

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

**CORNELIUS “NEAL” WALSH**

*Interviewed by: Dan Whitman  
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**INTERVIEW**

[Note: This interview was not completely edited by Neal Walsh prior to his passing.]

*Q: Neal Walsh, this is your life, as they used to say on the television. This is Dan Whitman interviewing Cornelius Walsh, for the transcriber. We call him Neal. It's August 5<sup>th</sup>, and we're in Neal's very welcoming house in Fredericksburg, Virginia, which is halfway between Richmond and D.C. It's a great way station if you're going anywhere. This is a great moment. We've been talking about this, and finally, we're doing it. This is good. We're going to get to the history, the jobs, and your professional background. Conventionally, we start at the beginning, and I kind of warned you about this. First, when and where were you born? And I think you know what the second question is.*

WALSH: I was born in Winsted, Connecticut, a small town in the northwest of Connecticut. It's a mile south of the Massachusetts border, and about 20 miles east of the New York border.

*Q: Sounds kind of close to Bradley Field.*

WALSH: It's very close to Bradley Field. Very rural. I was born in 1948, for goodness' sake. It was September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1948.

*Q: Well, now we've got your data and we'll go deep into your psychology. This is not psychoanalysis, but I warned you. Can you tell us the first memory that you have of early childhood?*

WALSH: Yeah. I've gone over it a number of times in my lifetime, you might say. People ask, "What was your earliest memory?" Mine is – and this was over a period of time – that people would not pick me up anymore. I was comfortable with the idea of people picking me up and carrying me from place to place, and all of a sudden, that started to drop off until it stopped completely.

*Q: We think that was because of your many character flaws, but it might have been because you were gaining weight, also.*

WALSH: It could have been.

*Q: If you remember not being picked up, it suggests that you also remember being picked up.*

WALSH: Well, I do remember the comfort of being carried and then the discomfort of not being carried anymore.

*Q: Ah, because then you have to walk, or you don't get anywhere.*

WALSH: Exactly.

*Q: So, from there to 55 years later— Just kidding. I'm guessing you were maybe two or three at that point. Did you have siblings? What was your childhood like? Was it the American dream? Tell us something about how you lived as a young lad.*

WALSH: I have to say that growing up at that time in a small town in the United States was probably one of the best things that could happen to a person. I had an older brother who was two years older than I, and two sisters. One sister is two years younger than I am, and one sister is nine years younger than I am. My father was fairly affluent. He was the legislator for the town in Hartford, and he was also the local undertaker.

*Q: In the state legislature?*

WALSH: Yes, in the state legislature.

*Q: And the undertaker?*

WALSH: And the undertaker.

*Q: This is segment two. There were four siblings. We want to know about how you got along, who they were, and what kind of parents you had. You said your father was doing pretty well; he was a legislator and an undertaker. Religion? Upbringing? Education?*

WALSH: We were solidly Catholic. I went to Catholic school for primary school. Then, I had an uncle who was an auxiliary bishop in Atlanta. So, the church community was pretty— Everybody we knew were Catholics, even though we had a pretty small family, with four of us. Relatively, that was very small.

*Q: Most people who have been to Catholic primary school have a strong opinion one way or the other? Do you?*

WALSH: Yeah. I thought it was a great education, and wonderful to see propaganda from the inside. It was—

*Q: Well, if you were eight years old, you weren't aware—*

WALSH: I was not aware. I had no idea. I do, as a parent, think that telling kids, “If you keep that up, you’re going to burn in hell forever,” is a tremendous motivating force in their lives.

*Q: And when you internalize that as a young child, that sticks, doesn’t it?*

WALSH: It does.

*Q: Does it have as much to do with training people to behave well as it does with belief?*

WALSH: No. At a certain point, the idea that doing X, Y, Z will result in burning for the rest of your life falls away, and you have to come up with some other ideas as to why this is all happening.

*Q: You read yesterday’s New York Times. There was a piece in which the professor said that the question to the students was, “Who creates your morals?”*

WALSH: Yeah, that was the article by what’s his name out of Harvard. I’m glad to see he’s \_\_\_\_.

*Q: Yes. So, I ask you the same question: if you were trained as a child in hell, and later realized that’s not exactly the reason—. Did you have a reaction when you read that article yesterday? Where do your morals come from? You’re a very moral man.*

WALSH: Well, that’s one that is going to sit. It’s one we who have gone through that Catholic upbringing are going to sit through and think about for a long time. Where do you get your morals? You do that from what you learn, right, about right and wrong from the Catholic school. What did you learn by observing people – people you admired, like your parents? Then, how did you aggregate all of that into a way of life?

As I used to say, I think I can say that within the federal government, we didn’t really start looking, to my mind, at ethics – in the sense of seminars on ethics, “all employees must have ethical training,” and so on – until the late ‘80s. Frankly, at that time, I said, “What do we need this for?” The rules should be don’t lie, don’t steal, and don’t chase the help around the desk. There you go. Those are the areas where people fuck up the most.

*Q: We’re leaping ahead, and that’s fine. Did you find that it should have been needless to point this out to federal employees? Should they have had this as part of their character in order to be a part of the federal government?*

WALSH: If you get right down to it, the Foreign Service is a pretty clean operation, and from my time in the ‘70s to the end of my career, the number of felonies, if you wish, were very minor. It is an honest and dedicated workforce. You have the various people who will lie, who will steal, and who will chase the help around the desk, but there are fewer there than, I would say, in city governments and so on. I come from Connecticut.

We've had three governors put in jail over the past 10 or 12 years. Mayors; there must be a special award.

*Q: The mayor conveyor belt, yes. Well, that qualifies Connecticut as a real state. If people had this intrinsically, was the training liability nonsense?*

WALSH: No, I think it's good to bring that sort of education back to people every couple of years, to say, "Hey, this is what we don't do. This is what we don't tolerate." Otherwise, you can go a long time without seeing an example of it. Sometimes, when it comes to these sorts of issues, your seniors – your ambassadors, your DCMs (Deputy Chief of Mission), your deputy assistant secretaries – are not necessarily the ones who are going to say, "I want to remind you all." You're leading that force, and you don't want to put that idea into their minds that they're all thieves, liars, and scandal mongers.

*Q: So, what, then you're aware of the Pompeo charter. Have you seen it?*

WALSH: I have not seen it.

*Q: It's quite stunning. It looks as if Moses just brought it from Mount Sinai. It's a big tablet that has principles of ethics, which seem pretty elementary. Any reaction to Pompeo—?*

WALSH: No, I didn't read it.

*Q: Let's go back to your two sisters and your brother. Was there an alpha male? Did everyone get along harmoniously?*

WALSH: Never. We were kids.

*Q: You were fighting, competing—*

WALSH: I remember going to sleep one night and looking over at my brother's bed and imagining a knife right in his chest.

*Q: Mmm, and where would that knife have come from? Not from the nice Catholic child.*

WALSH: If I could have gotten downstairs to the kitchen, he would have been gone.

*Q: What sort of thing would he have done to deserve a knife in his chest?*

WALSH: He was two years older than I was, and he was a much better athlete than I was, so I didn't like that. He, obviously, had social partners, and would never let somebody as young as I—

*Q: Well, I said this would not be psychoanalysis, however, there must have been some sense of competition and some need to overcome—*

WALSH: I never thought of it in terms of competition. I figured he was just— It would have been better for the world if he had not continued to live.

*Q: Okay. Did that opinion go on for more than 10 years?*

WALSH: No.

*Q: So, we can call it a normal childhood, I think. The parents, who were the tillers, the people guiding this whole thing— Siblings will be savage until convinced not to be. Apparently, between your schooling and your parents – we haven't talked much about them – something guided the four of you, or at least you. Do you remember the father or the mother actually determining your behavior? Were they just trying to make peace? Do you remember what the process was? The parents had four kids. Among any kids, there are differences, competition, some moments. Was this left up to the kids to work out, or did they intervene a lot?*

WALSH: In as much as the kids' lives were kept as secret from the parents as possible.

*Q: Did the kids have an unwritten rule to keep things to themselves?*

WALSH: Absolutely.

*Q: Ah, that's interesting.*

WALSH: You never ratted on the family or your brothers or sisters.

*Q: Even at moments when you wanted to sink a knife into their chest?*

WALSH: Absolutely. You knew the knife would go the other way if you did. As such, they were very even-handed with us.

*Q: Really?*

WALSH: Yes.

*Q: Did they do this instinctively? Did they read books? Did they read Dr. Spock? What do you think?*

WALSH: The one phrase— I remember hearing my mother talking to other mothers and so on like this. She would say, "He's going through a phase." My homicidal phase—

*Q: I would say that about you right now. You're still going through a phase.*

WALSH: We all are, of course. But yeah, they were pretty even-handed. They did read. They insisted we read.

*Q: What did you read? That's unusual. Americans in the 1950s at the age of eight didn't read much. What was the difference?*

WALSH: Well, actually, one thing that was a lot of fun was that they would buy books at auctions or at estate sales and stuff like this. So, they would get lots of sets— Not lots of sets, but some sets of children's books and magazines from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They had encyclopedias also from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These were fascinating to read. You could just sit and go through them.

*Q: That's an enormous benefit you had. It was a very small number of Americans at that time who were conscious of having reading material around.*

WALSH: Yeah. And we had friends. Actually, in my neighborhood— Later, we moved out to the country, but before seventh grade when we moved out to the country, I had one neighbor who had *Reader's Digest* going back forever in her garage. I had another neighbor who had *Look in Life* in his garage going back decades. And then I had the \_\_\_\_, who had *National Geographic* going back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. I would go to those places, sit in their garages or sit in that attic and read these books forever.

*Q: For the record, there's one publication on this table right now, and it is the latest National Geographic. To become a reader, is it circumstance? Is it encouragement from the parents, or is it mainly the availability of the reading material? Did you come naturally to this? Were you guided?*

WALSH: Yeah, it was there, and my parents never had any objections to it. My father even— Because they would not let me buy comic books, I would go to the city pharmacy on Tuesdays and the cigar store on Thursdays, when they got their comic books in. I'd go down there and sit and read.

*Q: It's time to come clean on all of these things.*

WALSH: Yeah. I'd always read their magazines. That must have started at an early age, because when I was seven or eight, we had a flood in our town. The manager of the cigar store drowned. I took all my money and bought a mass for him, which everybody thought was rather nice because \_\_\_\_ was Jewish. I had no idea he was Jewish. I figured him getting drowned was pretty profound, so I thought I should contribute to his family. So, I must have been seven or eight when that flood came. I must have been reading comic books at eight years old.

*Q: Remarkable. What's wrong with comic books?*

WALSH: It was sort of the same thing they used in terms of, say, Dairy Queen – “That's junk.” Comic books did not have the respect and prestige they have today.

*Q: Like Dairy Queen. That's good. Were you prohibited from using Dairy Queen and the ice cream truck?*

WALSH: Absolutely.

*Q: They would not have junk. I remember from some decades ago that you used to say, "Having a television in the house is like delivering sewage into the house." You could say this goes back to Dairy Queen and comic books as junk. Junk is not good. It pollutes the mind.*

WALSH: No. Of course, this was the 1950s, so my parents had much more respect for what was on TV, whether it deserved it or not. When my children were growing up, it was sewage. It's even worse today, but still.

*Q: Exponentially, since there are 100 channels. There used to be three bad ones, and now there are 100 bad ones. Well, well. High school. Were you at a religious school again?*

WALSH: No.

*Q: Okay. So, from the Catholic school as a young child, what was next?*

WALSH: What was next was a semi-private school. The public school for Winsted was established by a Mr. Gilbert. Winsted used to be a center for clocks, and the Gilbert Clock Company subsidized and established the high school. The high school grew out of the Gilbert home, which was an orphanage. In the 1930s, it became the local high school.

*Q: So, was there a purely public school in the same area?*

WALSH: No. The grammar schools were purely public, but the high school was semi-private, run by a private corporation. The town would be assessed a per-pupil payment every year.

*Q: That's fascinating. So, there was a town in Connecticut that did not have a purely public high school. Semi-private means that it was subsidized, and the appearance—*

WALSH: Right.

*Q: Okay. The type of training you had in high school—*

WALSH: It was pretty much a good high school. It had a college program, a vocational program, and a secretarial program. For the secretarial, I would say the greater number of female students went into that and fed into the secretarial system in Hartford, where the insurance companies and industrial part were. Then, for vocational, it was really good in terms of wiring, carpentry, drafting, and so on like this. Then, in college you had to have two to three years of Latin, two to three years of a foreign language, math.

*Q: Wow. Was this a big school or a small school?*

WALSH: The maximum number of students at any given time was between 350 and 400. So, you'd have a class of 80 or so.

*Q: Sociologically, was it pretty much one group? Was there a concentration of Catholic families in that area?*

WALSH: Yeah, but there was also a concentration of Anglicans, and a smaller concentration of Jews. There were maybe five or six Jewish families, maybe 10 maximum. There were Methodists, Lutherans, and others from the Swedish and Norwegian group over in East Hartland and so on like this. It was strictly white. There were some African American families that dated back to the 1840s and 1850s, during the period of abolitionist activity. These families had been in Connecticut for a couple of hundred years, and by that time, they were not necessarily "Black."

*Q: Thinking of Dubois, who was just north of—*

WALSH: He was in Great Barrington.

*Q: Great Barrington, near \_\_\_\_, just to the north. Not Black, then, in the sense of being part of mainstream, educated America, you mean?*

WALSH: Yes.

*Q: This may have been more common in New England than in other parts of the country, maybe. At what point in high school— Did you just kind of take for granted that you would go to college?*

WALSH: Yeah, that was the given.

*Q: Did most of your classmates do the same thing?*

WALSH: No. For most, I would say— It was probably 50/50 for the males, and, say, 30/70 for the females. Generally, you pretty much hung out with everybody. It didn't make too much of a difference.

*Q: Right. So, you were maybe a sophomore or junior when you started thinking, "Where should I go?"*

WALSH: To college?

*Q: Yeah.*

WALSH: Probably. I didn't really have a whole lot of anxiety about it, because it was always, "You *will* go to St. Bonaventure," since we had Franciscan priests. My brother

would have gone to St. Bonaventure, but he played good basketball, so he went to Boston College.

*Q: St. Bonaventure was the Catholic college in the neighborhood?*

WALSH: It was a Franciscan college in New York, about 40 miles south of Buffalo. It was right on the far edges of New York state.

*Q: Oh, way upstate. Okay. So, this was kind of a natural progression. Connecticut has many schools. Why not Connecticut? You just wanted to go away, parents agreed, that sort of thing?*

WALSH: Yeah. I wasn't terribly motivated. It was just like, "I have to go to college."

*Q: But you were. You were reading comics and National Geographic. You were very motivated.*

WALSH: I just didn't know what college was for.

*Q: Okay. So, you went to St. Bonaventure right after high school?*

WALSH: Right.

*Q: Was it big or small?*

WALSH: Small, maybe a couple thousand.

*Q: Was it a place for good memories?*

WALSH: Yeah, but it was also way out in the sticks.

*Q: And not even that close to Buffalo, right?*

WALSH: Not even that close to Buffalo. That tells you—

*Q: That's about a six hour drive.*

WALSH: It was a long way.

*Q: Whose idea was this? Your parents'?*

WALSH: Yeah. You know, the Franciscans were the priests in our neighborhood, so St. Bonny's was always considered a great place to be. A number of other alumni were in Winsted, other people who had been successful. Priests in the town and so on had gone there.

*Q: Not a big departure, culturally and educationally. So, what were the strong points, academically, of St. Bonaventure?*

WALSH: None. I did very well there. At about that time, I started reading some histories of East and Central Europe. I became fascinated by it. So, probably by January or February of my freshman year, I'd decided I would look for a good Russian studies department. This whole development of these vast plains on the edge of Europe was sort of fascinating to me. So, that's what I did. I transferred to Syracuse University, which had a good Russian studies program.

*Q: You went east.*

WALSH: I went east.

*Q: The Maxwell School.*

WALSH: The Maxwell School. It was Warren Walsh who was the director of that place. No relation. He had a— It was one of the better Russian studies centers. You had Harvard, Yale— Who else had a good one?

*Q: Columbia, I think.*

WALSH: Columbia, in New York, right. Then Syracuse, and on the West Coast, you had Stanford and a couple of others. But Syracuse was perfect.

*Q: So, you went there your second year?*

WALSH: Yep, my sophomore year. I transferred.

*Q: So, something big happened that first year. You went from being sort of—*

WALSH: Well, I realized that one, there weren't a whole lot of courses there at St. Bonaventure that attracted me. It was sort of like you go all the way through, and you're generally going to get pretty much just general courses that are not good.

*Q: Yeah. Well, it takes some people two or three years to catch on to that. You realized it in the first year.*

WALSH: I realized that, and that there was nothing there that would really make me wake up.

*Q: Okay. So, it was worth a try. You did wake up. You discovered Russia, went to Syracuse, and spent the next three years there?*

WALSH: I did. I did a summer – 1969, 50 years ago – semester at Leningrad State University.

*Q: Ah, the year of the moon landing.*

WALSH: I was sponsored by Michigan State. I had applied for a grant from IREX (International Research and Exchanges Board), as a matter of fact. Michigan State was the administrator, or had a number of slots, and they said, "Yeah, we'll take that guy."

*Q: You went for a year?*

WALSH: No, just for the summer. June, July, August. Three months.

*Q: Ah, the white nights.*

WALSH: It was. We got there on June 21<sup>st</sup>.

*Q: So, you were speaking Russian?*

WALSH: Well, that was the big deal on this one. You do three months of intensive language, and you've got a whole bag of credits. I forget how many credits you get out of that.

*Q: So, you had language and history and culture.*

WALSH: Right, and that allowed me to graduate in January of '70.

*Q: How did I not know this? You never told this to me. I never asked. This is pretty fascinating. How was the educational system in Leningrad?*

WALSH: It was—

*Q: Old Europe.*

WALSH: I liked it. I don't have the gift for learning languages. I have to write the words out. For my vocabulary, I would write the words out five times. I didn't even have a sense of how they fit into grammar. How do you do the declensions and so on?

*Q: This was old fashioned, repeat it to me, write it down.*

WALSH: Write it down five times. When I self-tested a couple of hours later, the ones that I got wrong I would write them out 10 times or sometimes 15 times until I got it.

*Q: And it's still there. You still got it.*

WALSH: Yeah, but it's been pushed aside to a great extent by Polish. Seven years in Poland sort of knocks the Russian right out.

*Q: I didn't know you were studying Russian as an undergrad. This is fascinating. What were your impressions of Leningrad, at that time? This is—*

WALSH: '69.

*Q: A pretty bad period in the Cold War.*

WALSH: Well, one, as a student and as a naïve, there was really no animosity against us at all. People all wanted to meet us, say hello, and so on like that. One of the Americans at the university, under this program, was expelled. This was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Soviet Union. So, there were great posters of Lenin all over the place. There was one life-sized poster, and he had a big red ribbon. So, this guy got a copy of that, put on the ribbon "First Prize, State Fair," hung it up—

*Q: On the Lenin poster?*

WALSH: Yeah. He hung up the Lenin poster in the hallways. Boom. Out.

*Q: Leningrad, to me – now St. Petersburg – is the most beautiful city in the world.*

WALSH: It is one of the most beautiful cities.

*Q: It was then, also?*

WALSH: Oh, yeah.

*Q: It hadn't been cleaned up, but the Neva and that broad river—*

WALSH: Yeah. Well, as you say, the student dorm in which we stayed— Across the Neva was the Winter Palace.

*Q: Incredible.*

WALSH: So, when the sun was going down, we would look out, and all the windows of the Winter Palace would be reflecting it. So, it was just great.

*Q: And you visited the Hermitage many times?*

WALSH: Many times. It was just a fabulous place.

*Q: Wow. So, this was between sophomore and junior year?*

WALSH: No, this was between junior and senior year.

*Q: And you graduated early.*

WALSH: Yes.

*Q: So, you came back—*

WALSH: Energized.

*Q: Energized and more curious than ever, perhaps, about Eastern Europe. Did you foresee that you would turn this into some career or other, or were you just pursuing this as an intellectual curiosity?*

WALSH: I thought this would be a great career. You can look at the years I was brought up. This was good and evil. This was bad and to end America. Think of what we were doing in 1969. We sent a man to the moon. We looked in the mirror and declared that we weren't the country that we wanted to be or that we said we were. Instead of keeping the lie going, we tried to change our culture and our society.

*Q: Are you talking about the science gap and the Sputnik phenomenon?*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: And you see the moon launch as the resolution? This was Kennedy's wish to close or remove the gap. I do remember the shock of Sputnik.*

WALSH: Yeah. We sent people to the moon, we had the Civil Rights movement, and we also had a war going on the far side of the world. Once again, we were fighting evil. I was very convinced these people were evil.

*Q: So, was there any dichotomy in appreciating the beauty and fascination of Leningrad and considering that country evil?*

WALSH: No. Once again, it almost goes back to your question about ethics. What is good and what is bad? You would look at the society, and remember, this was less than 20 years after the death of Stalin. This was probably 16 years. He died in '63. So, yeah, it was 16 or 17 years after Stalin, and the place was still sort of constipated, you know? So, you got along with a lot of people, you talked to a lot of people, but you'd also see— How do you work in that society? How do you manipulate that society? Well, you get on board the train, and you ride it as far as you can. What I saw was a fabulous country with fabulous people. Once again, for three or four years, I'd been reading their literature and going to fabulous lectures on the course of Russian history, society, culture and so on. I'd been seeing how impoverished the people were.

*Q: So, it didn't add up?*

WALSH: It didn't add up. Like, one of the young guides, or the people who lived with us and watched us – who I would later meet in Moscow in 1972 while we're doing the Nixon visit— Igor. Goddammit, what was his last name?

*Q: Wait, you were in Moscow for the Nixon visit?*

WALSH: Yeah. I'd meet him later on, three years later. But Igor— "People talk about us like we are just peasants. Look." He took his pants, and he went, "I have a zipper. We're not savages."

*Q: These were real conversations.*

WALSH: Yes. You'd go, "It's not the zipper. It's a lot of stuff."

*Q: He became something of a friend?*

WALSH: Oh, yeah.

*Q: You were brought together from a sense of animosity on both sides but discovered each other to be people.*

WALSH: Yeah, exactly.

*Q: Segment three. The plot thickens here. This is getting more and more interesting. So, when you say you wanted to do "this" as a career, were you thinking Foreign Service? What were you aware of?*

WALSH: The Foreign Service was my first choice.

*Q: So, you knew about the Foreign Service?*

WALSH: I knew about the Foreign Service. I did not know a lot about the Foreign Service. But once again, if you wish, people from our background – good, devout Irish Catholics – we gravitate towards large organizations. So, my brother went into the Marines. I gravitated towards the State Department or the government. If I had gotten a job in the private sector, I would have taken it. I just wanted to get out and see the world and see how it was.

*Q: Pretty interesting. As you described the Soviet Union, it sounds like George Kennan, who admired and loved the culture—*

WALSH: You can't help but like it.

*Q: He was very determined to do everything to prevent the system from flourishing. Were you aware of George Kennan, at that time?*

WALSH: Oh, absolutely. As a matter of fact, I think that was the year one of his books came out. What year was it?

*Q: Long Telegram was '47— Yeah.*

WALSH: Yeah, I read all of Kennan's stuff.

*Q: You did? Oh. It sounds like your thinking was very similar to his.*

WALSH: No, nowhere near as refined, in the sense that I'm looking at it from the perspective of a teenage American, proud of his country, imbued with the idea of justice, peace, and the American way. I believed that if everybody really did what we do, then nothing would be bad.

*Q: Where did this idea come from? Observation?*

WALSH: Observation, yeah.

*Q: Was this attitude shared by the other Americans in your program in Leningrad?*

WALSH: A lot of them had it, yeah. Some of them, sponsored by other schools, were from Syracuse. I got to know them pretty well and then, yeah, there was tremendous respect for the Russian people and so on.

*Q: I didn't know all this stuff about you. You've been very secretive and withholding. So, George Kennan. You were a teenager, proud of your country, and you felt that if other countries could be more of the same system as the U.S., then humans would benefit. With this motivation, you thought of how to apply this. You had only one more semester in college, and it occurred to you to join the Foreign Service. So, you graduated in December or January.*

WALSH: Right. '69 to '70.

*Q: What happened then?*

WALSH: I applied to take the test.

*Q: Already? For the Foreign Service?*

WALSH: Yep. I think it was in early December of '69; I'm not sure. I got a job with the Urban Development Corporation in the city of Syracuse. I worked for them for the next year.

*Q: Wait, you took the Foreign Service test, but you ended up with the Urban Development Corporation?*

WALSH: I needed a job. I'd gone to college.

*Q: And this did what? Was it a social work kind of thing?*

WALSH: Oh, no, it was real estate development.

*Q: Okay. So, you and Syracuse hit it off.*

WALSH: Oh, I think Syracuse is a great city. It's a little cold, but when you're in your teens and early twenties, the cold is nothing. Yeah. You are minutes from the Adirondacks, minutes from—

*Q: Now, you're a skier. Is this about where that started?*

WALSH: Yep. No, there was a ski place near my hometown, too. So, we started there.

*Q: Because later in life, you ended up in Switzerland, and I think it was not a coincidence.*

WALSH: Well, it was, but a happy coincidence.

*Q: Yes. I know you went back a few times to get the best of it. So, nature was a part of your youth?*

WALSH: Yep. I absolutely loved it, and all those cities – Syracuse, Ithaca, Utica, Rochester, Buffalo, even – in that whole area, above in the Adirondacks and below— There are the Finger Lakes. It's just a beautiful, magnificent area. But it's cold.

*Q: Well, only 11 and a half months a year.*

WALSH: Believe me, I'd trade two or three months of 90 to 100 degree weather to avoid that.

*Q: Yes. Me, too. We wonder, sometimes, why we're here.*

WALSH: At that age and that time, though, it was great. You could get word of a snowstorm coming. The first stop would be to go to the bottle store and buy everything you need. You'd go to your neighborhood bar and hang out there until the snow was so high that you'd risk your life if you didn't get home now. It was just great. What a great time.

*Q: So, real estate in Syracuse for a year?*

WALSH: A year.

*Q: Okay. So, chronologically, after that?*

WALSH: Well, while I was there, I took the test, as I said, in December, so then I – amazingly— Well, the big surprise was that I went to the local high school where they

gave the Foreign Service exam. I had this picture of the Foreign Service being sort of like a Dickinson—

*Q: Like learning language in Leningrad?*

WALSH: No, more like who knows what the Foreign Service is? The whole school was full of people. There must have been 300 or 400 people taking that exam. Of course, you've got \_\_\_\_\_ College. You've got any number of colleges in the neighborhood. There were lots of people from Syracuse and the Russian Studies department. There were lots of people who spoke much better Russian than I did. Woah. This was scary. I thought, well, I'd better start applying to law schools and stick to the old real estate business in Syracuse, you know? Amazingly enough, come March or whenever, I got a letter saying I'd passed the written exam.

*Q: That quickly? In 1970?*

WALSH: Yep.

*Q: I had no idea.*

WALSH: It was in 1970, yeah. They were asking me for an interview in Boston, coming up in June or July. So, I said, "Fine." I was pretty happy with this. It was very good, as a matter of fact. So, I went to take my oral, and then I waited out. A couple of months later— No, actually, the day of the oral exam, you go in and talk to three or four guys in the room. They ask you questions about music, about history, about books and so on and so forth. They're general knowledge tests. Now, what I had done at the written exam is that the morning session was a general exam for everybody. The afternoon session was broken out into one for admin or management people, one for people in the economics cone, and one for the political cone and USIA (United States Information Agency), and then another one for the consular services.

I knew nothing about management, economics, or the consular service. So, I checked the box for political section, but then also checked the box for USIA. I did not know what USIA did at all. I had no knowledge. None. So, I figured I'd cut down on the competition if I took the test for USIA. Fast thinking, I've got to admit. Just about everybody else took the political test.

*Q: True. You thought, I don't know what this is but let's go for it?*

WALSH: I thought, maybe nobody else knows what it is, you know what I mean?

*Q: That was probably the case.*

WALSH: So, I checked the box for USIA, figuring, if I get in, I'm sure I can move this around some way or another.

*Q: Well, they weren't really cones, officially.*

WALSH: Exactly. So, I took this exam in Boston, the oral exam. Right at the end of the test, they said, "Hey, you're the guy we're looking for."

*Q: I'm stupefied. I didn't know this happened so early, in your case.*

WALSH: I think they were looking for young people.

*Q: And they told you. That's something they don't do now.*

WALSH: They told me right there at the end of the exam.

*Q: Any idea who those examiners were? Did you find out?*

WALSH: Yeah, I stayed in touch with a couple of them. One resigned a couple of years later over the war. Another guy had a good steady career, and he retired. Those two, I remember, but that's about it.

*Q: So, voila. You're in USIA.*

WALSH: I'm in USIA. Later, I got a letter saying, "Report on such and such day in May 1971 to go into USIA."

*Q: That was a long time ago.*

WALSH: Yeah. So, I did, and that was just great. I just had a great time.

*Q: Was it 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue?*

WALSH: Yeah. What a great address.

*Q: That cluttered little building.*

WALSH: What a great place.

*Q: Gee. I didn't know this about you. I thought you did a few things and later landed, but this— You went straight to it. You were offered— They said, "We want you for USIA," and you said, "That's great." You later read up and found out what USIA was. It worked out.*

WALSH: It worked out particularly well, because I went through a three month training program. If we started in May, then that would have been May, April, and June that finished. Then, I worked in Congressional Relations at State for June, July, and August. In August, they put me into Polish language training, and in January of the next year, they shipped me off to Poland.

*Q: Incredible. Did they pick Poland, or did you pick Poland?*

WALSH: They did it the same way they're doing it today. They have X number of people, and X number of assignments.

*Q: Was your knowledge of Russian part of why you got the Polish assignment?*

WALSH: Yep. They, in their wisdom, said, "Hey, we'll give this guy three or four months of Polish, and bang."

*Q: Well, wait a minute, that almost makes sense.*

WALSH: Actually, it doesn't. The differences between the two languages are substantial.

*Q: But the thought process—*

WALSH: The thought process makes sense, yeah. So, there I was, off to Poland.

*Q: In 1971?*

WALSH: 1972. I got there in February in 1972.

*Q: Had you been to Poland before?*

WALSH: No.

*Q: First impressions of Poland?*

WALSH: Wow. I was just so excited, like, "Ahn!" I was where I wanted to be.

*Q: Poland is not Leningrad, but it's that part of the world.*

WALSH: It's that part of the world. The Poles were so much more open. I had occasion to go up to Russia a couple of times during my tour, and you never could have gotten me to bid on an assignment to Russia. It was just not there. Years later, when we had a chance in 1975 to go to another country in Eastern Europe, I was eager to go to Yugoslavia. But after three and a half years in an Eastern European country, my wife said, "I'm not going."

*Q: Wait a minute, wife? What happened?*

WALSH: I got married in this period, too.

*Q: Were you going to mention that? Is that part of your life?*

WALSH: You didn't ask me!

*Q: I'm asking you now. Did this happen in Syracuse?*

WALSH: In Syracuse, yeah, to a certain extent.

*Q: You were married in Syracuse?*

WALSH: Well, no, I wasn't married *in* Syracuse. When I transferred to Syracuse, Kathleen Penter, who is now my wife— '61, yeah. She and her sister were going to nursing school in Syracuse. So, I looked them up, and, you know, how would you say?

*Q: You became a married couple.*

WALSH: We became a married couple.

*Q: So, you went to Warsaw, and you were a couple.*

WALSH: Yep. We were married in April of '71, a month before we went to Washington. Kath worked in a hospital in Washington for the year that we were there, and then we went together to Warsaw. It was just great.

*Q: This is a storybook career. This is the way it's supposed to happen.*

WALSH: In a way, that's just how it happened, and it was very good.

*Q: So, how did she do in Warsaw? She did not speak a Slavic language. Was it possible to get around?*

WALSH: Well, they had a good language program in the embassy, and with her nursing experience, she got a job as a science teacher at the American School of Warsaw. She was paid in zlotys at twice the legal exchange rate. There was no social security. That was just the way you hired wives, in those days. It was like slave labor. "Can we get her for cheap?" So, she taught the school, and we had a great time. I had a six cylinder MGC with a long hood and little bubbles on top.

*Q: Where did that come from?*

WALSH: That came from my former brother in law, the fellow who had married Kathy's sister. I bought it for 1,700 bucks, and man, I had a great time with it in the moment, but I really should have just put it on blocks when I went to Africa and kept it. They only made about 1,600 of these things, and I think there are only 100 of them left worldwide.

*Q: So, it was made here? You had it shipped to Poland?*

WALSH: It was made in England, but I bought it here and had it shipped to Poland, yeah.

*Q: Wow. Three years in Poland?*

WALSH: Let's see. '72 to '73, '73 to '74, '74 to '75, and then in July '75— So, three and a half years.

*Q: '75 was when the Helsinki Accords were. Let's back up a little bit. Your job— You were a junior officer. You were JOT (Junior Officer Training) or whatever they called it back then. So, you had a year of rotation, is that right?*

WALSH: Yes.

*Q: Then you graduated your second year and became something.*

WALSH: I was the assistant cultural attaché.

*Q: CAO (Cultural Affairs Officer), okay. So, you were sending \_\_\_ and Fulbrights. By this time, you were very familiar with the USIA repertoire.*

WALSH: After I'd done that for a year, there was no thought of going and doing anything else in the Foreign Service. This was the job for me.

*Q: I always wanted to be in Eastern Europe and I never was. I was told that Poles had greater ability to travel than other Warsaw Pact countries. Did this mean you had a larger IV program and Fulbrights than other Eastern countries?*

WALSH: We did about 14 to 16 IVs per year. We had a healthy one. Then, different other grant programs – IREX, a social worker program—

*Q: The Cleveland—*

WALSH: Exactly.

*Q: My mother was involved in that.*

WALSH: Those guys. Mr. What's his name?

*Q: CIP (Council of International Programs), yes. My mother worked with that guy.*

WALSH: It was the same thing there, sort of like in South Africa in other times. Because there were Poles who could travel, generally – in those years, the '70s, as opposed to the '80s – if other countries couldn't send anybody, we could fill the hole right away. So, that was good. We got eight on the Fulbright side. We got 32 per year.

*Q: Oh, Fulbright plus IV equals 32?*

WALSH: No, Fulbright— For undergraduate, we got eight undergraduates, and then graduates. You would get— Then, it was split. Eight of the undergraduates would be humanities, and eight would be science. It was the same with the graduates.

*Q: How were the grantees selected? Were these people that you personally went out to meet, or were they brought to you?*

WALSH: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would provide us with the candidates. So, you would get eight—For the humanities, you would get maybe 10 or 12 candidates. For the science graduate program, you would get 150, 160. All of them were three pages short of their PhD. I used to feel I was building the Polish atom bomb. These people were just so qualified.

*Q: So, the Foreign Ministry did a good job in giving you shortlisted people, I guess you would say? You got to decide?*

WALSH: I would interview them. So, here came this 23 or 24 year old kid, interviewing people who will win the Nobel Prize. On the humanities side, they were all fabulously accomplished, right? But you only had 10 to 12 candidates. I remember that one year we had 12 humanities graduate candidates because they weren't really big on the humanities. Spend money, sending some historians to the U.S.? What's he going to learn? History. At the same time, from my first year doing that, a fellow I sent is now the most prestigious conductor in Poland on \_\_\_\_\_. So, last time I was in Poland in 2003, I saw this big thing saying, \_\_\_\_\_.

*Q: So, you're bringing out all these astonishing things. Many countries that are centralist give lists to the U.S. embassy that the U.S. embassy does not like because they are party hacks. This was not the case in Poland?*

WALSH: No. You'd get some party hacks, sometimes. Sometimes we'd say, "This guy is a party hack; look at his background," and so on. So, it would be like, "Okay. We'll send him, but tell them to give us someone else who's neutral." As Bob \_\_\_\_\_ pointed out, it seemed like party hacks were the guys who came back most influenced by being in the United States.

*Q: \_\_\_\_\_ came later?*

WALSH: Yeah, he came about a year, a year and a half into my thing.

*Q: When? You knew \_\_\_\_\_ in the '70s?*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: Oh my God. Well, what was he? CAO?*

WALSH: Yep.

*Q: So, you reported to Bob \_\_\_?*

WALSH: I did.

*Q: That was in your second or third year?*

WALSH: Yeah. He got there in summer of '72. He was in \_\_\_\_\_. So, he left in '74, so \_\_\_ came in June or July of '74. It was a two year tour.

*Q: And \_\_\_ adored Poland and goes back whenever he has the chance.*

WALSH: Yeah. Well, I mean, \_\_\_ adored Poland. I've seen him work in South Africa, in Russia, and so on. He has that enthusiasm that all of us need, that this is the place we should be. I didn't feel that way about Cameroon. I felt more like, "I shouldn't be here. You've got to be kidding me. What did I do to get here?" But still—

*Q: Yeah. That's another thing you and I have in common, Cameroon. So, \_\_\_. The Titanic, who is now a reference point for many people, just came one day—you had no idea who he was—and he was your boss.*

WALSH: I had no idea. Interestingly enough, he visited the post in '73 to just look around. He had heard about Poland and was very well-read about Polish history and background. So, that was '73. Then, I was a junior officer, so they said, "Take this guy around town." So, we went around town, we hung out, we talked about the job.

*Q: Who ever heard about going to a country and checking it out?*

WALSH: The CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) does it all the time. I wondered whether this guy was a spy.

*Q: Was he coming from the U.S.?*

WALSH: No, he was coming from South Africa. He came out of Cape Town.

*Q: He traveled from Poland to South Africa just to check it out? Wow.*

WALSH: So, yeah, he came in and talked. He met some Poles. So, yeah, he came in full of enthusiasm. He went back, took the language, came back, and spent another three years there. Maybe more. He was there when I went back in '77.

*Q: We mentioned the Helsinki Final Act briefly. Geographically, you're not that far from Helsinki. The talks were not all in Helsinki. Did your post— Were you aware that that was going on? Did it have some importance? How close did you get to it?*

WALSH: Absolutely. Well, we were doing all we could to sell it, to mention it, to talk it up. The big deal there was that you were talking about limitations on state control of its citizens for a guarantee of the postwar borders. That was brilliant. I think the Soviets and the East Europeans went along with it, never believing that they would be in a position to answer the hard questions about this.

*Q: They saw it as a way of legitimizing the borders that they wanted?*

WALSH: Right. There were objections from the Germans, of course, and the Poles, who— Half of Poland became Ukraine. So, you had a whole lot of problems and frictions, but for the overall payment there, that was something we could use, and we used it for decades afterwards. A decade and a half. We would say, “Hey, this is what you guys signed up for.”

*Q: Was there some question about those borders? I don't remember that there was. We never recognized the Baltics, but everything else was—*

WALSH: No, all the borders were sort of wishy-washy.

*Q: Ah, so the Soviets were motivated to do this to nail down their claims to relative sovereignty of the Warsaw Pact countries.*

WALSH: Absolutely. And of course, once again, the naivete of a young American looking at the borders— These had been in place all my life.

*Q: A small amount of time.*

WALSH: A small amount of time. It was 25 – a quarter century. A quarter century in the Eastern European context is not that much. Like, “We’ll come back and get that. Not to worry.”

*Q: Very sinister, the way you put it. There was Russe, and Lithuania—*

WALSH: Yeah. Lithuania used to be the most powerful country in Central Europe. Come on. Poland, too. They just went, “Don’t move or I shoot the dumb guy,” you know? “We don’t want this guy getting the job. We’ll have a Swedish king!”

*Q: Let the transcript note that he is putting an imaginary gun to his own head.*

WALSH: But, yeah, it was fascinating. Helsinki is a key to the future of what will happen in the next 15, 20 years.

*Q: Now, Helsinki—This is way before I had any knowledge of anything, but it was a relatively okay moment in the Cold War, and then it got worse. It got better in '75, and then things became— They went sour, I think, pretty quickly, as I remember. Then they had 15 years left, and they were finished.*

WALSH: Yeah, but you had some big steps. You had the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Agreement –

*Q: Which just died yesterday.*

WALSH: Yes, unfortunately.

*Q: I love INF. I love that thing.*

WALSH: Then you had the conventional forces agreements. You had a lot of stuff come up.

*Q: Now, you were not a political officer, and you were observing this. You were not a specialist. How knowledgeable do you think you were, as these talks were going on? These were very detailed and technical talks.*

WALSH: Well, on that level, not so much. In our speaker programs, we were not dealing with hard-edge issues. We would have a speaker come in and talk about the INF as we saw it.

*Q: Well, that's later. That's 1987.*

WALSH: Oh, excuse me. Let's get back to Helsinki after this. They would talk to academics, government officials—

*Q: So, you're overhearing this, or you're getting it via—*

WALSH: Yes. But, say, when we talked to the Department of English Philology for our Fulbright program, two professors – one American literature, one philology – were at eight universities, so 16 professors total. got us American Studies at the University of Warsaw. That was a big deal. So, when we go talk to those guys, we're not talking to them about Helsinki. We're talking to them about Helsinki in terms of exchange of people, which will make it easier for us to send people back and forth.

*Q: So, you did both sides of the mirror. You were sending people and you were also programming speakers?*

WALSH: Yep. Absolutely.

*Q: How were the speakers received? When they went to seed, they were mainly party people, I guess. Were they received openly? Was there true dialogue and exchange when an American speaker would come and, say, go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or even the university? Didn't they need to be party members to be teaching at the university?*

WALSH: No, they were not party people at the universities. Non-party people could also be shuffled off to another institution or to the Academy of Sciences. I had an exchange fellow. I really got to know him when I was in Krakow, and the word was out that the party committee at Warsaw University was going to find another place for him. So, the Academy of Sciences picked him up. He said, “You know, they nominated me for the Fulbright, and I got to do the research I couldn’t have ever done in Warsaw.” So, these things are not as—

*Q: This was not an Iron Curtain. This was maybe the most free Warsaw Pact country? Well, Yugoslavia, I guess—*

WALSH: Yugoslavia was, but Poland— That was the joke that they had. The dog of Czechoslovakia going to Poland, and the dog from Poland going to Czechoslovakia. One time, they meet on the bridge. The Czech dog says, “What the fuck are you going over here for?”

The guy says, “Hey, I need a good meal now and then. What about you, going to Poland?”

He goes, “Hey, I need to bark now and then.”

So, yeah, Poland was freer. Now, that doesn’t mean the police couldn’t just come and whisk you away for a couple of days. You could also be picked up. Our workers were picked up, our contacts were picked up. “Why did you go to Mr. Walsh’s house?” and stuff like that.

*Q: But nothing like the Soviet Purchase?*

WALSH: No, nothing like that.

