promoted into the Senior Foreign Service in the 1992 cycle. I was pleased to be ranked 12 among my peers who were also promoted. Anyway, Zurich would have been an ideal assignment. The urgent question for me was that I didn't really know what I was going to do.

I wound up going into the Private Sector Executive Exchange, which was a new initiative strongly touted by the Foreign Service Director General. I took the assignment to the firm that showed the most interest in such an exchange. That turned out to be Philip Morris/Kraft General Foods. The intent was that this would be a two-way street for government and business to better understand each other. So, I wound up going to their international office in Rye Brook, New York. This location was a very good place for our family for numerous reasons.

Q: So you did that from when to when?

WACKERBARTH: I did that from August 1992 to August 1993.

Q: What were you doing? I mean, this is an unusual assignment. How did you find you fit in, and what were you doing?

WACKERBARTH: It was a mixed bag. I was assigned to the long-range planning units of both the Philip Morris side of the house and the Kraft General Foods side of the house. On the one hand, you know, Yogi Berra said, "You can observe a lot by just watching," and the assignment gave me a window into how the private sector approached things. To be frank, I don't think that they really knew how to effectively use me. I was called "the Officer in Charge of Special Projects," and they assigned me to a number of them, some of which were interesting enough. I had to forage around to find the projects. I think I was able to educate a lot of people as to what resources about foreign countries exist within the federal establishment, particularly the Commerce Department and State Department, and then how to tap those resources. I remember at one point Philip Morris paid a million dollars a year retainer to get Margaret Thatcher as an advisor. One of my colleagues from the firm asked, "Well, why was Philip Morris paying Margaret Thatcher a million dollars as a consultant when we had Paul Wackerbarth for free and didn't know how to effectively use him?"

Q: Yes. Well, did you have a problem, personally or at all, with the fact that Philip Morris has been associated with cigarettes?

WACKERBARTH: l guess the best answer is yes and no. It was a tough call for me because I don't smoke, and I don't want my kids to smoke. It was clear that Philip Morris was in an adversarial position with society. On the other hand, one could learn a lot more being on the inside of an outfit that is in this adversarial position, to observe how they manage it.

I remember at one point, I'd get all sorts of promotional stuff, one of which was a really neat Marlboro golf hat; indeed it was just the right weight. I decided that my kids would absolutely love that hat, so therefore I gave it away to a friend of mine who was a smoker.

I, at one point, also got a Marlboro gym bag with the Marlboro logo on it. I remember when I got to my next post, the Post Doctor was visiting a group of different schools. They were talking about the medical hazards of smoking, and I said, "Well, would you like as a prop to be able to carry your equipment in this Marlboro bag?" I said it half kiddingly, but he saw it as a way of illustrating the power of advertising.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: I could have opted out of the assignment and asked for an assignment with another firm. I initially thought I was signing on with Procter and Gamble, but they had reorganized and didn't really know how to effectively use me. It was getting late, and I pretty much decided I would go with the firm that would seem to be able to use me best. I did have to work out the internal feelings that I had. Interestingly enough, the CEO of Philip Morris at that time was a nonsmoker.

Q: Yes. I mean did you find within, on the Philip Morris side, a siege mentality, or—?

WACKERBARTH: That's an interesting question. Of course, it was Philip Morris, Kraft, and General Foods; Kraft had not yet entirely absorbed General Foods, and so the General Foods people were a few miles away in White Plains, New York. I remember I went on their ski trip, which was really for the whole corporation, but it was basically a

General Foods thing; they would distance themselves from Philip Morris on the one hand, but it was clear that they liked the stock options and enjoyed sport together!

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: There would be some cutesy things that I would observe; in some offices, there would be a "Thank you for smoking!" sign.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: I remember on National Smoke Out Day, I happened to be having lunch with a colleague. She said, "I'm going to smoke, in part because I want to assert my right to do it on this particular day." Right from the start I wrestled with the substance of this assignment. Before signing on, I went from Warsaw to Geneva, for an interview. In the middle of the interview, the vice president who was interviewing me just came out of the blue and said, "Do you mind if I smoke?" To this day I am not sure whether that was a trick question, or to see whether I could handle it comfortably, or was this a spontaneous thing. Once on board, I would run this by people in the firm, and they said, "Well, the one thing we really do emphasize is that we think it's important to be courteous about smoking, that even as we assert the right to smoke, we try to emphasize that we don't try to impose this on other people." On one occasion they showed me a light fixture fan where the fan was also an exhaust fan; they were trying it out in certain offices.

At one point, we were talking about not pushing smoking on children by Philip Morris. For example, someone had invented an arcade game, like you find in shopping malls. They'd used a Marlboro racing car in that. I was told Philip Morris was quite energetic in asking the people who promoted the game to get the Marlboro logo off the racing car. Well, in part, that was not promoting their product among children, but it was also protecting their intellectual property theme.

I understand that the Marlboro brand is one of the most recognizable brands worldwide. When I was serving in Brazil later on, for sale in department stores were racing car driver outfits for kids, which would sometimes include the Marlboro logo. One of my former colleagues from Philip Morris came through and pointed this out. She said, "We would definitely go after that."

As I say, it was fascinating to be in the milieu. The project in which I became most involved was one which I call "cloning the CLO" (Community Liaison Office). This is the State Department's institution that provides assistance to families at overseas posts. In the 1990s multinational corporations found that in key positions, they wanted to put U.S. personnel into key overseas slots. Well, one of the things that they found is that it was a tremendous investment to get personnel ready and to send them overseas. It was not only the salary, but also the support for several hundred thousand dollars of cost to put families overseas, only to find that the personnel would curtail due to unaddressed needs. In many cases, even before the first year was out, the person would come back because the spouse or partner was unhappy. And so American business in the early 1990s was looking at a way to address these issues. They were thinking of setting up service centers, which

would perform some of the functions of the Community Liaison Offices, to help people find their way around the community, to answer questions, and provide guidance so that the families would not feel so isolated in these foreign situations.

Q: Can you cite some of your accomplishments?

WACKERBARTH: I drew on the Community Liaison Office model from the State Department. I worked with them to draw up a plan of what one of these service centers might look like. I think it never got off the ground because they couldn't figure out how to pay for it. That was an issue I couldn't really address. For the record, I was one of the key players on the committee.

I taught Kraft General Foods people how to draw on State Department Country Desk Officers as a resource for understanding foreign markets and for getting a grasp of the political climate in particular countries, including potential risks.

In a related context, I became an active member of Westchester County's Exporter Association, attending their monthly meetings. In some instances, I met with members privately.

At one point I was sent to the firm's Chicago office. I provided an international perspective, based on having served overseas, as well as sharing the availability of federal resources. For my part I gained that office's needs and perspectives.

Q: Yes. Oh. Well, after this stint of about a year—

WACKERBARTH: Right.

Q: What happened?

WACKERBARTH: I went to be the Economic Counselor at the American Embassy in Brasilia, Brazil.

Q: And you were there from when to when?

WACKERBARTH: Ah, 1993 till 1996.

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Chapter 13 – Brasilia – Economic Counselor, 1993-1996; U.S. President Bill Clinton, Secy of State Warren Christopher; Ambassadors: Richard Melton and Melvin Levitsky

[December 2023 Edit: In the light of his recent passing, November 2023, I have moved my memory of Henry Kissinger's 1995 visit to Brazil to the beginning of this chapter.]

In the summer of '95 Ambassador Levitsky took mid-tour R & R. During this time the newly assigned Deputy Chief of Mission, Lacy Wright, had not yet arrived at post with his wife (who happened to be the widow of assassinated South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem). During this time Ted Wilkenson served as Chargé d'affaires and I continued as designated Deputy Chief of Mission. As it turned out, Ambassador Levitsky's stateside

time was extended as he underwent heart bypass graft surgery. In this time frame the Embassy received a request from Kissinger Associates, who had been asked by one of their clients, General Foods, to do a tour of South America. Ted Wilkenson worked putting together the arrangements, including a guest list of prominent Brazilian and resident foreign leaders. As it turned out, Lacy Wright and his wife Jackie Bong Wright joined us just as the event was about to begin. Jackie offered to oversee the arrangements. Significantly, Jackie was the widow of the first elected president of South Vietnam, who was assassinated in 1963. To his credit, Kissinger, in making his remarks, referred to the time he toured refugee camps with Jackie's second husband who was our incoming DCM. Among the words Kissinger used describing the refugee camps visits included "Doing that breaks one's heart."

During the luncheon the Brazilian Foreign Minister made a comment referring to a hard time his predecessor had given Kissinger during the mid-'60s visit. Kissinger declined to take offense. He said, "I wouldn't want to do business with someone who would not defend his country's interests." When the event was over, I came away with renewed respect for Henry Kissinger as a consummate diplomat.

Now back to the interview.

Q: You're on your way to Brasilia in 1993. What was the situation in Brazil when you went out there?

WACKERBARTH: It was clearly one of transition. The first week I was there, an international mission had essentially worked out a Brady Plan-like economic reform program. We were prepared to back up funding. We were told, "Thanks, but no thanks. We're going to finance it through offshore domestic finance reserves held by Brazil in dollar accounts in Caribbean regional banks." I asked the then Treasury Department resident financial officer if this made us irrelevant. For all practical purposes he conceded it did. The Brasilia Treasury Department office was closed at the end of his tour of duty.