*Q: Jaruzelski later— There’s a lot of talk about how maybe he was the least bad leader they could have had at the time, and maybe he was, in fact, attenuating the Soviet influence. Any idea what Jaruzelski was actually about, what his mind— Did he see himself as a bastion against the Eastern influence?*

WALSH: Now, once again, you’re going to the future. That’s 1980, with Jaruzelski and so on. But for all of those people— Not all of those people. You had a very complex history, in terms of World War II. Who were the ones who were— There was the Russian-supported Polish Army, the Army \_\_\_\_, the army of the London Poles – what we would say was a resistance. You’ve got to remember that for the first year and a half of World War II, Russia occupied half of Poland. A big half, because that included what is today— So, you had a lot of complications there. You had families cut in half. So and So is the minister of this, but his brother is a subversive. You had lots of different splits. One of the oppositions in the Catholic Intellectuals Movements— His father-in-law was the director of the biggest steel mill in Poland. You had these things that were just so—

*Q: Fascinating.*

*Q: Okay. We're on the fifth segment. So, you had the London Poles, and you had those who had been supported by the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). Were there any other factions extant after—*

WALSH: Yeah. You had a whole— The younger people— Now, you see, all of these people had seen their country absolutely destroyed by the Germans and the Russians. They saw their country decimated. Not even decimated, but twice decimated, in the sense that you had 30 to 33 million Poles prior to World War II, and you wound up with 27 or 28 million in the 1950s. So, they lost six or seven million Poles; about three million of them were Jews. But three million of them were also Poles. Everybody was besides themselves, crying about the Jews. You get a piece of the pizza.

I used to help out in the visa section, and of course, to turn someone down, you've got to do it in person. So, you called them in. In those days, we had offices. They'd come in, sit there, and you would say, "\_\_\_\_\_", which would be, "I don't believe that you are a real tourist."

"So, no visa?"

"No visa."

"They're giving all them N\*\*\*\*\*s and all them Jews, and you won't take a good Catholic?"

"\_\_\_\_. You can apply again next year, and there will be another council here. Not me. Any more of that chat, and you will never get a visa. Take my word for it."

To a certain extent, you can understand that, but to a certain extent you say, wait a minute. It's so anti— Well, now we have somebody here. It was so antithetical to what we're talking about. I knew so many people who were members of the party who said, "Hey, this is stagnant."

*Q: Very general question: Were and are Poles Holocaust deniers as some people say?*

WALSH: No. I never got anyone who said that it didn't happen. They knew it happened. I never had anyone say it didn't happen.

*Q: Any reflections on the current bad relationship between Israel and Poland?*

WALSH: Yeah. These guys from the right wing—And I bet you that if you go back—I haven't looked at it too closely – the Communist government in the '60s and '70s backed a group called the Polish Catholic Intellectuals Club, KIK. These were hardline Catholics who aligned themselves with the government, taking positions even to the right, theologically and politically, of the Polish Catholic church. I bet you— Now, the Polish

Catholic church is intrinsically conservative. Everything we did, we did with the Catholics. But it was also a very – if you want – almost medieval thing. Now, there’s the Pope, and we’ll talk about him later on, but still— You go to a village, and you talk to the priests, and you’re not talking to the priests that I grew up with in Winsted, Connecticut. These guys could hardly speak grammatical Polish. They were just— My only cash bribe that I ever got was from a bunch of priests. They needed a transit visa for one of their brothers who was going to Korea. Hey, no problem. A few days later, they came by with the envelope and said, “We want to thank you.”

*Q: Oh, that’s not a bribe, that’s a gift. Technically, at least.*

WALSH: All I know is that I saw 20 dollar bills and almost flew out of my chair. Then, when I talked to the head priest of their monastery— I said, “Hey, you’ve got to do something about these guys. I can’t give the guy a visa for this. I would have given the guy a visa with a phone call. No problem. So, I give him the visa, and these guys come in and give me an envelope.”

He said, “Oh, God. Recruiting quality people is really hard.”

*Q: I was going to ask, but maybe you just answered this. I wondered if maybe your Catholic education served a purpose to you when you were in a Catholic country like Poland?*

WALSH: Absolutely.

*Q: The liturgy was the same, but the behavior was different. Is that correct?*

WALSH: Yeah. I knew where they were coming from.

*Q: So, USIA maybe had some kind of wisdom in making this match.*

WALSH: Well, I think that as a matter of fact, at that time, a lot of us were Catholic, but only because by that time you were getting some good Irish and Italian people. As a matter of fact, up until that time in the early ‘70s, Polish heritage people were not allowed to serve in Poland.

*Q: Because of the fear that they would be hit up for visas for their families?*

WALSH: No, because they would be blackmailed. If their family was still in Poland, then the government would put a squeeze on the family to induce them to do something.

*Q: China’s still one of them. There are still countries where that’s a policy; you don’t go to your heritage country. I want this to be the best interview ever conducted.*

WALSH: You’re giving me a headache.

*Q: I'm giving you a headache? That means I've succeeded. My goal here was to give you a headache. Let's close out the chapter on Poland, and then take a break. I won't even say final thoughts, because you were there for three years. This was your discovery, your entry into your whole life, really. Again, I had no idea that you started this early. What other reflections do you have on Poland? You talked about the intricate relations of the people depending on how the chips fell at the end of World War II. You talked about the Catholic Intellectuals Club.*

WALSH: Well, you asked about Jaruzelski. The fact is that Jaruzelski had a cousin who had the same eye condition that he has. He had to wear thick glasses. But he was a movie producer. A lot of movies he worked on were Andrzej Wajda movies.

*Q: Did you ever meet Wajda?*

WALSH: I did.

*Q: Wow, we'll get to that in a minute.*

WALSH: Now, whether he was sober enough to remember—

*Q: Oh, Neal, come on. I'm going to hypnotize you. You've got to tell us about Andrzej Wajda. Did you meet him more than once?*

WALSH: Yeah, in passing at social things. But I didn't really hit him up. He wasn't my contact, if you want to say, but he'd be there, and then I was \_\_\_\_. He met me, and we were polite to one another.

*Q: He was quite independent, I think, artistically.*

WALSH: Absolutely.

*Q: This wouldn't have happened in Romania, Bulgaria, the Soviet Union, maybe. I don't know.*

WALSH: Well, one of the great things about Poland and a lot of other repressive countries is that the guy who delivers is the guy who they know. So, if I'm walking down the street and somebody like Andrzej Wajda sees me— Maybe he had an \_\_\_\_, maybe he went to a dinner at the ambassador's. Once again, one of the things we did in Poland as the junior officers was that we met the guests at the door, got their coats – because it was cold a lot – gave the coats to the \_\_\_\_ people, walked them over, and in that interim walk got their names and introduced them to the ambassador and DCM. Then, away they went. That was the junior officers', JOTs, job. We also did inventory, distribution lists, and warehouse. I have put all my junior officers, for 40 years, through the same thing. As I say, you walk down the street, you've done the IV (Immigration Visa), you've done this and that, you've seen them and interviewed them and given them money for travel, and so they'll go, "Neal, how are you?" It's just great.

*Q: Actually, all ACOs in the world are in heaven, and as such, they may not be the ones who select the IVs, but the IVs think of them as the benefactor, even if it was a committee that selected them.*

WALSH: Exactly. If your ticket is not working, I'm the man to talk to. Don't talk to the chief employee section. What the fuck does he know about tickets? I know tickets. That's it. I had Polish staff \_\_\_\_\_. They were fabulous. You'd have the odd guys coming in. Stanislaw Lem, for example.

"So, who the hell was that?"

"An old friend of the embassy. Mr. Lem. He's a writer."

"Stanislaw Lem?"

"Yes, you've heard of him."

"Of course I've heard of him. I read his stuff."

"Oh, I'll introduce you next time he comes around."

*Q: It's wonderful, isn't it?*

WALSH: You get to know everybody. What's his name— The—

*Q: Dave Brubeck?*

WALSH: No. Oh, jazz on the \_\_\_\_\_. Every year. I took a plane ride with Thelonious Monk and the rest of the crew, who I forget, and I interpreted for them. It was a flight from Paris to Warsaw. They were on their way to Warsaw. I saw all these Black guys having a hard time with the staff on the airplane, and I went up and said, "Can I help you?"

"Yeah, man, we can't get a goddamn drink here. What's going on?"

I said, "I think they only have it by the bottle."

"So? What's the problem?" \_\_\_\_\_.

*Q: You rescued Thelonious Monk from sobriety.*

WALSH: I was having dinner with Bill Styron. "What do you want?"

"I think we'll get the crab salad." The waiter reaches into his coat, pulls the crab can out, ch ch ch, crab salad.

*Q: For Bill Styron?*

WALSH: He said, "That's about a pound of crab."

I said, "Yeah, it's not on the menu, if you know what I mean." We just had a great time that way.

*Q: Styron I met once, and it would have been in '67. He had just gotten the largest amount of money ever given by the Book of the Month Club.*

WALSH: Really? It must have been for the one about the revolt in the Hamptons.

*Q: Yes.*

WALSH: Well, I met him during the period when he was doing research for *Sophie's Choice*. So, we ran around the country with him a bit, put him on the train to Krakow, got him out of Krakow, and got him home. Once again, he had a lot of good contacts with Polish intellectuals. His translator, Ron \_\_\_\_, was a famous Polish writer himself.

*Q: What was Styron's interest? He had no family background, I don't think. What got him onto this?*

WALSH: He met the woman who was Sophie when he was a young kid right out of college in the '40s, right after World War II.

*Q: In the U.S.?*

WALSH: In the U.S.

*Q: She told him the story?*

WALSH: She was in the same apartment house as him, so she told him the story. It was all half-formed when he first came to Poland. He just tacked it on as a visit to Poland after getting his acclamation by the French Academy of Arts.

*Q: Was her name Sophie?*

WALSH: I don't know. I'd have to really think about it. But she told her story to him, and he came and spent weeks in Poland doing research. Then he did research for us, and Polish writers just loved talking to him about ethics, about all sorts of stuff and so on. It was fantastic. We kept up our relationship with Styron for another decade or more. As a matter of fact, until the '90s. I was over in our broadcast studios. There was one group that was doing a Styron piece in the studios, and I saw that and came out and there was Vernon Walters, saying, "Hey, how are you doing?" It was one of those days of total self-affirmation. What a good man I am. These people know me.

*Q: But in the '70s, Walters was in the military. Where was he?*

WALSH: Oh, where was he in 1975 or '74? He was deputy director and sometimes acting director of the CIA. So, when the White House said, "Here's what we want you to do," he said, "I can't do that." They said, "We want new, good Catholic ethics."

*Q: We're getting ahead of ourselves here –*

WALSH: 15 or 20 years ahead.

*Q: Not knowing, of course, that you would work as his IO (Information Officer) years later, you met him when he was acting director of the CIA.*

WALSH: I never met him at that time, no.

*Q: Oh, you—*

WALSH: I first met him in the 1980s, when he was ambassador to the United Nations. They would trot him out to French-speaking third world countries for heads of state visits because first, he had visited all their countries, second, he knew everything there was to know about them, and so on.

*Q: He was brilliant.*

WALSH: But he was also the guy who turned down Nixon when Nixon issued the order for the CIA to say that they were the burglars, and we should cut off any contact with the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) and the Department of Justice. Walters is the guy who said, "No, we are not going to do that." And he loved Nixon.

*Q: This is all very rich. Chronologically—*

WALSH: It's more of a metamorphosis, really. But there's no more magical position in an embassy than CAO, particularly in an authoritarian country, where your relationships are ambiguous at best. did the same thing, and I learned so much from him, but he did it at another level from me.

*Q: How many ACAOs (Assistant Cultural Affairs Officers) were there?*

WALSH: Actually, there was just me. How did we do this? AIO (Acting Information Officer). Once again, this was fascinating, because \_\_\_ was the JOT. I came in to replace him, and they opened up and got an assistant press guy position. I remember him saying, "I was here first, so that's my job." I didn't give a shit. I did not know that promotions came faster to press people than to cultural people. I was having such a good time—

*Q: Supposedly, we had press and cultural affairs. We didn't have USIS in the Warsaw Pact countries. But it was the same thing, we just called it something different.*

WALSH: Yeah. So, \_\_\_ became the AIO, and I was there as ACAO. It was another year before we got another JOT. He worked in the cultural section with me. Larry Plotkin. He had a sort of George Custer hairdo, mustache, beard, and all that. I like Larry. I really do. However— I know. I think we'll shift \_\_\_. But here is one of the deals. Catholic University of Lublin was not one of ours since it's a private school, and the Fulbright Agreement was between governments. So, they didn't get Fulbrighters. But we would help them recruit American professors.

So, there's an American professor out there. After he'd been there about six or seven months, the police tossed him out real hard – like, in 24 hours. So, I was talking to Larry about it, and it turned out that the professor was gay. Turns out Larry knew he was gay. No, we are talking about being gay in the 1970s in America and Poland. So, apparently, the police had approached this guy, asking him to seduce somebody for them or to compromise somebody else or himself. He refused. So, they bounced him out. We were kind of like, “Why was this guy bounced out so fast?”

I said, “Larry, did you know about this?”

“Well, yeah.”

I said, “You know, this is not good, to have somebody bounced out and to have somebody have the police put the hand on them.”

He said, “Well, I don't think it was any of our business to know whether or not this guy was gay.”

“That is a very good position, however, in this place, we've got to know that, because we've got to be prepared for a problem.” It didn't matter whether \_\_\_ would say no, or I would. It's \_\_\_'s decision.

*Q: \_\_\_ was the PAO (Public Affairs Officer)?*

WALSH: Yeah. Jock Shirley was the PAO before him.

*Q: It's like the wax museum.*

WALSH: Yeah. So, I remember him saying, “It doesn't make any difference.”

I said, “I know it doesn't make any difference to me and you. But the cops, the Catholics, the whole rest of them here—” And obviously, it's still going on in Poland. The police have to protect the gay pride parade. It's sort of like being in Zambia, where they say, “Please don't help us. No more gay marches and human rights, okay? Just forget it.”

*Q: There's always a context with another government and culture. We have our values, and to some extent we champion them, but we're in foreign countries.*

WALSH: Yeah. But for me, part of the hardest thing is— Now, of course, we don't give the Poles a hard time about it or the Zambians, but at the same time, if we're going to be beating up the Poles or somebody— We're dealing with Saudi Arabia.

*Q: Oh, yes. We have inconsistencies, do we not?*

WALSH: Yeah. When was the last time they did us a favor?

*Q: Well, they bought our weapons. I'm saying that cynically. You don't appear to be exhausted. You should be, because you've given such great material. Let's frame the Polish experience. You mentioned Krakow. That was a future assignment?*

WALSH: That was a later assignment.

*Q: Okay. So, at the Warsaw assignment, you were a Junior Officer. You were there for two years, then, as the ACAO, \_\_\_ and Jock Shirley. Wow. Kathleen was teaching science at the American School. So, what's the right question? What did you feel you learned and accomplished during those three years, at the time? What was your sense? "I'm just getting started and I want more of this"? "I like this and I'm going to do more of it"? Can you remember what you thought of as a kind of exit interview when you left Warsaw? Were you sad to leave?*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: You really liked the place?*

WALSH: I loved the place, and I thought I was doing a great job. What did I do? In a sense— I did not realize it at that time, but I did have a sense that the relationships that I was building with my contacts did two things. They gave us, as Americans, a deeper understanding of the ambiguities and difficulties of Polish intellectual life. Now, we always felt that because of our stance on the war, because of— Remember, this is 25 or 30 years after the war. It's an \_\_\_, as our German friends would say.

The Poles had positive feelings for the United States. We did not betray them like they thought the French and the English did. We didn't invade them like the Germans and the Russians. We didn't stomp all over them like the Germans and the Russians and so on. So, we were held to a higher standard. I wanted to maintain that standard, and— I was there as a representative of the United States to the Catholic Independent Intellectuals, to let them know that we knew and cared, but also to give them an idea that America believed in Poland.

The second point would be that, because we did deal with party members, party organizations—some schools were hard party, some schools were light party. There were no schools that were no party, aside from Catholic University. Of course, probably half of their staff were spies. But you'd have that, and you'd let them know—or hope to let them

know – that in their discussions, they would be friends of the court for us. Their discussions with other Eastern Europeans and with the hardliners within the party, that is. We would always be a friend in court for Poland.

When you look at what we did, it was so minor, but afterwards—and you’ll see this in the ‘80s—the impact. You’d sometimes look out at your audience. You’re Michael Novak, talking about human rights, and you’re looking out at an audience of people who are older than my mom and dad, and you go, “Man, what are we doing?” But when things came to happen, it was the students who were in the English Philology and Literature departments at various schools who were the lead liaisons between the Polish unions and American unions. They helped them get the money and publicity and support they needed internationally. It wasn’t the French department. I don’t mean that— It wasn’t the German department. It was the relationships that we had built. Then, in the second government in the ‘90s, it was like everybody was one of our grantees.

*Q: You dealt with intellectuals, artists, and freethinkers when you had the choice.*

WALSH: But we also dealt with, say, the guys from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from the Ministry of Defense, from the Ministry of Commerce. We dealt with them. We’d do our demarches, chat, and have drinks with everybody.

*Q: You said, a moment ago, “What we did was minor.” It was not.*

WALSH: Well, that is, at the time—I was too ill-informed, too immature, to understand just what the sort of thing we were doing. 20 years later, yeah. In 2000, a Pole who had been president of the writer’s union in Krakow mentioned me, saying, “We had a young man here who was counsel decades ago, and he said this—” That was me. So, what we said mattered. Yeah.

*Q: So, USIA had an innate wisdom in dealing with the brain more than dealing with numbers.*

WALSH: Yeah. That’s it. Data, data, data. That’s all we have today, but you can’t go \_\_\_. You’ve got to be living in these societies. You’ve got to live the way they’re living, to a great extent.

*Q: Have we lost the ability to do that?*

WALSH: Yep. Now, have we lost the ability? There’s a certain institutional problem here, as we develop things. The State Department bureaucracy is— I’m not saying it’s bad, I’m just saying that ambiguous ideas that could be really good ideas in terms of public relations, in terms of instilling values, can be knocked down much quicker within that bureaucracy because they are not, as we used to say, pulling any freight. How much freight did annual showings of *To Kill A Mockingbird* pull?

*Q: To Kill a Mockingbird was a profound influence, I think you were about to say, and an artistic expression in a country that needed to know more about us. Is that the idea?*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: So, you said you were concluding. “Two things that I – Neal Walsh – realized were happening that gave us as Americans a greater understanding of the ambiguities and challenges of being an intellectual in an authoritative country – relatively, of course.” And you said, I think quite meaningfully, “Our relations let Polish contacts know that we would be their friends, and we welcomed them being our friends when we needed advocates in other countries or just in general.” With this, we conclude, unless you have other parting shots about Warsaw, Poland, Jaruzelski, or where Poland fits into the Warsaw Pact. It was probably, with Yugoslavia, the most able to be itself. “Let Poland be Poland.”*

*Let’s just establish where you were. You were on your way. We’ve packed you out of Warsaw. What next?*

WALSH: Zaire.

*Q: On to Zaire.*

WALSH: Lubumbashi.

*Q: Let’s conclude. This is the end of our first interview in six segments. Dan Whitman, Neal Walsh, Fredericksburg, Virginia, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, and we’re looking forward to the next session.*

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*Q: This is Dan Whitman. This is Palindrome Day, I think. It’s 02/02/2020. I think that’s what today is.*

WALSH: It is. 02/02/2020.

*Q: It’s the same backwards and frontwards. Neal is in Fredericksburg, and I am in Washington, and we’re on a good connection here. Neal, it’s been a few hours – actually, six months – since we spoke last. This is great. We were in great suspense leaving Poland. You left us hanging there, man. Is there anything, in hindsight, more to say about your stay in Poland? We had a good conversation. You described, very ably, how public diplomacy worked back then. It was a matter of being open to gray matter exchange. There were differences in ideology, but commonalities in the way people thought. I think you were very encouraged by what you were able to do in Poland during the Cold War.*

WALSH: Absolutely.

*Q: Anything to add there before we go on?*

WALSH: Not really. I think that in our discussions back in August, we went through pretty much everything you can cover with the Poles in that period. That was the beginning of 1972 to the middle of 1975. So, that was really three and a half years, and I think we covered everything.

*Q: That's further in the past than I remembered. '75 was the Helsinki Final Act, so in fact, as things oscillated between good and bad, '72 was a relatively bad period. But there were some openings, partly, I think, thanks to Jimmy Carter maybe. But '75 was a good year. So, how did you get—I know you took an airplane, but how did the assignment happen for Lubumbashi?*

WALSH: For Lubumbashi, the assignment happened as I will tell you. In those days, we did not have anyone bidding on bases, and it was sort of determined by who you knew and how things got done. That's still the way, but it was much more blatant in those days.

*Q: Do we call it directed assignments?*

WALSH: Directed assignment was exactly what it was. I was asked, I have to say, by the East European Office of the United States Information Agency, if I would like to be the branch Public Affairs officer in Skopje, Macedonia. That was my assignment after Warsaw. I said, "That's a wonderful idea." We were all set to go to Skopje, however, my wife received a letter from the wife of the current branch Public Affairs officer, who went through all the various things she might need while she was there. Then, on a beautiful May morning in Warsaw, Poland, as spring is starting to begin – the sky was gray, the town was gray, there was a bit of ground fog going on – Kathleen looked around and said, "I can't take another one of these Socialist countries."

I said, "Well, I'm sure they'll think of something else." So, I informed my colleagues in Washington that Skopje was not going to work out, but I would like to be a branch Public Affairs officer. I'm very grateful for the interest they took.

They came back and said, "We have a good job for you, and that is in Lubumbashi, Zaire." I looked at that on the map, and that is the deepest and darkest that could ever be. I know I said I would like to go to Africa, because Americans weren't very heavily represented there. I thought it'd be exotic. But to jump in that deeply right away—

So, I said to Washington, "That's a nice idea and a great offer. I'm very grateful. Could you tell me more about the job?"

They came back and said, "That's not an offer. That is where you are going, and you are going to stay with us."

So, we returned to the United States in July of '75, and we began the study of French. We studied French from there. It was about four or five months of French, and then we were off to Lubumbashi. That was quite the trip, I must say.

*Q: So, it sounds like almost January of '76, something like that?*

WALSH: Yep.

*Q: Okay. Off to Lubumbashi by— Was it called Leopold then, or was it—*

WALSH: No, it was Lubumbashi then.

*Q: But you didn't go straight; you went through the capital, correct?*

WALSH: We went through Kinshasa.

*Q: Okay. What a difference that is from Poland, right?*

WALSH: It was very different from Poland. As I pointed out, Poland was oftentimes very gray and almost discouraging and quiet in many ways. Kinshasa is an explosion of color and noise and movement and people. It is incredible.

*Q: Yeah. So, did you stay in Kinshasa at all, or did you just go on to Lubumbashi?*

WALSH: We stayed about four or five days in Kinshasa to meet the people at the embassy. Those were the days when the branch offices were controlled by the country office. So, Kinshasa, therefore, was the main support and also the director of what I would be doing in Lubumbashi. That was true of the other branch, too, which was up in Stanleyville. Kisangani was the name of that town.

*Q: So, at the time it was just the capital and two consulates, I guess, for this incredibly huge country the size of the United States east of the Mississippi, or something like that.*

WALSH: That's right.

*Q: So, not much going on, but it must have been an intense experience. Anything to mention about discussions in Kinshasa about resources, the way you were going to do things, or was it pretty much left up to you?*

WALSH: Well, how would you say? We already have the skeleton of a very good program down in Lubumbashi. So, I would not be doing anything diametrically or dynamically different from what PAOs had been doing in the past. But it was a chance to talk to the main office about what the policy was and how we would go about it.

There was the fact that the ambassador there had been removed just six months earlier because of complaints from the Mobutu government, and that the one string on our harp

there was to maintain the allegiance – if you want to call it that – of the Mobutu government, which was tightly aligned with the United States, as opposed to what was happening in Angola next door. A radical, you might say, post-colonial government was coming into power. That colonial government was being sponsored and supported energetically by the Soviet Union, the East Germans, and the Cubans.

So, you had a civil war going on next to Zaire, and you had American support for the Zairians, who in turn were supporting one of the three non-Communist lines in the Angolan civil war. As a matter of fact, the group that they supported was \_\_\_'s group, which was— He was Mobutu's brother-in-law. However, they were totally incompetent and totally feeble, and they lost. So, later on, we had Zaire supporting UNITA, which was another nasty bunch. Not to say that the Cubans weren't nasty, but these guys were pretty— They were not only nasty, but they stole your money right away.

So, I got to work there and then we flew down to Lubumbashi. We took up residence and started our programs there.

*Q: Okay. So, you've started this when you're in Zaire, but your meetings in Kinshasa directed your attention to Angola, where it was MPLA (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) versus UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), right?*

WALSH: Right.

*Q: I did not know that Mobutu had expelled an American ambassador. So, the U.S. government, in the '70s— Our policy was solidly in favor of Mobutu, and those were your marching orders. Do you remember any of the personalities, like the PAO in Kinshasa? You were in Lubumbashi, right?*

WALSH: Right. I was the only American there.

*Q: Amazing, for a country so huge to have so few people on the ground. So, you had a full load. How many FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals) or LES (Locally Employed Staff) did you have?*

WALSH: In Lubumbashi, we had probably about seven, I think. Now, once again, it was an African listing of personnel. You had sweepers and locksmiths and so on like that all on the payroll, as well as program people. Program-wide, let's see. There were four, program wide. There was an assistant branch Public Affairs officer. We didn't call him that, but he was a program fellow.

We had a librarian, \_\_\_, who was a good librarian in many ways. We had the wireless file, the technician and distribution fellow, and then we had a driver. Those were the four or five— There were two people in the library, and then we had the technician and that was about it. Then, you know how these staffing things go. We'd have sweepers and guards and so on like that. It was always very difficult to fit an African personnel tree into a

USIA or American organogram. These were good employees. We really had a good group of people there.

*Q: Yeah. I was going to ask, because you came from way far away, how much do you think you relied on local employees to give you the lay of the land?*

WALSH: I would say I relied on the employees very heavily. Indeed, once I'd been there for a couple of months and they were comfortable with telling me what they thought about things, let's just say that the average Zairian was always perplexed and unhappy about the extent of the American involvement, inasmuch as they recognized just how exploitative and penal their government was, top to bottom, from the leader himself in Kinshasa down to the lowliest soldier or policeman in Lubumbashi. They would often question why we were supporting Mr. Mobutu. We had to be able to discuss that.

Additionally, once again, Zaire— This was my second country. Zaire is a smaller population group than in Poland. You had to find out where everybody was during the colonial period, and where everybody was during the transition from colonialism to an independent country, and what everybody used to do and what their parents used to do. The people who went to school with other people had their own network of things, so you had to know who knew whom. Where did they go to school? Where's the family linkage? What was the history? That determined what the present was, so you had to know all of that. The only way you're going to learn that sort of thing is through your FSNs and your local colleagues.

*Q: Yes. That's the way it is in all places. Of course, everything you hear, you have to measure the personal agenda of each person telling you something, I guess.*

WALSH: Yes. You've got to think, where does this guy come from? What tribe does he belong to? Did his father go to school with this guy? And so on like that. That was very interesting. You had to rely on them, and they were not upfront. They didn't say, "Hey, let's do this to screw with the government," but they would say, "I don't know if we should invite him. He barely got off the murder charge last year."

And you'd go, "Oh, is that so? Well, maybe we can find somebody else to invite to dinner."

*Q: Yes. A possible title for a memoir could be Dining with Murderers, which I'm afraid we've all done.*

WALSH: Yes. But then you get to know the people, obviously, as the branch Public Affairs officer in a small— It's not a small town. Lubumbashi is really fairly large and influential in the economic sphere in Zaire, but it's a limited audience. By serendipity, I was invited to become a member of a Zairian volleyball club. This club was made up of members of the government, members of the military, members of the university and the academics. They were also the lawyers of the city and so on like this. Like everyone else in Zaire, they wanted a treasurer that they could trust. So, even though I was a mediocre

volleyball player, I could keep the books, and that worked out really well. These guys just taught me a lot about how Zaire worked.

*Q: Fantastic. That's a great story. Before we get to it, though, you mentioned that a lot of your audience was skeptical of U.S. support to Mobutu. What went through your mind in trying to contradict that? Did you have your own questions about that relationship? How did this come to you, and what was your reaction?*

WALSH: Well, remember, we're 1975, 1976 and so on. At that time, the rapacity, you might say, of the Mobutu government was not evident. People talked about how corrupt it was, but no one knew the depths of it and what it had done to the country. Now, Mobutu had been, by that time, president and/or prime minister of the country since 1962. So, he had about 13 or 14 years to suck a lot of capital out of that country, he and his pals. So, the people with whom I was dealing on a daily basis at the university and any of the cultural organizations or social organizations— There was no structure, as there is today, of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) advocating democracy, clean government, good governance, and so on like that. After 15 years of Mobutu, they were pretty outspoken about what a mess the country was in, and why it was in it. So, the question was, how can America support such a criminal operation?

*Q: Right.*

WALSH: It took a while for me, leaving Poland, to realize that this supposed member of the democratic community of nations was really just an incredibly corrupt and vile government.

*Q: Okay. Did this create something of a trap for you? Your instructions were to support this because of a larger context, which we call the Cold War, but on the ground, you increasingly saw that there was some moral and ethical question here. How did you deal with that? Did you find it easy or natural to make the argument because of a larger context like the Cold War?*

WALSH: Not really. I think that was in almost everyone's mind, that Zaire was an ally of the United States. But to the people that it affected, that certainly did not seem very good. To them, the Cold War was a very distant and theoretical context. The hardships that were imposed on them by the corruption of the government were certainly right there in front of them at all times. Therefore, there was really no convincing and no discussion about what America and its policy could do.

The question often proposed by the Zairians – and this would include university professors, the odd lawyer, or someone like this who was close to the corruption but not part of it, to a great extent – was, “Why don't you just kill him, put somebody else in charge, and make sure that the next group that you put in charge here doesn't rape the country to this extent?” People had no trouble with that. We're talking about priests. We're not just talking about the farmer. All your farmers are really subsistence farmers. It's not just the guy in the village who says that. It's part of the supposed intellectual and

political infrastructure of the country. But yeah, “Why don’t you get rid of Mobutu?” It made them uncomfortable that we had such a thing.

Well, you’ve been in that situation in Cameroon, you know? How could you have positive relations with such bandits, you know?

*Q: A couple of questions. Did they ask you the quiz question? Did they believe that the U.S. was complicit in the death of Lumumba?*

WALSH: That wasn’t too much on people’s minds. It wasn’t raised very often. Maybe you got a \_\_\_\_\_. Maybe it was just the fact that Lumumba didn’t really have a whole lot—

Lumumba didn’t come up. Once again, I think that could have been regional, in the sense that he had no support down there at all. The support in the Shaba Province, where we were, was really for the Tshombe family and the return of the \_\_\_\_\_. They had a good time before, and in 12 years, that country went down. There was no sympathy for Lumumba.

*Q: Well, did they believe that the U.S. helped Mobutu get the upper hand on Moise Tshombe?*

WALSH: Absolutely.

*Q: So, how did that fall on you? What were you obliged to do and say, and how did you do it?*

WALSH: Well, that’s sort of an interesting thing, back and forth, and a lot of that was done before I arrived. So, we maintained very good relationships with Moise Tshombe’s brother. He was the chief of the Lunda. As a matter of fact, his business card said, “Emperor of the Lunda and Associated Tribes,” because his area of responsibility extends into Angola and Zambia.

*Q: Can you spell the ethnic group?*

WALSH: Lunda.

*Q: Okay. So, Tshombe was undone by Mobutu, was he not?*

WALSH: Yes. But Mobutu, at that time, was a stalking horse or a buffet of the Americans and the bells in the west. They were all eager to see Zaire unified. The breakaway Shaba— If Shaba left, then the money would all go somewhere else. That didn’t make anybody happy. So, it went on like that. It was the economic part of Zaire. I would say it was the beating heart, but things were not beating too hard when we were there.

*Q: So, it sounds like you had a pretty hostile audience. Again, how did the dialogue go?*

WALSH: It sounds like there's a lot of reasons for people to *be* hostile to America. It was actually reassuring, in many ways, to see how positive people were about America. They had high expectations that we would remove Mobutu and bring somebody else in who would run the place right, and some way or another, there were generally positive feelings about America. That stayed there despite what we had done to their political structure during the 1960s.

*Q: Well, Mr. Walsh, I think you can get some credit for your friendly and positive presence, which convinced the demonized America— You did not do this single handedly, but it sounds like, as people got to know you, they understood the complexity and saw Americans – people like you – as likable and reasonable people. Am I giving you too much credit?*

WALSH: Yeah. I think the fact that we in the consulate and in Kinshasa— The biggest part of our program in Kinshasa was our English teaching program, which was fabulous. We had English teaching in both Kisangani and Lubumbashi, which was also very positive. So, there was exposure of us, as Americans, to people. We would discuss things with people in a reasonable way. We commiserate with people about the conditions in the country without condemning, you might say. When they asked us why we didn't assassinate Mobutu and put in somebody new, we didn't say, "That's a wonderful idea," but we certainly didn't— We skipped from that to another subject. I think that the corruption and the foulness of the government was pretty well-known.

The one thing in Zaire, of course, was that the government was very disorganized. Therefore, the repression could not reach anywhere into the depths of society as it had, say, in Eastern Europe. Additionally, Mobutu was not necessarily— This was not necessarily a bloody-handed dictatorship. Yes, there was the odd victim, and the odd politician or businessman would fall victim to a bad \_\_\_\_. But all in all, Mr. Mobutu did not incarcerate or kill. Generally he exiled or house arrested people.

*Q: Okay. That's very important. Plus, let's underscore the importance of English teaching as a non-political action that created a positive atmosphere and was an alternative to policy debates, I think.*

WALSH: That's right.

*Q: Can you generalize, in the good old days of the '70s and '80s— English teaching, which we still do, though much less than before— Can you describe the value of this element of our programming?*

WALSH: Yeah. I've already discussed how valuable our connection was with the Institute of English Philology and so on like that. English teaching in a Francophone country was a real arm of outreach to people who were serious about expanding their economic, political, and social visions. So, therefore, the people who we got coming to our English teaching classes were really an elite group of various levels. That gave us

access to various places. Companies needed English-speaking people, so they would come and contract with us to teach their employees.

In the midst of the \_\_\_\_, if you want to call it that, which was an invasion by Cubans and Angolans in 1976— As they were beginning to move troops down into Shaba from other areas, a group of about 10 Zairian soldiers showed up at the cultural center. There, they said, “We are from the third level of English teaching in Kisangani at the American library, and we want to continue our studies while we are stationed here.” There you are. It’s a way that gave us a way to see the society we were living in and working with.

*Q: That’s very significant, I would say. Now, you mentioned elites. In the USIA vision, they very frankly— Because of limited resources, the directive was, “Reach the elites.” Nowadays, there’s something called Youth Exchange. How do you see it? Were elites in fact the best target audience?*

WALSH: No. I think that what you have to do with your target is that you have to look at it as a moving target. Now, the elites— Too much time in a smaller town like Lubumbashi— If you’re only associating with the elites, then you’ve got two elites. You’ve got a corrupt and criminal governmental political structure, and they were of course trying to structure it as a one party state, in terms of superstructure of government. Both parties were supposedly watching state organizations all the time. If those are the only people you’re dealing with, you’re not going to get the real hands-on feeling about where the country is going.

That’s why our association, say, was also at \_\_\_\_, at the university level, and the library itself, which was full at all times, and with the English teaching. So that was a very important step. You could not just focus on the elites. If you wanted, you could say, “The students are going to become the elites,” but that’s not necessarily true. The elite leadership in Zaire was so, so criminal that— The guys on my volleyball team were not a whole bunch of people you wanted to hang around with.

*Q: Right. Well, you did not have many resources. You didn’t have money; you only had five or six colleagues for such a vast area. How do you believe that you did reach other sectors other than the elites? You didn’t have many resources to do so.*

WALSH: Well, one, you spread yourself out. You would go out to various towns, like Kolwezi or— My mind will come up with another town.

*Q: Well, Kolwezi, etcetera. Okay.*

WALSH: You’d go out to the towns, meet with the *chef de region* (head of region). You’d go meet with the party leaders, go to the schools and talk to the students, and things like that. You were just visible, and you made it known that America stood with them. You let them know what aid programs we were going through, what we had done to stabilize the country after the civil war of the ‘60s, and so on. This was, I would like to say, a “show

the flag” operation. We were there, we cared, and we had a presence. That was the message, I think, that we carried on with our contacts.

*Q: This is the soundbite for today. I’m going to highlight this. “We’re there, we care, and we have a presence.” I think that says a lot about what USIA used to do, and what you did, certainly, in Lubumbashi. So, Kathleen convinced you to avoid another gray European place. How did she— What was the level of your satisfaction and happiness as a couple when you were in Lubumbashi?*

WALSH: In many ways, it was very positive. Kathleen worked at the local hospital and with some of the local doctors as a nurse. Additionally— First, the economy was certainly not banging away. It was pretty much a time when often the intensity of our work was less than in Poland or other areas, so it was a really good nine to five operation. The weather is California, San Diego type weather. It was fabulously warm. During rainy season the rains are all over by eight AM, and don’t start again until eight or nine in the evening. We could travel to Zambia and Botswana, so that was fascinating. As young people, we would go out and travel to Zambia and Botswana, which had infrastructure. We would go to Zambia to buy things – a garden hose, oatmeal, sugar, a lot of other things. Lubumbashi depended on Zambia and what they called the Copper Belt. The stores there, compared to Zaire, were very well-stocked. So, we traveled around.

I would say we got along well. It’s not that Kathleen— You feel your isolation in a place like that. But in real terms, to be young – in your 20s – in a place as zany and weird as central Africa was at that time, it was a fabulous time. We could go off and see the elephants. You could drive a day to the Angolan border and up, where we would take calls with Daniel\_\_\_.

After President Carter had been elected and I was visiting Daniel\_\_\_, he presented – I have pictures of this – a pair of elephant tusks that are longer than I am. These were about six feet long. The elephant tusks were for the new president, and we had to point out to them that we just did not have a vehicle to transport these, so we’d pick them up the next time we came. The idea of having that type of relationship, passing on the tusks to Washington for the new president, probably would not have been a healthy start for Mr. . I have to admit, our consulate was watched with great suspicion by the Zairian intelligence people. We were too sympathetic to separatist ideas.

*Q: Wow. Writing that down. Let’s see. From Lubumbashi to Lusaka, is that like a three hour drive or something like that?*

WALSH: It’s pretty much a whole day’s drive. We’d generally go to another town, overnight there, and go on to Lusaka. In Lusaka was a tremendous PAO, John Burns. He was a very good mentor for me.

*Q: Well, John Burns is a legend. I was fortunate to meet him myself when he retired in Pretoria. Let’s spend a moment remembering John Burns. What a formative and benign*

*person he was. How did you first get in touch with him? He was your neighbor, so to speak, a one day drive away.*

WALSH: Yeah. Well, that's indeed how we got in touch with him. We would be needing things, and sometimes they could only be gotten from Lusaka. So, we'd let him know that we needed such a thing and we'd be down to pick it up. He had a— I think anyone would say he had one of the best operations in Africa. The Lusaka American Library was fantastic. John's array of friends in the public circle, in journalism and academia and government, was really very good.

Once again, overall, we did not have a really good relationship with the Zambian government, in as much as we were waffling in terms of our policy regarding Rhodesia. We certainly were waffling on our relationship with South Africa. The Zambians were not a happy bunch about our policies. So, John operated really on his own and had fabulous contacts. He knew everybody. So, watching him and seeing how he handled things, for me, was a great time and a great learning experience.

*Q: Without the internet, at that time, how was it that you did follow his model? You didn't get to see him all that often. How were you able to learn from John?*

WALSH: Well, when we would go, I would sometimes spend a couple of days with him. Two or three times, we were there for two or three days at a time. So, I'd watch him on his programs and visits and so on like that. That was good. Additionally, Mr. , who was the cultural attaché in Warsaw, knew Mr. Burns and put us in touch. That was with Mr. saying to me, "John Burns is one of the best in the world and you'd better get to know him and see him do things." That was sort of an impetus to help. But he was there all the time and a good backup. Phone connections weren't the best, but sometimes you could get through by phone.

*Q: Well, then, mentoring in the '70s was a very informal thing. Nobody had a structure for it. The smarter people just did it, like you and Burns and \_\_\_\_, giving and receiving. Comments about mentorship?*

WALSH: I think USIA did mentorship in a good way. I guess that my experience is pretty much personal, inasmuch as I was assigned with some superb officers. Then, when I was a deputy area director— I think this was true of almost all the areas. We did not have determined slots for junior or first-year officers. You were called a Junior Officer Trainee for your first two years at post. Generally, you would try to send them to an embassy that had good leadership, that had super PAOs and people who were going to share with them. That was my experience in terms of assigning junior officers.

Obviously, from my experience – meaning Warsaw and the Zairian experience – that made a difference. We had a quality shop up in Kinshasa. It was the flagship. It was also South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya. Those were the four flagship African posts. They were very important, and they had good staff. It was \_\_\_\_, almost. You had to sort of make sure that you were getting the right information from your FSNs and others. Like, "He must

be free from war crimes.” You had, “Is he the fellow whose father—” It was lots of things. You had to keep an eye on the context of where you were working, but how you worked and how you targeted and where you worked were all learned, and I learned from John Burns.

*Q: Great. The great loss of not having JOTs anymore as we used to have— You’ve just summarized very well the benefits. Any more comments about the foolishness in removing that opportunity? Why did they do it? Was it resource scarcity? The need to get people into the field more quickly? Why did they do away with this marvelous system?*

WALSH: Well, because we were absorbed into the Department of State, and there was no provision for that sort of utility player that you sent to an embassy for a year or two.

*Q: Right. You’re right, actually. JOTs existed until 1999, I think.*

WALSH: There was no State Department provision. Their way of taking care of junior officers is to assign them to a consular service, which they did with Public Diplomacy officers, as well. They saw no use in bringing somebody onboard, whereas the USIA experience was that the first couple of years, you’re doing the gut work of an embassy, in terms of public affairs. You are doing the distribution of records. You’re charged with distribution of records, the inventory, the warehouse, the nuts and bolts.

Knowledge is power. Within six to eight months, you know everybody who is getting anything from the embassy. You know who are the friends of the embassy throughout the community. You know who’s died, who’s \_\_\_\_, who’s been promoted. You know how things are stored; you know where the books are; you know how to get things done. So, yeah, that’s what we just don’t have anymore. Sometimes, we’re sending first tour officers out to be PAOs, and they’ve never had any background. But the JOT program was very good. That’s all I can say.

*Q: Yeah, especially when they’re sent to the most challenging posts without any prior experience. That just confounds me. Well, we’re not here to lament the disappearance of USIA, but we need to remember the great things that were done with the structures they had. We would love to reconstruct them, but if we’re going to lose them, we should at least remember what there was. So, Lubumbashi. Was it two years? Three years? What was it?*

WALSH: We were there until 1977, the end of 1977. I’d have to actually try to—

*Q: It doesn’t matter. Approximately two years—*

WALSH: Yeah. We were there, and then the last six months of our time in ’76— In ’76, we had President Carter’s election, and people looked to President Carter for changes in policy. Additionally, between ’77 and ’76, we had an invasion of the Shaba Province by Angolan forces. That was right out of other incidents there. It absolutely mirrored the war history of \_\_\_\_. It was an old-time African war. The big powers – the U.S., the Russians,

and the Cubans – had not gotten in too deep at this time. We were there, we were supporting, it was this and that and so on. But it was still very much an African affair.

So, in this case, the Angolans came down the train tracks and the road between the border and Lubumbashi. We're talking about 300 miles. They were countered by the Zairian forces,\_\_\_\_, which had been pulled out of that particular area just three or four months prior because they had been ripping off the local people too much. So, it was a fascinating sort of thing. They would roll into— The aggressors, the Angolans, would roll into a town, and there would be fighting, which meant that whichever side made the biggest noise would get to keep the town, and then the Zairians would retreat. That lasted for about a month, a month and a half.

Then, the Moroccans were enlisted to go and push the Angolans and their Cuban influencers out of Shaba because it was obvious that Mobutu and his forces did not have the ability to do it. Mobutu, at that time— The United States was a close ally, at that particular time, but he often changed his close allies, particularly when dealing with military matters. He did not want to have a competent military.

*Q: Right. It could turn against him, I guess.*

WALSH: Exactly. So, for a couple of years it was the Americans, a couple of years it was the Chinese, a couple of years it was the French. Then, when units would be trained and ready, he'd break them up, retire some, put other guys in place and so on like that. Then, for those who had trained in the United States, they fought the whole thing about the military being an offshoot of the political situation. "We are loyal to the Constitution, not to the president. There should be accountability and no corruption." They were like minnows in a shark tank after they got back from training in the United States.

So, yeah. We had that. It was an exciting time. We spent a lot of time getting Americans out of Shaba and getting them to Kinshasa. That must have been post-election. We were still evacuating the town and still getting evacuated when Kathleen and I left in October of '77.

*Q: Well, wasn't that a bit dicey, to be civilians – and you, with a spouse – in the middle of a war? Wasn't that a bit scary?*

WALSH: Not really. This was a different time in Africa. There were a lot fewer weapons and a lot less bloodshed. I wouldn't say it was a positive time and place to be, Mobutu's Zaire, but we did not feel threatened.

*Q: If people were being killed—You said it was not in large numbers. You were in the capital, and you were an American diplomat. Were those two things protecting you?*

WALSH: I don't know. What was protecting me was the fact that I was an American citizen and attached to the consulate. That certainly gave me a status and prestige that

was way beyond my years and way beyond my intellectual abilities, but it was still just a non-threatening atmosphere.

*Q: Non-threatening to an American in Lubumbashi. It must have been pretty unpleasant for Zairians in little villages, I guess. Or was it not?*

WALSH: Well, probably for those in the villages, not so much. They might clear out so as not to get caught up in the fighting, but once again, they were just watching the circus parade go by. Now, in Lubumbashi itself, there was panic. The people were terrified of what might happen if the town were taken by the Angolans. However, the Angolans were stopped well outside of Kolwezi, which is the mining center, and driven back to the Angolan border.

*Q: Now, it wasn't terrible or threatening, but even so, you were evacuated. What was that about?*

WALSH: No, we weren't evacuated. My tour was up. What had happened was, I got a phone call from Poland, and they asked if I would be available fairly quickly to go to Krakow, Poland as the branch Public Affairs officer. Because they had nobody junior enough, who spoke the language— Somebody had been assigned there and then dropped out, so they were looking for a junior officer who spoke Polish to be the branch Public Affairs officer in Krakow. I was absolutely thrilled with that and I said yes. So, I was assigned to Krakow from 1977 to 1980.

*Q: Wow. , meanwhile, had departed from Warsaw, right?*

WALSH: No, he was still there. He left later on in '77.

*Q: Ah, so you kind of reunited a little bit?*

WALSH: Indeed we did.

*Q: Okay. Well, we've gotten you from Warsaw to Lubumbashi, and we've now embarked on a new chapter in Krakow in 1977. You did not need language training. Should we get into this now, or should we schedule another conversation that deals with Krakow?*

WALSH: Let's do that. Let's schedule another conversation.

*Q: Okay. Let me stop this recording. This is Dan Whitman signing off. It's 02/02/20 with Neal Walsh in Fredericksburg.*

*Q: So, we're recording. This is Dan Whitman talking to Neal Walsh. I think it's April 4<sup>th</sup>, something like that. We're doing this on the phone. Neal, when we last talked, I think it was February 2<sup>nd</sup>. You had completed your assignment in Lubumbashi, and somehow you finagled an assignment back in Poland, this time in the beautiful town of Krakow. How did you finagle this?*

WALSH: It was just by happenstance, that one day, here I am in Lubumbashi. We get a phone call from Mr. , of all people. Now, getting a phone call to Lubumbashi was not an easy proposition. It was just an amazing sort of thing. He asked if I would be willing to go to Krakow. I, of course, said, “Yes, absolutely.” This would be a dream come true, you might say. It turned out that they had had a candidate, and that person had done the nine months of Polish language training and so on, and then could not take the position for some reason or another. It was a health problem or a family problem or something like that. So, they were caught short, and I was the only person available who spoke the language and had experience and was available to go.

Now, the consulate in Krakow was a rather unique institution in that it was a consulate, but it had been paid for – construction and other conciliary rentals, land purchases, and so on – by the United States Information Agency, not by the Department of State. Everybody was very eager to have— Well, I say everybody in terms of the various foreign affairs agencies. But they were eager to have a consulate in Krakow, but the Department did not have enough money in its budget, at that time, to take on the responsibilities. So, USIA, which did have the money, at that time—

One of the reasons both USIA and Department of State felt it was important was that this was the intellectual heart of the country. The institutions in the area of the consular responsibilities were— There were about 10 universities in the area, and the city was very politically active inasmuch you had the miners in the Silesian areas and then the Catholic church, which was very strong in that area. So, it had political and intellectual gravitas, but also, 80% of the Polish American community came from southern Poland, in the mountains. There was a lot of pressure to put that consulate there. The Poles wanted a consulate in Chicago. So, that was the tradeoff. They got their consulate in Chicago, and we were able to put the consulate in Krakow.

The Polish government for years had discouraged the idea of having a consulate in Krakow. They realized the same thing we did – this was a big, important, dynamic body. But the economic rewards of having a Polish consulate in Chicago were quite strong. You had tremendous transfers of funds from the Poland community there back to Poland, and additionally, a huge consular load for them. So, we took over a 14<sup>th</sup> century building and had it totally rebuilt and restored. We established a library of about 3,000 volumes there. We had a strong English teaching program, in that we had two professors at the Jagiellonian University, and another professor at the University of Katowice. We had two in English philology and another in American literature.

It was a fascinating place. It opened in '75, and I went in '77. It was just a dream come true, because also, the structure of the city, in the sense of institutions— You had any number of Polish writers there.

*Q: We can add those to the transcript later. That's great.*

WALSH: Yeah. You had the Polish science fiction writers. Who else did you have down there? You had \_\_\_\_\_. He died just a couple of days ago.

*Q: Right. The composer.*

WALSH: The school of music was a very internationally known place, in terms of contemporary music. That was great. You had the \_\_\_\_\_ group, the \_\_\_\_\_, which was also very independent, very outspoken. So, yes, intellectually, it was a fabulous place to be, and also, it was a much less oppressive place than Warsaw. In Warsaw, of course, everything was at an official level, and the influence of the Interior Office and the police was much stronger up there than it was in Krakow. In Krakow, you could have fabulous personal relationships with people, students, professors, the Catholic Intellectuals Club. It was just a fabulous place to be. There was also the Catholic church. Then, there were newspapers, radio stations and musicians, playwrights, and others. It was just a much more open society than Warsaw.

*Q: Yeah. A very happy story. So, Bob \_\_\_\_\_ called you. He was PAO in Warsaw at the time, is that right?*

WALSH: No, he was the cultural attaché in Warsaw.

*Q: Ah, okay. But the CAO was able to convince somebody to bring you to Krakow, is that right?*

WALSH: Indeed.

*Q: That would be a stretch, these days, wouldn't it? The CAO would not have such clout. Do you know who had to be convinced? Was it the European Area Office? I guess it was, wasn't it?*

WALSH: It was. It was the Office of East European Affairs in USIA. Jock Shirley, my former PAO, was head of that office.

*Q: Okay. So, \_\_\_\_\_ convinced Shirley, and that sounds like all that was needed to make it happen, is that right?*

WALSH: Indeed. There was none of that business of bidding on positions and so on and so forth, as I found to my detriment in going to Lubumbashi when I had decided not to go to Skopje. They said, "Well, you're going to Lubumbashi, then." I said, "What else do you have?" and they said, "We're not bargaining here. You're going there."

*Q: Right. I think they called it the Open Assignments Process that came later, I guess.*

WALSH: Exactly.

*Q: So, Kathleen was reluctant to go from a cloudy, Eastern European place to another one, but Krakow, being the jewel— Was she on board with this move? Did she resist in any way?*

WALSH: She was on board. We had visited Krakow a number of times when we had been in Warsaw. We had enjoyed the city and met some people from there, so we were looking forward to going there.

*Q: Great. So, you had the added advantage that you didn't have to restore the building. It had been done two years earlier.*

WALSH: Exactly.

*Q: Were you the first PD (Public Diplomacy) person in the consulate?*

WALSH: No. As a matter of fact, the first PD person was a State Department officer, Victor Gray, who had been seconded to USIA. He was the first counsel there. Peter \_\_\_ was the first BPAO (Branch Public Affairs officer).

*Q: Ah, I remember Peter. So, you reported to Peter and to Bob? Was that how it worked?*

WALSH: No. What we did there— The chain of command, you might say, went from Krakow and me as a BPAO up to Warsaw. The PAO at that time was Jim Bradshaw. That was there. I was there for about four or five months before the new counsel, \_\_\_\_\_, came along. We also had two vice counsels who did the admin and visas.

*Q: So, you had your hands untied, free to do PD in a PD paradise. This is great.*

WALSH: That is exactly it.

*Q: That's great. So, of the various sectors you've mentioned – university, church, broadcast, theater, music – did you deal with all of them equally? Did you find one of them easier to get into at the beginning? How did you decide where to spend your energies?*

WALSH: Well, I just sort of followed very much how we had set up in Warsaw. As much as I can say that the structure was much more informal and we had carte blanche there, in many ways, the central government still had control over what we did, like the number of professors we could have on Fulbrights and stuff like that. So, that was still there. But with your ongoing associations with people, and the contacts that Americans had with Krakow, that was able to open a lot of doors for us in the consulate.

Jagiellonian University, to a great extent, was very open. They would invite me to the Department of Economics or the Political Science Department to come for discussions of American political movements or the American economy, how we look at things, and how we do things. Even the School of Mining and Metallurgy, which was a very strong

Communist Party school— We had great relations with them. I spent a lot of time with the youth group. They made me an honorary member, and I would go on their camping trips, kayaking groups, stuff like that. It was just great. Then, through that, I got to meet many of the fellows in the hierarchy of the school. They were pretty hardline. It was a very military outfit, but they were very welcoming to me.

*Q: That's terrific. So, did you— Of the many sectors, because you've mentioned six or seven or eight, did you just go wherever you could? Did you have a priority – information, culture, education? Did you just go into the whole thing full barrel?*

WALSH: Yeah. At every one of those institutions, there were individuals who were of importance to us, inasmuch as they had a strong voice in opposition politics. The doors were open to individuals and intellectuals, also, in terms of the governmental structure or the party structure. You could call up and go and have coffee and exchange thoughts with the first secretary of the city party. Same with going over to Katowice. You'd stop over at the mayor's office as a courtesy call, but then you would go to the newspaper and to other publications, some of which had nationwide distribution. So, you'd do that every couple of months. You'd stop down in Katowice and see the folks out there.

Then, the church was also very important to us. If they had prominent people – including Cardinal \_\_\_\_\_ and others – who were traveling to the United States and had questions, queries, or relationships with the United States, we would certainly do everything we could to enhance that process. Whenever American bishops and cardinals came to visit Poland, they would get an invitation to Warsaw and then they would also come down to Krakow to visit Cardinal \_\_\_\_\_ would also— This was very good for me. He had a great following, you might say, in African cardinals and bishops. So, whenever they had them visiting – particularly from the Francophone countries – he would invite me to a luncheon or reception with them.

*Q: Of course. Straight from Lubumbashi. Fantastic.*

WALSH: Yeah. It was fascinating, because the cardinals on the Polish side— When they were talking with the Africans, the Africans would be talking about, say— In one case we did have a Zairian bishop there, and once again, the question came up to me, “Why don't we just kill Mobutu?”

*Q: So, your last post followed you in that sense.*

WALSH: Yep. The Poles, seeing Mobutu as a strong anti-Communist fellow, would say, “How could they think that?”

I'd have to say, “Well, frankly, I agree with them.” So, we just had a super relationship with the Catholic structure. Then, in there, we saw very much that in a certain sense, the Communists – if you want to call them that; it was actually the Polish Workers' Party, not a Communist party— How would you say?

*Q: You're saying that they were the official party, but there were chances to have friendly talks with them. Was that the point?*

WALSH: Yeah. It was. It was very \_\_\_\_, particularly for the first couple of years that I was there. As we came up towards 1980, things started getting tight. Both the economic and the political conditions got a little bit harder for people. But the Church just had so much influence, and the Communist party sort of created \_\_\_\_, in the sense that it was— There was no— The Church had no broadcasts, no newspapers. There was \_\_\_\_. That was another reason I was there. The Catholic Weekly was the Catholic newspaper. Here's the Catholic Weekly in a country of 30 million, and it was only able to produce 14,000 newspapers a week. That was what its distribution was. But it had tremendous influence.

That was another thing there. I think that in my three years there, I probably sent 67 of their journalists and members to the United States on IV (Immigrant Visa) programs. Later on, one of their journalists became minister of the Interior in the 1990 government. He is the one who stood against the more radical members of the new government and made sure that the secret police files stayed closed for another 20 years. It was nowhere near as infiltrated as in East Germany, but it would have been a very bad time if those had been opened up to the general public. So, yeah, it was \_\_\_\_.

I remember Bob \_\_\_\_\_ coming down and visiting me, and he and I went out to lunch with \_\_\_\_, the editor in chief of \_\_\_\_, and, actually, one of the founders of \_\_\_\_. That sort of means *The Street Weekly*. He got up to go to the men's room, and Bob \_\_\_\_ watched him walk away, and he just looked at me and said, "You are so lucky to be dealing with these people. These are true giants of our time." It took me a while to— I was immature, and I was like, "No, this is just my client, Mr. and so on." But yeah, these people were giants. They had held out— He had spent six months or so in jail, and the newspaper had closed down for about a year, back in 1953 when Stalin died because they put the obituary on the obituary page and did not have a frontpage article on it.

So, yeah, these people— Watching how they did things— It was just a magnificent cadre of individuals. The director of the Krakow Symphony— Actually, he wasn't director of the Krakow Symphony. He was the director of the Krakow Radio and TV Symphony. In Eastern Europe, radio and other programs were very much like America in the 1920s and '30s and '40s. Your radio broadcasts – your CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System) and NBC (National Broadcasting Company) and whatever – all had their own in-house orchestra and in-house theater groups and so on.

The director of the Radio and TV Symphony in Krakow was a young man that I had sent to the United States. I didn't select him. I did, in the sense that I interviewed him, but he was really a very tremendous guy. He had gone to get his master's at the Juilliard School in New York. There we are, four years later, there. He sort of epitomizes—. Wit was his name. He went on to become the director of the Katowice Symphony, which was the best symphony in the country. Then, later on, he was the director of the National Orchestra. I remember talking to him at his home, one time, when Kath and I were visiting, and I said,

“Why are you doing this? You have invitations. You conduct in Germany and Italy and other countries. Have you thought of establishing yourself permanently outside?”

He said, “No. This is where I am. I want to be able to create institutions of culture, because we have nothing else like that in this whole country.” That was the way he and so many others – the professors at the universities, the writers, the journalists from the media, even some of the city and party officials – looked at it. Some of them were very much the same in terms of— “How do we get this country out of this rut?” So, it was a dream place to be. I still have friends and contacts from that time, even though it was 40 or 50 years ago, practically.

*Q: Fantastic. You talked about the opposition party. Did they tolerate opposition in the 1970s?*

WALSH: Yeah. I think— Using the term “opposition party” is giving it a lot more credit for its infrastructure.

*Q: Maybe they were the tolerated opposition?*

WALSH: They were tolerated. Additionally, let’s just say that everybody knew everybody else’s political stance. Like I said, this newspaper with a distribution of 40,000 was recognized nationally as being one of the most influential newspapers there. Earlier, I think I got off my point when I was talking about how I thought, in my mind, Communists created Cardinal \_\_\_\_, in the sense that the Church had no access to mass media. So, the cardinal and the bishops for that region really had to be politicians, in the sense that their voices appeared in the churches.

They appeared in the churches and gave talks and sermons all the time, much more and in a much more high profile way than an American bishop would, for example. Wakes, weddings, everything. They were sort of super \_\_ viewers, in the sense that they just went around. They had to maintain a public profile. If you were active, dynamic, and intellectually curious like \_\_\_\_, and had that personal spark and charisma, then that was your only leverage.

*Q: Great. Now, in our first talk, you talked about your Catholic education. What was the importance of that in becoming accepted in these circles? You mentioned the Church and others. Did this give you any special access, do you think?*

WALSH: Yeah, I think it gave me an insight into the culture and also a common language with both the everyday Poles and the clergy. Catholicism had reached deeply into their society, as it had into the Irish American community. At one reception, when he was still Cardinal, \_\_\_\_ came over to me and he put his arm around my shoulder, raised his glass, and gave a toast to the Irish and Polish people because he said, “We have suffered the same oppression. We have suffered the same slavery, and also we share this religion.” He lifted his wine glass and toasted this big crucifix on the wall of the reception room. I

don't know whether he was trying to tell me— Oh, and he also said, “We bear the same cross,” and that's when he held his glass up.

*Q: Wow, what a moment.*

WALSH: In the years since, I've thought that maybe he was trying to tell me I was drinking too much.

*Q: I don't think so.*

WALSH: But yeah, it was very much your \_\_\_\_.

*Q: Well, it sounds— I don't know if you've given it much thought, but it sounds as if the people you knew recognized in you a person familiar with a very important social aspect. I'm guessing they may have opened up to you especially because you did have this in common. Remind me, when was John Paul pope? Was that later?*

WALSH: It was '78.

*Q: Oh, so you were there.*

WALSH: Yeah. It was a year, a year and a quarter into my time there.

*Q: Oh, you must tell the reader. From your vantage point, were you surprised that there could be a Polish pope at that time? What was the level of interest and excitement in Krakow?*

WALSH: Oh my goodness. You have to remember that John Paul I was elected. That was sort of a big deal in the sense that the bishops and the priests would talk about that, and so on and so forth. Cardinal \_\_\_\_ went off to the Synod there or whatever. I don't know who he voted for, but they had John Paul I. Then, six months later, John Paul dies, so he goes back. At the time, we sent a telegram to Warsaw saying, “We talked to the Cardinal the other day, and he's getting ready to go off to the Synod,” and so on and so forth.

We said, “From what we see, his contacts with the third world” – because he was seeing these African and Asian bishops when I came to visit – “and his relationships with the American cardinals” – because we had Cardinal Kroll from Philadelphia, the cardinal from Los Angeles, and all sorts of things there— We saw into his \_\_\_\_, to a certain extent. We said, “We would be surprised if he's not in the top 10.” We did not expect him to become elected.

*Q: Was he not the first non-Italian pope?*

WALSH: Yeah, the first non-Italian pope in a long time. I think there was an Englishman who was a pope at one time or another. But yeah, it was the first time in several centuries.

*Q: Gee whiz. How did this happen? Surely people must have been wondering about the backroom politics in the Vatican that made this happen. I'm thinking of American politics and the party conventions where, sometimes, unexpected things happen. Do we have any idea what the process was that resulted in that?*

WALSH: Yeah, in the sense that— Obviously, we thought about it afterwards. I think that one of the reasons was that he was seen by many of the third world cardinals as a friend. He was young— He was in his 60s at the time. He was young and outgoing and dynamic. The virtues that attracted me to him— Obviously, he had this interpersonal ability to make contact intellectually and personally with you when you spoke to him, and I think he had impressed them.

He was non-Italian, which I think stood him in good stead with a lot of people. He was anti-Communist, but not a raving right-winger. His relationship with the African cardinals and bishops that I had seen was great. That's one of the reasons why we said this guy could be in the running. They were looking for a non-Italian at the time. Obviously, it couldn't be an American. It couldn't be a German, at that time. We were still pretty close to World War II. That would be too much. So, yeah, when you start off saying, "Why couldn't this be?" it was pretty obvious that it could possibly be him.

*Q: This is amazing. Now, the Polish government. You describe him as being kind of anti-Communist but not radical. Did the government find this difficult to accept?*

WALSH: Let's say they put the best face they could on it, but to a certain extent, obviously, they were not happy with this. Obviously, the Russians were certainly not happy with this. But this is a Catholic country. They're as Catholic as the Irish. So, as \_\_\_ himself said, "We share the same faith, the same oppression, and the same cross." So, yeah, the government had to congratulate him. The night that he was elected was a wonderful time. He was elected sometime in the afternoon on a Friday, and I remember that at the consulate, \_\_\_ didn't have any sense of real politics. He came to me and said, "I've got to go to Berlin to get spare parts for the washing machine. You take care of everything while I'm away."

I just smiled to myself and said, "No problem at all." So, I was the face of the American government, this young kid, going to the masses and the speeches and the discussions and all the press conferences that the bishop of Krakow had. It was absolutely wonderful. Then, the next year, in '79, when the Pope came to visit, that was one of the most magnificent things I've ever seen. He had a mass on a huge field just on the edge of the city limits, and it was still with an estimated million, million and a half people. Kath and I were invited to sit on the rostrum overlooking this massive crowd. It was a beautiful day. Then, the pope gave a speech at Jagiellonian, and we were invited to that. It was just a fabulous time. One of the things that they made sure was that the American consulate was there all the time in terms of events, functions, masses, and so on.

*Q: When you say "they," was it the Church, the government, or both?*

WALSH: It was the Church.

*Q: Fantastic.*

WALSH: It was a fellow who is now the cardinal primate of Poland. He was a monsignor, and he was sort of the special assistant to the Cardinal. When the Cardinal wanted us or did anything, he would stop at the consulate and give us the gossip. We'd go upstairs and have drinks with my press attaché, and he'd just go on like that. So, \_\_\_\_\_. Then, during \_\_\_\_\_'s time, he was special assistant. Wherever he traveled, there he was. He is now the primate of Poland. When he left, \_\_\_\_\_ became Cardinal, and once again, he was very close to us. We were good friends with him. Then, he was later primate of Poland before \_\_\_\_\_.

We sent in a cable – and I still have it in my file here – with sort of the basic background on the Pope, what he'd done as a student, as an actor growing up in wartime Krakow and so on, and then coming back and becoming a bishop and a priest. The only thing we didn't say is that he didn't realize we spoke English. We'd never spoken English to him. We just never did. So, yeah, it was fabulous. One time, Kath and I were on the Vatican Christmas card list. We got a card. So, my mother, of course, thought this was the best thing in the world. So, yeah, we had a wonderful time with them.

*Q: Now, I have to ask: The Soviet Union was officially atheist. The Cold War was in a relatively bad phase in the late '70s. You'd had the Helsinki Final Act in '75, which was a little bit of relief, but then it went back to being not a friendly time. The Polish government must have choked on all of this, no?*

WALSH: It did, but many in the Polish government were still Poles and would have their kids baptized in church. It was not as bad— Poles had a certain exception because first, it was a very large and dynamic population. At the end of World War II, the Russians had a problem in the Ukraine and Southern Poland as well. You still had private farmers in Poland. Agriculture was not collectivized, and there was a certain flexibility because they knew that if they came down hard on the Church— If they turned the churches into stables or warehouses like they had in Russia, there would be no way to control that country. Therefore, you had big allowances for the Church.

This is where you find the soil in which the current government of Poland came up. You also had a right wing Catholic intellectual subdivision that was sponsored and subsidized by the government. So, there you are. Here you have an atheistic organization and government sponsoring a religious intellectuals club. These guys are the Father Coughlan's of Poland – anti-Semitic, right wing. So, the nuances are just incredible.

*Q: Can you generalize beyond Poland— It is sometimes said that in order to keep the Warsaw Pact intact, the Soviet Union gave special little advantages to each of the countries a little bit differently. Romania got to have its own foreign policy. Poland got to have travel. The Polish citizens were able to travel. Each country had a little something, like a little bone tossed to them by the Soviet Union. Is that the way you remember it?*

*What about the other countries that were less driven by church but maybe more by other dissenting views that differed from the Soviet Union?*

WALSH: Well, you already had the whole Central European that had gone through various forms of uprisings and protests. You had— '56 was Hungary. In '54 you had them both in East Germany and in Poland a little bit, and then again in '56 in Poland. Then, in '68, you had the invasion of Czechoslovakia and so on like that. So, they knew that they had to give, and give in a sense of what was possible. They were trying to clamp down, and they would clamp down on the Catholic Church.

As a matter of fact, Krakow had so many—When borders were allocated at the end of World War II, Poland got the eastern provinces of Germany for the eastern provinces of Poland, which were given to Ukraine and to Belarus. So, in that area, the Catholic churches and other religious institutions in the new provinces— Many were taken over by the state. So, seminaries and other institutions that had been closed in those provinces relocated to Krakow. That's why Krakow was the center of intellectual life for the Polish Catholic church. So, you had that sort of thing.

So, during the Pope's visit, when you had millions of people coming to Krakow to see him, and then he went to two other places, the Poles— Outside of the city were very strong security units prepared for any sort of demonstrations. But inside the city and in any of the venues where the Pope appeared, you had a very low-level military or police presence.

*Q: Interesting. The history books talk about how Stalin promised Churchill and Roosevelt that Poland would be a democracy. He obviously never really meant it, and I think one of the regrets at the Yalta Conference was that the Western powers, at the end of World War II, never believed that Stalin would have such a heavy presence in Poland. Did Poles react? Were they still conscious of this 30 years later? Did they express any feelings about that unhappy history?*

WALSH: None, to a certain level. It was discussed very much intellectually, as it is here. I can say that I did not—and maybe I'm sugarcoating my memories—run into anybody. Here, once again, you're dealing with people who lived through that period and who were members of the opposition, you might say. They were members of the opposition, because only in the '50s and '60s were the Army\_\_\_, the Nationalists, allowed back into the country. Let's not forget that, also, the Poles in '69 and '70 also had uprisings of the ship workers in Gdansk. That's where \_\_\_ sort of came from. So, Russians realized – and I think the Polish military made it very clear – that too much heavy-handedness in Poland would be very difficult. Now, say, once again in Krakow you had the flying university, the churches, which were very anti-Communist, let's say. There were restrictions there. There were all sorts of zoning issues, and various people would be arrested and kept for a little while if they got out of hand and so on. But I think they realized that this was a sort of political dynamite, and they had to be careful.

*Q: Well, again, your time there, '77 to '80— Oh, no, the Gdansk uprisings were about seven or eight years before that. Did Walesa ever come to Krakow? Was Gdansk more handled by the embassy in Warsaw? I mean, geographically it's in the north, right?*

WALSH: No, Walesa wasn't traveling around. In general, at that time, we kept our distance, because this was not necessarily good for your professional life, to be known as a friend of the American embassy.

*Q: Right. Plus, I'm sure there would have been stories – or maybe there were – about the U.S. embassy in the background, encouraging these uprisings. That would have been poisonous for U.S.-Soviet relations. There could have been some real consequences. We don't know – I don't know – if the U.S actually did help Walesa. I don't know.*

WALSH: Well, actually, there are a number of things there to be touched on. One was, let's say, the repression. In those years, it was much more sophisticated than, say, in the '50s and '60s. So, instead of arrests and putting people in jail and so on like this, there were restrictions on your ability to travel. I remember asking once— There was a Fulbright, an engineer, who was another fellow in Krakow that had gone through my hands while I was in Warsaw. He was an engineer and had gone to the United States to get his doctorate under the auspices of the Fulbright Program. We would send 12 doctoral candidates to the United States—12 hard scientists, 12 social scientists—and then we would also bring in 24 professors.

For this guy, I said to him, “Wait a minute, you graduate from the higher School of Mining and Metallurgy, which is a hardline Communist outfit, and here you are, a member of the Catholic opposition. How did this happen? You've been nominated by your government to be a doctoral student to the United States.”

He said, “Oh, at a certain point” – particularly at the School of Mining and Metallurgy, but also at other institutions – “they come and talk to you about your religious and social life. It was well-known that I was active in Catholic affairs, so they said, ‘You either get with the party line or get out.’ I chose to get out, so I was made a member of the Academy of Sciences. They were not so political, so therefore I was able to follow my research and studies and get nominated by the government to be a scientist.” He said, “Maybe sometimes the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing, and that was good for me.”

So, things like that would happen. You would also have family situations. Another friend of mine was a journalist, and I got to know him in the traditional way. He was a young journalist in his early 20s when I was in my early 20s. The press attaché said, “This guy is going to go places. Let's get close to him,” and we did. He -- \_\_\_ -- later on became a professor at George Soros' university down in Budapest.

*Q: Oh, the one recently closed, yes.*

WALSH: He became a very well-known intellectual. He didn't have a dog in either fight, on either side. He was very political in many ways. But his brother was a vice minister and senior figure in the Ministry of Finance. So, you had a varied sort of thing. Later on, particularly after the Reagan administration came in and running up to that time in the early '80s, with martial law and everything, we started getting instructions from Washington to attend trials of labor activists. That was a fascinating sort of thing. I would go and attend a trial where a guy would be put in.

I remember that at one, an activist had been charged with assault and battery on the officers and resisting arrest. Poland has habeas corpus, but the police can arrest you and bring you into custody and hold you for three or four days without having any charges. If they don't bring charges against you, you're set free. Well, they had done this about 15 times in a row: put him in jail for three or four days, let him out. Give him 48 hours, and put him in. They'd done this about 10 or 12 times in a row for this, meaning that for a period of a couple months he's getting thrown in the slammer every other day practically. So, he finally cracked, beat up the policeman who took him, kicked all the windows and bars, stuff like this.

So, in the trial— It's before a three judge tribunal, and they argued about the hardship he was placed under and so on and so forth like this. The tribunal found him guilty, but they sentenced him to 30 days in the slammer. That was it. The incident was filled with people. They went off singing nationalistic songs. It was fabulous. It was sort of thrilling to do these things, but of course, it made me the Typhoid Mary of the district. I would call my old friends in the party or in the newspaper and say, "Oh, \_\_\_?" They'd show up and say, "Oh, he's sick today. He can't make it," or "He was called to Warsaw" and so on.

*Q: Do you think your presence in the court might have made a difference?*

WALSH: I think it made a difference in terms of my social life, yes.

*Q: I mean for the sentencing. Were the judges at all factoring in that they had witnesses from the West watching?*

WALSH: No. The request for us to attend these trials came from American unions. So, politically, this was still the Carter administration. It was before Reagan got into the White House. So, there was a domestic political thing. But also, remember, Reagan started his campaign in 1980 with George H.W. Bush on Labor Day.

*Q: Yes. I forgot that. Okay. So, in a way, you were at the center of the world. Amazing. Do you feel that of the Eastern Europe countries, Poland was the most malleable, most promising, most likely to become Western-oriented?*

WALSH: No. In the end, I felt that as much as I was thrilled to have these relationships with these various groups – the \_\_\_ University, the Church, Jagiellonian University, and so on – I was impressed by the power of the state there. In 1980, when I left, that was

shortly before martial law was declared there. I did not think that things would shift. I thought things would stay the way they were.

*Q: That's a paradox, isn't it, because you've talked about the tremendous strength of the Church, the election of John Paul, the unlikely candidates for Fulbrights who were actually nominated by the state. So, you think the state was only symbolically loosening up a bit, but really did have a firm grip during that period?*

WALSH: Yeah, I did at that time. In a way, there's a yin and yang here, too, because I also saw how the economic situation in the country was going downhill really fast. In the early '70s, during my first tour there, they were getting along, and they were still getting along when I was there in Krakow, on huge loans for construction and production lines from the West at seven percent, six percent. I had to admit, how did anybody ever expect to get paid back? They were not producing anything of quality. The technology that they were coming up with for their consumer goods was at the level of Brazil's. Real economies – the Korean, the Japanese, and other economies – were coming out and knocking them dead. So, there was no competition in that sense. I guess I think it was probably '78 to '79 or '79 to '80 when there were huge strikes in England.

*Q: Oh, yes, the truckers.*

WALSH: This was when Thatcher broke the unions in England. The Poles stole all the coal to break the strike. So, at that time, I knew I was part of a missionary mission, a missionary process, keeping the ties between Poland and the United States together on a personal and political level as much as possible, and in a positive way.

*Q: Yes. Now, this kind of goes back to two sessions ago when you described being in Leningrad as a student. Was this kind of the crowning achievement of the young man who had spent a semester in Leningrad, liked the people, and felt there should be more mutual understanding? Looking back to the Leningrad times, was this really a beautiful realization of what you were thinking as a student?*

WALSH: Yes, in the sense that I was playing a role that I'd dreamed of.

*Q: Yes. That's what I meant. You're putting it more elegantly than I did. You were dreaming of doing something— Of course, at the time, you didn't know it would be Poland, but you had served in Poland. You were ready and equipped with the language and understanding, and this was a real culmination, '77 to '80. It's a wonderful story, Neal. While we've still got you in Krakow, what more comes to mind about your own political development? I think you've described pretty thoroughly what the social, religious, and political and cultural life was like at that time.*

WALSH: Well, one of the things there – and this is very interesting – was that in my time, while I was there, I was hoping that the Polish political situation would loosen up, but I was also afraid of it, because if it did, it would mean an explosion. But once again, on the American side, the person who I think had the best insight into this is the great \_\_\_\_.

*Q: I was thinking the same thing. How so?*

WALSH: Well, when I returned to Poland in the fall of '77, I remember having dinner at his house – just Bob, Mary Beth, Kathleen, and myself. Bob, in that intense way he has of saying things, said, “250,000 Poles went to Italy this year.” Maybe that was after became pope. It could have been after. It could have been '80. But he said, “250,000 Poles have gone to Italy, of all places.” Now, Italy, in the Polish media, was always looked upon as the black sheep of Western Europe. Lots of terrible things were happening in Italy, corruption and so on. Bob said, “A quarter of a million Poles have gone there. That’s a quarter of a million people who are going to come back and say, ‘It’s not like that. You can get all you can eat there, whatever you want.’”

You talk about the various feelings in various Eastern European countries. The Poles and the Czechs had a sort of running joke. That is, a Czech dog and a Polish dog meet on the bridge at the border. The Polish dog says to the Czech dog, “What are you doing?”

The Czech dog says, “I’m going to Poland so I’m going to bark. What are you doing?”

The Polish dog says, “I’m going to Czechoslovakia so I can eat.” So, there were very fascinating differences in how each of these countries approached it, and the big thing there is that, yeah, the Poles, I think, realized how poor all of these countries—Poles, Czechs, Hungarians to a lesser extent—were relative to Western Europe.

*Q: Especially if they were traveling. This was before cable TV, so it wasn't as easy to learn about what was going on. But I think that the Polish Government was the only government that freely allowed citizens to travel.*

WALSH: They were not allowed to travel freely.

*Q: I mean, many Polish citizens were permitted – at least 250,000 to Italy alone. I believe no other Eastern country gave that many exit permissions to people, I think. So, this really did undermine this. The government outsmarted itself, I guess, by opening a little bit of freedom. People used that freedom to learn that they were getting a bad deal.*

WALSH: Well, also, we turned down 80% of the visitor visas.

*Q: But other European countries did not?*

WALSH: I don’t know. That I don’t know. I know that today, when you go to London, you meet more Poles than Englishmen.

*Q: I know. And what a situation for those who kept Polish citizenship after Brexit. What a mess. We don't know what's going to happen.*

WALSH: Yeah. So, it's fascinating. That means that we would be getting hundreds of people coming in with passports to come into the consulate. They would have permission to travel to the United States if they could get a visa, because the remittances are a big deal. That was a very big deal. Remember, all those loans Poles were taking out from American banks and so on like this were all denominated in dollars. They were certainly not—

Then, when times would come up, I remember— It was fascinating when the hostage crisis started. We were going around the world asking everybody to give us a little hand and put a little pressure on the Iranians to help get them out. The Poles wouldn't give us shit. So, Ambassador Schaufele, at that time, just asked that at that time, they get more green. That was pretty hard to get through.

*Q: Yes. Wow.*

WALSH: I'll tell you one last anecdote before I sign off here. That is on how the place was structured and the access we had. One time, I think Kath might have been away. I think she was pregnant with Bridgit and had gone to Paris or Berlin for a checkup or something. I was out running in the woods right outside of town. We lived right in that area. I'm jogging out to the woods, and I realize that I got myself a little disoriented and didn't know which path to take back to the city. So, I see this priest sitting on a bench. I go to him and say, "Father" -- \_\_\_\_, which is sort of a rude way to say "Father" in Poland. Like many other languages, it has— Really, if you're going to talk nicely to a priest, you'd say \_\_\_\_ -- "Sir Priest." But I just said, "Hey, which way to \_\_\_\_?"

He looks up at me and he goes, "\_\_\_\_. Mr. Counsel, how are you?" It was the Cardinal. He said, "Sit down and tell me what you're doing out here." So, I tell him I'm running and trying to stay healthy. He says, "I'm walking nowadays, but I used to do the same thing." That was the sort of place you had. You would see these guys in the streets, in the woods.

*Q: Wow. And when he saw you, he knew immediately who you were.*

WALSH: Oh yeah. I was the Irishman, to him.

*Q: Oh my gosh. Wonderful. I can't imagine equaling this experience elsewhere, but I know you did. Well, I don't want to exhaust you, Neal. Let's round up. You said that was a final anecdote. Any final anecdotes or reflections as we get to 1980?*

WALSH: Yeah. One was that you do this, as I say, missionary work. You have a lecturer come in, and he's talking about democratic governments, and you invite a certain audience. All of a sudden, you're sitting there looking out at the audience and you realize they're all elderly. You're going, what the fuck is going to happen here? Nothing is ever going to change here.

But at the same time, by this time, we only had, in Poland at that time, one professor— We had 12 or 14 nationwide, but they were in pairs, more or less, in terms of linguistics

and American literature. Later on, Bob \_\_\_ actually got an Institute of American Studies to be formed in Warsaw at the University of Warsaw. Professor— I'll have to think of the name, but the professor who worked with Bob to get it opened— This was not exactly a career-enhancing move for him. But he wound up as foreign minister for years. But across the border, after martial law came down, the students in the English institutes in these universities across the country were the contacts for solidarity with foreign unions and foreign universities.

*Q: Wow. That's immense. Again, the Polish government, looking back, would have been dismayed at their own stupidity, to a large extent.*

WALSH: Well, no, as a matter of fact. That's why the whole thing was kept—. You sure don't want somebody talking about economics, because we have the people's economics and we're basket cases here. You really didn't want to have too much. So, English philology and English and American literature were seen to be the safest thing in the world.

*Q: Right. It wasn't calling for reorganizing social or economic structures.*

WALSH: Right. Whereas when I would go through the applications for 12 guys to go to the United States to do doctoral studies, it was like they were asking me to create the Polish atom bomb. They were all physicists and so on and hard science guys. But they all, like the fellow I knew in Krakow, eventually became advocates for America. 20 years after, back in the early 2000s, there was a newspaper article with a writer. He said, "Back in the '70s, we had a fellow here who was a pretty good guy, and he used to say that if the Poles were given a chance, they would vote to be the 51<sup>st</sup> state." It was nice to be remembered, 20 years later.

*Q: Oh, yes. That's one of the many Neal Walsh legacies.*

WALSH: So, there you go. I've got to get upstairs.

*Q: Great story. Many things. Just for the transcriber, we're clicking off. This is the third recording of the day. This is Dan Whitman, interviewing Neal Walsh. Can't wait for the next episode.*

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*Q: It's April 14<sup>th</sup>, I think, with Dan Whitman interviewing Neal Walsh. We're on section 13, here. So, Neal, you were talking about— You were talking about the investment in human capital among the intelligentsia, with exchange grants and IV grants and how they later became of such value. Can you pick up on that as we start today? You were also talking about youth outreach.*

WALSH: Well, I think where we left off— Are you recording now?

*Q: I am.*

WALSH: Okay. I think where we left off, I think, was when we were discussing my feeling, you might say, of accomplishment in the future. We're looking down in the future to 1981, '82, during the period of martial law. I had left Krakow by that time, but as martial law progressed through the 1980s, the liaison between the unions and foreign unions in Germany, France, England, and the United States were the institutes of English philology at the various universities where we had had Fulbrighters.

The certain warmth in the heart that comes from seeing that we had been investing, in terms of human capital, in training programs and liaisons with the Institutes of American Philology and American Literature, as well as in linguistics. That was by decree of the Polish government. These were the only institutes that they thought were safe to let Americans teach at, you might say. That goes back to when Fiszak, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, was BPAO in Poznan. Out there, there was a very dynamic director and professor of English philology at the University of Poznan. I had that name in my mind before I started to talk.

Fiszak. He was a party member. He was influential within academic circles in Poland, and he was able to ask the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of Education to allow these professors to be established. So, at certain times, we had American professors in linguistics and literature in seven different universities in Poland. Oftentimes, they worked hand in hand with British counsel professors, who were in a number of those positions, too. In Krakow, the orientation of the institute was very much towards the British side. But our professors had a very strong link there.. The struggle in the 1980s, or the resistance to the martial law government, was the first time in Poland that the workers and the intelligencia were united. A lot of that outreach and the foundation of that was the relationship with universities that had been touched by Americans. So, it was just a tremendous thing.

You had asked me earlier, when we started talking about Krakow, how we divided up our work and so on. Well, the interesting thing there— To a great extent, it was always assumed that we knew what we were doing. So, nobody really said, “I want you to do this, this, this, and this.” You had to do it by the seat of your pants and by watching your colleagues. I was tremendously gifted by having Jock Shirley, \_\_\_, Bob \_\_\_, Frank \_\_\_, George— I'll get George's name. He was the English teaching officer. It was just a cast of characters, and these were people of ability and character. Watching them as a JOT and then as an assistant cultural attaché was a fabulous learning period for me in Warsaw. Then, going to Krakow, they all assumed that I would know this stuff. I didn't. I had to say, “Why are we here?”

The Church, \_\_\_. The university. We had to help the university look for people there, and additionally, make sure that your Fulbrighters – professors and students – are supported, because they really made a difference in the Institute of Music. We had three Fulbrighters there. At the university, we had a number of Fulbrighters dealing with some very sensitive historical issues. At one, we had Jewish relationships, the politics of Jewish

assimilation prior to World War II. We had a professor there who was studying but also would lecture, and he was an American who taught at the Hebrew university in Israel. Here he is, doing this under our auspices – because he never would have gotten away with doing this from Israel. He actually lived in my house for two or three months. We kept a kosher kitchen for him.

Then, another time, we had a young woman who came for just a couple months, but her goal was to get to German archives that were still in the salt mines in Poland in order to study the assimilation of the Jewish elite in Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The archives and the letters, a tremendous amount of primary sources, had been bundled up, boxed, and brought to the salt mines for safekeeping during World War II. The Poles and the Germans had not really reached an agreement as to how to get them back to the institutions in Germany. I remember her— It was towards the end of my time there that she came in and asked if I would help her. Now, the rector of Jagiellonian University was on an IV, someone who once again I had not nominated, but whose paperwork I had handled. I said, “Look, I’m pretty much on a first name basis with this guy, but I can’t make any guarantees, because in terms of the politics and the national culture, this is a very sensitive subject. You never know how it’s going to go.”