To take its place the embassy created a financial economist position; this was first occupied by Sharon Delarosa, who did a stellar job. Most notably she developed contacts among end users in the U.S. and locally in Brazil. (The method was greatly enhanced by the creation of a State Department global network which meant that for all practical purposes, telephone calls were "local calls.") I asked Jack Orlando, who had covered the vacant Economic Section Chief position during its vacancy the previous year, to continue as my deputy. A second-tour Foreign Service Officer, Susan Garrow, was assigned to the Economic Section. In her second year she developed significant contacts in the Finance Ministry at the working level. I nominated Mr. Orlando, Ms. Garrow, and Ms. Barbara Stevenson, Office Manager, for embassy performance awards. In the case of Ms. Delarosa, I submitted her name in response to a request for the outstanding Foreign Service Economic Officer competition. Though she did not emerge as the recipient, I got significant feedback for the strong case that was made.

Well, let's see. In '93, I guess it was at the end of '92, the elected president resigned, and this is actually the second time that I think Brazil has had what I call the "Andrew

Johnson" problem—that is, that vice presidents had been chosen to bring along a region, balance a ticket, rather than for their expertise.

Q: Oh.

WACKERBARTH: It happened in, I think it was, 1985 when Tancredo Neves, who everybody agreed was an excellent candidate for president, died on the eve of his taking office, and a man from the northeast, José Sarney, became the president. At that time, I wasn't working on Brazil, but it flashed through my mind that they now had the "Andrew Johnson" problem.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: Well, darned if they didn't have it again. Fernando Collor was elected, I think, in 1990, a very attractive, young president, but his administration was rife with corruption, and he was forced to resign at the end of 1992. The vice president was somebody named Itamar Franco, and Itamar Franco, who may have never had a passport, was a local type of politician from the state of Minas Gerais, from a middle-sized town, Juiz de Fora.

As happened many times in Brazil, inflation was rampant. One time I took the Brazilian currency from the time of independence in 1822. I saw that if you took it out to the ninth power, that would be what one unit of currency in 1822 was by the mid '90s. It was just incredible. The rate of inflation the first year I was there was running about 5,000 percent a year. Shortly after I got there, President Franco named his Foreign Minister, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, as his finance minister. Among other things, Cardoso brought in Pedro Malan, who had been with the Inter-American Development Bank. Together they had a plan to stabilize Brazil's currency.

I remember going out to one of these big box shopping centers, Carrefour, a French chain, very similar to Walmart. What happened would be you'd get paid by the month, and your paycheck was adjusted for inflation, but you got paid at the end of the month; if inflation was running 35 percent a month, by the time you actually got paid, your paycheck was worth about 65 cents on the dollar. The one thing that these big box stores would do was hold their prices until after people had received their paycheck. The scene on that first...like the first Saturday of the month was out of a comic book! I mean just shopping carts everywhere, bumping into each other, and there was a lot of perpetual motion!

Brazil had recently joined what they called "Mercosur" or "Mercosul," which was the Common Market of the Southern Cone, along with Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay. This was enjoying fairly solid success. Brazil had made a commitment to reduce its tariffs. The Brazilian authorities' answer essentially was, "Well, we did what we said we would do, and that's all we're going to do for now, and maybe a little bit later we can revisit the issue."

One of the first things I had to deal with was interesting. A cabinet official tried to get a commission from Merrill Lynch to trade in bonds in the Brazilian financial markets. Merrill Lynch came to us, and we worked to figure out what our best strategy would be.

Our ambassador at the time, Richard Melton, who was in his last several months of his tour, met with Finance Minister Cardoso, and informed him that we'd received this information about the request—that the Brazilian cabinet official had made a request for a five percent commission on the bond issue. The official was removed from his position. It was all handled very quietly, but very effectively.

Q: Well, when you got there, did we feel a responsibility for the financial crisis that Brazil seems to be perpetually in? Was this something that we sat around and worried about? Or was this something we just kind of reported on?

WACKERBARTH: It was interesting because an economy the size of Brazil's is not insignificant. If they had pretty good times, it'd be seventh, eighth, or ninth in the world in terms of size. When I was talking about my time on the Mexico Desk, I talked about the concern that Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank Paul Volcker had about Mexico, because U.S. banks were highly exposed. This wasn't so much the case in Brazil at this particular time. The interesting development here was that there was a lot of talk about the Brazilians possibly doing a Brady plan (Nick Brady was Secretary of the Treasury), in which, basically, U.S.-backed bonds, called Brady Bonds, would back up the financial situation. Well, what Brazil did in this period on its own was, it essentially ran a very high trade surplus and used the trade surplus to quietly purchase bonds on the New York financial markets by themselves. They didn't want to buy them all at once, because that would have had an effect on the market. So, one day they basically said, You know, gee whiz! Very nice of you to think of the program with the IMF and to back it with securities, which bear the full faith and credit of the United States, but we basically bought those securities on our own, and we'll keep the IMF informed of what we're doing. Thank you, but we don't really need the help of the United States or the IMF in running a stabilization program!