So, I called him up and sent him a letter saying, “Can this woman have access?” He called me right back and said, “Yes, this is wonderful. I want to meet her,” whereas some other institutions would have just closed the door on them. I think he, given the amount of support we were giving there to Jagiellonian— I wouldn’t say he felt obligated, but I think he felt free to make that sort of political decision right there at his level, you know?

*Q: Fantastic. So, when you say salt mines, you’re not kidding. These were salt mines?*

WALSH: Yeah, these were huge salt mines up \_\_\_\_.

*Q: The point is, what, that paper is preserved as well?*

WALSH: Yeah. Well, they don’t get bombed and burned.

*Q: Incredible.*

WALSH: I’m sure that was part of post-1989 discussions between the Poles and the Germans, but yeah. So, for me, those two years were just fantastic. Let’s say I went there— Well, Kath and I went there in 1977, late ’77, and I think we left there— Well, we left there twice, actually. We left in what must have been ’79.

*Q: Yeah, I think that tracks with what you said before.*

WALSH: Then we came home and got ready for another post in Africa, I think. I’m not sure. We were on home leave, and then they called and said, “Your replacement is not coming. Will you come back to Krakow?”

I said, “In a New York minute.” So, we went back there for another eight or nine months.

*Q: Fantastic. Okay. So, you really spent a tour and then a third of a tour, again, in Krakow. That’s a great story.*

WALSH: It was really wonderful. Ambassador Schaufele was the ambassador at that time. He was a former assistant secretary of African Affairs. So, that was a good relationship that I had with him. He’s also been nominated to be ambassador to Greece. But in his hearings, he had mentioned something like, “The Greeks and Turks have to get together to do this,” or something like that, and the Greek community, of course, was outraged, so he lost that. So, I think he really wanted a warmer climate, but he was a very good ambassador in Poland. As a matter of fact, he made the point of— At this time, Poland was going through tremendous economic problems, and we were supplying it with grain at subsidized prices. He just said— The Poles were reluctant to give us any sort of help on the hostage crisis in Iran.

*Q: Oh, yeah.*

WALSH: He just said, “Turn the boats around and let’s see what the Poles do.”

*Q: Let’s spell his name, just for the record.*

WALSH: Schaufele? Schaufele.

*Q: Okay. Great. So, that eight or nine months was added on. So, you spent a month or two in Washington, spinning around, and then went straight back. Anything different? Were you able to pick up pieces of earlier work?*

WALSH: Yeah. This was part of the time that I was Typhoid Mary. My official friends—It was a lot of outreach to what was the Flying University and a priest who was very close to the Flying University. The Flying University was \_\_\_\_, really. Young people were talking about history. What was not talked about in Polish history at the time? Where were the gaps? What had happened after World War II? Who was what and what was where? They were really looking at 40 years of oppression, 30 years, actually.

So, it was tensing up everywhere. The structure was just not holding. There was a lot of pressure and pushback against the government. The economic situation was just going downhill, because finally, the Western banks and the other nations realized that they weren’t getting paid back. So, yeah, you would have to go to two or three stores to find food, to find anything. Everything was getting worse. People were very outspoken about it. The Russians were putting the pressure on the Polish government, and the Polish government was cracking down as much as it could in terms of labor trials and so on like that.

*Q: Right. I remember talking, and maybe you can clarify this— The Polish head of state – I forget his name – was seen as part of the oppression at the time, and then later, in*

*retrospect, people were saying that he was actually playing a nuanced scheme to try to prevent a Russian invasion. Tell us about that, because you were kind of in the middle of it, right?*

WALSH: That was exactly it. I wouldn't say I was in the middle of it. I was sort of an observer, watching it from the outside.

*Q: What was his name—*

WALSH: He was a guy with dark glasses. General—

*Q: Something. I think it ends in -ski. It's on the tip of my tongue. I'll get it—*

WALSH: I cannot remember.

*Q: Jaruzelski.*

WALSH: You remembered it before I did, for God's sake.

*Q: Well, I wasn't as obsessed—*

WALSH: There are a couple of things there that are interesting. Yes, indeed, Jaruzelski made it very clear to the Russians that if things degraded further, if they attempted to do to Poland what they had done to Czechoslovakia and Hungary, it would not be that simple. He could not rely upon the armed forces to stay neutral. He made that case very clear to \_\_\_ and company.

*Q: How do we know that?*

WALSH: There have been discussions and papers written about that over the years. It's not like it was in the newspapers, in \_\_\_, *The Tribune of the People*. They didn't have info on General Jaruzelski. It was '81, I think, when martial law was declared, but Jaruzelski just took over. I was not there.

*Q: Have you been in touch enough to know if Polish attitudes towards Jaruzelski changed at some point? What was your feeling from people you knew about the head of state? Did they think he was the enemy? Was he protecting them from the Russians? Any idea what was on their minds?*

WALSH: Well, there is a good question. That would be a great question to put to \_\_\_. He was very much involved after—and I was with him in Washington for a while—the martial law was declared, but I forget what it was. I forget what the vote was. There was solidarity. They had gone on strike in Gdansk. Then, they voted for a nationwide strike, I think. I had left Krakow by that time.

*Q: So, around '80, kind of?*

WALSH: '80, '81. Then— Not \_\_\_\_ .

*Q: \_\_\_\_?*

WALSH: \_\_\_\_ . was a friend of mine. But \_\_\_\_— There's a picture of him as they took the vote. He had opposed this.

*Q: He opposed what? The vote was what?*

WALSH: The vote was for a national strike. He just opposed it because he knew that the reaction would be tremendously negative with the government. He was pushing for further negotiations with the government. Once they started down that road— There's a TV clip of \_\_\_\_ just putting his hand up to his forehead and going, "Oh, no." That's when Jaruzelski put into action martial law. On the other hand, it went off so well and so coordinately across the country that it was obviously in the planning documents of the Polish army and the armed forces. I think that the Poles, as much as they hated Jaruzelski----they incarcerated 2,000, 3,000 people in the initial months ----as much as they were upset about this, they realized that it was better him putting us in jail than the Russians.

*Q: Okay. So, even back in that early period, they did sort of see him as a buffer?*

WALSH: Yes. Better him than the Russians. He was also seen as a dog of the Russians, but still. That is the sense of the question in Poland in the post-World War II years. I think I told you about my friend Wolinski. There was the good Wolinski, who was a non-journalist, his brother, who was eventually minister of Finance in the successor government, but was a good \_\_\_\_, as well. Then there was Wolinski, who was a freelance journalist and leading intellectual. There were bad people from the same families that were split.

*Q: At the same side of the spectrum, at the time— I was just reading newspapers. We all thought Wolinski was the savior, the Mandela, and yet he, too, had some unsavory sites that came out later. But that would be after your period, I guess.*

WALSH: Well, Wolinski has been accused of being a police informer. But in that period, everybody was a police informer. Not everybody; it was nothing like the Germans and so on like that. But they were under severe pressure. So, he had a slight relationship with the Office of Security, the \_\_\_\_ . Did he ever turn anybody over? One of the things there is that the embassy is right across the street from the House of Veterans. When I was in Warsaw, before a lot of these tensions came out, somebody pointed out that the files in that place were held very tightly, because it tells what everybody did during World War II, who was with whom at a certain time and so on.

This continued on, because at some time or another, I had American students, and we had a large number of Polish American students, going to medical school at the School for

Physical Education and so on like that. They were being pulled in every now and then by the police to say, “Hey, you do this and this, and we’ll help you.” A young man who represented the \_\_\_ Foundation there— Later, he was nominated to be consul general in San Francisco in the second government, and it turned out he had been an informer or an active agent of the police. He, one time, said he would give me a box full of zlotys if I lent him X thousands of dollars so that he could buy a car. Good thing I didn’t do it!

*Q: Yes. These are the ambiguities, right?*

WALSH: Ambiguities and nuances, yeah. A friend of mine was a journalist for \_\_\_ . Kathleen and I would go to his father-in-law’s house, which was near our house in Krakow, during the winter to swim in his father-in-law’s inside swimming pool. His father-in-law was the director of the steel mill, \_\_\_, which had been put right next to Krakow as a part of social engineering, to build a working community. So, here is this guy whose life is with the Catholic resistance, you might say. He marries the daughter of one of the highest authorities in the region.

He later became the minister of the Interior—not the father-in-law, but the journalist. One of the things he did as minister of the Interior—and he was minister of the Interior for, I think, six or seven years, when the new, 1990s, roundtable government came in – was that he kept the files of the Security Bureau, the \_\_\_. It must have been \_\_\_. He did this in order to make sure that these files did not get opened willy nilly for everybody to read. That would be national suicide.

*Q: Gee. Because well-known people would be known to be—*

WALSH: Exactly.

*Q: Creepy. All of it is very creepy. Did this creep you out? What did you feel, knowing that everybody you knew had, probably, two sides to them and you never quite knew what you were getting in a friendship? Didn’t that get creepy, after a while?*

WALSH: Well, no. I have to say no. What was creepy was to be working with a government or in a country and society— This struck me once. I’m a very naïve guy. Kath and I were very close to the schools at the Higher School of Mines and Metallurgy, which was a very strong party school. We would go on outings with the student youth group there. I remember talking to one of the students, saying, “What are you going to do? What’s your plan and your future?”

He said, “What I’m going to do is I’m going to get a job somewhere on the coast to be a director of electricity and power supply and so on at a powerhouse or factory or something like that. I’ll live quietly and very nicely for two or three or four years. Then, when everybody thinks I’m a good guy and a good party member and so on, I’ll join and be a member of the sailing club there. Then, I’ll get a boat, and I’ll take it to Sweden.”

I remember thinking, time and again— To Kath, I'd say, "What a sad place to be, where the number one ambition for somebody is to get the hell out of here. That's the goal of a quality person." But a lot of the people that we worked with, say, at the university, or the journalists at \_\_\_\_, or the priests and others from the Catholic Church that we dealt with— They were there to say, "How do we make this society better?" Poland had gone up to the barricades a couple of times since World War II, and they knew that that wasn't going to get them anywhere, but how would they keep alive the spirit of democracy, free choice, and so on? That was exciting, being with those people. It was depressing, sometimes— Michael Novak, that's the name. those who wanted to come to a lecture at the American consulate on Catholic politics in the United States.

Another thing where we were pretty strong also with independent thinkers – students and journalists – was— We ran a business, back in the days, when we would have NBC news on tape, and we would show it. So, two times a week, in our little theater, we would have the American news. It was always packed. We had a tiny cultural center. We had only, maybe, 2,000 volumes in our library, and then we had the bi-weekly showings of the news. The library was always full. The showings were always full.

*Q: This was not co-located, right? This was in the days when they had separate cultural centers not based in the embassy?*

WALSH: This was based in the consulate. This was a 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> century building, so one side of it was the consular section. We lived in an apartment up there on the third floor for about a year or two. Then, the other side was the library. We had a gallery. We had art openings there. There, we could do openings both of American artists—We could do American artists who were students and so on there, and we could have cocktails there. We did great stuff there. But it was in two buildings that were faced on the square.

*Q: Wait, so you had the consulate and the cultural center in the same building?*

WALSH: No, different buildings in the same plot.

*Q: Ah, got it. So, your residence was actually in the cultural center building?*

WALSH: In one of the buildings, yep.

*Q: Fantastic. The perfect commute, I guess. Well, that's great that the place was packed. Was it packed with the same people, did you notice, or were there new people coming and going? Was this really getting a significant demographic of the city? Was it already converted—*

WALSH: Already converted, in a sense. I'm sure there was a placement or two there, every now and then.

*Q: Yeah. I've always thought that Poland, generally, was very favorable to American culture. Many Poles have relatives in Chicago and Cleveland and what have you, so they were inclined to be receptive and friendly culturally and by family connections, right?*

WALSH: By family connections, historic connections— Obviously, \_\_\_ and— Who's the guy who got killed down in Georgia, in Savannah? It'll come to me. There were historic connections. Now, class-wise, once again, there was that division between the workers and the intelligentsia. Class-wise, your Polish community in the United States are peasants from the mountains. Mountains throw off emigres, because you can't really see them. So, we got that late 19<sup>th</sup> century, early 20<sup>th</sup> century immigration to the United States, and they were mostly people of the land. The aristocracy, who were the \_\_\_, if you wish, did not have a real warm relationship with them until later.

One of the great times we had there, once, was with a fellow by the name of Piszek. Edward Piszek. He was a multimillionaire and the founder, entrepreneur, and owner of Mrs. Paul's Frozen Foods. So, we had a dinner for him at the consul general's residence. He contributed to all sorts of charities in Poland. He was very tight on his Polish roots. So, we're having the dinner there, and Piszek looked at one of the fellows who was invited, Mr. \_\_\_, a leading Catholic intellectual, a hero from the Sikorski side, from the Free Polish National Army, the \_\_\_, in World War II. He had been allowed— Well, he'd not been allowed, but he lived in the home of Count \_\_\_.

Many of the nobility or others were allowed, after World War II— It was not quite as bad as in Russia. They didn't kill all the nobles. So, he was allowed— They needed bodies. The floor space was measured by how many people were there. So, Count \_\_\_ had a number of friends that he invited to live with him, not knowing they'd wind up living with him for the next 35 years. Mr. \_\_\_ lived in Count \_\_\_'s house, and he was a very distinguished guy, and he looked the part. He had a hawk nose and white hair that flowed back. Every hair was in place and he stood straight. He must have been well over my age. I'm 70 now. He stood up straight all the time.

At the dinner, Piszek, who is your sort of jovial, red-faced, happy Pole, looked over at him and said, "Man, this guy should be advertising \_\_\_ shirts." Mr. \_\_\_ did not take that as a compliment.

*Q: Oh, that's funny. It was meant, probably, in good humor.*

WALSH: Oh, very. Mr. \_\_\_ entreated him not to be the person to make pleasantries about his appearance. It was just sort of like, "Oh, yes," and then we changed that subject really fast.

*Q: It became weather and sports from then on.*

WALSH: Yeah. It was the sort of thing that we would have. If we had someone like Piszek there— I remember that there was a Polish American actress who was very tied to her homeland. She played the nurse in— What was that Korean war TV show? It was a

movie and then it became a TV show. Whatever. We'd have visitors, like Michael Novak, once again. We'd take him around and let him sit around and chat with the bishops or the priests or the activists. That was wonderful.

*Q: Let's talk a moment about the language. It sounds as if you had incredible access to people because you did have fluent Polish. The dinners and the conversations must have been very different and more meaningful when they took place in Polish. Any comments about that?*

WALSH: I think – and this sort of puts me— I feel that if you don't speak the language, you don't get any idea of what's going on around you. Since we were so hyper-sensitive to the political atmosphere, I used to be able to say that any 13 year old boy in Poland knew more about the political nuances than we did. That was the table talk. Thank goodness for President Trump. He's returned politics to the table talk of America.

My Polish was good. 3/3+. You had to know Polish. , once again— He's Polish American. As a matter of fact, that was another one of the Pope's points before he was pope. Once, he introduced me to a group of American clergymen – Cardinal Kroll and maybe someone else with him at the time. I came up behind them, the two American cardinals, and what were they talking about? They were talking about the Irish and the Italians and how we couldn't have another Irish cardinal. It was great. But he introduced me as the only Irishman he knew who spoke Polish.

*Q: Now, there's the title of this whole interview. "The Only Irishman He Knew Who Spoke Polish." That's a good one. That gets three lines on the margin.*

WALSH: But yeah, I felt very much engaged there.

*Q: This was your heyday, Neal. I know you had been there, but I didn't know all these stories. This must have been one of the great periods of your life.*

WALSH: It was, absolutely. The only thing there is like— I told you in the other story about the Pope when he was a cardinal, raising his glass to me and saying how Irish and Poles shared the oppression, religion, and the cross. Was he telling me to knock it off? If you went to a meeting there in the morning, at nine or 10 o'clock in the morning, it would be set up. Vodka, brandy, coffee, tea, water? If you had two or three meetings in a day, you had a nice buzz on by two or three in the afternoon.

I had one of my first meetings over in Katowice. I think it was with a national magazine. As I went there to pay my first courtesy call to the editorial board, my driver, \_\_\_\_\_, who was a fabulous guy, said, "Hey, watch out, Mr. Walsh. The first time I dropped Peter off" – my predecessor – "he didn't get out of there until four in the afternoon." I got to know these guys. Bob \_\_\_\_\_ used to call them \_\_\_\_\_, because the editor in chief was Schmidt \_\_\_\_\_, which means Smith. is also smith in Polish; it's a blacksmith.

When I used to go over there, one of my later times there, I saw that he was not having coffee. I said, “Oh, you’re not having coffee today.”

He said, “Yes, my doctor tells me that my liver is having trouble, so no coffee.” There you are, nine or 9:30 in the morning having vodka or brandy, and your liver is starting to go. “My \_\_\_ is starting to go,” as he said. Ease up the coffee, obviously. It was a fascinating, wonderful time.

*Q: Well, that’s great. So, are we getting onward in that second eight or nine admin stay?*

WALSH: Yeah. In the time that I had been away, the economy kept on going down. It was just going around. I would have to go to three or four stores to get stuff, like frozen vegetables and stuff like that. The political tensions had also ratcheted up. So, I think I left there— It must have been in January of ’81. Then, we came back to the States for a month or so, and we were off to Botswana to be PAO in Botswana.

*Q: Ah. Let’s take a little break.*

*Q: Here we go. It’s Dan Whitman. It’s April 16<sup>th</sup>, and this is section one of this coming series. Neal Walsh is on the line, and we’re going into hypnosis, going back in a dream state to 1981. How did you snag Botswana? That’s a very nice post, actually.*

WALSH: It was very good. We must have left— Let’s see. It was probably late 1980 or early ’81. I’m not sure. That’s when we left Poland, because my successor finally arrived. I was sort of disappointed in that—

*Q: Bummer, I know.*

WALSH: But then we went off and it was pretty quick. As a matter of fact— This isn’t for any sort of record or anything— Who was it? Goddamn. He wound up being ambassador to Sri Lanka.

*Q: Not a PD (Public Diplomacy) person?*

WALSH: He was a PD person.

*Q: I’m thinking of \_\_\_, but \_\_\_ was after.*

WALSH: No, \_\_\_ was PAO (Public Affairs Officer) in Warsaw at that time. He had succeeded \_\_\_. He was a good PAO in many ways. No, he had succeeded Jim Bradshaw. That’s right. So, he was PAO while I was down in Krakow, and that worked out pretty well. Then, I can’t really remember that gap or whatever that time was. There was a question about where I was going to go. There was discussion of me going to the Caribbean. However, this other guy – I can’t remember his name – his baby— They had a child who was about a year, a year and a half old. That child had a sort of fit or something of that sort. So, with that condition with a child, you couldn’t go more than 24 hours

away from the United States. So, it was Botswana and Bermuda or the Bahamas or something like that. Two B places.

I wound up in Botswana. I think we probably got there in January of '80. I'm not too sure. It was the dry season, and it was pretty nice, I have to say. Botswana was a fascinating place to be in. It had one university. Coming from Krakow—

*Q: A smaller pond to be a big fish in.*

WALSH: Right. There were seven universities in the consular district in Krakow. There were weekly, monthly magazines. Then you get to Botswana, where you have one weekly newspaper, one university, 16 secondary schools—

*Q: In the whole country?*

WALSH: In the whole country. Most secondary schools, though— All of them followed the British curriculum. So, for their American literature courses, all of them had *To Kill A Mockingbird* as the standard work in their curriculum for their junior year. So, that was great. I went to all 16 schools and showed *To Kill A Mockingbird* and talked about it and its place in American culture, as well as what the film could mean.

*Q: The film was from what? The '50s? The '60s?*

WALSH: I would say the '60s.

*Q: Just in time to be a classic by the time you—*

WALSH: Yeah. It was just great. Then, the town – Gaborone – was a great place to work, because if you really had any business to catch up on, you could catch any of the ministers of government at the Gaborone Club on Friday afternoon, where they were all having a beer before going off to their posts and their farms. They'd go out and spend the weekend out there. Sometimes, if you were really desperate to see somebody, you'd see them on Sunday morning when you picked up the Sunday papers from South Africa at the local pharmacy. I remember that one time I was there, and there was Archie Mogwe, the foreign minister, in line with the rest of us, waiting for the papers to come in.

*Q: Wow. So, in terms of Botswana, there was just one weekly? That was it?*

WALSH: Yeah. *The Gaborone Times*.

*Q: Wow. That's a pretty small landscape. I gather that things were pretty friendly between the media and the educational places and the U.S. embassy. I'm guessing it was quite cordial.*

WALSH: It was cordial. These were the last days of the Carter administration. You have to say that this was brilliant. I think there are two things you think of when looking back on the '70s. One was the Helsinki Agreement.

*Q: The Final Act, yeah.*

WALSH: The Final Act. Then, the election of Carter and Carter's emphasis on human rights in our foreign policy. I think that particularly the Eastern bloc – or the Russians, if you wish – felt like signing the Final Act, the Helsinki Agreement— “We'll sign this just like we signed everything else.” Here these guys guarantee the current borders and the current status quo. “All they want us to do is say human rights are a big deal!”

*Q: They didn't know that we and Carter were serious.*

WALSH: Yeah. Then, along comes this president and these Europeans, as well , who say, “Come on.” Thatcher comes along, too. All these guys start saying, “Hey, you can't do this or that.” That was quite a time. Now, the feelings were positive, because they had gone through three years of the Carter administration, and the Carter administration had been tough on South Africa – certainly tougher than Nixon-Ford – and had had good relationships with\_\_\_, but not really good relationships with the ANC (African National Congress). But they were still there.

So, there was a positive feeling that sort of reflected on us, but also a great deal of skepticism. They assumed, of course, that we were a White country, so we were in South Africa's corner. I'll mention that as we go on to the next administration. But then, additionally, as we went into January and February of 1980, we had the Russians invading Afghanistan.

*Q: Yes, '79, '80, that's right.*

WALSH: So, there we would be trying to talk Botswana into joining a boycott of the Moscow Olympics. They had a very hard time saying, “We don't have a dog in this fight, and we want to go to the Olympics.” They were very stand-offish. You've worked in Africa, right? You had four people getting paid to be the commissioner of athletics or the track and field manager or something like this. Then you have athletes, you know?

*Q: The bureaucracy of sports, yeah.*

WALSH: There was some country – it could have been Cameroon – that had more officials— I think they had 20 officials at the Olympics and no athletes. But Botswana had great runners, great track and field, really good athletes. The great Mal Whitfield would come there three or four times a year, which was great. We had a delightful relationship with the military because of the sports programs. It was the only military sports group in Africa with a tennis team. We were asking General Merafhe, who later, I think, became foreign minister— I don't know if Merafhe became president or vice president, but I said, “What's the deal here?”

He said, “Between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, you’ve just got to keep these boys busy.” So, in sports, we had a great relationship, but convincing them not to go to Moscow took a long time. It was January or February, and this was one of those things where everybody would be saying, “Hey, why did you pull my \_\_\_\_\_?” But they agreed not to go.

*Q: Oh, they did?*

WALSH: Oh, yeah, we had a lot of pressure from Washington to get them to sign up.

*Q: Isn't that more an ambassador or political person's job than a PD person's job? How did you fit into that?*

WALSH: It wasn't really a big embassy. Therefore, once again, when the political officer or the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) would deliver the note to the Foreign Ministry, everybody would ask me, “Why are we doing this?”

*Q: Okay, so this was a team effort.*

WALSH: I would say, “You guys got to think about this.” Afghanistan was this small, defenseless country next to the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union just reached out and grabbed it. “You’ve got a neighbor who would be more than happy to grab you! Stand up and be heard!”

*Q: Well done.*

WALSH: I was unsuccessful in that effort, but still. Going out to the university and talking to classes and other groups, having speakers come in, was always a great adventure because the students were very leftist and always very suspicious of the Americans.

*Q: Sure, like any African student, I think.*

WALSH: Exactly. We were not exactly the White Hats to them at all. So, that was good, talking to them. “What you’re saying, Mr. Walsh, is a bunch of falsehoods, and blood will run in the streets.”

Then you’d have to say, “Well, many people agree with you, but—” It was a great training ground. Of course, they were college students, so they were much more verbose, for one thing. It was a much better give and take than, say, with the secondary school students, about *To Kill A Mockingbird*. It was a wonderful “show the flag” effort to go to all 16 schools every year, but the fact was that those kids wanted to know the answers to upcoming tests, not the cultural role that this film played.

*Q: A couple of questions on this. Do you know how many African countries boycotted the Moscow Olympics? Any idea?*

WALSH: No idea.

*Q: Do you think Botswana was one of the few or one of the many?*

WALSH: I think we had more who went than who didn't. There was a great— Actually, Mal Whitfield and Muhammad Ali went around Africa on a special trip. My goodness, I forget who the deputy assistant secretary that went with them was, but yeah, it was a rather interesting trip. The big question came down. Someone in Tanzania explained to Muhammad Ali why they opposed American policy and so on and so forth like this, and he said, "Really? How? You mean we're not— What's going on here?" That was the end of the tour.

*Q: Wait, so Mal Whitfield was Sports America, is that right?*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: Please, let's delve into that, because that was a robust program later extinguished, I think by the USIA (United States Information Agency) director. Explain the importance and the scope of Sports America.*

WALSH: Well, for me, it was tremendous. Let's see. I saw the value of sports and youth programming when I was in Warsaw. We had a situation there where the American junior track and field team was participating in an international juniors track and field program in Warsaw. This was sometime in the early '70s. I think the athletes called the embassy to say, "Man, we're in this dorm here, and it is horrible." Once again, just like Africa, the managers, coaches, and officials in the American Olympic\_\_ Athletics program are staying in nice hotels. The athletes are staying in Polish college dorms, and they're calling to say, "Hey, man, this is horrible. The food is horrible. Everything is horrible."

So, I went out and talked to them and talked to their officials and stuff, and we arranged to have a big reception at the embassy. I got to meet Polish officials from the Polish Athletics League who turned out to be\_\_guys and military guys. They had the same problem as General Merafhe – they had to keep these kids busy, you know? I built up a relationship with them. It opened doors for me in Poland, both in Krakow and Warsaw, and actually also in Lubumbashi, Zaire, where I was a member of a local city volleyball team.

*Q: Okay. So, you had a background of utilizing this as leverage. It was fun and effective.*

WALSH: It was fun, effective, and opened doors that were closed to us otherwise. The same was true in Botswana. To a great extent, the military doors would have been closed to us completely if it were not for sports. Later on, General Merafhe was chairman of the National Olympic Committee and so on and so forth like that. Mal, who I had heard of but never met before, turned out to be a fabulous ambassador.

*Q: I always heard that. I never met him, but I heard it.*

WALSH: He was just fabulous. His daughter is a CNN (Cable News Network) anchor.

*Q: Oh, I think I know her.*

WALSH: I met her— She called me up and wanted me to deliver a eulogy at his funeral, and I did it. I loved it. Let's see. Where was I? We're back in Botswana. So, Mal would come and work on the teams. He would do one or two week seminars and training sessions for their runners. Then, he would get other guys to come in and do boxing and short distance running. So, this was fabulous. All sorts of stuff came out of that. I enjoyed that quite a bit. So, yeah, once again, what is our— We had to understand our desires. Who do we want to be talking to, and how do you maintain good relations when we are, at the same time, not necessarily following our national interest, if you wish, in terms of our relationship with South Africa?

Now, the government, the ANC, and \_\_\_\_\_ loved the Carter administration. Carter spoke a good game and did as much as he could. In terms of relationships, they looked at us with a very positive relationship. Later on, General Merafhe's son went to West Point, as a matter of fact. One time, I got a phone call, and my secretary came in and said, "The president's on the phone."

I said, "You tell them that we've paid that bill." We'd had a musical group and filmed the whole town, actually. We did it on the town square. The President Hotel was a big deal with us. I said, "We paid that bill."

She said, "No, it's President Merafhe. He wanted to talk to you." So, I picked up the phone and talked to him, and he was looking for a good secondary school for his son in the United States. So, I was able to meet the son, go over and talk to the president about it, push him in a certain way, get some direction. So, it went like that. That was how that place worked.

*Q: Fantastic. Let's dwell on that. Did you have an academic advisor? I guess not. You were everything, right, as the PAO?*

WALSH: I was everything. South Africa had one and I relied on that person to give me a hand.

*Q: Do you remember how you went about this? Did you just recommend a school and then they took that recommendation?*

WALSH: Yeah. I cannot remember how that all went, but I know that I got the educational advisor out of South Africa to come up and talk. Then, how it all worked out— I know the son went to the United States. Did he go to St. Paul's? Did he go to Wesleyan? I don't know.

*Q: Was it a private school?*

WALSH: Yes.

*Q: There was no problem getting a visa for this, I guess?*

WALSH: Well, in those days, visas were totally different than they are today.

*Q: It was kind of pro forma, wasn't it?*

WALSH: Yeah. I could go over to the embassy with a passport and find a visa.

*Q: That's a little bit different. This was pre-9/11, shall we say.*

WALSH: I had to make sure that the ambassador got looped into the discussions with the president, obviously. The ambassador, Howard Dawson, was a USIA guy. He was very meticulous about many things. So, I made sure that he knew I was talking to the president.

*Q: Wow. The president called you.*

WALSH: That was very cool. Again, like I said, you see the ministers at church, you see the ministers at the Gaborone Club, you see people walking down the street, you see the politicians.

*Q: Small town, yes.*

WALSH: Small town. You could get the professors at the university, the rector of the university. was a Zimbabwean, a Rhodesian. Many of the permanent secretaries and senior civil servants were Rhodesians, waiting for the war next door to go away. For the first year that I was there, they were doing the talks in London.

*Q: Yeah. Okay. Since you brought it up, the neighborhood— You had \_\_\_\_\_. You had Namibia in turmoil. You had Rhodesia in turmoil. Of the frontline states, Botswana was one of them. What was the calculus? Were the frontline states coordinating? Were they unified in opposing the apartheid regime? What do you remember of all of that?*

WALSH: Well, I think one of the things that was good— In Botswana – and this is true for both Seretse Khama and then for Quett Masire, who followed him---- were the two presidents who were active when I was there. One of the things you could always say is that they could look themselves in the eyes and say they were honest in their relationship with South Africa. They would— Mogwe, the foreign minister, would also say, “Look at this. We have to import matches, for goodness’ sake, from South Africa. We cannot live without South Africa. Therefore, we absolutely condemn the racial structure of that country, but us saying that we will cause blood to run in those particular streets is crazy.”

They were no more economically dependent on South Africa than Zambia, than Tanzania – another frontline state. In a way, that's sort of the hypocrisy of the other frontline states. In Botswana, they were honest about their relationship. "We don't like them. We don't like this. We don't trust them. But we have to live with them." So, yeah, they were very interested in how our policies worked and how we worked on them. They pressured us as much as they could for sanctions against South Africa, but they didn't want sanctions to go too deep because that would affect them.

*Q: Right. Actually, almost all African countries were importing canned foods and produce and everything else. In fact, I remember seeing cans saying, "Imported." They didn't say imported from where; everybody knew, so it wasn't printed.*

WALSH: Exactly. They were open about their relationship, given that they had about a 600 or 700 mile border with South Africa. This is what they could do. By the same token, they had a much more professional army in terms of discipline and ability than any of their neighbors. They did not allow, say, the Rhodesian Liberation – either of the contending groups in Zimbabwe or Rhodesia – to use Botswana as a launching place. Zambia did. had his people up there in Zambia. But the Botswanans did not, and they enforced their border as strongly as a tiny country like theirs could. Their army was well-disciplined and everything. I think it was about 1,200 people, maybe; it wasn't exactly very big. But they knew they could not afford to invite a Rhodesian attack. The Rhodesians had attacked Zambia several times and wiped out some of the \_\_\_'s place.

But yeah. It was a country that had pride and no corruption. They had worked out agreements with South Africa, particularly in diamonds, diamond-marketing, and so on like that. Their profits from the diamond mines, at that time – and I think it's still true today – went into a national trust fund. It didn't go into De Beers, and it didn't go into the pockets of the political parties. So, in a way, that was a really good place to work.

*Q: I think it stands out as unique in all of southern Africa in that regard. Why and how did that happen? Was it because they had fewer population pressures? They were relatively wealthy because of the diamonds, so maybe the officials didn't feel they had to be corrupt. Why was there less corruption?*

WALSH: There are any number of culture and political regions for the stability and the lack of corruption in Botswana, particularly at that time. I've heard that it's gotten a little bit corrupt, but again, compared to their neighbors— First off, the Tswana are the majority tribe. The other ethnic groups were the Bushmen, on the San People on the other side. They're pretty much over to the west, by South Africa. Then, the western \_\_\_ of the Zimbabwe Rhodesians.

They were a delightful bunch, too. Both of those ethnic groups are prominent in Botswana, but they are very small and had no political or territorial demands on the country. The total population of Botswana when I was there was about 900,000. So, you had a tremendous territory with the people spread out all over the place. There were three— Francistown, Gaborone, and another place in the southern area where the

supreme court was. I'll remember. It was where Baden-Powell was under siege during the Boer War. It wasn't Pretoria..

That southern town is \_\_\_s. His grouping of Botswana was one of the most influential groupings, but as a clan rather than a tribe itself. Then there was Seretse Khama, who was one of the great leaders, the great Khama. He was educated in England, and he had drunk the Kool-Aid of decency; "You do this and this, and your government is run nicely, and everyone will be happy." That is what your job as a leader is. It's to do what is good for the community. He followed that right through and kept an eye on it.

As a matter of fact, I think this was before Masire was president, but maybe it was after. Maybe it was when Khama was president. One of Khama's cousins, the president's cousin, had to do 30 days in the slammer for taking the engine out of a new government pickup vehicle and putting it into his pickup truck, and then taking the old battery out of his pickup and putting it in the government vehicle. It's an idea of the scale of what was going on, but also, nobody got away with that stuff there. It is a small country. Everybody does look over everybody's shoulders. As a matter of fact, my secretary, \_\_\_\_\_ Hirschfeld, was married to a Hirschfeld, obviously, as her name was Hirschfeld. Her husband's father was really minister of the interior, more or less, and head of the national police. Her husband, at one time, was in the national police and later on became the chief of the Internal Accounting Department – the corruption police. I remember saying to him, "This is quite a great job."

He said, "No, this is not a job that makes me any friends." So, I didn't really have too many other interactions, aside from Zaire, with the police and the interiors, but I can't imagine an African senior internal affairs policeman being as open about things as he was.

*Q: So, you said it was Masire or Khama who went to England for education. Do you think English education had an influence on governance, directly or indirectly?*

WALSH: Yeah. He went, and the big scandal in England and in Botswana, to a certain extent, before independence, was that Khama had married an Englishwoman. Did it have an influence? Yes. Botswanans, in the end, to my mind are the Scotsmen of Africa. They're tight with their money, and they do what they can to keep things quiet, you know?

*Q: That's a good analogy.*

WALSH: There was always Kingsley J.N Mamabolo. I've been wondering about this name, and I was going to tell you about this. Kingsley Mamabolo was a friend of mine in the civil service. He was permanent secretary of the Ministry of Lands. He had been district commissioner up in Chobe at the time. This is in the very north, and it's one of the largest national parks in Botswana. There was a really high-end hotel that had been built inside that park. That is where Richard Burton and Liz Taylor had gotten married. I got to know him when he was Permanent Secretary, and I was there.

Later on, when I went back to Washington and was working in the African area of USIA, I called him up and he was ambassador. So, I went up to the Botswanan embassy, chatted him up about this and that, and he said, “Oh, let’s go to lunch.” We went off to a nice Chinese restaurant and had lunch.

As the check came, I said, “Here, let me take care of this,” fully expecting him, of course, to be quite proud of being the ambassador and thus to catch the bill.

He said, “Oh, thank you, Neal.” We rode in his chauffeured limousine to dinner. We have a great lunch, he has a good time, and when the bill comes, I make a pro forma, “Oh, let me catch this for you—”

*Q: And surprise, surprise, he let you. So, that’s the Botswana background, I guess.*

WALSH: Yeah, it was very much like, “Hey, this is great.” They were just very good. Also, there, we had a great relationship with the British Council. We worked really well with them. Tom \_\_\_\_, the rector of the university, as I said, was a Rhodesian. He was a great guy and a great friend of Mr. . So, yeah, my first year there was 1980. The only major thing on my agenda at that time, aside from interviews for Fulbright scholarships. We had about four or five. We had a professor at the university in the history department. Let’s see. What else did we have?

Then, of course, I would go up to Dukwe, a refugee camp up by Francistown in the north, where there were several hundred refugees from South Africa. This was the year after the big riot. This was great, because I got to know them. All of these young people up there— Wow. First, they really didn’t have a warm spot in their hearts for the United States of America. They were very interested in America and they would want to go to America, but they didn’t think America was doing them any good.

Then, of course, they’re put out there in Dukwe, out in the middle of nowhere, because the government of Botswana sure as hell didn’t want them— Gaborone was a state of maybe 50,000. I used to think of Botswana as the population of Syracuse spread over a country the size of Texas. So, they didn’t want a concentration of these people. Are you kidding me? So, they had them up in Dukwe. As refugee camps in Africa went, it was very good. It was very well-organized, there was food, everything was done. There were classes and so on like that. So, I would interview some people up there for scholarships to go to the States.

*Q: So, they could be candidates. Did they have passports, these people?*

WALSH: No. They kept international travel papers from the UN (United Nations).

*Q: So, they could travel— They could, at least if they were chosen, be Fulbrighters without owning a passport?*

WALSH: No, not Fulbrighters. There were church and other volunteer groups.

*Q: We'll call it exchange programs. Okay.*

*You said the first year as if the second year was maybe different. The first year, you're saying, was pretty standard? You were interviewing candidates for exchanges, you got a call from the president of the country, there was one weekly newspaper. It sounds like, in terms of public diplomacy, it was fun, meaningful, and not crazy busy.*

WALSH: Yep. Again, the ambassador was a USIA guy, so he would want our newsletters and materials, and he would want to be featured in the local paper. I felt a little hesitant about that. I felt that maybe we should have an ambassadorial interview on the local radio once or twice a month max.

*Q: Ah. He overdid it?*

WALSH: Yeah. That was one of the things there. I did not want us to get too involved, or to have our profile go too high.

*Q: Or too often. The more often, the more diluted, I guess.*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: Okay. Well, was there a little bit of friction over there, or did Dawson back down to your suggestions?*

WALSH: I think the two of us worked out a modus operandi.

*Q: Good. So, that was your first year, which makes it sound like the second year was something different?*

WALSH: Well, the second and first year were sort of interrupted inasmuch as I, if you remember, was waiting for an assignment on home leave and did not get home leave after Krakow. So, towards the end of 1980 or '81—

*Q: I don't know. When you edit, we'll figure out which year it was.*

WALSH: Okay. Kath and I went home on home leave, probably in about November, and while we're home, guess what happens?

*Q: Election?*

WALSH: Nope. Martial law in Poland is declared. So, between December '81 and sometime in January, I went to Washington for work on what was called the Polish Working Group.

*Q: That was more than a quick visit. Was it an assignment?*

WALSH: No, but I was home. I went down to Washington probably mid-December, came back for Christmas, and went back again. I was just working at the State Department, following the cables and so on and so forth.

*Q: But you had not curtailed from Gaborone, right?*

WALSH: Oh, no, not at all.

*Q: So, this was kind of a prolonged homestay?*

WALSH: Yeah. I went back in late January of '82.

*Q: So, you were in this Polish working group for a whole year?*

WALSH: No, '81. It was a month or so, doing that.

*Q: So, you had a longer home leave than average, but you did go back to Gaborone. Anything to report about being in the standup group? What did you call them? The ad hoc group on Poland.*

WALSH: No, I just finished there and went back to Botswana. But it was cause for one of the great moments in my career. I forget what it was. The Polish ambassador to the United States defected during this period. To underline how seriously we took it, President Reagan invited him to dinner at the White House. So, at that time that I was there, Mr. Shirley was one of the rotating directors of the Polish working group. Mr. Shirley, I think, was director of European Affairs for USIA. He was also very active in the Polish working group and working on Polish policy.

So, one evening, shortly before the ambassador who was invited had dinner. Mr. Shirley swings by the working group, and everybody's sitting at their various stations? This was the olden days. You didn't have a computer and stuff like that. But Mr. Shirley says to Bob, "How's it going, Bob?"

And Bob says, "I'll tell you, Mr. Shirley. This really pisses me off. Here we are totaling up how many of our friends and clients have been thrown in jail, and the president of the United States invites this guy – who did nothing but say no to us when he worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – to dinner!" I think he referred to him as a "stupid sonofabitch" or something like that.

And Mr. Shirley says, "Well, Bob, I really wouldn't refer to him as a stupid sonofabitch. I would say, certainly, that he is a man of tortured conscience."

Mr. Shirley, in that inimitable way of his, looking for close contact, put his arm on Bob's shoulder and looked him in the eye and said, "Which one of us isn't a person of troubled conscience?"

Bob didn't say anything to me at that time, I just saw this and thought, how about that? Later, Bob told me that he had been called in. I don't know who called him in, whether it was \_\_\_\_\_ or Archie Davies, one of the other directors. He was a deputy assistant secretary of State at that time. They told him, "Bob, you really shouldn't characterize people like that in front of the junior officers, you know." He was so admonished.

So, I went back to Botswana in January of '82. I finished up there later in '82. It must have been fall or early winter of '82. I went back to Washington to be a desk officer in USIA for Africa. Now, let's see. What happened in that year that I was in Botswana? One, the Botswanans went to Moscow for the Olympics.

*Q: Woah, I thought they decided to boycott?*

WALSH: No, they didn't. I told you I lost that.

*Q: Okay. That's an accomplishment.*

WALSH: No, I didn't work that out. What else happened? There, because of the agreement in Zimbabwe, as it was now called, Joshua Nkomo had a whole range of Russian equipment that he was wanting to sell. Cadillac \_\_\_ wanted to sell Botswana their armored cars. In the end, they took the Cadillac \_\_\_ stuff, which was good. Our sports relationship worked out well, at that time.

*Q: Is Nkomo using Botswana as an R&R (rest and recuperation) stop? What's the connection?*

WALSH: I mean, the connection is that he was called the president, you might say, with Mugabe in Rhodesia, in Zimbabwe. He's got excess equipment, and I think it was the Russians who were selling this stuff.

*Q: So, was it your embassy that helped Cadillac get that deal?*

WALSH: Oh, yeah.

*Q: Ah, okay. So, we did not have an embassy in Harari, at that time?*

WALSH: We did have an embassy in Harari, but the equipment was in Zambia.

*Q: Oh, right. Nkomo. Zambia. Got it.*

WALSH: Well, first off, John Burns went there with USIA. The ambassador had been an observer for that last year or two in Harari, and then he became ambassador. The name

will come to me. He was really a fine guy, and that was great. Also, we in Botswana could go there on vacations, which was great.

*Q: So, there were nasty times in Rhodesia, but when the transition was made, I take it that it then became a very pleasant place to be?*

WALSH: Absolutely.

*Q: Okay. Great. Next door— As you say, it's like crossing Texas. It's not exactly a couple hours down the road; it is the next country over. I'm disappointed. I thought you were going to say that \_\_\_\_\_ came into the Polish working group and said, "We need an interpreter in the White House. Go now." I was hoping for a story like that, but you can't have everything.*

WALSH: No, it was nothing like that. \_\_\_\_\_ was in Washington, and he became the deputy director of African Affairs for USIA. Now, there was a director of African Affairs. That was Art Lewis.

*Q: Of course. The good and wonderful Art Lewis. Makes me sad. It was a great loss, to not have him around. So, you had established yourself already at this time. We kind of knew you as an Africa/Europe guy, because you kind of alternated. The pattern was already quite clear. I mean, you did not know that this would continue, but everything you had done so far had been Europe, Africa, Europe, Africa.*

WALSH: Yeah. Another thing that came up in Botswana was trying to explain the new policy of constructive engagement. In 1981, that was a key sort of thing. Now, once again, we were — The logic of constructive engagement— Who was the assistant secretary of \_\_\_\_\_?

*Q: Chet Crocker.*

WALSH: Crocker was not an evil guy. You would think, maybe this guy would have evil people being his assistant secretaries. This guy didn't even have assistant secretaries! That's the reason we had so much trouble! But the fact of the matter was that we shifted our policy. So, we would have engagement with the South Africans because they were getting very rambunctious with Angolans, going in and punching the local guys and then punching out the Cubans. The Cubans had arrived there in 1975, when I was back in Lubumbashi, for God's sake. So, you know, they were sort of picking up.

So, we had to explain constructive engagement to the Botswanans. Now, that was a little tricky at the old university. It was like, "Well, yes, many people agree with you but—"

*Q: Let me ask the question that a pre-junior officer would ask. I've heard this question so many times. Did you ever feel there was a distance between what you personally believed and what you were saying at that university? Was that a factor?*

WALSH: Yes and no. First off, Crocker- In my mind, we could do better. But what we were doing seemed sensible.

*Q: Okay. So, you weren't being dragged into a mind frame that was really— It didn't take you too far out of your comfort zone, I guess.*

WALSH: No. I did not feel that . But at the same time----Because it was very important?----you looked at constructive engagement, and there was the fact that, as Crocker would say, we had to solve Southwest Africa. We had to cut the problems in Angola and bring peace and rule to South Africans further.

*Q: And the shift, we should explain, was Carter out, Reagan in. That's what the shift was.*

WALSH: Right. Then, in terms of coming to grips with what was going on in Rhodesia— At that time, that was a time when our friend Mugabe was really being a little— It was a democratic government with an election and everything, and things happened to almost all of the people that opposed him. But the idea was to support him and bring stability there, and a lot of money came from us, the Europeans, and the Brits in Rhodesia. That was money that I saw 25 years that was well-spent. For all the corruption and all of the repression that Mugabe brought to Rhodesia or Zimbabwe, it is the most literate country in Africa. All of the aid groups focused on education in the first 15 years, and then on AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) with PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief).

So, yeah, when you think back to where we were in the early '80s, the discussions were with Botswana and \_\_\_ as to what they knew the policy was. That was a fascinating sort of process. We met with the \_\_\_ people. I remember one of the discussions there. They were like, "Hey, you guys can't do this. You can't trust the South Africans. Who are you talking to? What's going on?" They were just sort of pole axed, you might say. It just threw the ANC and \_\_\_\_\_ into really— They were comfortable with the Carter administration.

*Q: So, they were suddenly quite unhappy with American officials also, I guess.*

WALSH: Yes. By this time, Khama had passed away. Masire, the vice president, became the president and was later elected president. Botswana just took this as, "Well, that's life." They indicated their unhappiness with constructive engagement. They wished that we would speak more straightly. They saw this as a rapprochement between the United States and South Africa, which it was. They wished that it hadn't happened, but once again, they were very pragmatic.

*Q: Okay. So, it was challenging, but not— So, you earned your salary, shall we say.*

WALSH: I earned my salary, but it wasn't like people were spitting in the street when I walked in. Everything was still very cordial.

*Q: But challenging. That's what diplomacy is at its best, I think – cordial and different.*

WALSH: Yeah. People would say, “It’s unfortunate to see you taking this position. We are sad to see America turning its back on its principles,” and so on like that. I think the efforts of diplomats and others, and of \_\_\_\_, were there to keep it that way. You had people in Washington talking about South Africa being a strategic partner for the United States in terms of containing the Soviets.

In Mozambique where the Cubans and Soviets were active— As a matter of fact, in Mozambique, Samora Machel wanted to sign the Warsaw Agreement, but he was a man of great humor. He did a press conference in Gaborone, one time, and I attended it. One of the questions there was, “Hey, one of your jet pilots defected with his airplane to South Africa. What do you say to that?”

He said, “That’s the first Black jet pilot they’ve ever had.” He said, “I give my blessings to him.” So, there was this— He was able to say— No, the guys who want to— And they did succeed in turning the UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) guy— What’s his name? They turned him into a freedom fighter.

*Q: Which he probably was not. Right?*

WALSH: If you want, the right wing people were not understanding that if the Soviets gained such a foothold in southern Africa, in Mozambique, or if South Africa ever fell to the ANC and the Russians were able to use their bases, this would be very bad for us. In fact, my feeling at that time was that if that ever happened, we’d be looking at World War III. This is pumping these guys into things they are not, you know? Chet Crocker was able to at least keep that area down. South Africa was not a strategic partner for us. At that time, confronting the Soviets in South Africa was a diplomatic rather than military issue.

*Q: Yeah. I just looked it up. It was Jonas Savimbi who was the UNITA guy.*

WALSH: Savimbi. Exactly. Not necessarily a great democrat, you know?

*Q: Oh, far from it. It was really only the Cold War that— We would not have been friendly with him, I don't think, but for his opposing “Communism.” He was pretty much a monster, I think.*

WALSH: Yes. I think I told you about when I was in Zaire. One time, I was in Kinshasa, and a guy I ran into in Kinshasa and had drinks with was an East German who had been working across the river in Brazzaville. Both of us sort of agreed, “What the fuck are we doing here?” There was the other side of being in Botswana in 1981 or ’82. Everything was happening in Eastern Europe, and there I was in southern Africa, in Botswana. It’s a lovely place, a great place.

*Q: But I'm sure you felt you were missing the main action.*

WALSH: Yeah. But, then again, I was living much better than I would have been in Poland. You could go to the store and buy whatever you needed there. You had South African wine and all sorts of good things. You had cheese. All these things you could never get in Eastern Europe at that time. So, it was great. We had two children by that time. Our third, Francis, was born in South Africa. So, there were things there for family and so on. By this time, Kath and I were really pretty exhausted. I was, too. I had been working from 1975 in Lubumbashi, the branch post, and then in Krakow, and then in Botswana. That was really a branch post. It wasn't exactly a big embassy. So, it was time for me to get back to Washington and see what the big guys, what the adults, did. So, when Mr. came with an offer of being a desk officer with USIA for Africa, I said, "Sure, I'd love to."

*Q: \_\_\_\_\_ seems to keep popping up in this drama, almost like an Oscar Wilde play. He's popping up from behind couches. He seems to be always present. Before we get you back to D.C., you said a little ironically, "Branch post." In fact, how much did you depend on larger neighboring posts like Pretoria, Johannesburg, Harari, Lusaka? How independent were you really? You had your own budget, of course, but you were only one person.*

WALSH: Oh, well, let's see. We had a seminar in Lusaka for the BLS – Botswana, Swaziland, and Lesotho – PAOs. Michael \_\_\_\_\_ and Frank Wisner, the ambassador in Zambia, led us through how to be a PAO. That was great training. Nobody really told you what you were doing. You got a job and started doing what the other guys tell you to do. Finally, in 2000 and 1999, when I had the ability to do things, I got some training courses from other PAOs and stuff like that. That gap— Going to Washington— I wouldn't say this was the reason I went there, but one of the things that I had in mind was to learn what's going on. How does this all fit together?

*Q: Okay. So, you mean Lusaka was more of a grounded training area than Pretoria or Johannesburg at that time?*

WALSH: It goes two ways. Lusaka was a lot farther away than Pretoria. Pretoria was about four or five hours down the road. So, \_\_\_\_\_ was the PAO there at the time, and she was very— We would piggyback with them on speakers and visitors. So, we would really get a lot of help. We got more out of Pretoria than out of Lusaka. Lusaka was great. Then, of course, when you were frustrated and you felt that we were not going in the right direction, the right person to talk to, at that time, would be John Burns. I would say, "John, this is what's happening," and he would say, "I know that guy. I'll call him up."

*Q: John is amazing. So, there really was an informal cooperation among PD people in the whole SADC (South African Development Community) region. It wasn't SADC yet, I guess, but it was the frontline states and South Africa. Easy for you to go back and forth as a white person.*

WALSH: Absolutely.

*Q: Was it easy because you're white? Would it have been a different thing if you'd been Mel \_\_\_\_\_ or somebody?*

WALSH: Oh, no. One time, crossing from Botswana into Zambia, my friend PJ— It wasn't PJ O'Rourke. His name was PJ— He was an Irishman, right? He would go through customs and immigration at this sleepy little place. It was very sleepy. He would have no trouble at all, and they would chat with him. "Oh, you're a poor Irishman. Oh, the British were so bad to us," and so on. He'd go right through, and I'd be sitting in the baking sun for an hour or so as they chattered about me, just to let me know that—

*Q: There are those who we know and those who we don't know. Is that it?*

WALSH: Yes. "We like the Irish. The Americans? Not so much."

*Q: Well, I mean, \_\_\_\_\_ saw you as an Irishman. Why couldn't the border official do that?*

WALSH: No, because I had an American passport.

*Q: I see. Okay.*

WALSH: "Hey, this guy's got an American passport. Let's cook him for a little while out there."

*Q: But you took it because you're a guy who takes things as they come. Remember the toy we used to have that would always end up with the head up and the feet down?*

WALSH: Yep. Well, if I've eaten and I'm not grumpy. I was stopped at a border crossing, an army barrage, as they called it, in Zaire, once. I was hungry. I was tired and frustrated. These guys started zapping me. "Oh, you went by the barrage by 400 meters."

I said, "Hey, I don't see a barrage. I see a couple of garbage cans across the road."

They were giving me a hard time. One of my friends, a local, drove past. He was coming home from Zambia to Zaire. He passes me and says, "Hey, you want me to get you out of this?"

"No, you go on."

I remember Kathleen saying, "You know, you brought this on us."

*Q: Kathleen would be like the Greek chorus, reminding the protagonist that the protagonist made a wrong move.*

WALSH: Exactly. "This did not have to happen, you know." So, there it is. Let's break off for the day now.

*Q: Okay. We've got you back in D.C. as a desk officer. Just tell me, was it east, south, central and west? How was it?*

WALSH: It was central, at that time. It was Burundi, Rwanda, Zaire, Brazzaville, and who else? It was sort of central.

*Q: Cameroon, I think. Maybe Chad. Anyway, pretty much as it has remained in State. That's what I did, years later, sort of, except that I was doing other things as well. Okay, Neal. Let's just put a marker in here for the transcription. It's still April 16<sup>th</sup>. This is segment four of today's interview. This is a great cycle. We've got you back to the U.S.*

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*Q: Now, it's May 20<sup>th</sup>.*

WALSH: My God, the time goes fast.

*Q: It does. Too slow and too fast. It's Dan Whitman, interviewing Cornelius Walsh, and we're on our way. In our last discussion, Neal, we were talking about Lusaka. Was it Lusaka? Mike O'Brien and Frank Wisner. Let's back up on that. Who was this guy?*

WALSH: Well, Frank Wisner, at that time, was the ambassador to Lusaka. He was known in the Foreign Service as the son of one of the founders of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency).

*Q: Right. His name was also Frank Wisner, wasn't it ?*

WALSH: I think so. The area, at that time, organized a small seminar in Lusaka for the three PAOs of the BLS countries – Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland. They were very small and somewhat insignificant countries in the overall movement of diplomatic power, but as I said earlier, in terms of \_\_\_\_\_ power and \_\_\_\_\_, it was indeed a frontline state.

*Q: Right. The frontline states were officially Zambia, Swaziland, Lesotho. Namibia did not quite exist yet.*

WALSH: It was Angola, Zambia, Tanzania—

*Q: Oh, so these were countries that did not border on South Africa, but they were considered frontline in that they had a common policy of opposing apartheid. Is that right?*

WALSH: Indeed. Until mid-1980, they were also opposing Rhodesia.

*Q: Opposing the white Rhodesia, I guess. That's the whole other story – the breakaway of the breakaway, Rhodesia became a kind of pariah state in the eyes of the British empire. That was kind of a headache for the UK (United Kingdom), was it not? Now, the son of*

*the founder of the CIA. I have to ask you, who was this guy? What was it like to work with him? Did he evoke his father? Did he live on his father's reputation? Any connection there, or was he completely severed from his father and his father's career?*

WALSH: I don't think he could ever be— Given the prominence of his father, he could never be completely away from it, but Frank indeed carved out his own very influential future in diplomacy. At that point, he was at the midpoint of his career. He was the ambassador to Zambia at that transitional point where we were going from Carter to Reagan and there was the change from standing somewhat close to the frontline states to constructive engagement. So, he was very influential. He later moved on from being ambassador to Zambia to becoming assistant secretary of State for African Affairs.

*Q: So, what about him? What were his politics like? Did he advocate constructive engagement as he was told to do? By the way, he was career, not political, right?*

WALSH: Exactly.

*Q: But he had his own career, I guess, and he was not ambassador to Zambia only because of being the son of somebody.*

WALSH: Oh, not at all. Once again, as I mentioned last time, there was that wit. Chester Crocker was leading as assistant secretary by putting things in front, saying, "We cannot approach the Namibian independence period through the UN. We'd have to do it directly with South Africa, and that cannot be settled until we can settle with Angola and then again with Rhodesia." Frankly, from our point of view – since we, as a nation, were not feeling quite as oppressed as the others and we were not within arm's reach of the South Africans – this was a rational policy for us. Again, what was our direct relationship with South Africa? That was a whole other can of worms. But Frank was a very good ambassador to Zambia. He was excellent. Then, Mike, who was the successor to John Burns in Lusaka, was a perfect guy to run an office that would be used as a model for the three of us from smaller, less active posts.

*Q: So, Mike was PAO, and you were working with Mike? Was that how it was?*

WALSH: No. I was PAO in Botswana, and Mike had all of us – me and the two PAOs, one from Swaziland and one from Lesotho – meet up because we were all first time PAOs. So, it was a very good thing for us to have a four day seminar in Lusaka with Mike talking to us about the nuts and bolts and Frank Wisner talking to us about the politics of the approach to the policies.

*Q: So, a good learning experience. The four day conference – this was Mike's initiative. Can you remember some takeaways that you got from that meeting in terms of running a useless post?*

WALSH: Well, I had been in Zaire when John Burns was in Lusaka. John Burns gave Lubumbashi a lot of support and I visited him a couple of times. By observing John

working and having this seminar with Mike O'Brien and having watched Mike O'Brien in the past, it was a great seminar to see that particularly in these smaller towns, our job was very much in the aspect of personal relationships with journalists, academics, and government officials.

*Q: Lubumbashi is geographically closer to Lusaka than it is to Kinshasa, is that right?*

WALSH: Oh, yes. Not only that, but there's a road.

*Q: So, in a funny way, Kinshasa was very francophone and Lusaka was very anglophone, and there you were on the border between these two entities that had very different colonial backgrounds. What do you remember as contrast – cultural, political, what have you – between— You were in southern Zaire, bordering on Zambia. These were very different places – different cultures, different histories. How was Lubumbashi different from Kinshasa?*

WALSH: Well, in one place, there is the intellectual disparity between the two. Frankly, as much as the educational level of the Zairians and the Zambians— It was incredibly different. In terms of overall macro science speak, the Zambians were much more literate as a nation overall than the Zairians. There was no attempt whatsoever on the part of the Belgians to develop a successor generation of indigenous peoples in Zaire. Therefore, the people with whom I was dealing in the mid-'70s there— You're really looking at a training program for literacy in Zaire of only 15 years. Zaire came to independence in 1960 to 1962 with four or five college graduates, period. Zambia had access to the Commonwealth, to England, and so on like that. They had had up to the point of permanent secretaries, even during the colonial period, for its ministries indigenous Zambians.

*Q: Is it possible to generalize in francophone and anglophone Africa— Are there any similarities? When you think of Nigeria, Benin, Senegal, Ghana, do you see any patterns between former French and Belgian colonies and former British colonies? Maybe Belgian and French is very different. Do you see any way of generalizing these things? Maybe not. I don't know.*

WALSH: Well, yeah. In terms of infrastructure and intellectual development, the anglophone countries were of a whole further along and more developed than the francophone countries.

*Q: Take the opposite model. Relatively advanced Senegal and relatively backwards Nigeria – are these anomalies, or are we out of the area where you were working?*

WALSH: We're out of the area where I was working. Zaire was an incredibly impoverished landscape. You can attribute much of its poverty and lack of infrastructure to corruption in the post-colonial period, but the fact that the Belgians did not develop the slightest indigenous capability – be it healthcare, the universities, anything – was a tabula rasa.

*Q: Did you know Belgians in Lubumbashi?*

WALSH: Yes.

*Q: Impressions? Memories?*

WALSH: Once again, they were very nice people. These were people who represented, first off, the oil companies, the mining companies, and so on like. They weren't necessarily advisors to the government or anything like that. They were still participating, you might say, in the extraction industries. I would say that in the casual racism, they were further down the line than the British or the French. I remember one friend who came back from a hunting trip. He had a pickup truck with a covered shell back. He got back. They were just in from the bush. He opened it up and two or three guys came out of the back, Zairians. They're all cramped over, stiff and sore from riding in the back. I said, "Oh my God."

He goes, "No, they don't feel it." That really was *les gens* (people). I'd say the only people worse than that were the Portuguese. I remember talking to this woman in Mozambique once, in Maputo. I said, "This here in Maputo is really dead." It was a very dystopian situation. You'd have high rises empty. Nothing functioning and so on. I said, "This is so different from so many African cities where it's very lively with the markets and so on."

The woman said, "The people left."

I said, "The people left? Where did they go?"

She said, "Back to Portugal." The whole idea of who are *people*, who is a *person*—

*Q: So, those who remained were not people.*

WALSH: Exactly. They were the Mozambiquans. You know, you got that sense to a lesser extent in Zaire, in Mozambique, and in South Africa. It was so much more of a science fiction, in that these were colonizers from another planet. With the Brits, a lot of these British settlers in Kenya and Rhodesia were of the lower classes. They were engineers. They built roads and this and that. They built things and did things. The whole Brit approach was to gain infrastructure. That serves the empire, of course, but it was also not as unfair as the French, Belgian, or Portuguese systems.

*Q: Sounds a little bit like the Chinese today, who have no contact at all, culturally, and who are in fact engineers and laborers. It is kind of parallel, in a sad sort of repetitive way.*

WALSH: Well, with the Chinese— What we're going to see in the next couple years is that the Chinese have been making loans, and one of the great things that the Africans

love about the Chinese loans is that they don't ask any questions. They just let them have the money. How sweet. Well, the fact of the matter is that the Chinese also don't even have a concept of debt forgiveness. So, I think everybody's going to be a little surprised. There are going to be some bubbles in that relationship as time goes on.

*Q: Well, now with COVID (Coronavirus Disease) everything's up in the air, but it seemed, before this, that the Chinese government was beginning to understand that they had to pull up their socks. African people and African governments were beginning to see through this and to negotiate more skillfully these contracts. It seemed like they were kind of putting window dressing, at least, on some of these deals. Now we don't know, because countries in debt are going to be flatter on their backs than ever before. It's a whole new element. But anyhow, we're here mainly to talk about the past. So, Zambia. Onwards.*

WALSH: Zambia with Frank Wisner. He was a helpful fellow for everybody to know, and it was good to get to know him and see him. The seminar with Mike O'Brien for me certainly was helpful, in order to know how things were going.

*Q: Yeah. I meant to say Botswana and onwards. You went back to Gaborone, I guess. So, you're now looking for your next assignment, right?*

WALSH: Right.

*Q: Okay. So, this is our big transition. What were the choices and what resulted?*

WALSH: Well, the choices were actually all small PAO shifts. Barbados was one, Botswana was another, Burundi— All B's. Everything I had heard about Gaborone and Botswana sort of made me think, "Oh, goodness, this would be a great place to go." Of course, if I got Barbados, I would have loved it.

*Q: Maybe. We don't know for sure. Was this a direct transfer?*

WALSH: Yeah. Right from Krakow down to Botswana.

*Q: Okay. That's right. You were in Krakow because Bob \_\_\_ brought you back.*

WALSH: Well, \_\_\_ got me there for Krakow and so I did two years there. Two and a half years. It was late '75 or early '76 to '77, '78. Then, I went back in '78 for another six or seven months because of the incoming PAO. Then, in '79, early '80, I was off to Botswana.

*Q: Okay. Wait, so the Mike O'Brien conference, were you in Krakow, at that time?*

WALSH: No. That was in 1970. I was in Botswana.

*Q: Okay. So, now we're getting you from Krakow to Gaborone. Direct transfer. No need for training. Maybe you had home leave for something. So, now you're in Gaborone. How does that go?*

WALSH: —probably 1970. Excuse me, 1980. I had a great staff, a good program. I think, as I told you before, one of the points I was making with the ambassador there was that we could do anything. We could print, we could organize, we could run speaking programs, and so on, and we could do it better than the local government. So, you don't want to start publishing an embassy newsletter, I think, that outshines the local bi-weekly.

So, that was probably the only organizational thing that I had. We had a good newsletter. We had a small library. It had 1,500 volumes, as opposed to Krakow, which had 2,000 volumes. It was smaller. The library was something you see in a lot of posts. Not anymore. The world is much more professional. The librarian was a watchman who became a messenger who became a driver who became an assistant librarian and then was the librarian. You see that in so many places. That's over and done. Nowadays, we're—

*Q: High tech.*

WALSH: It is high tech.

*Q: We don't have libraries; now we have IRCs, Information Resource Centers, which are largely unlined and very sadly, these days, lie behind these enormous barriers. They tend to be inside embassies where access is very limited. So, compared to now, you had a very free flow of people coming and going.*

WALSH: And in those places where we still maintain open libraries, Namibia is one. There is another in Zimbabwe. Where we have them, they are still full. People come to use the Wi-Fi. They come to use the computers. They still borrow books. They come for the information and English teaching. It's the same thing. Where we have successfully maintained our English teaching or privatized it to the extent that we can, we can make a profit on this damn stuff. We are making a profit. The openness is just amazing.

*Q: As a Public Diplomacy post, it sounds pretty ideal. Now, Botswana was a frontline state that does border on South Africa. Did that alter the mood or the type of activities that you were doing? Was constructive engagement a much larger issue for you because you were in Botswana?*

WALSH: Well, it was something that you ran into often in the Cold War, and that was public perceptions and ideas. People were disappointed in America because they saw what they thought was the—

*Q: Cooperation?*

WALSH: No. They saw our policies as being insincere and incompatible with our rhetoric and with our stated role. The Africans, to a great extent, saw us to be supportive of apartheid. Indeed, until we joined up with the embargoes and so on like that – which took place, really, as time went on under Republican administrations – the fact remained that overall, there was— One-on-one conversations, or just going out to the university and talking to students, or having a class on economics and international investment and so on like this with a group of 20 or 30 students— But when we would have a large public session on overall foreign policy at the university, oh boy. “Mr. Walsh, this blood will run in the streets.”

All you can say to that is, “Many people agree with you. We know that. This is how we see this coming about.”

People said, “How can you support Mobutu?” That was a question that was deep in our hearts, too.

*Q: I've asked you this before, and we've all run into this in this business. You are called on to express the point of view that you yourself have some doubts about. Any comments? Were you at the margins, at the limits, of your own personal beliefs in doing these things, or did you see compatibility between your own personal belief and the things you were asked to convey?*

WALSH: Well, I was a very strong believer – particularly after so much time in eastern Europe – that what we were doing overall, in a global sense, to push back against Communist advances was not hypocritical and was not antithetical to our stated values. So, in that sense, I was a good advocate for constructive engagement. As I said, I saw the logical connections being made.

*Q: Do you think Crocker himself saw it that way? Did he see constructive engagement as the best option in the Cold War, or did he see it as a policy that in any context would have been correct?*

WALSH: I think he would have seen it in any context, because I think that having looked at and known Crocker's deep knowledge of past events from 1950 to 1980, these countries – and again, you look at our allyship with Mobutu – were very malleable. They were very easily shaped by any major power that was willing to provide the funds and weapons and to establish an authoritarian – if you wish – seat of any kind. So, working out basic agreements to live in peace with the Rhodesians and with the Angolans and, to a great extent, with the Mozambiquans— These were the true frontline states that were being railed by Communist subversion. I would say that indeed Crocker believed in this. I believed in it, too, to a certain extent.

*Q: Okay. Now, my understanding is that there wasn't a big groundswell in Botswana of militant communism. Was there?*

WALSH: No.

*Q: Why not? I guess there was in Lusaka, in Mozambique. The future Namibia was in turmoil. Rhodesia/Zimbabwe was in turmoil. Why was Botswana so calm? Was it having lots of space and not much population?*

WALSH: Well, for one thing, that is one aspect. Also, it was a uni-ethnic society. There were various clans among the Tswana, but they are all, to a great extent, Tswanans. So, there were Northerners, Easterns, Southerners, and so on, but they spoke the same language and they had the same cultural identity. Traditionally, within the Tswanans culture, things are done by consensus. That is true in a lot of African countries. But within the clans, they also had mechanisms with which to depose a leader or a leading family that they felt was acting counter to the interests of the clan. So, there's that sort of base there.

Additionally, the leading clan, which Seretse Khama and his family represented, was a very pragmatic group. As a matter of fact, they had invited the British government to take over the administration of Botswana to protect it from British commercial interests.

*Q: Wow. That's remarkable and very unusual.*

WALSH: Yeah. Khama went to them and pointed out that he and his people were in danger of being swallowed up by British entrepreneurs and colonialists. So, they felt fairly comfortable with their position, you might say. Additionally, they recognized the fact that they had to deal with the devil – meaning, apartheid in South Africa – in order to survive. They did not like the Afrikaners. They recognized the weakness and hypocrisy of the British South Africans, but at the same time, they realized that they had to live with this entity.

*Q: Yeah. Now, Botswana was fortunate – it had diamonds and not many people, and it had a relatively straightforward way of distributing the income from the diamond sales. I don't think there was massive corruption there. Was this just dumb luck, or was there a cultural element? Botswana now is referred to by many as maybe the most democratic country in Africa and the most successful, in terms of stability, personal well-being, and all that. What do you attribute that to? You said that the uni-ethnic aspect didn't really allow space for turmoil. You said that the Tswanans are accustomed to making decisions by consensus. Lots of space; not too many people; diamonds. Are there other elements that made Botswana the calm and productive place that it was?*

WALSH: Well, there was exceptional poverty. I used to always think of the place in terms of the city of Syracuse, spread out— As a matter of fact, when I was there, I think the total population was in the neighborhood of maybe 600,000 or 700,000, spread out over an area the size of Texas. They had few natural resources. The diamond industry was only coming onstream while I was there. The mining of the diamonds and the polishing, cutting, and so on like that was only getting started in the early 1980s.

Now, one of the things the Botswanans did was they had English and American lawyers represent them in their negotiations with De Beers. One of the things there – and this was very true when we had talks with the Namibian liberation group. ? No, that was—

*Q: We'll think of it later.*

WALSH: We were talking with them, and one of the people with whom we were talking at that time was part of their representation right there in Gaborone. He was a cousin or close family relative of Seretse Khama. He said, “We never trust the South Africans.” So, they modeled a lot of the leasing and the licensing and the investing of the diamond trove by looking at what had happened. They looked at some of the agreements made with the American and British oil companies with the Saudis and so on like this, and they said, “Okay, here’s how we want it.” So, they worked out an agreement with De Beers.

Also, again, they looked at Nigeria. Some of these countries have only one gift. They said, “We’re not going to let that happen to us.” So, Debswana, which is the De Beers-Botswana Company, was the overall umbrella. The De Beers is required to train up any number of initial polishers, cutters, and anything like that.

*Q: So, De Beers, which was a South African company— Did it run the entire diamond business in Botswana?*

WALSH: Yeah, but the Botswanans, through their legal assistance from the United States and the Brits, had much more control over De Beers in Botswana than even South Africa today does over De Beers in South Africa.

*Q: Remarkable. So, this is partly thanks to the president, Seretse Khama?*

WALSH: Yeah. The presidents who followed him, too. I think I told you the anecdote about my life with the Botswanan ambassador in Washington. They are the Scotsmen of Africa. They’re coming out of a hard scrabble life, centuries of a hard scrabble life. They have needed a hard protectorate like England to protect them, not only from white colonialists but from South African tribes and the tribes coming down from the north and from the east. The Zimbabwean and the Zambian and the other tribes were all much larger and much more active.

*Q: Well, that’s remarkable. That’s a good story. So, you were able to run a pretty ideal Public Diplomacy program. You had a library; you had people coming and going. You said that on an individual basis, you felt that it was more productive. The larger the grouping, the more hostile the sense was towards the United States, I think you said.*

WALSH: Yeah. I’ve worked in Africa long enough to know that a lot of what is said is said to raise the prestige of the speaker.

*Q: Right. So, if there’s an objection, it’s usually very noticeable.*

WALSH: Exactly. The United States is an easy target in many ways, because our hypocrisy in foreign affairs is very open. We're for freedom, but even look at today. My God.

*Q: Well, today, gosh. Yes. Today.*

WALSH: Also, some of the arguments— One of the things about the Tswanans was that they saw the disasters that befell commodity-based economies in Africa, like Zaire and Nigeria, and said, "Hey, we don't want that to happen to us with the diamonds."

*Q: That's uniquely smart. In other countries, regardless of culture or ethnicity, you had the bad luck of a strongman basically diverting all the energies and resources and pitting one ethnic group against another. Maybe the ethnic uniformity in Botswana meant that you could not do that. You couldn't play one against the other because there really was only one. Interesting.*

WALSH: Right.

*Q: This is interesting. So, you were there 1980 to '82? '83?*

WALSH: To '82.

*Q: What about summing up Botswana? You had this newsletter, which I think you said was one of the good initiatives you had there, and which competed in quality, maybe, with some of the local productions. You had a pretty strong following, I guess. Gaborone is a very sparsely populated country, so I guess the capital becomes much more important in a country like that.*

WALSH: Well, let's see. We had four cities, you might say, there. That's it, really. I mean, we had Francistown, Selebi Phikwe, Gaborone, and then 50 or 60 miles south of Gaborone, near the South African border, was a town that was a big deal during the Boer War. It was Lord Baden-Powell who was under siege there for about six or eight months. That was a big deal. Then, you had some tiny towns. I remember that one time, there was an urgent need to talk to the city of— I forget what the town's name was, but it's right up in the Okavango area. That is a big tourism area now. Very big. A lot of these places were just small little mom and pop shops. Chobe and the areas. Now, these are fantastic safaris and so on. They're great places for tourism. On our Fulbright, one of our Fulbrighters every year – we'd get maybe two or three max – was designated. We had one designated to get a master's in English, one to get a master's in history, and somebody to go to the Cornell School of Hotel Management.

*Q: Ah, yes. That was and is one of the two or three outstanding ones in the U.S.*

WALSH: Yep. The University of Botswana and the government of Botswana had a wonderful relationship with Williams College, and the people at Williams College, I

think, were also very influential in building the safety valves and the safety structures of the Debswana Agreement with De Beers.

*Q: Interesting. Did you ever have American Fulbrighters in Botswana?*

WALSH: We had a teacher out at the English department of the University of Botswana, but the Fulbrighters often were more researchers than teachers. They were doing research on wildlife, of course. So, you'd only see them every two or three months.

*Q: Yeah. Now, with Gaborone being the only real major city, did you stick pretty much in that city? There was less reason to travel around, I suppose.*

WALSH: There wasn't a whole lot of reason to travel around. I would go down to the southern city. That was the old colonial capital. I'd better look at a map and find out what the name was. The supreme court was there, and I would go down and visit the chief justice about every four or five months. I'd bring a load of legal books down there. He was a Ghanaian.

*Q: So, Botswana was organized kind of like South Africa. It had a legal capital that was not the political capital?*

WALSH: Right.

*Q: That's interesting.*

WALSH: It was legal strictly for the supreme court. The legislative and executive arm were up in Gaborone.

*Q: Right. That's kind of similar to the South African system. Anyway, it was all under British rule.*

WALSH: I think they shared the same basic legal structure as South Africa. What do they call it? Dutch—

*Q: Dutch Roman.*

WALSH: Dutch Roman law. So, their legal colleagues are really New Zealand, South Africa, and Scotland, so that was fascinating.

*Q: I think that's a combination of precedent law, like the UK, and codified law, like France. I think it comes from the Netherlands. Okay. So, we're about to say goodbye to Botswana, I guess.*

WALSH: Yeah. One thing, though. I remember, and I was thinking of this today, that overall – this is something that should be said – in Botswana we had a couple of cultural presentations. One was a \_\_\_\_, which is a Louisianan sort of thing. We filled the full town

square. Now, thousands of people came to see them perform in the open air program in Gaborone. I was thinking about that.

*Q: It sounds like tremendous fun.*

WALSH: It was. Absolutely. Then it made me think of all the other ones that I have been a part of and worked on over the course of my career. They have almost always been very successful public successes. They were a great deal of fun for those of us who put them on, and for the people who saw them. Once again, when I was talking earlier about sports and how that opens doors, these programs— We did classical music programs in Zaire with a pianist, and we filled the hall for three days. In Cameroon, it was the same thing. The first thing I did when I arrived in Poland as a junior officer was to accompany the author and producer of *The Man of La Mancha*.

In Poland, what we would do was we would subsidize the cost of the translation, or we would help get the hard currency and make an exchange with the local producers in order to get the rights to put on the translation of American programs. There were stage plays, musicals like *The Man of La Mancha*, and so on. That was just incredible, because it brought all sorts of authors to Poland to spend their zlotys. So, yeah, it was a wonderful time.

Every country where I've worked, even in places like Gaborone or Lubumbashi, Krakow and Warsaw, the impact of the cultural presentations cannot be denied. Seeing them dry up, thinking of the times when we would be able to bring \_\_\_\_\_ or another musical group, or the New York City ballet to Warsaw and so on like that, it was just incredible. I told people this, underlining the success and the access that these programs gave us.

*Q: Well, this is why this interview was so valuable, Neal. I was having a friendly argument with a friend in the military the other day, long distance, about so-called delivering the message, which is what, even to this day, is what the U.S. military does not understand. That's what Public Diplomacy was and is. We consider it to be delivering a message. They call it information operations. They use the term "public diplomacy" very differently than you and I do. They use it as an instrument of convincing people of a policy.*

*I think we're at the end of today's interview, so any thoughts on— Is there any possibility of ever reconciling the U.S. military use of that term, "public diplomacy," and the State Department use of it? Even within the State Department, we have political officers and admin officers who have no understanding of the story you've just told. I underlined it three times – "opens doors." I call it programs without a specific agenda. What is the value of programs that do not drive home a given point and do not have an agenda?*

*I think it's thought of derisively as soft power, as a needless type of activity even in the State Department and more so in the Pentagon. What are we to think of this? Is there some way of reconciling these ideas? Do we always have to be explaining ourselves – and now, in retrospect, even more so? As you said, the performing groups have mostly*

*disappeared. Joe Duffy euthanized those. It used to be called Arts America and he killed it. What are we missing by— When we used to have programs that did not have specific political agendas, what did we gain from having those?*

WALSH: I have always looked forward to dealing with the military because they have so much money. I've always been disappointed because in their headquarters at AFRICOM (United States Africa Command), they have sociologists, they have anthropologists, they have all sorts of incredibly well-informed people. But when you get into the hands of these guys, all of a sudden— We had a problem when I was temporary DCM and PAO in Nairobi. Now, I'd have to count on my fingers— This must have been 2012. We had gotten the military program. We had three or four military people assigned to the Public Diplomacy office, and some of the things they were doing were designing shoulder \_\_\_ for the mixed units that were being trained to go to Somalia.

But out of their money, we also had a couple hundred thousand that we put to translating American works into Arabic. Now, out of what we called at that time the Milky Way – because there were so many admirals and generals up there – there was a colonel who was in charge of the region. I forget what these guys were called. They had a special name. They were out of Special Forces, assigned to Public Diplomacy.

*Q: Were these the \_\_\_ Ops people?*

WALSH: They were the \_\_\_ Ops, but we didn't call them that.

*Q: Well, then they renamed themselves MISO (Military Information Support Operations), I think. Military Information—*

WALSH: Exactly. Then, the colonel comes down and says, “Hey, where's the anti-terror tenor of these books?”

We said, “We're not doing propaganda. We're doing books. We're doing things that we want people to read. We're like missionaries. We want them to read our Bible.”

“No, that's not what we want to do.”

I said, “Look, okay. These are fine young men that we're dealing with, and they've got some good relationships with the schools and stuff down there on the coast, but we don't exactly need them. We need these books. But \_\_\_, that'll come along. So, why don't you take them all up and go away? We don't want to deal with you anymore.”

Then they said, “Okay, we'll do this.” You've got to decide that they're going to do what we say. That's what the agreement is. But they are torn between two cultures, you might say.

*Q: Yeah. We've all dealt with this. It seems like there's no common language, even with the term "public diplomacy." I wish they would just stop using that term, because it has such a different meaning. Is there any hope?*

WALSH: You've always got to keep fighting it. A friend of mine who was director of the White House Office of Biological and Chemical Help, his office was established under the Clinton administration in the National Security Council. Later, when the Bush people came in, that office was thrown away. Then, after 9/11, it was brought back, and after Ebola, it was brought back again. He's gone through all of these things. He was an admiral in public health. He did an interview. I think it was with PBS (Public Broadcasting System). They said, "What about this?"

He said, "Look, health is not sexy. So, every four or five years, the whole thing gets thrown out the window because a) we haven't had a crisis in four or five years, and b) we'll never have another crisis." He said, "All the time, it comes up and happens again. Ebola, now COVID, and so on like that. That's the way it is." That's what we do. No matter how much we talk— This is a fascinating thing. Some of the things that we do and have done in the past – and still are happening now— The CIA does it because they have lots of money, so they can do all sorts of recruiting and so on. They give out books. But since they do it secretly, it's so much sexier, you know?

*Q: That's a good point. Well, as you say, it's kind of an eternal— It's not a battle, but it's a struggle to get people to— If they're not going to do something, they should at least understand what their colleagues are doing. But we'll keep working at that. As we leave Gaborone, where are we pointed to next, just so we see what the next interview's going to be?*

WALSH: Oh, we'll be pointed towards the African division of USIA.

*Q: Okay. You were Central Africa desk, is that it?*

WALSH: I was Central, East, and Southern.

*Q: Oh my gosh. In one tour, you did all three?*

WALSH: Well, let's see. I started in '82 and went until '85. It was three years. So, I did about a year with each one.

*Q: Most interesting. That almost never happens in a single tour. So, you did every region except west. You did the other three. Shall we get into that in our next interview? You want to start now?*

WALSH: No, it's about 3:15 and I will be calling you right about this time tomorrow.

*Q: Excellent. We've made some geographic progress. We're still in the other hemisphere, but now we're coming into the current hemisphere. We have to call this progress. So, signing off for May 20<sup>th</sup>. I'm going to stop recording.*

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*Q: Here's Dan Whitman again. It's the next day, May 21<sup>st</sup>, I think. Neal Walsh is there in Fredericksburg. We surged ahead into the early 1980s. So, you switched from overseas to domestic. Let's get you to 1982 at the Central Africa desk with USIA.*

WALSH: Exactly. We had been overseas for almost 11 years. The last part of that---- the last six or seven years of that---- I had been more or less on my own, in the sense of being BPAO in Lubumbashi, Branch Public Affairs Officer in Krakow, and a one person PAO in Botswana. So, that's really three tours in a row. I felt that indeed it was time for me to go back to Washington and see how bigger things work. So, I went back to Washington and, at that time— Of course, if you were coming out of an assignment in Africa, no one would talk to you, so you had to go to the African division. At that time, I think, Art Lewis was the area director

*Q: I think it was \_\_\_\_.*

WALSH: He was succeeded by \_\_\_\_, huh?

*Q: It could be. That's barely before my time. Before we go on, I think we both understand what you just said about how Africa in the field becomes Africa domestically. Explain to those who do not understand the disdain that some of our colleagues at the Agency had for the Africa area. Some referred to it as the armpit of the Foreign Service. How did that ever happen, that crazy idea that people had?*

WALSH: That is a very— It was not just rooted within USIA. It did not just figure in terms of my going back in the early '80s to the area office. It's fascinating, because I never thought of it that way. I was always going to Africa, from Poland to Zaire and back again, and then Poland to Botswana. I saw it as just absolutely exciting. I couldn't imagine a more exciting place to go to. One of the reasons I had put down earlier in my career development papers or whatever was that Eastern Europe and Africa were the two areas of interest. East and South Asia looked very crowded to me, shoulder to shoulder. The Middle East just seemed like a totally unsolvable place.

As we were discussing yesterday, the hypocrisy of American policies— Even as I could minimize it in terms of Africa, for the Middle East, I just could not believe what had happened to the Palestinians. Therefore, that was out. Latin America, once again, was so influenced by the United States. Africa, for me, was a very positive, exciting place to be. There were very few Americans and new countries. What better field for a person in Public Diplomacy – but also in diplomacy at all? But then, when I got to the area and started talking to other people about arranging bids and arranging places, Africa was

considered to be a loser place and a place where people who couldn't succeed in Europe would go. I felt that that was just terrible. There was no better training place.

Later on, when I was in the executive secretariat, your employees or subordinates are special assistants to the undersecretary, people working on the line. These are tremendously well-performing mid-grade officers. We were discussing what would be a better way of using them as they went along. The discussion went— What we were doing to a great extent was, we really beat the hell out of these people on their two year assignments. So, you would get a really well-performing person who would be mid-level. Then, that person would become the third person in the economic section in Italy or the second or third person in the political section in Portugal, for God's sake.

My suggestion there— I talked to a number of them, and I did recruit a number of them for Africa. My suggestion was that the best finishing school for them, after they had performed well on the seventh floor, was not necessarily a principal officership, but a position in a consulate or a DCM position or a position as head of the political section, admin section, or whatever in Africa. In Africa, you do everything. I had a PAO in Brazzaville, and I went to visit to see how he was doing. In the morning, I saw him, and he was working with the contractors to rewire the public spaces within the \_\_\_\_\_. In the evenings, he hosted a poetry reading by local poets. You get to do everything. In the morning you're chasing the contractor who stole your deposit, and in the evening, you're having dinner with the minister of Health.

I thought that was the best finishing school there could possibly be for an up and coming officer. Then, in the same position later on, when I was a deputy area director and when I had some people who wanted to go to Western Europe, getting them into Western Europe was— My closest friends were DCMs in Germany and in France. It was like they wouldn't take my word that I was recommending to them a water-walking cultural affairs officer. I was recommending to them a PAO who had done stellar work in someplace. They'd say, "Brazzaville? Are you kidding me?"