Q: This happened on your watch? Yes, what was in it for the Brazilians to go this surreptitious route and purchase themselves, rather than go through the Brady plan?

WACKERBARTH: Basically, they had a plan sufficiently similar to a Brady plan without having to mortgage their sovereignty by being dependent on the United States or on the IMF. I think it probably enhanced Cardoso's popularity as he ran for president the following year in 1994.

Q: When this happened, when you found out about this, was there sort of a feeling of being, on maybe the Treasury's part or our part, or the embassy's part, or something, of being miffed? Or saying, "Thank God! We're out of it!"

WACKERBARTH: I think it was the latter. I remember asking the Treasury attaché, "Does this make us irrelevant?" And he said, "Well, maybe it does!" I think part of the problem was Treasury's issues with Brazil, that our relationship with Brazil had been replete with disappointments. I remember I once caused one of my Central Bank friends to just about split his sides and fall over in laughter. We started talking about Mark Twain, and Mark Twain having said, "Quitting smoking is easy. I've done it a hundred times!"

WACKERBARTH: And I said, "Well, you could almost say for the Brazilians that putting an economic stabilization plan in place is easy. They've done it a hundred times!"

Q: Yes

WACKERBARTH: And he about fell over in laughter; and then "picked himself up" when he realized that he was a fairly senior Brazilian official at my house.

In the spring of 1994, I was the Control Officer for the visit of Vice President Al Gore. Such a visit entails much preparation and coordination of time, place, and officials to be present. At this time Ambassador Melton had already left post and Ambassador Levitsky had yet to arrive. Gore's trip included Bolivia, Argentina, and Brazil. He came in the evening for an evening visit only. As such, it didn't even merit inclusion in the press. The visit was short and inconsequential with no time for any substantive conversation. This was very unfortunate for so many reasons including that the Brazilians, perhaps most importantly, were slighted. Shortly thereafter Mel Levitsky presented his credentials as Ambassador to Brazil.

In terms of politics, the country is governed by a multi-party system. The parties go from the right to the left, but there's a lot of movement in between, in the center particularly. There was an election there in '94. The candidate of the center was the finance minister, Henrique Cardoso.

His opponent was a Labor leader, Luiz da Silva, or Lula as he's called; he was a perpetual candidate. I think Lula's running for maybe the fifth time. His opponent Cardoso, the finance minister, was not a highly charismatic figure or particularly strong campaigner, but he put in place what they called the "Plano Real," as finance minister in July; and that was the economic plan that was backed by the Brazilian bonds. The Plano Real quickly addressed the inflation that I described at Carrefour.

Q: What you mean is, there wasn't any real incentive for savings, was there?

WACKERBARTH: No, no. I mean Brazil...ah, well, except that you could buy inflation-adjusted savings accounts. If you had the money left over to save, these would be very, very attractive. Actually, they could be attractive as their value was indexed to take inflation into account.

Q: Well now, were we playing any role in this inflation problem? Or was this something we were observing?

WACKERBARTH: We were observing and reporting on it.

Q: Something that people I've talked to, who've served in Brazil, were saying, that for a very long time Brazil was very much like India, a sort of a self-enclosed what do you call…

WACKERBARTH: A closed model state.

Q: A closed model state, where it was big enough, and they did things, and so exports weren't—

WACKERBARTH: Import substitution model.

Q: Yes, and you know, they built their own computers, albeit not as good as you can get and all—

WACKERBARTH: Yes.

Q: Was that changing?

WACKERBARTH: No, it was changing.

Q: Were we trying to do anything about that?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, well, this was all tied with the Uruguay Round, and they opened up to Mercosul. No, part of this whole equation was in fact, to fight inflation by allowing imports to come in to compete. This idea of building their own computers, which was called informatics, was an animal of the ’80s. At that time, they thought they should really build their own, and they wanted to have a domestic information technology industry in the worst way, and in fact, that’s what they got, that is, in the worst way.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: Information technology is the one field you don’t want to isolate yourself from, because technology is expanding and changing at such a rapid rate that it’s easy to fall quickly behind; if you don’t have the means of communication to get through trade, you’re naturally going to lag.