"No, I'm not kidding you!" Both of those people – the Brazzaville PAO and the CAO from Zaire – became ambassadors later on but selling these people to the Euro \_\_\_\_ was a very difficult thing. People would absolutely doubt my word. I felt that I was just—

It was like, "Well, they're doing well in Africa, but it's Africa. That's not Europe." My God! What snooty people. But as I say, the quality of the people and the quality of the job— Every job that we're doing is a good job. There really weren't too many that were bad jobs. So, that is just a discussion of the period. But coming out of Africa, you would see people automatically think this person should go to a less active position or a less prestigious position because they were Africa people.

*Q: Right. I had the same experience and the same beliefs. What you just said is absolutely what I saw. Smaller posts gave much greater experience. The Euro \_\_\_\_, which I have been at times and so have you, just never got it. Your career is a fascinating study between Africa and Europe. That's a great combination. Mine was somewhat similar, I guess in*

*the opposite order. I would say that I began to have fun and to really dig in when I left Europe and went to Africa. So, I totally agree with what you just said. So, let's get you to the area office back in 1982 and the Central Africa desk, which I think, traditionally, has been the least sought-after of the desks in USIA. Why would you say that is? Was that your experience?*

WALSH: At that time, no. It would depend on what we're talking about. Haiti; there were some big disasters in that area. It was made up of Brazzaville, Zaire, Burundi, and Rwanda. Then, the Central African Republic – or at that time, I think we were the Central African Empire, even – and Chad. Was that still northeast?

*Q: I believe you had Cameroon and Gabon?*

WALSH: No, Cameroon and Gabon were pretty \_\_\_\_\_. Well, it must have included Gabon, because I went there at that time, too.

*Q: I think Chad was central and Niger was west.*

WALSH: Yeah. So, Zaire was corrupt. Zaire had been, as I said, invaded by Angola. The Moroccans had to come in and save it from any number of different problems. But at that time, there was still sort of a sense that maybe we'd get Mobutu to see the light. That never happened. Both Rwanda and Burundi had gone through, obviously, terrible ethnic happenings in the '70s. They were at \_\_\_\_\_ in the '80s. The Hutu in Rwanda were holding it in place, and the Tutsis were doing the same in Burundi. They're both very science fiction type places, like South Africa, you might think. Once again, by preaching the benefits of peace and democracy and integration, we sort of became not the best friends of the central government. It was the same in Zaire. The central government had very many suspicions about us.

At the same time, we were able to hold, in all of those countries, fabulous outreach programs. They were all very active. The Fulbright program had Americans going to these countries to do research or teaching in the humanities, and they were very active, and then some of them reflected Botswana. Rwanda and Burundi attracted anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists. These were fascinating political and ethnic entities. So, once again, Zaire attracted a lot of people just because of its size and the variety.

*Q: This was just a year before, but I was a Fulbrighter in Brazzaville.*

WALSH: Brazzaville was a fascinating country. It had shaken, to a great extent, its relationship with the eastern bloc. You didn't have Germans running the police departments and so on like this. Elections were very bloody there, though. It wasn't a democracy, that's for sure. Additionally, the oil money—I remember at that time, I think, one of my friends from high school contacted me. He was working for an investment firm, and he said that they were approaching a group of people who would be selling bonds based on income from the oil revenues of Brazzaville. I had to laugh because I

said, “I think those are mortgage dumps for the next century with the French. Don’t even think about it.”

*Q: Very good advice, I think.*

WALSH: So, yeah, we had a good string of PAOs in various countries. They were very good. I think she was in Rwanda.

*Q: Maybe Botswana?*

WALSH: No, she was not a southern Africa person.

*Q: Okay. Then, you had John Archibald, John Murphy, and yeah, you had some outstanding people. Tell us— You’re dealing with the same topics, themes, and countries as you were when you were in the field, but what’s the value of doing it from the Washington side? How is that different from being in the field?*

WALSH: Doing it from the Washington side was interesting. Having been a PAO already, you really got to see how they’re planning, what they’re doing, how far in advance they’re working. Also, you could push your own agenda in the sense that where I saw importance in establishing strong ties with academic institutions— PAOs were grateful if you had somebody in the area office who would say, “This is what is an interesting thing to do. Take graduate students and bring them to the United States. They participate in linguistics and American literature and economics. But bring them to the United States for a master’s degree, as teaching fellows, or to be influenced into getting their master’s. Then, when they go back to their home country and continue to do good work and get recommended by their departments, have them come back to the United States four or five years later to be foreign doctorate students.”

I’d seen this work in Poland; I’d seen it work in Botswana. For some of these countries, this was a new, interesting way of doing things, and they thought, why don’t we try that? It worked out pretty successfully. Then, working in Washington with the people going out as Fulbrighters and then also with the IV (International Visitor) program and the Fulbright program, you just got a great insight into how this is developed, how you can identify people who would be good speakers for us, and then recruit them, and then ensure that the international visitors from the countries had good experiences. In a certain sense, that was good, because a couple of my contacts from Lubumbashi, during the years that I was in Washington, came as IVs. I had a great time hosting them, bringing them down to Fredericksburg and showing them the town and so on like this.

*Q: Yeah, it makes me sad, because what you just described was an idyllic period. They could come for their master’s, go back and teach, come back for a PhD. Those days are over, I’m afraid. The ‘80s were a great period for educational exchange. We had a small university exchange program. It wasn’t massive, but it did great things.*

WALSH: Yeah, we had university to university exchange. We subsidized those in a lot of cases. That really was long term. Earlier, when I discussed yesterday the Williams College relationship with Botswana— To see these relationships develop in other countries, once again, it was fascinating. The Academic Exchange Office, I think \_\_\_ was in charge of that, but I'm not sure; \_\_\_ actually had a big hand in it, too – had two things operating down there.

This is the advantage of being in Washington. You can see that there's one side of the shop that's pushing for expanding programs and having new programs. Every new administration and every new political appointee has a new program they want to make. But also, there's the wing within the machine that says, "No, we have good relationships between this country, this university, and this African university. Keep that going. Make that as deep as possible." So, that was good. That was very good.

*Q: Again, not to be obsessed with Joe Duffy, but I believe that it was under his watch that the university linkage program was killed. AID (United States Agency for International Development) picked up, in a much larger way, the same type of program for a few years, and then AID stopped. So, at this point, we have no university linkages that are financed by the State Department or the USG (United States Government). Obviously, a big loss. What was going through their minds? I remember this as being the early '90s when Duffy dismantled all of this. Do you have any comment on what was the rationale? It just appears so stupid and self-wounding.*

WALSH: Well, actually, we were pretty lucky. We had Charlie Wick as director in the '70s or '80s, excuse me. He and the president and \_\_\_ over at the CIA were long term drinking buddies – not in the sense of barhopping, but every two or three weeks, the three of them would get together with their wives for drinks and dinner. Now, Wick was known as a fruitcake, but he doubled the resources and understood the value of the university and academic programs, and he sort of envisioned that thing. To us, that seemed weird, but it was really very visionary. In terms of doing phone interviews with journalists and others from the United States and overseas, we rolled Chester Crocker out time and time again. That worked very well.

*Q: So, in your capacity in the Africa Bureau, you did interact with Wick, who was a very important character in all of this. Let's spend a bit of time on Wick and whatever you remember about him. He was weird, but because of his personal friendship with Reagan, he was able to double the resources. Do you think he actually understood the value of what he did?*

WALSH: Well, you know, you've got to remember that you and I and so many have had experiences with so many different directors, and they come from various backgrounds. This guy came from Hollywood. He was a Hollywood producer. So, he had this vision of, "Hey, we've got to have \_\_\_\_\_." Then he also had a very narrow, American idea. There was one thing., We had an interesting time, and I think this was still when I was in Botswana or just before I left. After the clampdown in Poland, Charlie Wick had the film and TV division develop a TV program called, "Let Poland Be Poland." I remember our

Fulbright scholar in Zambia wrote a great satirical piece called, “Let Zambia Be Zambia.” He was ready to have them carried away in a box.

But Charlie saw the value of these things before we did. We were bureaucrats, and VOA (Voice of America) has been great. And VOA was great. You would go into the most back of beyond villages in Zaire, or Cameroon, or— I’m thinking of the French service, in particular. I remember that I did a tour— I don’t know what, but my goodness, he did the music programs for VOA.

Q: \_\_\_\_.

WALSH: \_\_\_\_.

Q: \_\_\_\_\_. *No, he had another middle name. His daughter, by the way, was a wonderful PD officer.*

WALSH: She was a great person.

Q: \_\_\_\_.

WALSH: \_\_\_\_\_. Back in the mid-‘70s, when I was in Zaire, he came to visit, and we’d go to a village 20 or 30 miles outside of Lubumbashi. In Lubumbashi, when you say \_\_\_\_\_ is coming, people come out. A couple of times, when I was desk officer, I was in Zaire and he was visiting, and once again, it was the same thing. He would walk down the street and people would say, “There he is!” We were the most listened to Francophone, non-indigenous French language station. We were ahead of everyone else. Probably one of the most heartbreaking things was to see VOA gradually get whittled away. One of the things was they took the money from the cultural programs, the music and history programs, and put it into more propagandistic programs. People didn’t listen.

*Q: We might be facing this again at this very time. There’s a big controversy brewing about an individual who was proposed to be head of the overseeing entity of VOA who may have a political agenda. We don’t really know. But this has always been the waves lapping at the shore of VOA. There has always been this possibility that it could be corrupted by political content. So, Wick, being from Hollywood, saw these new formats like film, with “Let Poland be Poland,” and TV sort of with WorldNet, which was by today’s standards a very primitive technology. At the time, it was very much in the vanguard of having live satellite TV, which was very much a novelty, at that time.*

WALSH: Exactly. Live satellite television was absolutely amazing. So, yeah, it was introduced to Africa because I think we used it more than anybody else. That was way ahead of other areas. Additionally, USIA was way ahead of any of the State organizations when it came to using these satellite connections.

*Q: Right. While we mention that, I guess we should mention Africa Regional Services in Paris. I don’t know if that was part of your responsibility as a desk officer. They were very*

*active in relaying these things and embellishing them. When you were in the Africa Bureau, what was your back and forth with ARS?*

WALSH: It was very positive. Then, later on, in dealing with east and southern Africa, it was the same thing with the regional office in London. The infrastructure and energy in Paris was a lot more because we had the publishing house, and we also had a more in-depth access and utility of American scholars and journalists and others who would be our speakers.

*Q: I laughed for a second when you said the one in London, because I believe it was a single local employee, a British fellow. I never met him, but he single-handedly ran a very effective program. When he decided to go elsewhere or retire, that was the end of that program, very sadly. RU (\_\_\_), was that the name of it?*

WALSH: RU, right. The Paris office was really good, too, both on translations and on presentations and so on like that. It was superb.

*Q: Right. And it was very much— Well, it was kind of oriented towards Francophone Africa. Not officially, but in practice. Your posts in AFC were all Francophone, I believe.*

WALSH: Exactly. They were all Francophone, and to a great extent. These were not exactly the cutting edge— They were very Francophone and very cultured, so they looked to France. What we had coming out of Paris was all very good. The book translation program was superb.

*Q: And the book publishing program with Nouveaux Horizons (New Horizons).*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: So, you've mentioned a number of IV speakers, Fulbrighters—*

WALSH: \_\_\_, as well.

*Q: I'm thinking of the things you directly dealt with as a desk officer. So, you were the conceptual safety net, sort of, for a lot of small posts. The smaller the post, the more they depend on a good desk officer, I think. Sometimes it's easier to communicate with Washington than it is to communicate with the next post over the border. Did you find that it was useful to try to do program speakers, for example, which will be shared by neighboring posts?*

WALSH: Absolutely.

*Q: Okay. What about that, then?*

WALSH: I can't remember. There were two things that we would do in terms of sharing. One would be a speaker and cultural programs. All of those had to be tied into minimum two but often three or four different posts that would be doing that.

*Q: Was that part of the landscape before you went into that job?*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: Okay. Yes, it had to do with reducing costs. If you were paying for a plane ticket from Washington to Dakar and you added \_\_\_\_, the addition was miniscule. Also, it just made sense to have the resource be shared with so many small posts – Benin, Togo, Guinea—Well, that's West Africa. You didn't do that, but let's say Rwanda and Burundi. I suppose that almost everybody who went to the one, probably made the four hour trip to the other, right?*

WALSH: Yep. Brazzaville and Kinshasa.

*Q: Right. So, when you were in those three positions, there were more resources, back then. Did you travel to the field every year or more than once a year?*

WALSH: Once a year.

*Q: Okay. Those are the good old days of regional and subregional PAO conferences.*

WALSH: Yeah. You had subregional conferences, most of the time, I think. That was one of the things that I found more effective, these subregional conferences, than everybody.

*Q: Right, because there's more in common with \_\_\_\_ posts in central amongst themselves than there would be between them and, say, Anglophone east.*

WALSH: Yep. Well, also think of central and west, where you would be discussing English teaching programs. You would be discussing ARS (\_\_\_\_), \_\_\_\_\_. With \_\_\_\_\_, you would be discussing translations – what's available right now, what are we publishing, what are the commercial houses publishing, and so on like that. So, yeah, those were very good.

*Q: Again, in those days, with resources that disappeared within 15 years, the area director would take one, two, or three people from that office and go on the road. I know that \_\_\_\_\_ did this later. He would take the cultural advisor, maybe, and maybe some desk officers, and they would go together through Africa to two or three subregional conferences, bringing a traveling roadshow of people who could update the PAOs on what's going on in Washington. I'm just mentioning that because this no longer exists much. The digital phone calls, I guess, have replaced it, to some extent. But those were real morale-building sessions. People would see their colleagues. They would have breakfast with their colleagues. It made a feel of a group, didn't it?*

WALSH: Yes. But also, that is part of the Washington experience, particularly when being a desk officer. You're in daily touch, depending on what's going on, with the program officers – with the Interest Bureau, with the Cultural Presentations Bureau, with the academic and Fulbright programs and so on like this. So, you'd get to know everybody who has a hand on the faucet of money and positions. So, you get to know that. Then, by the same token, you get to know the resources not only of the countries under your supervision, but of those around you. So, if you had a regional—

Of course, now, they're all multi-regional or regional IV programs. Many of the IV programs coming up in those years were just getting started with regional and multi-regional. They were mostly individual programs, and they ran for 30 days. So, you got to know what were the resources of your own string of countries. So, if you knew, say, that they're killing one another off in the Central African Empire, how many IVs can you take from them to give to another post who's putting together a delegation of people to look at building standards in the United States or something of that sort? That's a strong commercial thing. You also had to know that, okay, we have to pay this other country back in two or three months or something.

That's where your central value as a desk officer was. It was in being able to find resources for your field posts, like a speaker on a specific subject, a slot at a university. If you borrow from another post for a Fulbright slot in an IV slot— So on like that. How do you get extra money for their English teaching program? How do you find them an English teaching fellow? They weren't called that, in those days, but still, how could you get people there? That worked out very well.

*Q: I guess that it did work well, as I remember. Also, though, there was a kind of friendly competition with the other desks, because AFC would try to get as much as possible for their posts, and then your colleague doing AFS or AFE would be doing likewise. What was the— Who was the arbiter in determining— Let's say that different desks would say, "My region needs an increase this year. Sorry; somebody else is going to have to have less." Who would decide that? Would it be the deputy area officer? Would it be the budget person? Was it a small group? Was it a junta?*

WALSH: Well, it was a small group, but generally, the person that gave you the final decisions and stuff was the deputy area director. He – in my time, they were male— Actually, there was a female deputy area director one time. Judy \_\_\_? I don't know.

*Q: Was Cynthia \_\_\_ in there?*

WALSH: No, she was definitely a '90s person. But it would be the deputy area director, working pretty much with the cultural coordinator and the programs and policy person. Those were the trinity underneath the director. Also, you always knew that Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya would Hoover up a lot of resources.

*Q: Right. And they should, because in so many ways, they were the most important. None of them were Francophone, now that I think of it. In its better days, Cote d'Ivoire was a big recipient, I think.*

WALSH: Yeah. Cote d'Ivoire, Zaire, and Senegal were your big resource— Ghana was still a black hole. Let's see. The Ivory Coast was the hope of the future.

*Q: Yeah, it was really glamorous in the '80s with those champagne lunches— These were the elites, of course, living in Abidjan, but it was a country really on the move. Was a benign dictator, I guess. The country was going forward. What countries— When you were on these desks, you must have had favorites, including maybe countries where you had been PAO, like Zaire and Botswana. Did some of them appear to be more productive with U.S. exchange programs than others, as it comes to mind? Do any of them appear with greater and more forceful memories than others, from the D.C. perspective?*

WALSH: From the D.C. perspective, not too much, because the Francophone countries were very oriented towards France. So, therefore, there was discrimination against American graduates in getting back and getting integrated into either the health system or the academic system in countries. At that time – this is the '80s, which is more than 30 or 40 years ago, for goodness' sakes – in Francophone countries, taking and getting an American degree was a real roll of the dice. So, we had to really sort of sell.

Then, by the same token, they were very elitist, so therefore they saw – and this was true to a lesser extent in the Anglophone countries – that we had a program for linguistics or language teaching, the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), right? They would be looking— You know the Brits. It was fascinating how your Francophone elites mimicked— They were more Catholic than the Pope when it came to mimicking the attitudes of the metropolitan. So, you had to do a sales job with the local universities and with the potential candidates.

*Q: Yeah. Let's see. Not too many years later, as I remember, when the numbers of bursaries and scholarships declined, I remembered from the field that people really wanted to go to the U.S. and would go, as second choice, to France and then third choice to the Soviet Union. Nobody wanted to go to Moscow, but Moscow had so many more opportunities than France, the UK, or the U.S. Okay.*

WALSH: One of the wonderful stories of that time is— On the military side, in many countries, the U.S. and the Russians are competing to sell equipment and so on and so forth. I remember the comment of an African— I wonder what country it was. Was it Tanzania, or what was later on Zimbabwe? Whatever. They said, "It's just terrible. If you buy airplanes from the U.S., you've got to go to the United States and spend two years learning how to fly in Kansas. If you're going to Russia, it's six months and then bam, you're done. No problem." So, there was a bit of that, but it's fascinating that— I feel lucky to have been in a situation working in the academic and cultural field over two decades. I got to see it change from the '70s, where in Francophone countries it was very

hard to sell American \_\_\_\_, to the end of the '80s where— The competition at the end of the '80s and '90s— The American degrees had a lot more prestige.

*Q: Yes. That's how I remember it also. Well, other comments about being in D.C.? D.C. in the '80s. Still a vibrant USIA. This was probably the peak of the influence of the Public Diplomacy sector in USIA under Charles Wick. Nobody liked him, but everybody liked the resources he brought.*

WALSH: The money. We loved the money, and additionally, once again— Later on, when I was southern Africa desk officer, and I think Bob \_\_\_\_ was by that time the deputy area director or area director, this was— I'm trying to think of when it was. But South Africa— We started then, in the '80s, getting money from USAID for our programs in South Africa. and then I think Kent \_\_\_\_ and John Burns— They were some of the PAOs down there. It worked out very well, but it was always a very careful line in order to not attract too much attention from the government of South Africa or from the State Department's assistant secretary to Southern Africa. At that time, it was Frank Wisner. After \_\_\_\_\_— Was he a deputy assistant secretary?

I don't know. But I do know that Bob was on the D.C. side at that time. Later, he would be the PAO down there. But he was having some serious discussions with Wisner about how much and what we should be doing and who we should be bringing as IVs to the United States. The current president of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, was a labor leader who we brought, during that period or earlier, to the United States. The embassy did not necessarily like how closely we worked with him.

*Q: Yeah. In fact, most IVs from South Africa, at that period and especially later, after the Mandela election— Most South Africans who had done things of value could not get visas because they had been arrested during the apartheid period, and this went against the visa rules. It was a crazy kind of— You would get individuals nominated for IVs who could not get visas. This did happen. The left hand and the right hand of the U.S. government were not in touch. But yes, AID money— I think that was partly because AID was administratively incapable of doing quick turnaround exchange programs, and they knew that their USIA colleagues could. So, there was Dire Emergency and these various programs that worked, I think, pretty well. So, you remember \_\_\_\_ as successfully getting this type of thing to work. There was AID money spent by USIA for mutual purpose. It was a win-win. At the time, there was— Nobody foresaw the change that would happen in 1990 when Mandela was released.*

WALSH: Yeah. Well, one, this evolved during the '80s. In a way, I think it was a way for USAID to be able to tell its patrons in the United States that it was doing something in South Africa, and for the administration to say, "Oh, yes, we're helping out, but not offending the South African government." That was always part of the equation, you might say. So, it was a fascinating sort of action there.

East Africa – Kenya, Tanzania – they were big deals for us, obviously. We had good Fulbright programs in both countries. In Somalia, man, what a drag that was. But we had

Tom Hall there as PAO. He did not appreciate that we referred to it as “dog patch by the sea.” But he was one of the best PAOs that we had in the region. In Kenya, we had \_\_\_\_, and in Tanzania, we had another guy. We had good PAOs in that area.

Then, in southern Africa, of course, we had John Burns in Zimbabwe, at that time. Our big problem with John was that he never reported what he was doing. But I have to say that I did a TDY (temporary duty assignment) there two or three years ago, in 2017, and John Burns was still known among the journalists and others, as one of the key people in Zimbabwe, 20 years later.

*Q: Wow. Burns was very unique.*

WALSH: It was actually 30 years later, for God’s sake.

*Q: He was very unique, and did things with his own style, and he did them so successfully that people stopped requiring of him, I think, what they would normally require. He just kept producing interesting things. So, any sense of how Washington itself was behaving or transforming in that period between ’82 and ’85? In terms of evolution of policy towards Africa, we had no idea until 1989— Hank Cohen was the first one who even learned that FW De Klerk, who was an IV grantee, had decided to release Mandela from prison. That came later, with big drama. But when you were doing AFS, what was your sense of the potential of South Africa to have a positive change? Did you feel that it could emerge from this dark period?*

WALSH: Not really. I felt one, that it would be a long, hard struggle, and that we should maintain everything— What we were doing in the country at that time was positive. We were opening reading rooms in some of the townships. We were having very good relationships with the Black and white academic hierarchy and so on like this. But given the—

One of the things that De Klerk said when he came back from the United States was that he felt that African Blacks were being treated much better in South Africa than were African Americans and that we could do much better as our society evolved. So, I mean, you were still pushing against the stone there, and you didn’t see it changing that well. They were very proud of their military operations and their ability to hold off the \_\_\_\_\_. Economically, they were advancing, at least for the whites, but also for the industrial and the \_\_\_work, they were doing pretty well. An economic toll that the wars in Namibia, , in Zimbabwe and in Mozambique had was something they could live with. But there were also some very shaky things. There was a lot of emigration from South Africa to Australia, New Zealand, England, Ireland, and so on like that, and to the U.S.

But, once again, in the ‘80s, Zimbabwe was operating in a very positive way. It was the breadbasket of southern Africa. Everybody— Well, I wouldn’t say everybody, but the donor community – the Europeans, the Americans, and to a lesser extent the Japanese; at that time, China wasn’t really in the ballgame – focused a lot on what the previous government in Zimbabwe had focused on: schools, education. So, over that decade and a

half before the country collapsed, it became the most literate and well-trained society in Africa.

*Q: Yeah. Very sad.*

WALSH: Well, the result today is that the situation in Africa is very much as it was in the 1980s. You have Zimbabweans in crucial positions of government and academia throughout southern Africa. It's a fascinating sort of situation, but all in all, I didn't see that change in South Africa coming. Now, with the various collapses— Once the Soviet Union collapsed, the reason— And here, once again, is the thing that just sort of drives you crazy. A lot of the reasoning within the U.S. government about maintaining a relationship with the South Africans— One of the things that would sort of make you sick is that, year after year, the country plans out of South Africa would liken the South Africans to the Americans because they were a pioneering race.

*Q: Oh my gosh. Really? Wow.*

WALSH: What can you say?

*Q: That's a totally Afrikaner viewpoint.*

WALSH: Yes. Then, one of the other little pillars of our relationship in the political sphere in that region was that we certainly didn't like the Mozambiquan government, because they wanted to be part of the Warsaw Pact. We needed to maintain access to the South African ports and so on. Well, you know, if the world came to a point where the Soviets would be operating in Mozambique and/or threatening the sea lanes around the Cape of Good Hope, that would be a very dangerous world.

So, I always thought that was a worry that we didn't really have to worry about. It was sort of like what I call the "Chinese fire drill," these days. When you have a country of a billion and a quarter, you're not really thinking you want to go to war with anybody. You've just got to find a place for all of those people to sleep and eat. The programs we had in all of those areas— I have to admit that the 1980s were a golden period.

*Q: That's how I remember it, too. Resources and open-mindedness and figuring out what to call it – American Studies or the Studies of the U.S. Nobody wanted a program called American Studies, but everybody wanted some element in their history or literature department. It was really a very lively, forward-looking period. How did we lose it? Maybe that should come later in this series of interviews. How is it that we lost what we had in the 1980s? Looking back, it does seem like a golden period, and it seems inconceivable that we would have just given that up. That came under the Clinton administration, first, and then intensified later. I guess that's beyond our paygrade, right?*

WALSH: Well, it also came down to— In the mid-'80s, when budget cuts were coming in, it came down to— Congress saved us a number of times because once again, Charlie Wick was very focused on information. So, the cultural and the educational programs

were not as close to his heart as were press and other programs like that. So, if it came down to getting the money for WorldNet or getting the money for Fulbright, it would be WorldNet, if he were deciding. We came to many number of times where we were told to cut the budget, and that's where he would have been cutting. But Congress saved us quite a bit, in those days.

*Q: Yeah. Looking back, I guess that's one reason— Aside from being an unlikable guy, he did minimize— The great engine that drove all of these programs was the E Bureau (Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and Environment). These days, what's left of the P Bureau or the I Bureau or whatever they called it— It doesn't really even exist anymore. It's been melded into PA (Bureau of Public Affairs). It's become almost nothing, compared to what it was under Wick. That has to do, also, with technology circumventing the types of information programs we had. We used to be the only source. Now any journalist, no matter how poor, can get information on the Internet.*

*So, what are we looking at? We went AFC, AFE, AFS, and after three years, it was time to look at another option. What were the choices, at that point?*

WALSH: Well, the choices at that point, really— My heart was set on going to Zimbabwe as PAO, however— I forget who it was, but John \_\_\_ was the area director at that time. He came to me and said, "Look, I'm sorry. You're not going to be able to go to Zimbabwe because so-and-so has high school aged kids. He needs a place to go." So, I went to Cameroon in the summer of 1975.

*Q: Okay.*

WALSH: That will be tomorrow's discussion, my friend.

*Q: This is great. This comes close to home, since that was my last full overseas tour. Cameroon really got into me, and I think it got into you, also. Can't wait. With great suspense— Tomorrow at four o'clock, right?*

WALSH: Okay.

*Q: Signing off. It's still the 21<sup>st</sup>. That's the end for today. Goodbye.*

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*Q: We're recording. I think it's May 25<sup>th</sup> today, and if it's not, it's pretty close to May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020.*

WALSH: It's the 26<sup>th</sup>.

*Q: Thank you. May the correction be noted by the authorities. We left you last in Washington. You were—*

WALSH: I circulated through a number of desks.

*Q: Right. You were hoping to be off to Zimbabwe, but John \_\_\_ needed that spot for someone else, and things got swapped, which is what happens a lot in the Foreign Service. In 1985, off you went to Cameroon. So, there's where we left off. Let's pick up there.*

WALSH: Well, first off, let's go back to desk officering. I just want to mention that that is a very good job, but I hope it still is, because it introduces you to so many people.

*Q: Yes, it does. There's a lot of debate about whether that's still the case now that some desk officers have bureaus "embedded" with what I call the \_\_\_ desk. Sometimes, their energies are hijacked for purposes that are not PD. But your point is well taken. We hope that there's the same value as there was, and we just don't know, because things have evolved and changed. But remind us why it's a good job.*

WALSH: First off, you become familiar with the PAOs in the field, which is a career-long investment in time, you might say. You get to know their strengths, their weaknesses, their attitudes, how they handle money, how they do this and that, how they program, how they collaborate with other posts and with Paris, London, and Washington. You really get a feel for the individual, and that's why I say that PAOs like John Burns, like O'Brien, like Kent \_\_\_ in Tanzania—. My goodness. You look around and say, "Wait a minute, these guys are really good operators."

It's perfect for, say, a person like me who had been overseas and on my own for a long time, to be able to watch these people – not necessarily guys; there were women, too, like Mary Ellen \_\_\_\_\_. Jodie \_\_\_\_, my goodness, she was \_\_\_\_\_. So, you get very familiar with how people operate. The same goes for the people with whom you're working in your shop. Let's see, who were the desk officers in the '80s that I dealt with? One was Mary Ellen \_\_\_\_\_. Another was Joel \_\_\_\_\_. Goodness, he was so detail oriented. You had to hit him in the head sometimes just to get him to think bigger. But I mean, you know, you really get a good feeling for individuals and how they operate. You get an idea. Not everyone operates as well as yourself or as badly as yourself. You learn how the differences can work as time goes on. So, that was very important.

*Q: Very intriguing. This presupposes two things. One, you're talking about USIA, which was like an extended family compared to what we have now. It was a much smaller group. Plus, what you're saying implies that if you're reassigned to the same area and encounter the same individuals, there's this benefit. Is that less the case if you mutate, shall we say, from AF (Africa Bureau) to EAP (East Asia and Pacific Bureau) or NEA (Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs). Individuals are not necessarily wedded to one area. In this vast world we're now in, you may not reencounter the same individuals.*

WALSH: Well, that's a downside there, and that is also, more now than ever, a prod or an attraction to stay in the same area. You do get to know people. People do two, three, or four assignments in the same region, and that is important to make you feel comfortable

in what you're doing. Nowadays, of course, the personnel division will say, "Wait a minute. That's a little long. We've got to get that guy out of there." But also, in USIA, we used to do that, too. I remember one time when I was in the African Division as a deputy area director, a friend of mine, Jeremy Kirk, who had never had a hardship post— He was an OC (Counselor) by that time, and the time came up to get out of Europe. As an OC, he had to take a hardship post. It came down to Korea or Nigeria.

*Q: Korea means learning a 12 month language, or maybe a 24 month language.*

WALSH: Yeah. He took Korea.

*Q: Seriously?*

WALSH: Like any European. Yeah. To somebody like myself, two week areas – just doing two – is the comfortable thing to do for a career.

*Q: Yeah, and you're a very good example of that. I think more in retrospect, maybe, than by planning, it was Europe and Africa for you, and that really did make sense, especially looking back at it.*

WALSH: Absolutely.

*Q: Now, you did this for 25 or 30 years. At what point did you realize that this was working well, and you should keep the pattern? Did you have that thought somewhere along the way?*

WALSH: No.

*Q: So, it's really logical only in retrospect, in your case. Not so much as a planning device.*

WALSH: Yeah, but I think you have to look at that. Almost all of my jobs, as time went on, were name selections. You know, like we say about Cameroon; I wanted to go to Zimbabwe, but the fact that another person, who had the support of the area office, had children needing a high school rather than a grammar school, which is why I wound up in Cameroon, which had a grammar school but no high school. There's always something that's going to come out of the blue.

*Q: Exactly. But in your case, in this anecdote, coming out of the blue, kept you in the same area, which was to your benefit, I think. So, I guess we're looking at this as wisdom for future FSOs, maybe, who can consider the benefits of this happening. In your case, it wasn't really a plan, but it did work out.*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: Okay. Great. So, were you disappointed at getting Cameroon?*

WALSH: I certainly did want to go to Zimbabwe, but I knew it was time for me to take a larger PAO position. Additionally, I thought I'd learned enough, and I'd gotten along well enough and knew enough people on the program side of things. That was another big benefit of working on a desk. You got to see – and this is probably still true – and work with the program offices. There's always that semi-complaint that they're pushing their own creations on you. Well, I think that if you have a good relationship with the various academic and cultural programs and speaker programs and so on like this, you could always go back and forth with them about what you're looking for in your country.

*Q: Remind us – Zimbabwe was a one or two person post at that time? Cameroon was three, right?*

WALSH: Right.

*Q: So, Cameroon was a step up, in fact. Was it a one instead of a two? Do you remember?*

WALSH: I think it was a one.

*Q: So, in fact, you were being entrusted with more responsibility. It sounds like the system expressed its trust in you by giving you a larger post.*

WALSH: Yeah. In a sense, that was good. I'd say that Cameroon— Not only was it a three officer post, but also you had a branch post down in Douala.

*Q: Right. They did away with that some years later.*

WALSH: Right.

*Q: So, you were ready, as you just said. You were able to benefit from your domestic tour by knowing who to go to in Washington, London, and Paris. So, you were a more effective PAO in Cameroon.*

WALSH: Yeah. That was very good.

*Q: Okay. So, you got to Cameroon in '85?*

WALSH: I got to Cameroon in June or July of '85. I had an information officer, Art Buck, who had been there two years. Then, Barrie Walkley was my cultural attaché.

*Q: Oh, the remarkable Barrie Walkley.*

WALSH: Barrie Walkley was great. Additionally, I'm trying to think of who my predecessor was. It was a woman. She was well-respected.

*Q: I don't know either. We'll put an asterisk here; this is exactly 20 years before I took that job. That doesn't seem as if we're separated by 20 years, but in that case, we were. Barrie Walkley was quite an interesting character who later became an ambassador. Was it Gabon where he was ambassador?*

WALSH: He was ambassador to Guinea and Gabon.

*Q: A really gifted— UK-born, wasn't he?*

WALSH: Yes. Let's see. After retirement, he did a couple years— He also did time as the special representative and chargé in South Sudan.

*Q: Right. Before there was a real South Sudan.*

WALSH: Right. Well, even after independence he was the chargé.

*Q: A most interesting fellow. So, he was your CAO. How was it— Of course, at that time, we did not know that he was going to go on and zoom way up ahead. How was it working with someone that qualified? You were equally or more qualified. How did that relationship work? Was this the first time you had supervised two Americans?*

WALSH: Oh, yeah.

*Q: How did that go?*

WALSH: That went fabulously. Barrie was absolutely— He was one of the best people I've ever worked with. As you say, he was qualified. He had a PhD in English literature and was very much an academic in many ways, but he was also a showman in many ways. So, he was energetic, he was personable and a people person. He was politically oriented in the sense of knowing who does what to whom in various things. He was a superb representative for us to the universities and to the think tanks. Once again, this is a Francophone country, so they loved the PhD. They loved the academic side and so on like this.

— and he was a tremendous person. The only problem in dealing with him was feeling, every once in a while, that probably for my own peace of mind, I should lock him up in a closet somewhere and slow him down. There wasn't a program or an offer or anything he ever saw that he didn't come in, sit on my desk, and say, "We really ought to be doing this." He was right, most of the time.

*Q: So I hope you did not lock him up. Did you— Can you comment on giving free range to subordinates? Any general comments about that?*

WALSH: Well, yeah. When they're as competent as Barrie, how can you not? As a matter of fact, it's a great relief. You can say, "Hey, Barrie, we've got a dance group coming in." I remember that that was the \_\_\_ Dance Group, and they were fabulous. They were really

good. So, we booked it for two days for this dance group. Well, that's a big hall, you know. Well, I kept on looking at it, and I said, "Guys, every time I look at it, I'm thinking, what are we going to do with this little-known group? Who's going to like that? We're charging money for people to see it and stuff like that. How are we ever going to get ahead of this?" And guess what?

*Q: You filled the hall every time, right?*

WALSH: We filled the hall twice, and we got a demand from the university and other places— After the first time, they said, "We've got to see them again," so we did it for three days. They had a rest day. Like any active PAO, I said, "The heck with their rest day. You guys are going to work." And they did.

*Q: Again, Arts America groups were so effective with so many benefits. In 1985, it's possible that Joe Duffy had begun to think about getting rid of Arts America. He did not do so— Well, this is before Duffy, right?*

WALSH: This is well before Duffy. This was when Charlie Wick was still around.

*Q: This was in the '90s, sorry. 1995 was when he would have been thinking of. So, again, this was really the heyday of PD.*

WALSH: Yeah. We had great programs. We had a professorship. Now, once again, Fulbright teaching assignments in Cameroon were absolutely tied to the French system. My God. You could have probably gotten \_\_\_\_\_ or somebody else there, some of the great names, and then they'd say, "Hmm, yes, an American PhD." They were really brutal. So, on short term, we could get people on American literature and stuff like that. So, we didn't die on that, but we also got a professorship for two years, practically, with Lee Evans, who was the fastest man in the world, at that time. He was the 1968 record holder of the 400 meters. Additionally, he held that— It might have been just the 100 yard dash. I know that he did get a medal for the 400, but he also did something else, because he was listed as the fastest man in the world at that time. He held the world record, I think, for the 100 meter until the 1990s. He held it for 20 or 25 years.

*Q: This is another promising division – Sports America.*

WALSH: Well, we didn't have Sports America as itself at that time, but we had friends, once again, in the exchanges division. So, when Mal Whitfield says that this guy is available and looking for a job— Actually, even though he did not raise his hand, he was up there in 1968 for the four by four, the 800 meter relay. He was up there, and he had— It wasn't Tommy James, for goodness' sake. But there were the guys putting their fists up. Lee didn't put his fist up, but I'll tell you—

*Q: Oh, the famous political gesture. I got you.*

WALSH: He didn't put his fist up, but jobs were pretty tough for him to get. So, we booked him for two years at the Higher School of Physical Fitness and Sport.

*Q: Wait a minute. He stayed in Cameroon for two years?*

WALSH: Yep.

*Q: Incredible. In years later, he would have come for four days. But he stayed in Cameroon for two years? Wow. You did this administratively as a Fulbright?*

WALSH: Yep. Once again, that goes back to the relationships that you build as a desk officer. Overseas, being BPAO, you get to know people or know of people, but as a desk officer you're working on schedules and so on like that with people. You just say, "Hey, I've got a deal here. Can you help me on this?"

They'll say, "Okay," you know?

*Q: So, this is Mal Whitfield who did this?*

WALSH: Mal Whitfield proposed it, and then he and I disposed it. It was great.

*Q: Fantastic. I had no idea that Fulbrights were used, at that time, for sports. We know that that's an extremely effective way of reaching the underpinnings of a culture. You don't have to be ideological or delivering a "message." You can just be working with individuals in another country and developing a relationship. That's what Fulbright really is.*

WALSH: Exactly. Once again, in Cameroon, like in Poland and Botswana, who are the guys that are big in the sports field and the Olympic committee? It's the police. Who's got teams? You have city teams, but you also have a military team, and they want to be part of what you're doing. So, there, we had Lee at the university or at the Higher School of Physical Fitness. But we also had George Foreman, who came for about a month. He was not making a whole lot of money at that time, so he was glad to work with us. At that time, we also had a couple of Olympic boxers from the military who came down. They were stationed in Europe, and we got them from EUCOM (United States European Command).

*Q: I think you mentioned in a previous interview the importance of aligning activities with what we called in the old days the "country plan." Some of us, frankly, worked the system just to do things that we emotionally, subjectively thought would be valuable. Then, we worked the rhetoric around whatever was prevailing at the time. Any comments about Cameroon or in general? Bringing athletes clearly is a good thing to do. Somehow, it had to fit into a rationale that had not foreseen the use of athletes. What goes through a PAO's mind in justifying to himself or to others doing a good thing when it doesn't necessarily align with the document that was formulated nine months earlier?*

WALSH: Well, yeah, that is always a problem. When you go in in June or July to a new post, your first six to nine months are going to be operating on the old plan. That's even more true now, because your IV and everything has to be booked the fiscal year before. So, it's only after you've been there about half a year that you're working on the system this way. Then, on justifications, it is wonderful, because it was the Cold War. So, the Russians were doing sports, and we had balance. It wasn't the Arts America program. Out of the speaker program, I got a marathoner to compete against the Russians. It wasn't against the Russians, but both the Russians and the Americans had runners in the Cameroon International Marathon. We sponsored that, and we justified it by opening doors to elites and, additionally, getting good perceptions in the local press and media.

*Q: Now, if you're able to remember— I know I would not be able to, but the extent to which your planning really relied on the strategies written by your predecessor— The country plan— We get lots of training and lots of encouragement to put that at the top of our thinking. Was that 50, 70, or 90% of your motivation in doing these programs?*

WALSH: Yes and no.

*Q: Okay. Please comment.*

WALSH: My comment on the country plan is always to go back and look at the previous two or three years of the country plan, and then try to put something together, to look at the precepts laid out in the planning and processing papers. I think that at one time, we had the instructions for the plan, which were thicker than the plan would ever be. I would say, "Okay, but what do I really want to do? What can I do here?"

*Q: In addition, the embassy has a totally separate way of planning. This was USIA or USIS. The country plan did not need to be approved by an authority higher than the PAO. So, this gave the PAO— Again, at the time, we did not know how fortunate we were to have such independence and such trust given to the PAO.*

WALSH: Well, it was very good, because— Now, this is always the six to one, half dozen of another— Ambassadors who kept in touch with us would say, "I want a cultural thing." They would be reading the cables and stuff like this, so sometimes they would say, "I want this," and it wasn't in your country plan, so you could say, "I don't have that. It's not in the country plan." But you'd always have to confer with your ambassador. You don't want him looking up and saying, "What? Don't we have somebody at that university? \_\_\_?" Then you can say that this is why we do or do not.

Additionally, you always want to consult. "Do you want to have a cultural presentation?"

*Q: Of course, the ambassador would always want that, right?*

WALSH: Always. There were sometimes where he'd say, "Hey, I don't know that," but by the same token, like I said, you can turn out hundreds of people in Gaborone for a musical group of \_\_\_\_\_. Now, I'll admit, that tells you that people don't have a whole lot to

do on a Saturday afternoon in Botswana, but by the same token— It gives you that positive background noise about America. In these countries, these are things people are going to say, “I saw this 10 years ago.” We often forget about the positive background or wallpaper – whatever you want to call it. Well, now we’re talking \_\_\_\_ years, so maybe not, but there’s somebody who still remembers, in Yaoundé, the dance group we had.

*Q: They really do.*

WALSH: We also did a jazz group. My God, we took them from Douala all the way up to like— What was the capital of the Anglophone area?

*Q: It could have been \_\_\_\_?*

WALSH: No, \_\_\_\_\_ is down south. It’s a northern one.

*Q: \_\_\_\_\_ is southwest. Oh, I know what you mean. I know the town. We’ll both think of it later. Not Bafusam— Anyway, it’s in the northwest, I guess.*

WALSH: Yeah. We took them at night, all the way through these horrible roads. It was horrible. But yeah, we got— Once again, that was the ambassador. Myles Frechette was the ambassador. We called him Mad Myles. He was very energetic; ambassadors generally are. “We want to do this! You don’t want to do it all the time in Yaoundé, Neal.”

“Oh, well, it’s a lot better to do it here, you know?”

“No, no. We have to go up to Bamenda.” Like, oh, Jesus Christ.

*Q: Well, Bamenda is beautiful. Is it possible that you had an FSN (Foreign Service National)—*

WALSH: You’re taking an American group that lands in Douala, and you’re taking them the back way, you might say, along the road that goes from Douala up to Bamenda. That is not exactly a superhighway. You are stuck in the middle of nowhere at night. You’ve got these guys saying, “What’s going on here?”