The biggest issue we had to deal with was intellectual property rights, especially in the area of patents for medicines. Brazil has not developed very many medicines on its own, yet they were highly skilled at what they call reverse engineering, at copying patents of others; we'd been on their case for years on this.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: But with the case of Brazil, we’d been raising our concerns so long that we weren’t going to wait for their implementation. So, we pretty much were involved throughout my tour in extensive and detailed talks, trying to get them to adopt an intellectual property policy that would also protect our concerns.

Q: Well now, what recourse does a nation, or a pharmaceutical firm, or anything else, have when somebody is essentially stealing their stuff?

WACKERBARTH: Well, one tool was to apply trade sanctions.

Q: But you said this has been going on for years!

WACKERBARTH: Right, and they would consistently say, “Look, we’re addressing the problem.” Well, finally they did, and we never actually...I mean we drew up plans for applying sanctions, and they didn’t like being on the USTR (United States Trade Representative)’s watch list. In no small part they were interested in getting our foreign investment, among other things; they were moving toward privatization, and they wanted

to be known as a foreign- investment friendly country. I would add that we made the case that Brazil ought to be going about developing its own medicines. The profile of its medicine-using population is a very young one; in contrast, the profile of the medicine-using population in the United States is an older one, and so a lot of research in the United States goes towards developing things that are appropriate for older people.

The interesting flip side of all this was on the issue of sound recordings or video recordings. Brazil was very protective of its intellectual property rights there because there's a peculiar Brazilian art form called the "telenovela" (TV serial), which is of better dramatic quality than a soap opera—maybe not that much better—but it had certain artistic quality. Well, Brazil was selling these videos in a number of foreign markets. For example, Chinese TV doesn't develop a lot of material on its own. Rather it happily purchased these Brazilian telenovelas. So when the president of Brazil went to China, he found Brazil was a familiar place to the people because hundreds of millions of people there had watched these telenovelas. For this reason, Brazil did not want these TV programs pirated, so on the one side they were very protective of their intellectual property rights.

Q: Well, did you have the feeling that in the '90s, when you were there, that the problem of intellectual property rights was beginning to gain the attention of most countries? In other words, it no longer was the sort of thing you could shove to one side.

WACKERBARTH: Pretty much, and of course, it was part of the Uruguay Round, which by the way, is the round that established the World Trade Organization.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: And it became very important when I was doing Mexico in the 1980s, and the momentum kept building further and further up. Part of the reason was that this is the way of the Inter-American economy; but the knowledge export, the value of our knowledge-based exports was right up there with our top agricultural and industrial-based exports. I can't cite the rank, but under the top three, it might have even been number [two] second between agricultural commodities, airplanes, and industrial goods. Knowledge-based exports were very important. For example, I visited with a person at the Squibb pill factory in Sao Paulo; and you know, you can drop the powder into the capsules as efficiently in Sao Paulo as you can in New Jersey, except you don't have to pay the person you trained to run the machine as much. They were using our formulas to their benefit as well.

Q: The atomic and the nuclear issue had been resolved by the time you were there?

WACKERBARTH: Actually, it was resolved while I was there, but it was in the final stages. The way we described it was that Argentina and Brazil decided to join hands and jump over the candle together, and not decide that one or the other was the net gainer. I think with Mercosur, even though they didn't particularly like each other, they realized that there was more benefit from having positive commercial relations than to try to outdo each other as nuclear rivals.

Q: Really, because it looked like a terrible danger, but a waste too.

What about trade with Europe?

WACKERBARTH: Well, this is a big question. During my time there, Brazilians were debating whether their future was northeast to Europe or due north to North America, and it's one that they're still...it may be that the European Union was a larger consumer of Brazilian goods and services than the United States, but they were finding that they were dealing with a prickly E.U. partner. Another area of major growth was their trade within South America, which expanded trade quite a bit, albeit from a very low base. This did not involve large margins, yet they started looking at one another. One of the things that they proposed, I think it was November of '93, early, was the South American Free Trade Agreement.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: That was actually proposed by Franco at a meeting of the Rio group, or it was a group of some of the South American presidents, and they talked about free trade agreements within South America. But throughout my tour what I watched was Brazil or Mercosur lining up, one by one, each of the other South American countries in these free trade agreements, all of them which had a long-time frame for takeoff; coincidentally they would come into effect in the year 2005.

There was a summit of the Americas which was interesting because one of the things we had to accomplish was that we had to make sure that Itamar Franco went. As I mentioned before, he hated to travel; he hated meeting foreigners; he was more comfortable with his local colleagues. We finally got a commitment that he would go, and he took Cardoso, who was the president-elect at that time, as an advisor. In reality he was the front man, with Cardoso being the brains behind the operation.

Q: You left there in '96. How did you feel? I mean did you feel that things were moving, particularly in an economic way, more positive towards the United States, or were we much of a player?

WACKERBARTH: Well, to be candid, I didn't have this sense that I came to a city of brick and left it a city of marble.