*Q: Oh. So, this is before big planes came into Yaoundé, I guess. Was Douala the main port of entry?*

WALSH: Exactly.

*Q: Is it possible you had an FSN named Sam Tita? Does the name—*

WALSH: Of course we had Sam.

*Q: Ah! Sam was an eternal—*

WALSH: Speaking of driving, if you're driving at night—

*Q: Isn't he amazing.*

WALSH: Sam was there.

*Q: Tell us, because I had the benefit of Sam, how amazing it is to have a driver who understands your programs.*

WALSH: Well, Sam Tita— To my mind, there's always one person like this. In Poland, he used to be called the man with the zloty\_\_\_ -- the Man with the Golden Hand. He could be listed as your projectionist. In Zaire and Lubumbashi he was the radio operator because we had the radio for the wireless file. That's why it was called the wireless file. There's always someone who is committed to what we're doing and making it happen. They're intelligent enough and common sense enough to say, "I think this is a good idea, Mr. Walsh," or, "I don't know about that." That is very important. But we had a whole staff in Yaoundé who were good at that sort of thing.

*Q: This is great. Was Sam a driver, at that time, or was he doing a multitude of different things?*

WALSH: He was a driver.

*Q: I don't know if this is relevant. I remember the day, in 1999, October 1<sup>st</sup>, when, supposedly, this whole system was changed and theoretically, all drivers went into a central motor pool.*

WALSH: Oh, indeed.

*Q: In the case of where I was, which was Haiti, it was an astounding and stupid loss, because the USIS drivers knew where the Ministry of Education was; others did not.*

WALSH: Exactly. I saw this for the next decade, or further. I saw it even when I was an annuitant working overseas. This was still the sort of thing where, if the Public Diplomacy Office had something to do – invitations in particular---- or if the ambassador wanted to talk to Professor So-and-so at the university – it was like— You'd have to go— If you were the charge, you'd say, "Hey, So-and-so," and they'd either say, "So-and-so is a former PD driver; he'll know what to do," or you'd say, "I've got 500 names." They'd send them out with this driver or this driver. You'd say, "Do they know where these guys are?" If you gave an embassy driver something to deliver to the university or to an academic or to a ministry, he would have this idea that if he delivers it to the front office, it will get to the person.

*Q: And it certainly will not.*

WALSH: Yeah. Barrie used to refer to this. He would send out the guy with the blessed stick. That's what Sam could do. He could find people. Back when I was in Zaire, I was missing my key for the cultural center when the PAO from Kinshasa was visiting. I said, "Hold on a minute," and I drove over with him to the FSN's house. I said, "\_\_\_\_, do you have the key?"

"Oh, yeah, here it is."

He said, "That is the best thing. You always have to know where your FSNs are living."

*Q: So, where were you on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999?*

WALSH: I was in Geneva, and I have already gotten assurances from the ambassador and the admin officer that there would be no change. The only change that came up was that, about six months into the business, they sent the personnel people from the Regional Personnel Office in Rome around. They were very concerned that our technicians— we had two — were not assigned to the State Department. They would be working on our stuff no matter what. So, they talked about this, and then the only other recommendation they had was that the secretary for the PAO should be downgraded a secretarial position.

I said, "This is not going to make any difference to this particular person, because the amount of money coming in— She'll keep her pay and so on. But if you downgrade the job, everybody knows that. This is a small place. She'll lose a bit of her prestige. So, if she's going to lose the prestige, then we'll stop translating things for the front office, because that's not in our job description. Additionally, we'll stop doing a quick review of the daily French press. Then, we'll also stop recommending this, that, and the other thing locally. We'll stop talking about local politics — who to see, what to do, and so on like this — for the ambassador." Because that's what we do. We do outreach to these local institutions, but that's not really supposed to be done by us. We're supposed to focus on the UN. "So, if you do this and cut her back and so on, we'll take that stuff out of her job description, and the ambassador will be blind to a great extent, unless you get a protocol officer or somebody who's going to do all that stuff."

They said, "Oh dear."

I said, "Yeah. When this woman retires, then you can downgrade that position, but don't do it before. "

*Q: That's a good story. You were fortunate, as I was, by the way, because you had a front office who understood the value of PAS (\_\_\_\_).*

WALSH: Absolutely.

*Q: Many embassies were not that lucky. Anyway, back to Cameroon. That was a good interlude, because that's part of the value of this interview and others. We get to remember what we had — not so much to lament and to mourn but to understand what*

*were the resources and what we gained and lost with the system. There were more losses than gains, I think. So, back to Cameroon. Was this two or three years you were there?*

WALSH: I was there for two and a half years.

*Q: '85 to '87 and a half kind of thing?*

WALSH: Well, no. It was '85 to '87.

*Q: Let's get the full story.*

WALSH: As I said, it was a very Francophone place. As a matter of fact, when I was there – and this could still be the case – Cameroon was the second largest importer of French champagne in the world. Well, now I imagine China is the biggest, but at that time, it was the United States and then, after that, Cameroon. Can you imagine? They all have little ivory swizzle sticks that they would pull out of their pockets to swizzle around in their champagne. It would be \_\_\_\_\_. So, in a sense, we were proselytizing among the infidels.

*Q: Yes. Now, Francophone— Of course, the country is officially bilingual, and when I was there two decades later, we probably had the majority of FSN staff who were Anglophone. How did that work in your time?*

WALSH: In my time, the press guy was Anglophone. The cultural guy, who passed away maybe while you were there, Paul Henrie— He was Francophone. So, the senior cultural guy and the senior press guy were Francophone, and if I only had one Anglophone— Let's see. David \_\_\_\_\_, the admin guy. I never really figured out whether he was Anglophone or Francophone.

*Q: Some of them are so bilingual. It's wonderful.*

WALSH: There's that. Additionally, when a whole bunch of them were chatting away, I had to say, "Are you guys all from the same tribe?"

They said, "No, we're speaking Pidgin."

*Q: Yeah. Well, a word on language: Pidgin, which is the same Pidgin, I think, as in coastal Nigeria, is a lingua franca. It's nobody's native language, but it's quite amazing. The role of language— If you have any observations— I think that every African, educated or not, speaks a minimum of three or four languages.*

WALSH: Oh, yeah. They are speaking those from infancy on, so their brains are hardwired for that. One thing we did is we made a point of not getting too close or overpopulating our programs and our outreach to the Anglophones. It would be very easy. If we were sending a slate of students for IVs or Fulbrights or even professor

research and so on like this, it was important that we didn't overpopulate it with the Anglophones. They were very attractive to us.

Frankly, we also had very great sympathy for this group of Anglophones who were caught in a Francophone country. But once again, given the snobbism of the Francophiles as the leading lights of the country and so on, we had to watch out. We have this poor Anglophone minority trapped between Nigeria and the rest of their fellow citizens. I see today that the friction between the Anglophones and the Francophones is much more acerbic and vicious.

*Q: I think we could call it a civil war.*

WALSH: You know, during our time, the Anglophones certainly felt they were being oppressed, but at the same time, that oppression was nothing like normal life in Nigeria might be.

*Q: Plus, if I understand it, you were in the final days of Ahidjo, is that right?*

WALSH: No, I came in just a few months after— No, I came in a year or a year and a half after Ahidjo. This is why we had a good solid program and good resources there, both for USAID and for USIA and the embassy. Ahidjo had given up. Paul Biya had been elected. A year and a half later, Ahidjo – or at least the northerners within the Cameroonian military – staged a coup against Biya. But a large grouping of the military were southerners, and they countered the coup and kept Biya on as president. So, that made Cameroon a \_\_\_house of democracy, during those years. We also had \_\_\_telling us that there was friction between the north and the south, which some of us, like me—

ThThere was a lot more than friction between the Anglophones and the Francophones, at that time. It worked out that the British counsel was active with the Anglophones. We would have two or three Fulbright anthropologists and others up there. We would get a speaker up there. As I said, we would do cultural presentations way up in Bamenda, and we would make visits with the ambassador to the Anglophone area, but also to the Francophone. An interesting thing that was just starting out, then, was of course Saudi support for mosques and religious training.

Now, this is 35 years ago. We started to see the friction between the African Muslims and the Saudis. If you're taking money to reconstruct or build your mosque, you would have to take their imam, and then you would get them teaching, and then the teaching would be turning against the indigenous Muslims. Very much like the Catholics – that's the only other religion I know— There was African culture and spirituality involved in the indigenous Cameroonian Islam.

*Q: I think that, at least when I was there, you could say that the Islam that we saw in Cameroon was far more flexible and tolerant than the strict adherence that you saw in some of these places in the Middle East.*

WALSH: Well, that was the thing. All of a sudden, we saw this friction between the Wahhabis and the African Islamists. The things that the African Islamic leaders and imams did were mortal sins in the eyes of the Wahhabis. First, they didn't bundle their women up in burqas or so on. They didn't have to keep their hair covered. They could wear something, but it wasn't really observed in certain areas. Additionally, they sort of made their living like guys do in their churches here, by doing weddings and so on. But they would also sell little— They weren't magic potions, but inscriptions where if you were worried, it would be good for you, and so on.

*Q: Artisanal icons, right. So, we had no idea, at that time, how this would metastasize, 30 years later, to 9/11. How do you remember it, at that time? Did it seem like a big part of your agenda, to be observing all of this?*

WALSH: No, it was not a big part of the agenda. It was just a very interesting side of things. This was the sort of thing that Barrie Walkley was very good at. He'd say, "I've been talking to so-and-so, and did you know, they're very upset because they're getting a million dollars to rebuild their mosque but now, they have to get three teachers from there in order to get the million dollars." So, yeah, that was the sort of thing that Barrie had a very good nose for.

*Q: Well, let's talk about the cultural portfolio for a moment. You talked about Fulbrights, athletes, religion— In Cameroon, it was common to see intermarriage among Muslims and Christians. That was not exceptional. Was this anything more than "check, I see, I understand, let's move on"? Did this ever become a focus in your programming?*

WALSH: No, not on the religious side at all.

*Q: No reason why it should in the '80s, I guess. What about the IO (Information Officer) function? The IO function was quite different from now. Nobody had Internet, so officials and journalists depended a lot on the wireless file, as you said It was not a pyramid. It was a hierarchical pole. It was PAO, then IO, then CAO, I think, at most posts. Talk about the portfolio of the IO as different from your own.*

WALSH: Well, the IO was very good, but once again, we're sort of limited as an Anglophone institution in a Francophone country. So, the books in Paris, \_\_\_ and so on like that, that was very good. That was a good deal for both the CAO and the IO. Also, TV-- Cameroon had just started TV the year I arrived.

*Q: TV news in particular, I guess, right?*

WALSH: Right.

*Q: So, this was '84, do you think?*

WALSH: They started TV in '84.

*Q: And it was CRTV (Cameroon Radio Television) exclusively. It was a monopoly, I think.*

WALSH: Exactly. It wasn't on 24 hours a day or anything like that, and they had to split it between Anglophone and Francophone programs and so on. I still remember Julius \_\_\_\_\_. I don't know if he's still around, but he did an English week in review on Sunday nights that everybody watched. All the Anglophones watched it. He used to say, "It's a tough world out there, and many bad things have happened." Then he'd say, "Things have been good in Cameroon. Let's keep it that way."

*Q: Oh my gosh. That's like a Walter Cronkite tagline.*

WALSH: Yep. "Things are good here. Let's keep it that way." It was also a sort of warning. Another time, the journalists went on strike, and President Biya was down in Douala. So, he's visiting there, and he wakes up in the morning, and he wants to hear Radio Cameroon. Well, guess what? It wasn't on the air. What does that tell your African strongman?

*Q: There's a coup in the making.*

WALSH: Exactly. So, let's just say that the Journalists' Association of Cameroon was not too smart. They put the police over that broadcast house and beat the shit out of everybody. But, you know, just imagine! You're down in Douala— So, yeah.

*Q: Well, let's see. So, you had gone from Ahidjo to Biya. In the first two years, Biya was quite different from what he's become recently, which is a pretty rigid—*

WALSH: Oh, yeah. He and his cabinet spoke a good game. Additionally, it was nowhere near as corrupt as Gabon, Kinshasa, Brazzaville, and so on. He had the odd tanker that might go missing, but nothing big. Because it was Anglophone and Francophone, and there were north and south and other divides, they had to keep everybody happy. So, everybody got a little bit, but not— It wasn't like Nigeria.

*Q: That leads me to the next question. This suggests that your IO – and you, as the PAO – probably had relatively good access and entrée to CRTV. How were you able to parlay that into getting favorable coverage or any coverage of the U.S.?*

WALSH: Oh, absolutely. Pretty much, we'd just get good, positive coverage. We would do IVs with the journalists. We'd do TV programs, because it was a new TV system. So, we would send them off the United States to do news stories in the U.S. You can walk in, have coffee with them and so on like that, and there were no problems. We'd get superb coverage of our programs – like our marathoner, Lee Evans – and they'd do discussions and interviews with our English teaching program and the Francophone press and so on like this on Francophone radio.

*Q: This might have been a terrific post for the IO, at the time.*

WALSH: Yeah. I would say it would have been and it was, because we came in— Art moved out— They must have left in '76 or '77, and they were replaced by Morgan \_\_\_\_\_ and Judy Moon.

*Q: Oh, I remember them.*

WALSH: Judy Moon came in to be the CAO. This was her first overseas post, and she was the ACAO (Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer). Of course, we had JOTs (Junior Officer Trainees) at that time, but as a JOT, she was the ACAO under Barrie for a year. She found him the most condescending human being she ever dealt with. You have to remember that Barrie was British, and he had a PhD.

*Q: So, you didn't find him that way, but she did.*

WALSH: Well, he was also a guy. And we're talking about 1985. Of course, she also found me positive. She knew some things about computers, too. So, after a little while, we didn't have a wireless file; we had a computerized file. It was amazing. So, in that way, she sometimes had to go over to the embassy and help them with their computers.

*Q: Well, you just talked about the transition of a small team. Do you think two or three years— What's the best amount of time? When you lose Barrie Walkley, you lose something. What do you think is a good rule of thumb for the length of a post in hardship or non-hardship? Do you think the USIA system had it pretty well worked out?*

WALSH: Yeah. I think that two years in a hardship post, with a third or fourth year on board— It depends on how you are. You had some guys— It wasn't John Burns. It was the Irishman. He did four years in Lagos. I remember when we were looking for somebody, somebody said he was IO or PAO in South Africa.

*Q: Yes. The guy who lives in Cape Cod. I know who you mean.*

WALSH: So we said, "He's got kids going to college. Give him a call." He spent four years in Lagos. Two years is fine. If you're doing well— Barrie did three years with no trouble at all. The third and fourth year were on option, and that was a good way to do things. The other thing about being in some of those countries----This didn't happen to me in Cameroon---- you feel that you're at the end of the world, sometimes. So, you want to go back to Washington or to a larger post or something like that.

*Q: So, transition is good?*

WALSH: Yeah. Once again, Judy, being the ACAO for six months or more under Barrie, as horrible as she may have found it, she benefited tremendously. Once again, as a CAO, that's just the way— He was just the type of person you want to have trading somebody up. That was the other good thing about Africa or USIA. They assigned junior officers to posts and people, rather than, "This post always gets a junior officer." The area office would say, "You don't want this guy being this person's mentor. It's not going to work."

*Q: At the time it seemed like a bureaucracy, but looking back, it seems like a family, doesn't it?*

WALSH: Yeah. So, once again, people who knew Barrie said, "Hey, he would be a fabulous mentor," and it worked out very well. All of the doors were open, and once again, Cameroon, because of throwing back the coup and the reinstatement of the democratically elected government, were the golden boys. Biya got a presidential visit, he talked with Reagan, he did all this, he had a full state visit. We were thrilled. We also had a secretary of State visit. That doesn't happen too often in Africa.

*Q: So, the secretary went to Cameroon while you were there?*

WALSH: Yep. George Shultz.

*Q: Fantastic. Let's look towards completing the Cameroon segment. There's no time limit, but you mentioned sports and the use of the IV program to strengthen an already good relationship with the CRTV. What could you see in Biya at that time that made him so rotten and so terrible 20 years later? He turned so bad. Did you get any inkling?*

WALSH: No. It didn't show. Additionally, as you say, he said all the right things. He never even thought of saying anything about, "I like this. I think I'll be president for life." No. He knew the right words to say and so on like this. I'm not saying he was a con artist, but he did get very positive vibrations from us, from the West Germans, from the Brits, and from the French. Additionally, we had very active East German and Russian embassies there.

*Q: Yeah. And a big French embassy, which I think was always the most important one.*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: Gosh.*

WALSH: The French, I have to say, had a very strong commercial class there. They had construction companies who did roads and so on like this.

*Q: Well, this was the Union Française (French Union), still, set up by De Gaulle. It had not yet fractured and splintered as it did later. You did have the CFA franc (Franc of the Financial Community of Africa), I guess, at that time.*

WALSH: If you had enough CFA, you did well. You could buy almost anything, compared to places I had been before.

*Q: Right, because it was an international currency pegged on the French. So, this is positive. Neal, you had a great guardian angel or something over your shoulder taking*

*you from one very positive experience to the next. This is a great story. Any other positives to remember from the Cameroon assignment?*

WALSH: Everything worked well. We had good personnel, both FSNs and Americans. The relationship with the embassy— The ambassador knew how to use USIA. —very much, and we worked well with the whole— Once again, the embassy – be it the spies or the political section—

*Q: I'm shocked, Neal. Did we have spies? I'm shocked.*

WALSH: Additionally, there was the military attaché. They were all very familiar with USIA and all very happy to work with us.

*Q: Any comments on how Kathleen made her life meaningful at this time?*

WALSH: We had three kids. I will ask her the next time I talk to her, and I'll say, "Dan wants to know how you made your life meaningful in these places."

*Q: Or how Neal did not prevent you from having a meaningful life. However you want to put it.*

WALSH: Oh, that'll be a great way to put it.

*Q: She did intimate, at one point, that she would have interesting things to say in an interview – not to contradict what you're saying, but just as a different angle. That would be fun, someday. Let's look at finishing up this phase. Any other positive or negative things? Do you want to talk about how you began to look at your following assignment, or should we wait until next time?*

WALSH: Let's wait until next time.

*Q: I'm going to stop the recording. We're saying goodbye for today. It's the 26<sup>th</sup> of May.*

WALSH: Right. I will speak to you at four o'clock on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

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*Q: This is Dan Whitman talking with Neal Walsh. I think it's May 28<sup>th</sup>. Off we go. We've got you in Cameroon, ready to go to your next assignment.*

WALSH: Right. You know what, it must have been later in the year in '77, because we had originally signed up for— well, I had asked for an extension. It was a two year or greater hardship post, but our \_\_\_\_\_ came in on Thursday, a French Jesuit, and saved us. There were some good things about the place, but our daughter, Bridget, got very sick, and there was no hospital at all. You had to call the doctor. The public hospital was absolutely out of the question, and we had two incidents with that.

First, we had a school bus crash, and they brought the kids there. This was at the beginning of the AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) business, so you didn't want to have anybody get a blood transfer or anything like that. So, that was sort of traumatic for the kids who got taken there. It was like any African emergency room – you had blood on the walls up to your shoulder practically, you know? Another time, my Fulbright scholar who was teaching English there got malaria. He had two great experiences. One, we brought him to the hospital, and they gave him a slip that said 147. He says, "Is this my room number?"

We said, "No. That's your place in line." So, we brought him to the embassy, where my wife was the nurse. The guy is having cramps and everything. He's lying on the floor, and the doctor from Lagos is coming through, the regional medical officer. He sees him on the floor, and he says, "Hey, what's with you?"

He says, "Man, I don't know, but I think I've got malaria or something. I'm in bad shape."

The guy said, "Hey, did you get your—" What's the shot that you get?

*Q: You're supposed to get chloroquine—*

WALSH: No, gamma-globulin. He says, "Hey, did you get your gamma-globulin shot?"

The guy said, "No."

He says, "See what happens?!" And he took off.

We said, "That's the doctor." Once again, in this place, whatever his agreement was, the doctor wouldn't see Fulbrighters. In most places I'd been, they were treated as part of the family.

So, Bridget got sick, and there was a local clinic run by a French woman. All it was, was a semi-clean place with a French doctor and a couple of French and Cameroonian nurses. She just passed in and out of consciousness. They think it might have been typhus; they didn't know. Laboratory tests didn't exist there, for God's sake. So, after that happened, Kath and I had a talk and agreed that this was not a good place for three active kids. We don't want them cowering in the house. That was one of the great things about the place; you could get out and go around and play and do whatever you wanted. So, we transferred back to Washington.

*Q: Wait, how did Bridget make it out?*

WALSH: Well, she's alive and well today. She was touch and go for a few days, and then she had a long convalescence.

*Q: Did you ever find out— Do you think it was typhus?*

WALSH: I think so. That's what the French guy thought, and he, of course, was your basic French doctor. He'd work on a patient, go have a smoke and a glass of wine, and then come back and so on. So, we went back to Washington, and I was in IIP (Bureau of International Information Programs). My specialty there was international trade and economics and policy. So, I had a good time there.

*Q: Okay. IIP – or I guess they called it P, back then – was the prestigious place to be in USIA at that time, as I remember.*

WALSH: Well, I didn't look at it that way. I had spent time on a desk, and I thought that was the place to be. But it was pretty good. I was having a fine time there. Let's see. We did Gorbachev's visit. That was a big deal for us. That was his first visit in late '87, early '88. I'm not sure. Probably late '87; it was cold. I do remember that. Then, of course, we had the other thing that was fabulous to work on, the dramatic stock exchange collapse in November of '87. That was one of the great introductions to the interagency. Nobody wanted anything to say until we knew what happened.

Baker was secretary of Treasury at that time, and he sure did not want to say, "Boo." I think a lot of people traced what happened back to his presentation at an international conference in Scandinavia where he said, "Weak Dow or strong Dow, these things don't really bother us. Our trade levels are where we want them to be," and so on. Immediately, the stock went down on a Thursday faster and deeper than ever. This is where I met many people that I met later on in my next assignment. I was going to the Treasury and trying to get a statement out of those guys, and it was pretty hard. The White House wasn't putting out any statements, either. So, yeah, that was a good week or so spent chasing the paper.

*Q: We're picking you up again in '87, '88 with Baker and the stock market uneasiness.*

WALSH: Right. Then, there was Gorbachev. Then, there was the process of bidding. As I indicated, we came home about a year early, and I didn't really feel like being in Washington that much at that time, so I started looking at various jobs that might be available. The press attaché job in Bonn, Germany was open. That had a lot of attractions. One, nobody really got promoted out of it in the recent past. I think we've gone to people there. But you had a high school. You had schools for the kids. It would be my first non-hardship assignment. Additionally, it would be another language. I had done what they called at the time, "opening my window." So, I'm running down on my time. My clock was running. So, I decided I would bid on Germany.

*Q: Opening your door means you were at an 01 at that time?*

WALSH: Yeah. So, I open the window and I'm bidding on Bonn. Now, of course, coming from Africa and bidding on a European assignment is very tricky. The German club is even worse than Europe to get into. So, a lot of people were bidding on this thing. It was

just terrible. I remember that I would consult with my colleagues every morning. One morning, Vic Jackovich— Do you know him?

*Q: I remember the name.*

WALSH: Now, Vic was in the African area at that time, and he had finished an assignment as IO (Information Officer) in Nairobi. I'd say, "Keep your eyes open." I don't know— He was a desk officer, I think, in AF (Africa Bureau). I'm not sure where he was. He might have been in Europe. I'm not sure. So, I told him, "Keep your eyes out for people who are bidding on this thing." He called me and told me that this guy, Paul Kennedy, who was an African American and PAO (Public Affairs Officer) in Brussels— It was either USIS (United States Information Service) Brussels or U.S. NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). I'm not sure where he was, but he spoke French and German and had a good track record. He looked pretty good.

*Q: He wanted IO Bonn?*

WALSH: Yep. Well, also at this time, Jackovich— We're having lunch one day, and he says, "Paul Kennedy called me, and he was looking at this job as PAO in Lusaka."

I said, "I hope you told him that's pretty good, huh?"

He goes, "What? No? You're crazy. I can't tell him that."

I said, "Talk to him. Tell him it's the best place if you have kids."

*Q: Oh, Neal, you're so Machiavellian.*

WALSH: Yes. All of a sudden, it looks like old Kennedy's got it. It had gotten down to me and him, and obviously, he had had German experience. He had the German language and so on and so forth. So, he gets selected. Well, maybe two or three weeks after he got accepted for that job, Kennedy, who was the PAO at OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) in Paris, dies. He's dead.

*Q: Oh my gosh. So, Kennedy went there?*

WALSH: Kennedy called. He said, "Hey guys—" I don't think the guy was cold. "Guys, I'd really rather go to Paris." And they said okay.

*Q: Which opened up IO Bonn.*

WALSH: Exactly. There was nobody else. This was January, and you had to start language right away. So, the European area and Bonn all said, "No, this guy's never been to Germany. He's never done this or that." The PAO at that time, Terry Catherman, had begun his career in the occupation period. So, come on. Let's see. Everybody else had already done a tour in Germany. They were just saying, "This can't fucking happen."

Pat \_\_\_ was in personnel. Personnel backed me up very well. They sent me off to language school.

Phil Arnolds was head of IIP at that time, and I went in and said, “Phil, I don’t want to seem like I’m two faced, but I’m going to bid on this German job.”

He said, “Hey, what? Sitting around here doing press releases versus Bonn? There’s no question. Go right ahead.” So, I got that, and I did not six months but nine months of language training, from January to September. My German— I tell you, even the Germans were baffled by my German. I can still remember a moment – and actually, it was only a couple of months into the training program – when we were in the elevator at the old FSI (Foreign Service Institute) building.

*Q: The one in Rosslyn.*

WALSH: In Rosslyn. We were in the elevator, and the elevator had glass walls, and it was raining or something that day. One of the instructors is with me. She says, “I like your sweater,” you know. . I said, “Yes, it’s terrible out there today, isn’t it?” She was saying, “Hey, you have a nice sweater on,” and I’m saying, “Yeah, it’s raining all over the place, isn’t it?”

So, I go and land in this place where everybody speaks— Terry Catherman gave me a hard time on my German. He said, “Look at all of us.” Terry had two German wives. What the fuck do you think? That’s an unfair comparison. Even you, Terry, had a German wife once. Give me a break. But the ambassador there was Rick Burt, a really horrible man. So, he saw himself very much in competition with the Russian ambassador. The Russian ambassador— This was Gorbachev and Gorby Mania. The terror was that the Germans might slip and make an agreement with this awful, nice guy for a neutral Germany outside of NATO that had unified. Gorbachev was abdicating. Hanging out with the East Germans was no fun at all, and he’d be glad to give them to the West Germans. So, we had to really do nice things and show things up, but our airplanes were crashing all over the place. In ’87-’88, we had 13 air crashes.

*Q: In the military, right?*

WALSH: In the military. There were about 300 casualties overall. One of them was at Ramstein early in June or July of ’88. That was a couple 100 right there. But every time one of these things went down, you were wiping out five or six German civilians, you know? So, on \_\_\_\_\_, the U.S. presence was the big issue between us and the Germans. Amazingly enough, within the American community – because you had a huge American community of more than 230,000 troops and so on – there was an attitude of, “Hey, we won the war. So what? We can do what we want.” So, this was a problem.

Going through the German press, talking to the German press, you would get a lot of them saying, “It’s time for the Americans to leave.” Another issue there was what we called \_\_\_\_\_. The American Air Force was trained in Germany, because it was one of

the few places in the world where you could be 300 feet off the ground. So, when the F-18s, the new ones, started flying, you'd get a plane coming down the Rhine— Now, those are not mountains on either side of the Rhine; those are hills. They were running between the hills to avoid radar.

*Q: Traumatizing the people who lived there.*

WALSH: Exactly. The Air Force did it because they could do it, because it was in the president's Status of Forces agreement, that the German government and the German air force and military would have no direct control over the training activities of the U.S. Air Force. So, here you have an urban-type area where you can fly your planes at 300 feet and hide from radar.

*Q: Not good public relations at all.*

WALSH: Exactly. Trying to talk to the military into a more accommodational situation was just incredible. I remember that after I'd been there a couple of months – this was maybe early '89— Well, first off, I got there in September. In November, we had a plane crash north of us, up in the Ruhr. I was introduced to the politics of all this, because my first thought was, the ambassador goes up there and says how sorry we are that six or seven people are dead. This brought me into the whole praxis. The ambassador did not want to go in there because he would be criticized by the generals as being soft on these issues. Since this was an election year, he certainly wanted to stay in this administration, so he did not want to have somebody talking bad back in Washington.

So, we didn't go until the next day – the day after. We had all sorts of stories coming out from the German press about armed Americans keeping Germans away from their homes that have been destroyed when they just wanted to get the family valuables out and so on like this. I'd say, "These articles here, we have to call them up and tell them it's not right. We'll put the news out and so on like this."

Terry Catherman said, "Oh, you don't want to do that. You get in a pissing contest with them and then—"

I said, "Hey, you've got to really be serious about this."

So, we would do that, but you had to push back, because the German press was very vociferous on these presence issues. So, that was my first trial by fire there.

*Q: I remember you saying that you had to deal with a real curveball.*

WALSH: I realized that this was going to be a big part of my job as we went along. Now, one part about Burt was that— *The Wall Street Journal* was taking shots at him every now and then. So, my assistant was a guy called Bill Bach. He was the assistant press attaché. He had a welcome dinner for me with some of the American press. There was the *Wall Street Journal* guy who Burt hated and was terrified of. So, we're talking about this, that, and the other thing, and somehow, I mention that my uncle was a fireman in

Newark, New Jersey. This guy, God, I forget his name, but he was another Irishman. He said, “That’s amazing. My father was a guy there.”

I said, “My uncle’s name was Jack Clifford.”

He goes, “Jack Clifford? He got injured and became my father’s driver when my father was the department chief.”

“Uncle Jack also put in the plumbing in my house when I was a kid.”

He says, “He did the same for me at my place.” So, we started talking about Newark and this and that and growing up Catholic Irish and so on like this. I never had any trouble with him ever again. He’d call me and say, “I’m going to say this and this about Rick.”

I’d say, “Tone it down a little bit. Cut it back here,” and so on like that. Whether you were dealing with American journalists, German journalists, or international journalists – which we had a great number of there – that’s what it was. It’s personal relations and knowing your stuff.

*Q: Can we say luck of the Irish?*

WALSH: Oh, no. There are a lot of dumb Irishmen out there.

*Q: I haven’t met any dumb ones – or if I did, I didn’t know they were Irish. Let’s see. That’s an incredible story. So, the source of criticism for the ambassador, The Wall Street Journal, suddenly became your lapdog sort of.*

WALSH: I wouldn’t call him a lapdog, but he would listen to reason.

*Q: Did the ambassador know that this had happened, that you had made this crazy coincidental connection?*

WALSH: No, and I wouldn’t tell him because he would use that to push me to try to push and pull stories out. That was his whole thing. That would change the nature of our relationship.

*Q: Absolutely. Good judgment.*

WALSH: Somehow or another, I don’t know why, we had a poisonous relationship with the front office. It was probably early in ’89, it might have been, when Terry, as PAO, and I, the press officer, were called to see the DCM. While we’re going down, Terry says to me, “Look, just one thing I want to tell you is how happy I am with our relationship with the front office and how it’s going. Since you arrived, everything has been done in a clear, calm, professional way, and so on.”

*Q: Let me guess: the meeting was tumultuous.*

WALSH: The meeting was— Once again, Dobbins, whom I later worked with and liked quite a bit, was the DCM.

*Q: Oh, Dobbins, okay.*

WALSH: Yeah. So, Dobbins is sitting in his office. We come in and sit. He chews his fingernails, he looks out the window, and then he turns, and he throws a piece of paper across the desk and he says, “What the fuck is this?”

I read it, and I can’t remember what it was. It was some kind of press release stating what we were going to be doing with Germans and this or that trade group or whatever— I said, “That’s the press release I put out last night.”

“I didn’t sign off on this.”

I said, “No, I tried to get hold of you, and I couldn’t find you.” We’d just started using portable radio phones at that time. This is early ’89.

*Q: Satellite phones, right.*

WALSH: I said, “I tried it. I couldn’t get a hold of you or Rick. We’re not talking about brain surgery here, so I wanted to get it out for the six o’clock news. I sent it out.”

“Don’t you ever fucking do that again.”

*Q: Oh my gosh.*

WALSH: It was really sort of— “Terry, you haven’t told him what to do?”

“Geez, I don’t know,” and so on like this.

So, as Terry and I leave, we’re going down a hallway, and I said, “Geez, Terry, I’m awfully sorry. I didn’t know they were so sensitive about the clearance process here.”

He goes, “Oh, don’t worry. That was nothing.”

*Q: Oh, my God. It was worse than you thought.*

WALSH: He said, “That’s okay,” meaning that whatever had been happening there before I got there must have been horrible.

*Q: The delights of EUR (Bureau of European Affairs). Oh my God.*

WALSH: It was just amazing. So, I was in pretty good shape there. The other thing was that you had to give about a 15 to 20 minute briefing on the German press in the morning.

So, you had to be up at 5:30 or 6 o'clock going through the video and the newspapers we had, and then practicing your delivery. We generally had two translators on board at any time for the rough drafts in English, and then I would go over them, clear them, read them, get them ready, and do all that.

Another great thing there was— You know how there are some words that you have that you've never really used out loud because you've never had to? The big issue with the Germans was sovereignty. This was what a president's issues would be – who are we? Why should the Americans and the Allies be walking all over us? We pay for the French to be in Berlin, and what do they do? They use it as a training place for their troops. There were lots of complaints like this.

But my pronunciation of sovereignty was “sovereignty,” and after a couple of weeks there, the ambassador's special assistant said, “Now, Neal, it's pronounced sovereignty.”

I said, “No! It's sovereignty.”

He said, “I think we'd better check.” How about that? I have to say, I'd been giving the briefing for about a month, five days a week, and there it was. I'd been mispronouncing this. Sometimes, with my pronunciation of German names, I'd say, “Professor \_\_\_ is commenting upon our policy,” or something, and Catherman would go, “\_\_\_!” It was like right out of *Dr. Strangelove*. He'd slap the table and go, “\_\_\_!”

*Q: Wow. So, this was no longer Gaborone or any of your lovely previous posts. It was suddenly gray, long nights and a hostile front office. Suddenly, it was not much fun, I would say.*

WALSH: Well, it was very stressful, I have to say. But again, in a certain sense, it was good. I didn't realize that this was preparing me for the next two or three years, because we had all these issues, so we had to learn a lot of this stuff. The econ side was huge because Germany and the EU (European Union) were sometimes going in directions that we certainly didn't want. We wanted them to open up the agriculture and industrial area for us, and we wanted them to invest in the U.S. Baker ran his own shop.

So, sometimes – twice, in my first year there – Baker comes to Frankfurt to talk to the bankers and the minister of Finance without telling the embassy. Now, that's enough to get your ambassador hanging from the f'ing roof, particularly if he is sort of, how would you say, insecure already. So, that had to be smoothed out. Getting to know the people at the Ministry of Finance was a good deal because they would call and say, “Herr Baker is coming next week.”

We'd say, “Oh, that's good.” You'd be able to transmit these things from the Foreign Ministry to the ambassador, and that worked out very well for me.

*Q: So, your relations with Catherman sounded like he was a skeptic, but he was kind of won over by you, little by little. Is that correct?*

WALSH: Oh, yeah. I think he was very pleased. It took a lot of pressure and stress off him.

*Q: Ah, because you were the decoy, the guy who caught the flak?*

WALSH: Yeah. I think you've seen this. It depends on where you are and what you're doing, but who handles the ambassador? A lot of times, it's the PAO, and a lot of times, it's the IO. In this case, Catherman was very happy to have me be in the ambassador's back pocket.

*Q: Well, that's an anomaly, because the way it's supposed to happen— I think the PAO really is the intermediary, and to some extent is the buffer between the IO and the ambassador. It sounds like Catherman was all too happy to have you become the buffer.*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: Okay. Now, at some point around there, Burt went, and Vernon Walters came, is that right?*

WALSH: Right. That happened after the election.

*Q: After the U.S. election of '89?*

WALSH: '88. The election was in '88.

*Q: Right, okay. Then, Burt went back to Arms Control or something like that?*

WALSH: Yeah. That was a big deal because the election— Now, this is Germany. This is not Cameroon. Let's see. Had I been anywhere overseas when we had elections? Nope.

*Q: Okay. Let's see.*

WALSH: '72 to '76— But I was out— and then '75— Carter! Oh, yeah, okay. When Carter was elected, I was in Zaire. That's not exactly like— Not comparable.

*Q: So, Walters was a much more genial, friendly guy I think, is that right?*

WALSH: Oh, yeah. We had— The election for Bush was a big deal. That was great, because that was sort of my first big event after the air crash. So, we rented an elephant, we rented a donkey, we had hundreds of people including the minister of Finance, the minister of Foreign Affairs. This is a big deal. That was a great show. Then, Bush came in, and yes, Burt thought he was going to become ambassador to the court at St. James, and he got to be ambassador for Arms Control and Disarmament, which----at his level, because he had been an assistant secretary for years before going to Bonn----he thought was a comedown. But the big trick was that I and the two special assistants in the front

office had to draw straws to see who would call BMW ( Baertschi Motoren Werke) and cancel the order for the BMW right-hand drive convertible.

*Q: So, who lost the lottery—*

WALSH: Another guy who was a great guy, and he was fascinating and epitomized—. I forget his last name. John—. He was a Mormon. He was unflappable. He was sort of the key, for me. I'll tell you a Mormon story later on, but it was common to have Mormon people in the Foreign Service, because he had done his two years of missionary work in Latin America. Having two years of good Catholics slamming the door in your face, you either come out pretty weird or very unflappable. He was a great guy.

The other special assistant was Richard Dudley. He was a former enlisted Army guy who worked at the Pentagon in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He had been sent to Burt by Richard Armitage. He was there to keep an eye on Burt, because Armitage did not like Burt.

*Q: Okay. Armitage was DAS, wasn't he?*

WALSH: Yeah, he was deputy secretary later on. At that time, when he was at the Pentagon, he was assistant secretary for Plans and Policies. So, he was about the number three guy up there. He was undersecretary for Policy. In a way, he was very much doing the same thing there as he did when he was deputy secretary at the Department of State. He was a rational member of the Republican defense group. Burt was aligned with Richard Pearl and the other people who were hardliners. Richard was Armitage's guy. These guys and I all got along very well. So, that was a fine time.

So, then, we had the election. The Germans had a very warm spot for Reagan. First, during his first visit when he went there, he went to the SS ("Schutzstaffel," Protection Squadron) cemetery. After, they pointed out to him that these were SS graves, and he said, "Hey, a deal's a deal."

*Q: \_\_\_\_, right?*

WALSH: Right. Then, of course, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." Then, Bush. Now, they're hesitant about Bush, because they didn't know where Bush was going in terms of Gorbachev. It was fascinating to be in Germany during the transition, because Gorbachev was visiting the United States again, and there's Reagan, Bush, and Gorbachev. But Bush, if you remember, had a long review period, as they called it, to see how our relationships would be.

*Q: He also had spoken with Gorbachev before being elected and created a relationship that turned out to be very useful and productive. So, he was very skilled in that.*

WALSH: Oh, yeah. So, that review took a long time. We did not get a Bush visit until May of '89. That would have been, maybe, where \_\_\_\_ called you from Bonn to say, "Watch out." You didn't have to watch out for Baker. Baker was a pretty easygoing guy in many ways.

*Q: As I remember, it was the other way around, but we'll keep going. I remember you as saving me— Well, I know that the day you called was the day Baker came to Denmark. It was a disaster. As you had correctly predicted, there was no avoiding it. In one day, he went from Bonn, Copenhagen, to Oslo. By the time he got to Oslo, all press arrangements had been canceled. It was a disastrous Baker visit. Now, Bush may have been coming at a similar time.*

WALSH: Baker would have been February or March, because May was Bush. What happened with Baker was that this was the first international Secretary of State visit for him and Margaret Tutwiler. She also had another young woman who worked with her, Kim something.

*Q: Yes, I remember her very vividly. When I saw her on the tarmac, it was hate at first sight. It was like a love affair in reverse.*

WALSH: Well, setting up for Baker, our instructions were, "Local press only." So, what did we have? We had the local press – *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. So, then Baker is— I got to know him over the time period there. He was, interestingly enough, one of the most professional speakers, and he had— I always thought his eyes were cold and thinking, but he was actually a very chatty guy. Somebody asked him a question, and he would answer it many times, instead of saying, "How about this," or, "How about that?"

*Q: He was a great professional.*

WALSH: So, actually, on his first visit – and this was early '89 – Margaret Tutwiler just about tackled him off the stage. After they packed him away, she and Kim went into a room with me where I got the bludgeon. They said, "Hey, I thought we told you local press only!"

I said, "In my experience, local press is local American, international, and German reporters. We couldn't really, in a place like this— Brits, French, us— Everybody's here, and we want to just invite the Germans? The German journalists would say we were just spoon-feeding them. That's not going to do us any good. The Germans are as locked into the international world as Americans."

That sort of went along a little bit. As time went on, Margaret and I developed a very good relationship because she smoked. So, whenever we did anything, generally, she and I would go out the back door and have a cigarette and talk it over, and that was it. Actually, Bill Bach came out talking about Kim.

Bill Bach actually really had a deal there. Later on, we had a visit from Vice President Quayle. He had a young woman from the White House press office running his press side of things. She was the advance person. Bill said, "I'm watching her work her interface with the Secret Service and the military guys for the planes and stuff like this, and I'm seeing how they're treating her when she says, 'What about this,' or 'What about that?' They are so fucking condescending." So, after you do that for a few years—

*Q: You become strident.*

WALSH: Yeah. You have the ball cutter right in your pocket. When you're in a position where you can squeeze the ball, you will. That's sort of— I was like, "Bill, I think you're right. That's exactly it." So, that was good. Then, we had the May visit by Bush, which was a three day visit that just worked out very well. It was lowkey. I have to say, everybody said it was a lot nicer than a Reagan visit. As much as the Germans loved Reagan, apparently scheduling and other stuff all had to go through his wife.

*Q: Oh, absolutely.*

WALSH: So, doing advance work and getting things set up and doing the press work for Bush was just a pleasure.

*Q: Much easier. Nancy Reagan was pure poison, and she developed hatred wherever she went. That's not a political comment; that's just the way it was.*

WALSH: Well, I'm sitting in the back of the van, I remember, and we're doing some of the advance visits to various protocols, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The doctor is talking to the Air Force One people, and they're chatting about how nice it is that they didn't have to wait to hear from California, from the astrologer, about setting up the schedule. You heard rumors like that, and sometimes it was sort of said in the newspaper, but no, it was for real. They really did do this. Here you're talking about one of the most successful presidents in the United States, and we're calling in the sheiks to tell us what to do.

*Q: Yeah. That was really unbearable.*

WALSH: But Bush was a total pro, and his people were so easy. Then, of course, dealing with Baker almost all the time was just incredible. The Germans were leaning— Since 1946 or '47, this whole thing of a neutral Germany united was the thing that had been held out to the Germans. "Get rid of these NATO guys, and we'll get rid of East Germany. You can have it." Of course, my feeling was that if the Russians attacked, they'd only get 50 or 60 kilometers into Germany, because by that time they would have stolen all the BMWs and wristwatches. You can't believe the difference in the societies of East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and West Germany.