I mean I didn't have that sense—Gee! This was a productive tour, or that wonderful things happened on my watch. I felt good that they had an economic stabilization program in place. But I would say openly that my worst nightmare was that Cardoso would just have a nice presidency, and things would go well during his administration, but that he really wouldn't be able to address those underlying problems of the Brazilian economy, which had plagued it for such a long period of time. His finance minister, Pedro Malan, had an agenda in place to accomplish these things, and for a while I would keep score on five points and would see a gain here or a gain there, but then things would delay. Particularly they would run into problems in their Congress as well as their judicial branch, which was highly volatile and unpredictable as well.

I might add, that one of the more interesting things to me, was that almost everything in the Brazilian economy was running on cash. A major key to Brazilian success would have been to get a situation going where normal credit would function. I joined a meeting

with the president of Citicorp in the Ambassador's office. I asked him, "What is your portfolio here?" And he said, "Well, we'll be able to do some government finance, and we'll do some trade finance." Next my question was, "What about credit?" It turns out that in Brazil, Citibank was a consumer-oriented bank. To me it was a real eye-opener that there wasn't much consumer or even that much commercial credit. Almost everything was running on cash. I thought they needed normal banking protocols where normal credit would function.

Q: Yes, yes. Well, in '96, whither?

WACKERBARTH: Back to Washington.

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Chapter 14 – Washington, D.C. – August 1996 to 2000; U.S. President Bill Clinton, Secretary of State Warren Christopher until 1997, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright after 1997

Q: What were you doing then?

WACKERBARTH: l was the Dispute Resolution Specialist. This title was because in specific legislation, the Congress had mandated that every Department of the Government should appoint a senior officer to have that title. The State Department had lagged behind on this initiative. Undersecretary Richard Moose had come to Brasilia. One of the items on his agenda was to find a senior officer for that particular position. I talked to him a little bit about it; Ambassador Levitsky talked to him about me and the position. An assignment was worked out stating that I was appointed as the Department's Dispute Resolution Specialist.

Now what this was about was essentially putting in place an alternative dispute resolution regime, in which…

Q: What kind of regime?

WACKERBARTH: Alternative dispute resolution. This would be for workplace disputes.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: Actually, the assignment turned out to be, at best, a mixed bag. Part of it was that a couple of weeks into my assignment, Ambassador Moose, who had tapped me for the job, ran into some personal issues and resigned. This basically left me without an advocate…new job to this part of the Department, no supervisor…I got caught in tension between different deputies to the Director General.

Jennifer Ward, Principal Deputy, didn't know a lot about Alternative Dispute Resolution, but she made her voice heard. Ambassador Quainton, Director General, was open-minded, but leaned heavily on her. I still recall Quainton's review statement which was complicated by the fact that I didn't report to the Principal Deputy, Jennifer Ward. I reported to one of the other deputies, who also left shortly after I got there. Eventually

Ralph Frank came in to replace her. It was a tricky and uncomfortable position to be in as I got caught in tension between different deputies to the Director General.

I recall, with somewhat amusement, Ambassador Quainton's review statement of my Employee Evaluation report, in which he described my task as "Sisyphean," because of the "litigious climate" of the Department, and "a thankless job"; I wouldn't quite say I was damned with faint praise, as so much as the job I was trying to do was damned with faint praise. He also made some remarks about "my courage, and energy" in taking on this "thankless and Sisyphean task."

And for my part I thought that defined my situation.

Q: You did this from when to when?

WACKERBARTH: I did this from August '96 to August '97.

Q: Can you give some examples of what you did?

WACKERBARTH: Well, basically we developed a framework for how we would deal with disputes. We tried to get parties to mediate a few disputes. The other player in the mix was a Deputy Undersecretary for Equal Employment Opportunity. She and her staff were fairly wary of this concept of mediation. For the record, it's not quite like arbitration. Rather, mediation is basically where one agrees to come to the table with a view to work out one's own agreement. And I think that they felt that their clients might get a better deal by this way of working things out. I remember very specifically one of my colleagues, when I described to him what we were trying to do, said, "It seems like Management would want to do this, because it could result in reduction of a lot of liability."

I remember at one point I drew the analogy that this is like Third World medicine. We had this very elaborate Foreign Service grievance board, which reviewed grievances. It's like Third World medicine in the sense that we're highly invested on the high side, but not very well invested on the primary care side. A lot of the disputes that wound up going through the whole grievance process and to the Grievance Board, which was an elaborate expensive process, could have been resolved through mediation at the primary level.

But we did get a framework set up. I remember Ambassador Quainton sending me a note, complimenting me on establishing a structure. I showed him how one of the early mediations was going to take place, but we really didn't do much more in that particular area. Some of it was resistance within his own office; there was resistance from other players in the Department on this as well.

I remember one interesting mediation that took place. One of the issues in a lot of employee disputes is asymmetry. There was a secretary or clerical employee who had developed multiple sclerosis. What she really needed to do was to renegotiate her work requirements, and mediation seemed like a good forum to get the parties together in the presence of a trained mediator. (I went through mediation training, but I never became a mediator myself.) This seemed like a climate in which one could craft work requirements where she could say what she could do, and the employer could say, "This is what needs

to be done." In other words, we could work out her level without her having the supervisor dictate the work requirements, and her saying, "But I can't do this." It seemed like a solution. She wound up asking for too much, and said, "Well, shouldn't I get a promotion, too?" or something like that, and so for that reason, it didn't prove to be a good example.

Q: Yes. When you left this board in '97 did you feel that there was a system in place, or was it still that the preferred route was litigation?

WACKERBARTH: I felt that Ambassador Quainton's description of the Department climate, as being a litigious one, was on target. I did not feel a great sense of accomplishment. I felt I gave it my best shot, but I also felt that I was not really able to get very far in overcoming the institutional bias which kept the Department litigious.

Q: Yes. Ninety-seven, what happened?

WACKERBARTH: In '97 I was appointed to the Senior Officer Division of the Department's Foreign Service Personnel System/Career Development Assignments. The Secretary of State was Madeleine Albright.

Q: And how long did you do that?

WACKERBARTH: I did it for two years.

Q: That would be through ninety-nine.

WACKERBARTH: Yes.

Q: How did you find that?

WACKERBARTH: Well, it was interesting. I had been a CDO (Career Development Officer) before. However, this was a new and different structure. Now I was a CDO for a certain number of senior and O-1 officers. I also represented the East Asian and Pacific Bureau, the Economic Bureau, the Bureau of Population and Refugee Affairs, and the Medical Bureau, including the doctors' panel. Of course, my observation when I saw this structure was, "This is interesting." At the time when the real estate industry had come around to identify who represents a buyer and who represents a seller, we were going in the other direction.

Q: Did you have any other responsibilities?

WACKERBARTH: Yes, I was chair of the six-eight year rule panel as well as being the point of contact for officers seeking jobs at the State Department transferring from USIA. Anyway, we proceeded like that for about a year, and then the bureaus convinced the new Director General, Edward "Skip" Gnehm, to have separate assignment officers; one group would advocate for the position to be filled and the other group would advocate for the individual filling position. The second year it functioned pretty much as it had previously.

Q: Did you find that all your dealing with senior personnel assignments were up against this sort of a quirk that anyone who's getting ready to retire wants a Washington assignment because you're paid more for Washington?

WACKERBARTH: Yes.

Q: That means you get a higher pension.

WACKERBARTH: It's very tough to get senior officers to take overseas assignments for a whole variety of reasons.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: If one retired from overseas, the idea of basing one's pension on the federal salary plus locality pay was a disincentive for retiring personnel to serve overseas.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: One of my additional duties was to be Chairman of the six-eight year rule committee.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: To clarify the six-eight year rule, recommendations went to the Director General on people who were seeking waivers for the eight-year statutory limit on service in the United States and the six-year Department rule on service in the Department. We were constantly dealing with one excuse after another, particularly from more senior people, or people closer to retirement age—anything to avoid going overseas.

This was during the cost-cutting mid-'90s. The idea was that the Department didn't really need to have so many people working the Personnel system, which I think was a valid question. Frankly, it was a tough structure to work in because, as I said, I was representing both client interests and bureau interests at the same time.

Q: Yes. Well, for yourself, what happened? When did you retire?

WACKERBARTH: I retired September 29, 2000.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: My last year was at the Board of Examiners,1999 to 2000.

Q: Yes. What was your impression of the candidates for the Foreign Service?

WACKERBARTH: We met a lot of very sharp candidates. The thing that stuck out in my mind was one could meet a lot of bright people, but they weren't necessarily focused, and they didn't have a sense of what the United States' interests were. One of the things I found very interesting was that often you would find that candidates who are naturalized U.S. citizens would have a much clearer focus on what represents the United States'

interests than people who are native born. Foreign-born applicants were notably sharp on that.

There were a lot of bright people as one must be bright to pass the Foreign Service examination. However, many didn't have a sense of "What are the objectives of the organization?" and "How can I show that I'm better equipped than the next person to advance them?"

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: That's the clearest answer I can offer. It was interesting because I think more than half the people we passed were from Minnesota. Well, first we would call in those people who did not succeed; and then we would call the people who did succeed in to congratulate them. They received a pile of forms and papers; it was like the equivalent of the thick envelope for college admission.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: Well, I remember one interview in Chicago. A very educated, well-traveled woman did not pass, though she had studied at Yale and Harvard, and also overseas. She looked at me and said, "Well, how can you not take me? I have all these degrees." The fact of the matter was that she was very weak in focusing on identifying what the U.S.'s interests were, and how they might be advanced. I took the lead (there were two of us in the room) in explaining the way we apply these 12 criteria.

For the record, the way the Foreign Service oral exam was given at that time, it was one of the most objective exercises one could find on this planet, in the sense that the score on every one of 12 categories had to be on the basis of what the person did or said during the exercise. We would add up the score, and that's how it was determined who passed, and who didn't.

Q: Well, you mentioned Minnesota. I was on the Board of Examiners back in '76. Isn't Carlton College in Minnesota? I knew Carlton was a college, but didn't pay much attention, and it was pointed out to me that Carlton College graduates had the highest pass rate of any who took the exam, higher than any other educational institution.

WACKERBARTH: Kofi Annan, then Secretary General of the United Nations, graduated from Macalester College, also located in Minnesota. Could there be something about that state that develops interest and expertise in foreign affairs there?

Q: Tell me, what was your impression at the time? There's always been this great push to bring in minorities. When we're talking about minorities, we're really talking about African Americans, I think.

WACKERBARTH: Yes.

Q: One of the concerns has always been that standards are lower for an African American in order to get the recruitment figures up to a decent level. How did you find that?

WACKERBARTH: I didn't buy that. I recall that if the Front Office presented pressure, it was subtle. For our part, our defense of objectivity was stalwart. When challenged, we pointed out that we dealt with 12 categories.

I might say something at this point. My colleague Kevin McGuire went to Howard University (a very prestigious HBCU—one of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities—in Washington, D.C.) as a Diplomat-in-Residence. He essentially rewrote the job description for this assignment, and he became very proactive in getting strong students at Howard to take the Foreign Service exam. Once he found out that a student had taken it, he worked very closely with him or her. Among other things, he got the coaching materials from Georgetown School of Foreign Service, and basically grilled the minority candidates with these materials, to ensure that they were well prepared.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: It was interesting work; for example, there was a situation in which we had a senior officer whose time in class meant that he had to retire, so he went and took the exam again and tried to come in as a junior officer. I was not initially on his panel. When they started the first exercise, one of the panel members said, "Well, I know this guy." So they quickly had to find somebody who didn't know him; that person turned out to be me. I remember the demarche exercise. I didn't know all this until we got into the demarche, but the guy presented the demarche like a pro; and I gave him a seven, the highest possible score, because he presented like a pro. My counterpart gave him a five. My counterpart had been in the Board of Examiners for three or four years, and said, "Well, this and that," and my own private thought was, "Get out of here! Are you going to flunk Mother Teresa for lack of social consciousness?" Anyway, I think the person somehow squeaked in.

Q: Interesting!

WACKERBARTH: I had a sense that there were personnel who were close to retirement doing three, four, maybe try to do five years in the Board of Examiners. We talked about it before—about wanting to stay in Washington. If one pretty much saw that their career was topping out, it wasn't a bad place to finish up. I think Skip Gnehm tried to change this.

Q: Well, you left in 2000, and what have you been doing since?

WACKERBARTH: I've signed on as a docent at the Washington National Cathedral.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: I basically retired on Friday, and Monday I went over to the Cathedral and said, "I'd like to sign up." I enjoy that very much. I give tours of the Cathedral, including some very interpretive tours, and it's an extension of being a briefing officer.

Q: Yes.

WACKERBARTH: I think the highest marks I got for anything in the Foreign Service were for my oral briefings, from being basically able to explain economics well to a wide variety of audiences, and so I adapted this skill to explain the Cathedral, and how it tells stories of the Bible, the Faith, and the nation. They often say one should try to develop another side. I also took a whole series of art history classes at the Smithsonian. I went through the basic core courses. I just have to pull all my stuff together, and I'll have a certificate in Western Art from the Smithsonian, which with $2.34 will buy me a cup of coffee at Starbucks.

Q: Yes!

WACKERBARTH: And in connection with my work at the Cathedral, I took a Church History class and wrote my paper on Abbot Suger, who put together the first Gothic cathedral at St. Denis or Saint-Denis near Paris, and showed how he went about developing Gothic architecture.

Additionally, at the time of this interview, my oldest daughter is in graduate school, and I've got two kids in college. I've become the transportation coordinator and logistical coordinator for them. My wife teaches for Fairfax County Public Schools; she's not ready to retire, so I became the chief cook and bottle washer at home. Even before I had my heart bypass, I was working on physical fitness. Of course, I'll plan on doing that a little bit more!

End of interview