I think I told you about Poland. Going back, it may have been— When I came in '77 to go to Krakow, Bob \_\_\_\_\_ had a dinner for me. We had dinner with Bob and Marybeth,

and he said, “Hey, there are 250 Poles or 1,000 Poles who visited Italy last year. Once they’ve seen that, they’re not going to believe anything.” It was like, why don’t we invite the Russian army to take over?

*Q: It wouldn’t last long. Good point. Now, maybe you’re going to get to this, but I have always been very curious. At the time, I was doing NATO tours and bringing NATO country journalists to East and West Berlin and all of that. We were told at the U.S. mission to East Berlin that the policy was for a united Germany, but we did not really mean it. I remember that very explicitly. Vernon Walters got out in front of the entire D.C. establishment and called for a united Germany. I believe my understanding is that the establishment in Washington was furious that he would do such a thing, but then by making that statement, he caused U.S. policy to drift towards what it had said it wanted – a united Germany – but had never actually wanted. How do you remember this?*

WALSH: How do I remember that?

*Q: What did Walters really want, and was he alone when he made that statement encouraging reunification?*

WALSH: Now, first off, with reunification, we’re going through that whole thing. You’d almost think that May 1989 was the last normal presidential visit to Germany, because beginning in June, you had demonstrations in East Germany and the exodus of East German citizens. We were watching what was happening, and a lot of different things happened here. You had the Gorbachev visit to East Germany. Then, you had the question of Genscher as the foreign minister. He is from the Social Party of Deutschland, not the People’s Socialist Party. It was a coalition government. He was famously close with \_\_\_\_\_ and Gorbachev and so on like this. The Germans were very happy with what Gorbachev was saying.

We’d say, “Wait a minute, are we going to live in the garage? What’s going on with us? Where do we fit in here?” So, that was our approach. The U.S. was a positive factor. But in Germany, once again, you’ve got to go back. You’ve got the U.S. military \_\_\_\_\_ problem. You’ve got 250,000 troops there. You’ve got \_\_\_\_\_ saying, “Get these guys out of here. Leave AFRTS (Armed Forces Radio and Television Service), leave the radio station and the TV, but the rest can go.” So, it was a very delicate time.

So, Walters comes. He was known as a premiere Cold Warrior. They’re saying, “Oh, Vernon Walters, he’s here to keep everyone in line and keep an eye on \_\_\_\_\_ and turn back the Russians.” But one thing— Walters had just the best political feel for anything, and he would watch these things go on.

It might have been August or September. The East Germans were piling up in Czechoslovakia and in Hungary. It was fascinating, because you had these tens of thousands of East German refugees piling up in these so-called Communist countries. They were all demanding asylum from West German embassies. How do you work that out? What are we going to do with them? So, they worked out trains from

Czechoslovakia to take them to West Germany and so on. Then, the Hungarians said, “Hey, they want to go on to Austria, that’s okay with us.”

When that happened, Walters said to us at a staff meeting in Germany, “That is the end of the Eastern European empire. They’re done.” Once the Hungarians had allowed free passage for East Germans through them on to Austria, that was it. The West Germans would welcome them, and, he said, “How this is going to go, I don’t know.” But always in his mind was the fact that this was the beginning of a process that would bring about German unification. That was how he spoke of it inside, not publicly. He was not going out and talking about this in speeches and talks at all.

*Q: That’s my question. He was communicating with Washington about this. Do you have any idea what feedback he was getting from main State?*

WALSH: Main State was looking at it in a very hierarchical way. First off, Baker is his boss. Who was his assistant?

*Q: Armitage? I don’t know.*

WALSH: Additionally— So, there were some times when there were miscommunications. This is going forward to another area. In November, when the wall came down, he was in touch directly with the national security advisor, Brent Scowcroft. He was directly in touch with the president. Who was the third one? It was an older guy.

*Q: No, I’m thinking of Scowcroft. I don’t know.*

WALSH: Oh, I know. It was Larry Eagleburger, He was the interim Deputy Secretary of State when Baker left to become a private practice attorney. Those are the three guys who guided things through. Baker’s attention was focused, to a great extent, on the Soviet Union\_\_\_. This is where Bush got burned a little bit. We’re talking 1990 now, with the Chicken Kiev.

*Q: The Quayle speech, right.*

WALSH: No, no, that was his speech.

*Q: I meant that Quayle was the one who called it the Chicken Kiev speech, I believe. I think it was.*

WALSH: I don’t know. On the night of the fall of the wall Ambassador Vernon Walters was in direct touch with President Bush and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft. They were in the Oval Office talking to him.

*Q: Now, I know we’re getting to a really great story about what you saw on television that night.*

WALSH: We were watching TV, the news, every night before. As the press attaché, I'm embarrassed to say this, but we'd catch the clips the next morning, and we'd check the translations. Now, during the period of East German deflation—. It was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of East Germany and Gorbachev watched the tanks and parades and everything, and then finally..They said he whispered, "It's over."

In November, we're watching the exodus. East Germany was going down like a balloon letting the air out. I remember some of the interviews that were in the German papers with East Germans. People would say, "It's not that we're Communists or non-Communists. We just want to be able to live a life like other people" – meaning, Western people.

On the night that the wall came down, I watched the news then called the ambassador and said, "The minister of the Interior appeared on the news in East Germany, and to my knowledge he said, 'All East Germans who wish to travel to friendly neighboring countries will be able to do so.'" Now, if you listen to him carefully, he's not really changing anything. You had to have exit papers, right? Additionally, who's a friendly country? Is West Germany a friendly country? So, it didn't change things very much.

We had all senior staff listening to or watching the news. The question was, "What do they mean by this?" By that time we were getting word from Berlin that crowds are building up on the other side of the wall. This was just incredible. We all realized that something literally earthshaking was happening. By that time we had gotten the ambassador in direct touch with the mission in Berlin.

Ambassador Walters was in touch with the White House, watching the TV and giving updates to President Bush and Scowcroft. Right off the bat, Bush says - and this is why I love Bush – "We've got to watch this very carefully and see how this plays out."

During Tiananmen Square, which happened a couple months earlier, he was getting pushed for not being aggressive enough in addressing what the Chinese were doing and not being supportive enough of the students, he said, "Until I have a better idea of what is actually happening in China, we won't make any major decisions, because I don't know what's happening there, and I was ambassador there. We're going to wait and see."

That's how Bush took that first night. Congratulations to everybody. Everybody realized it was earthshaking, but where it was going to go or how it was going to go, we didn't know. We were supportive of the Germans. Chancellor Kohl was in Washington at that time.

*Q: Oh my gosh.*

WALSH: There was also a restriction that German planes could not fly to Berlin. Only the occupying powers could fly to Berlin. This happened on a Thursday night, Armistice Day. We had to get an airplane to Hamburg to meet the chancellor. He flew in on Friday. We found a plane to get him to Berlin.

*Q: So, wait, the Americans got the chancellor to Berlin because he had no other way to get there?*

WALSH: Absolutely.

*Q: Wow.*

WALSH: I went with the ambassador on Saturday or Sunday, the first or second day after the wall came down. We were met by the commanding general of the American garrison, whose first words were, “Don’t give the golf course up, sir.”

We then took a helicopter flight around West Berlin. It was amazing.

There were East German cars all over Bonn and West Germany. It was a beautiful, bright, all day event. You could see the sun flashing off the chrome of miles and miles of cars coming to West Berlin. It was just incredible. I also have to say that everybody watched this, we looked at it, and this was a culmination of everything we worked for for many years. There were tears in people’s eyes. As Walters said, later on, of course there were tears. We all realized we were going to be unemployed pretty soon.

It was just incredible. Ambassador Walters made a few pro forma visits to the garrison and the mayor, but that was it. The place was packed with American journalists and thousands of other people. Pablo Casals was there, playing his cello. It was an incredibly riveting time.

Then, there is the question of what to do. Policy had not— The policy and, generally, the discussions were that we underline our commitment to seeing a unified Germany. So—

—when we might see him, I don’t know. But a week later, a couple of things came up as the next couple of weeks came off. First off, the Germans issued from the Chancellery a 14 point memorandum— “Here are the things that have to be done in order to reach unification.” They were sort of broad strokes. There was quite a bit of kerfuffle in the sense that the Germans had not consulted with the Allies.

Walters handled it pretty well, because when he was asked, “Did the Germans consult with you?” he said, “Not directly, but anyone with their ear to the ground would know that this is the direction they were going in.” That sort of pissed off the British and French ambassadors, but it kept us appearing to be in the loop. Then, shortly after that, he had an interview with a French Sunday morning political radio show. This was apparently a big deal in French. It was a regular weekly international affairs program. There are three French journalists in a chair, and they interview a distinguished person. So, Walters went with it.

Now, his French and his ability to work was just absolutely incredible. He grew up in Paris. He started secondary school there and never finished secondary school, period, but

his French was perfect. Watching him handle these discussions was just awe-inspiring. But during one of the commercial breaks, I approached him, because he had said, “I believe we will see Germany unified within the next year or 18 months.”

I went to him and said— I’m thinking in German, but I clearly ought to be saying this in French. I said, “I think we might want to use the conditional there. This could happen, this is possible. ‘C’est possible’ (It’s possible) or ‘devoir’ (to have to) or something like that.”

He looked at me with his big eyes and put his hand down. He said, “I don’t see why I should have to say that. It’s going to happen. Period.”

“Okay— You do that—”

Now, on the Monday thereafter, Baker is in Brussels, and he is asked, “Vernon Walters says that Germany would be united within the next 12 to 18 months.”

Baker says, “General Walters is a very distinguished statesman, but I would not go so far as to make predictions.” That’s what he said. I got a call from Margaret Tutwiler that said, “Can’t you keep that old man quiet?”

I said, “That’s not easy. People want to call him, and he’s too prominent to hide. You can’t just have him not do anything.” I said, “I will continue to try to nuance this.” Baker was looking at the collapse of the Soviet Union. That is an immense country. What are they going to do? We don’t know. We’ve got Gorbachev saying that this was costing them a fortune and they couldn’t do this or that. But basically, first, the CIA, Webster and those guys, are saying that we can’t trust them. Secondly, can he control the situation to the point where all this happens peacefully? You’ve got 200,000 troops in East Germany. Where are you going to put them? How are you going to do this? We’re looking at incredible costs and so on.

I forget the dates, but we had a meeting of the British, the French, and the Russians in Kiev to discuss the pace and direction of German unification. We did not participate in that because Walters had continued to say, “This is what we’ve been committed to since 1945. We cannot go back or dilute our support for this.” So, yeah, he became, in a way, the godfather of German unity.

Then, finally, we came out with the Two Plus Four Agreements. How it would be negotiated was what we called the Two Plus Four. It was in Bonn and Bad Godesberg, and there was Condoleezza Rice, and— Who else? There was someone who was an undersecretary and then became head of the World Bank. Then, under Bush Two, he was the trade representative. The name will come.

*Q: Zoellick.*

WALSH: Zoellick. Some of the best conversations I ever saw were the morning briefings and discussions with Walters, Zoellick, Condoleezza, the head of our political section, and others about what we're going to be doing about this or that today. Zoellick was a very careful guy, and Walters was not necessarily that careful. So, there he is, having morning breakfast, and he'd be waving his croissant, crumbs going in all directions. You'd just see Zoellick going, "Oh my God. What am I doing here?" It was just a great— But Two Plus Four, I think, might have come in in January of '90, maybe. Nothing got settled until July of '90 when Gorbachev and Kohl— They were probably down in Georgia at a vacation place or something. Gorbachev agreed to allow a unified Germany to stay in NATO. That was the big question right up until the last minute.

*Q: Neutral or NATO, right. An enormous concession by Gorbachev, which brought him much distress from his own countrymen forever after. We saw him as a hero, but the Russians certainly did not, at that point. What a story.*

WALSH: Oh, hey, it's 5:23.

*Q: That is my thinking. Let's sign off just for today. I think it's still May 28<sup>th</sup>, and I'm going to say no more recording.*

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*Q: We're going to start right now. This is Dan Whitman and Neal Walsh. I think it's July 15<sup>th</sup>. We're going to pick up and dive back into Neal's Germany assignment. You were IO in Bonn, I believe. Off we go.*

WALSH: Now, one of the things here – and actually, this is a really good note, so thanks a lot for going through that because I was wondering where we were over the last couple of days – is that you had so many consequential things happening at the same time. You had— Well, in May— Well, March 1989 was the first visit of Baker to Germany. I don't know if I mentioned that that was also my first meeting with Ms. Tutwiler. When he got off the airplane, Baker was met by \_\_\_\_, and he was escorted directly over to the press photo pool. We had pointed out to Ms. Tutwiler in our preparatory cables that this is what \_\_\_\_ always does. She said, "We want to keep it low key. No major things like this." So, immediately after that, she was like, "What's going on here?"

We said, "We told you this is what he does. You've got to be really careful here." The interesting thing is that Baker had a reputation of being a great poker player. But in cases like this, being brought over to see a journalist, he would say, "Hey, this is my friend \_\_\_\_\_," and then being asked a question, no problem— Press conferences were the same thing. To a great extent, he was not only a fabulous politician, but he was also a person challenged by ideas. So, if somebody asked him an interesting question, instead of coming out and saying, "No comment," or, "I don't know," or, "I haven't read it." The gears in his mind would be saying, "That's an interesting thing. I wonder how I would look at this."

That happened even after the airport arrival when we had a press conference with Baker. It was only for local press. Ms. Tutwiler was absolutely livid when she realized that *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, AP (Associated Press) and UPI (United Press International) were there, and so on. *Reuters* always sort of get a pass because they're half owned by the Americans and the British. But she said, "What's going on here?" To my mind, she had the clippers and was ready to go.

But I said, "These are local press. These are people here in Bonn."

*Q: I remember the dilemma, yes.*

WALSH: Did I tell you about this? Am I repeating myself?

*Q: No, this is just a generic thing. Nowadays, with the Internet, there's no such thing as local press.*

WALSH: Exactly. But we were into that sort of process. Then, in May, there was the president's visit to Poland. That was the beginning of what we called the roundtable process, which led to the first free elections in Poland. That was a big deal. I went up there to work on that visit, and it was just an amazing process. Then, during the summer – June and July – you had the visit of Gorbachev to East Germany to celebrate whatever the anniversary would have been— Let's see, if it's '89 and the event was in '45 or '47— It might have been the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the East German state or whatever. That's where he gave the godfather's kiss to \_\_\_\_\_. The celebrations were all standard Eastern European, Soviet-type things. There were marching bands, gymnasts, hard workers, and so on and so forth like this.

Right about during that visit is when Gorbachev said, "Hey, you got to get it together, pal, because we're not going to be around to subsidize you or protect you. No more Russian or Soviet support." That started that huge hemorrhage of people who were going to Czechoslovakia and then pitching up at the West German embassy and demanding asylum. This was happening in Hungary as well. Hungary declared that its border with Austria would be open. Therefore—

This is when Walters made any number of predictions throughout all of these processes. This is when he said, "The opening of the Hungarian border is the end of the Soviet glass sea." It was the end of the Soviet buffer states. Once people realized that they could leave, they would leave East Germany and Czechoslovakia and so on. We were watching this all the time and wondering. Additionally, you had tremors within the West German government, because what did this mean to them?

This goes to the kernel of the differences in approach – and these are, to my mind, nuanced – between Walters and Baker. Inasmuch as Walters watched the deterioration of East Germany and of the eastern Communist countries with the eye of somebody who had been in – as a translator, advisor, and soldier during World War II – he said, "It is time for us to fulfill our promises that have been made since the 1940s."

There was a long history of negotiations, propositions, and so on to answer what was called the German Question, which was, what do we do with Germany? The British said, "We like Germany so much we'd like two of them." A lot of this was also with posturing by both sides. The Russians would say, "Yes, if in a couple of years, Germany declares its neutrality, then we can all love and work together with a united Germany." This is an approach that they took right through the 1940s. Some of the approaches that we were getting out of Russia, at that time, were pretty much some of the reruns of the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s sort of siren calls to the Germans to unite.

It was very fascinating to see how Walters, with his historical perspective, thought that we had to fulfill our pledges of unification to Germany. Baker, on the other hand, is looking at the collapse of the opposing superpower with the thought that, aside from the British, no superpower of the sort, no empire of that scale had ever collapsed peacefully. So, Baker was thinking, how do we do this? That whole summer period brings us to November. Demonstrations had begun after the Gorbachev visit. Some had started ahead of time. But in East Germany, they were calling for democracy and holding open elections and so on like that. All of them were peaceful.

There were trains that were being routed through East Germany to West Germany, closed trains, of the East Germans who had been gathered in Hungary and Germany. These were charter trains that would bring them to asylum in West Germany. There was an agreement. There'd be demonstrations at the train stations that they went through in East Germany. As Walters pointed out, there was a small fee for getting on the runway, you might say, of a train station in East Germany. They all paid their fee and then went up and demonstrated. This is very German.

So, this went on until the total collapse of the government. The interim government made its announcement in November----we watched them on TV and didn't really know what they meant. It was sort of Delphic----all people can travel to friendly countries." What are friendly countries? If everything is open, does that mean every traveler has to go get the exit form? What's going on? By midnight, the wall was down. People were going back and forth. It got down to the colonel at the Brandenburg Gate who was calling and calling for instructions. Finally, his shift's over and he says, "I'm out of here."

Then, after that, there were any number of real, major steps that we look back on and say, "This was it." There was the 10 Point Program for Unification from Chancellor Kohl. That was a point that was set by the West Germans. They said, "Here are the bases by which we would approach or consider negotiations on unification." This was maybe two weeks after the wall came down. I'm not so sure on that, because that period from the fall of the wall until Christmas or New Year's was just packed with these things. He was issuing his 10 points, even as the English, the French, and the Russians were meeting in Kiev to decide how they were going to handle this. "We're not going to rush into anything here."

But Kohl was rushing, and the big question at that time was, did he consult with the Western occupying powers, who all continued to have serious legal positions in the country? In a sense, Berlin was still technically occupied territory. So, the question was, had he consulted? The British and French were quite frank in saying, “No, this is not right.” Walters said, “We did not have formal discussions, but anyone who had a feel for the political world extant in West Germany at the time would know that this is exactly what they would be looking for.” That didn’t land him many friends on the other side.

The other thing was that Walters said, in his appearance on French radio---- which was a big deal. It was their version of a “Face the Nation” radio show----when asked, he said, “I can imagine Germany uniting within the next several years.”

That’s when I said, “Let’s think about doing the conditional.”

He put his huge hand flat on the table and said, “I don’t see why we should do that.”

Well, by Monday, Baker had been in Europe, and he was in a press conference in Brussels. So, the day after, the question was, “Your ambassador to Germany says that he foresees German unification in the next couple of years and that this is very close.”

Baker said, “We have great admiration, and he is one of the great diplomats of our service, however, I haven’t consulted with him at this time.” “Always eager to hear from him.” Within 48 hours, I was told by Ms. Tutwiler that they were not eager to hear from him at all and couldn’t I keep that man quiet?

I said, “No, actually, I can’t. He has a feel for the country and the history here, but also, he believes he is the ambassador to Germany for the United States and that it is our role to live up to the promises we have made over the last 45 years.”

It was fascinating, because you had a triumvirate of fabulous people in Washington – Bush, who said, “We are not going to gloat over the troubles of Eastern Europe“----, who was a person who knew Vernon Walters and worked very closely with him, and Baker and Larry Eagleburger. So, you had a group of people who understood the history and the challenges of doing this all at the same time when it was still not clear what was going to be happening with the Soviet Union.

By January or February, we had the outline of the Two Plus Four. There was one contretemps between Baker and Walters in a visit to Berlin in December of ’89. So, this was six weeks or a month after the election. What had happened was the East German (?)\_\_government had fallen, and a caretaker government had taken over, promising elections and so on and so forth. It was very much an interim government. In Berlin, Baker was there to talk to the mayor of Berlin and once again, here was the place where President Reagan had made his “Tear down this wall” speech, so it was very symbolic for Baker to visit.

Baker received an invitation from the interim East German government to come and meet them in East Berlin. Baker and Walters had a serious policy disagreement on this. Walters said, "If you go there, you are visiting an unelected government with less credibility and less legal status than the old, former Communist government. It's not a government that we actually recognize right now."

Baker saw that this was very important to him and globally, offering his hand peacefully to these guys. It would show that we were not trying to impose a decision of any kind on any government. Walters felt that that was not the way to go. So, Walters returned to Bonn. As he left, he stopped in my hotel room and said, "I'm going to Bonn. Are you coming?"

I said, "Well, really, I have to work for the assistant secretary when they're visiting."

"Well, well, well—" And away he went.

I remember that there was a reception in East Berlin and Tutwiler wanted to call someone in West Berlin. However, our phones – and these were portable handphones; mobile phones, so to speak, in 1989 – had no way to make a direct call from East Berlin to West Berlin. It had to go from East Berlin to London, and then the signal would be sent back into West Berlin. So, I got to the PAO there, and I said, "Assistant Secretary Tutwiler needs a phone to make this call."

You know what his question was? "Who's going to pay for this?"

*Q: That's a good one.*

WALSH: —He was one of the Euro \_\_\_\_\_. One of the guys who's worked in Germany all of his career and stuff like that, so it was a very typical question, "Who's going to pay for this?"

I was like, "Jerry, get yourself in there. She wants to talk to so and so in West Berlin, and you have a phone, so give it to her!" You ran into a lot of that stuff that was going on at that time. Then, Baker came back and stopped in Bonn on his way out. He and Walters discussed this. Walters' nose was quite out of joint, but they got along on that point.

This happened in December. January and February were taken up by discussions on how to arrange Two Plus Four. We had two or three sessions in Bonn, another one in East Germany, trying to get everything together. Most of them were in Bonn. Another major point was during that period---- I don't know if it was in November or December---- but Kohl said, "We will make one-to-one exchanges of the West German Mark for the East Germany Mark.

*Q: Oh my gosh. That gives enormous unearned wealth to the East Germans, right?*

WALSH: Exactly. They had no wealth. They were about to turn into nothing. It was a fascinating thing, and the question came up, “How could they do this?” Every rational economist in the world said that this was going to cost them too much and be too much.

Walters said, “Look. If the Confederate States had gotten into a situation where they were a foreign state and they were about to come back to be with the rest of the United States, what would we do? Would we bargain with them as to how much their dollars are worth? No, you’d say that this was what we were going to do.” This was enormously costly to the Germans, but it was an important stake there.

So, just about everything had been tied up neatly in a package except for membership in NATO. This had been the cliffhanger question of German neutrality since the 1940s. Everybody would be happy to have a happy Germany, as long as they stayed neutral. We and the British and the French were saying, “You cannot have a neutral Germany. It has to be constrained by membership in the European community of the time and in NATO.”

Kohl went on this visit to the Crimea to visit Gorbachev, and he got the agreement. Now, Kohl and the Germans also pledged themselves – and we contributed to this – to helping to pay for the return of the Soviet occupation force from East Germany back to the Soviet Union. That included troops out of Poland and the Czech and Hungarian Republics. So, it was fascinating to see how all of these details had to mesh and come together. Walters underlined our commitment to German unity no matter what the conditions were and our support for the Kohl government. He had the White House— He had Brent Scowcroft and the president working for him. He got personal notes from the president on articles. There was an article in *Newsweek*, once, by Margaret Sullivan or something—

*Q: Oh, yeah. From the Post.*

WALSH: It said that there was tension between Walters and Baker. The president sent him a personal note saying, “Hey, don’t let the bastards grind you down. Don’t worry. You’re doing the right thing.” That was really good.

*Q: Boy. That answers, partially, a lot of questions that many of us have had about the role of Walters in this whole thing. Those of us who did not know these details had the impression that Walters was way ahead of U.S. policy and kind of making it up as he went along, incurring a lot of dyspepsia in Washington. But I guess what you’re saying is that that actually was the case, but President Bush, after considering the options, decided to back Walters on this. Is it fair to say that that’s what happened?*

WALSH: Rather than letting it go on as a catfight, the president allowed both men to take their position. The president recognized that Walters was the ambassador of the United States of America, attempting to uphold American pledges and establish the United States as the primary supporter for German unity as early as it could possibly be. At the same time, Baker is the person who had to face— He was looking at a massive danger in terms of, where does the Soviet Union go? That was just an amazing thing.

*Q: Now, it's unimaginable, to me, that this could happen today – that an ambassador, anywhere in the world, could be recognized by the president of the United States as the person authorized to actually make policy decisions. Am I exaggerating? I just cannot imagine such a thing happening. In addition, what we now call the blob – all the committees, think tanks, the National Security Council, and other State Department bureaus – I'm guessing had a lot of uneasiness with this whole thing. So, you're saying that the president actually decided in favor of Walters and silenced all the discussion? I'm oversimplifying it, but that's a remarkable thing. I can't imagine such a thing happening, not just today but in any presidency since Bush Sr. What do you think about that?*

WALSH: Well, as you say, any presidency since Bush Sr. One thing is that you had practical, intelligent, and deeply informed and educated people, steeped in the policies and the issues. So, in terms of how this went, yes, there were differences, but one, the president did not see any of these as being showstoppers and two, from his own talks with Scowcroft, revealed that Walters believed that Germany was going to go its own way here, in that the relationship between Kohl and Bush, was very close. The whole idea there was that, okay, the Germans did not consult us on a number of issues, but if you're looking at a sovereign German state and a chancellor of the influence of Helmut Kohl, then indeed— The president had a long personal relationship there with Kohl.

*Q: I can't imagine these days, again, a U.S. policy taking so much note of another country's sovereignty. It just isn't in style these days. Tell me more about Scowcroft. Which way did he sway on this, and was he part of President Bush's decision to back Walters?*

WALSH: Once again, it wasn't necessarily an all-part thing. I think Scowcroft and Condoleezza Rice, actually, as the Central European director for the National Security Council, were the parents of the Two Plus Four. It would be the two Germanys and the four occupying powers. That would be the negotiating basis there. Along the way, these were irritations, and Walters did understand. I think that his role was to represent U.S. policy to the Germans. It wasn't to say, "Wait a minute, we've got to figure out what the Soviets want to do." That would not have gone over too well. So, that was his role. People knew that was his role. Open conflict between him and Baker would be, naturally, very bad for us.

Additionally, Baker and Bush had a good personal relationship. Walters and Bush had a good relationship, too. But with Baker, it was "My friend Jim." He was never really "My friend Dick." Walters would sit there as a conservative representative to make sure the Germans did not go too far in their love affair with Mr. Gorbachev. That's why Walters could sit back and say, "Here I am. I come here with the man who is going to sit on Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, and I wind up being everybody's friend." So, yeah, the disagreements, as we came up to the Two Plus Four and eventual dates for unification, were less than later disagreements on what to do with the Yugoslavs.

*Q: Even more interesting that Baker and \_\_\_\_\_ were very close. But I see that what Walters was doing was keeping Russia away. That was another way in which Baker and Walters were actually at crossed purposes, right?*

WALSH: Baker met with \_\_\_\_\_ a couple of times in Berlin. I have to say that \_\_\_\_\_ and his crew were very smooth, very good to work with, at least at my level. I have no idea how it was at the upper level, but this was a brilliant time. Baker got on with \_\_\_\_\_, and he didn't need somebody— The problem here was – and this is probably one of the reasons that here you are, 30 years later, and you don't have ambassadors making policy – that he is working on a global policy, and his ambassador is making it quite clear that this is a country of soon to be 80 million people, and I don't think we're going to be telling them how to unite. We should be there to help them along.

That's why he always underlined that we have been making this commitment for 45 years, and we will stand by that commitment. Baker, of course, was across the \_\_\_ border looking at 250 million Russians or Soviets and saying, "What do we do with them? What do we do with their atomic weapons? What do we do with their tanks? What do we do with all of this?"

So, you had a couple of things. They got along well at that time. Where they started to headbutt was on Yugoslavia. That was in the '90s, after Unification Day, and we had a huge event there. Everybody in the world – think tanks, everything – was there. We had Kissinger coming to visit now and then. You had the vice president coming; the president came two or three times. You just had a lot of interaction. It was enough to keep a mid-level press attaché with three daughters who needed to go to college a little—

*Q: A little wound up, I think.*

WALSH: Exactly. I would remind everybody of their social and civic duty to my three daughters who needed to go to college, so they'd better not mess this up.

*Q: We'll relay that to all concerned. It's amazing, what you saw and what you were part of. So, Yugoslavia's another topic.*

WALSH: That's a couple of years down the line.

*Q: This is outside your area. Any comments on that? What was the headbutt?*

WALSH: The headbutt there was that Walters felt that \_\_\_ was giving Baker— Now, this is 10, 12, 18 months after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but we still have to go through the Gulf War. Walters thought Baker had been charmed too much, and that Bush was pushing Baker to recognize the breakaway republics in Yugoslavia. Walters felt that anything – be it the car, the Yugo, anything you could find to keep those guys united – was good. It was sort of \_\_\_\_\_ he wanted \_\_\_\_\_. But anything that they could do to keep them at peace with one another was better—

*Q: In retrospect, that was the right thing to be thinking.*

WALSH: Right. Walters said, “No, no, no, we have to look to the ethnic realities of the place.” Then, of course, the Europeans said, “This is a European problem.” Walters always repeated that with a certain scorn, because he believed that you cannot take on policies of that scale without the United States of America.

*Q: NATO, I think, was furious when Germany recognized Slovenia. NATO really didn't want that, and Germany was a solo thing there, which was the first step in recognizing the different Yugoslav republics. That led to the horrible wars in the mid-'90s.*

WALSH: That was Walters' final disagreement with Baker, and it led to Walters retiring.

*Q: Oh, okay. So, Walters was more of the \_\_\_\_\_ feeling. When you say it led to him retiring, was that from disgust or being asked to leave or what?*

WALSH: Well, he was asked to leave, we might say. This was in '91. So, it was after the Gulf War. You'd already had eight or nine months of trouble down in Yugoslavia. But in '91, he got a call from the president to say that they were looking at doing things in a new way and changing some things. Bob Kimmitt would be coming out, the undersecretary of State for Political Affairs. He would be coming out to replace him. We were in Berlin at that time. Walters got the call. We were in the car, and he said, “I just got a call. This is what's happened.” I was devastated.

But let's get back. We're back in '90, right? Then there was the July Kohl visit, which comes out with an agreement with Germany on Soviet acceptance of Germany in NATO.

*Q: This was Gorbachev's decision, right?*

WALSH: Right. There were a lot of details yet to be worked out on the Two Plus Four level in terms of financing, history, credits, all sorts of things on who owed what and so on. There were agreements on troop withdrawals and downsizing. In NATO— The other thing was----this began with Reagan and continued on---- the denuclearization of Europe. You had the MBFR (Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions) among other things. As a matter of fact, Walters said, at one time, that when the wall came down that weekend— General John Galvin was the commander in chief of U.S. forces in Europe. He said, “Somebody better call Butch and tell him not to try anything fancy on this. He's been waiting for this war for so long. This is going to break his heart.”

Actually, the difference between the 1970s and the 1980s Army in Germany was just immense. The Army in Germany in the late '80s was in the field, training, six months of the year. It was a totally professional, incredible force. As a professional force, it was so different from the '70s, when you had a draft. You'd just realize that this was a different world, nowadays, when you saw that Army. That comes down to nowadays, when they talk about the warrior ethos and so on. That didn't exist in the '70s. Everybody just

wanted to get their time in and out. So, that was another one of Walters' great quips. "Somebody better call Butch and tell him to stay in the barracks. Don't go get him."

*Q: That sounds like Strangelove stuff. The meeting in July 1990 with Kohl— Was Kohl in Washington for that?*

WALSH: No, that was Kohl in Crimea or the Caucasus. That was Kohl. Kohl was in the United States – I think I told you this – when the wall came down. The big deal was to get him back to Germany as quickly as possible, and then get him to Berlin, but he had to go on an American airplane.

*Q: Wow.*

WALSH: German-flagged planes were not allowed to land in Berlin. Like I said, this happened on Armistice Day, so we had to find Sergeant Grab A Sandwich, who was the only guy around, to get authorization to get a plane up to Hamburg to meet Chancellor Kohl.

*Q: So, that was 11/11/89? Wow.*

WALSH: Yep. So, we finally got a plane up there to bring him into Berlin, and later on, as things developed and there was a lot of going back and forth between German diplomats and government officials between the West and Berlin, Walters gave the military lawyers and everybody else an order. "This is ridiculous that the chancellor of Germany and other German officials cannot fly directly to Berlin without using our airplanes. I have nothing against them using our airplanes, but we're not looking at a sovereign state here." So, the lawyers all went off and conferred, and so on and so forth, and they worked out a new court order for Berlin. Planes would go from Bonn to Munich, and then up to Berlin.

They put that in front of the ambassador, and the ambassador said, "Are you guys out of your minds? We are dealing with a country that will still have 80 to 85 million people. It will be the largest and richest country in Europe, and a sizable part of our alliance. And you're telling me that we're going to make the chancellor and other senior diplomats of that country fly 200 to 300 miles for an hour or so out of their way, in order to go to Berlin, which, if I remember, is only about an hour and 10 minutes away from Bonn."

Everybody said, "Well, yeah. That's what we think is the best way."

He said, "I think you better take this and go somewhere else."

*Q: It does sound crazy. Munich is way out of the way.*

WALSH: Another time, Walters and I were coming in on a plane and landing in Frankfurt, and there was another small Air Force plane. Chancellor Kohl and his wife were getting on that to go to Berlin. Walters went out, chatted with him. He watched the

chancellor, who was the size of a barn door – he was big in every way, like Walters –to get on the plane. So, then, the next day, he talked to the commander in chief of the United States Air Force in Europe. He said, “I think we’d better think of a bigger plane for the chancellor.” These were small executive jets. He said, “I can’t imagine cramming that man and his family into a tiny jet.” So, after that, there was a full-sized plane available for the chancellor whenever he needed to go there.

*Q: He was the largest human being I have ever seen. He was immense.*

WALSH: Kohl or Walters?

*Q: Kohl. Walters was big, but Kohl was like—*

WALSH: Oh, yeah. I wound up standing next to him once at a ball in Germany. I was in the men’s room, and this immense wall came up next to me. It was Kohl. Walters watched him struggling to get into this \_\_\_ or whatever it was, and he said, “We’ve got to change this,” and we did. But that was fascinating. You’d have these things happen, and these lawyers – not only the embassy lawyers in the political section, but the people from Berlin – who were steeped in it, who made a career out of this— There were the Tripartite Agreements between us and the German state. You’d say, “Can we have him fly straight?”

“Oh, we’ll fix that—. Mmm, he’s got to go through Berlin, but that’s okay.” It’s like, no, that just shouldn’t happen.

*Q: It sounds like you were physically with Walters quite a bit. He took you on the plane and all. I take it you got along, really, very well with Walters.*

WALSH: I did. My viewpoint was, “Whatever you want, sir, I’ll do it,” but in general, yeah, we got along well. We both recognized we were in a period of fluidity, and his coming there sort of announced it, you might say. We were talking earlier, last time, about the number of air crashes that we had had – what we called the “invasion hype” problems of having 240,000 troops stationed in the country. We had seven or eight aircraft failures in the year and a half before I arrived. It was terrible. Actually, there was only one other crash while I was there, but it was \_\_\_\_\_ first, and that was about a month after I arrived.

At that time, \_\_\_\_\_ was in the United States, and we were talking. Walters wasn’t there. This was still at the time when \_\_\_\_\_ was there. We were closing up on the night of the crash, and we got a call from the Defense Ministry. He was not in the United States. He was in Germany. It was the Defense minister who was in the United States. They said, “We’ve got a call from the minister in Washington, and he says that we are to inform you and ask you to inform your subordinate commands that there will be no non-essential or training flights whatsoever by the U.S. Air Force in Germany until further notice.”

The special assistant to the ambassador took that call, and he put the phone down. There were three of us there, including the head of the political section. We had been there

talking about, “What are we going to do about \_\_\_\_\_?” We were in contact with military command and so on. But he put the phone down and said, “I think that is the first time that the Germans have made an issue and a directive to us of that sort.”

Everybody – the defense attaché, the representatives of the Army, Air Force, and Navy – were called and told, “Hey this is what we’ve been told. Make sure that this order has gotten from the Germans to everybody down the line.” We got a lot of pushback from the military, saying, “This is illegal. They can’t do this according to this agreement.”

The word then came from Washington – and this was before the election, or maybe right after the election – saying, “What the Germans tell you, you will do.” Doing training flights of our massive fighter plane community there was driving the Germans crazy. These flights were taking place at 300, 400 feet above their heads.

*Q: Yes, and the civilian population was way out of joint with that.*

WALSH: Well, Chancellor Kohl was way out of joint, too. He had a fundraiser on a river steamer, and two, four, six planes go over his head and he can’t hear anything.

*Q: Oh, bad style.*

WALSH: —you know, that was it. Interestingly enough, we had a conference of the military attachés and the representatives of the military. We were at the embassy with the commanders of the various forces there in Germany, and once again, this is ’88, still, or early ’89, before everything hit the road. It’s fascinating, because they were talking and saying that the Status of Forces Agreement was good, solid, and could be lived with and so on. I raised my hand and said, “I don’t know. I’ve been reading the papers, and my job is to read all the regional papers to see what they’re saying about all the military presence.” I said, “I think we’re going to get a lot of pressure to change the Status of Forces.”

The colonel, Colonel Hertel, the Army attaché, because of insults of this scale, said, “On what do you base that?” Once again, we’re dealing with people who have worked in Germany for decades. I’m the new guy.

I said, “As I said, this is one of the issues that’s a big deal for us here in the press office, and in the three or four months I’ve been here, this is the conclusion I’m coming to. We’re not going to survive another year or two with this SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement).”

He said, “Well, you know what they say. Opinions are like assholes – everybody’s got one.” I was so stunned. I didn’t even have a comeback. It was like, he can’t be doing this to me in front of all these people. I was like, come on. But yeah. So, later on, as the Germans started telling us what they wanted us to do and we started agreeing with them on what we would be doing, I thought, *So, Colonel Hertel, how’s the work going on the new Status of Forces? Burning a little midnight oil, aren’t you?*

I remember seeing him and going, “Hey, Jerry, how are you doing? How’d that work out for you?” But there was still an atmosphere of, “We won the war. Of course we can do this.”

Once again, that was one of the great things about Walters coming. Ambassador Burt was a political appointee and definitely didn’t want the generals complaining about him back to their offices in Washington. So, he did not push much on the presence issue. Walters could pick up the phone, talk to \_\_\_\_\_ or others, and say, “Hey, this is a problem. I want you to fix it,” and they would fix it.

One issue was that there’s a big lake in southern Germany, in Bavaria, which we had places on for the recreational use of the troops. We could use motorboats and go water skiing on this lake. Germans couldn’t. They could not have motorboats. They could have sailboats, rowboats, etc. This was raised every once in a while. One morning, I was saying, “In this paper here, there’s another complaint about motorized boats on such and such lake. This is a problem.”

Walters said, “Wait a minute.”

They came in and said to Walters, “You have a phone call from General \_\_\_\_\_.”

So, he goes out, talks to \_\_\_\_\_, comes back into the meeting, and says, “We don’t have to worry about that anymore.” That’s how he could deal with these problems.

*Q: Well, he had enormous stature in the U.S. military. When he had differences with them, he got his way.*

WALSH: Always.

*Q: Fascinating. This is great material. Roz Ridgway – what was she doing at this time? Was she not the secretary for Europe?*

WALSH: She was the assistant secretary for Europe. The German issues were pretty much handled by the embassy, the National Security Council, and Secretary Baker. Roz came out and was well-liked and well-known and respected, but at a certain point she didn’t really put an oar in the water. From my perspective, she was able to work on all sorts of other issues. She felt she had professionals dealing with it.

*Q: Right. She had a big portfolio, including what is now NATO and Scandinavia. She had a huge portfolio. Well, we’re not going to get you out of Bonn/Berlin quite yet, because I’m sure there’s more to go over. This is really astonishing and revealing information. Very valuable. Let’s think about concluding remarks, maybe at this time, about— I think you’ve given us tremendous material on \_\_\_\_\_, Kohl, Gorbachev, \_\_\_\_\_, Baker, Walters, Bush. It’s really quite amazing. Anything that you feel we should add to that group? Scowcroft was also there, of course.*

*You were closer to Walters than any of them, because you saw him on a daily basis. Do you think that your viewpoint, being physically at his side, affected your views? You wanted to be loyal and a good colleague of this man. Did that affect how you saw the whole thing? I think you said very articulately what Baker's interest was, which was the larger picture. These were legitimate differences. Basically, Walters got his way on this and Baker did not. Anything to add to that about personalities, mood, the way the process worked, the tone that was established during the meetings that you saw? You said many times that this was all amazing, surprising, unprecedented. What was it like? I know you weren't in the room for all these negotiations; you were out there getting the press ready for the readouts.*

WALSH: Well, later on, at another time after coming home from a presidential trip, the kids said, "Did you talk to the president?"

I said, "Yeah, I did."

They said, "What did you say?"

I said, "This way, Mr. President."

I think I mentioned to you that the weekend after the wall came down---- the wall came down, I think, on a Thursday night---- we had to get Kohl. He arrived Friday night in Hamburg. We did not go right to Berlin because this is the sort of thing that Walters thinks of that you would not have a political appointee think of. Just watch some of our political ambassadors of the current time, like the hotel manager who was working in Kiev. Walters said, "No, we will not do anything at all."

The president said, "We're not going to gloat over this," and the night of the fall, the president was on the phone to Walters. There I was, sitting at the side of that room. Once Kohl had visited Berlin, we went to visit on Sunday, I think, and then we took a helicopter ride around the city. I think I told you that it was a beautiful fall day, and you could see lines of cars from every point of the compass coming into Berlin. Frankly, some of us who did that flight had tears in our eyes. Walters did, I did, the commander of the brigade there did. I think we all knew we were working on the culmination of all our dreams, and that lent a positive impetus to this. How could we make this work? I'm sure Baker had that, Walters had that.

For me, it was, how do I make this work in a way that the German people understand that we are standing by our promises? That was the message that Walters wanted to get out. It wasn't that the United States was going to help them on this, or that the United States was doing this for its own good, but that we had promised for 45 years that this was what we were going to do. That just put a spring in everybody's step.

*Q: That's great, because it's a very coherent idea. You can agree or disagree, but it's something that an IO can work with. It's kind of a dream to have a message that is clear.*

*Well, fantastic. I know that there's more to remember, and I will get it out of you next time with sodium pentothal or however I need to do it. This is the great moment of the Cold War, and there you were.*

WALSH: Yeah. It was.

*Q: I think that because of the drama here, let's not abandon it, but let's take a pause. We'll get back to it as soon as we can and pick it up there. I'm going to stop the recording.*

*Q: Okay. Let's take it from there.*

WALSH: Then, if you're working as his media person— You have two things. One, you have the prestige of Walters. From the 1950s until that period, he had always been there. He was the translator for Eisenhower and Nixon in the '50s. He was military attaché in Brazil during the time of the generals. Then, later on, he was the military attaché in Paris during the '68 eruptions.

*Q: Oh, I never made that connection.*

WALSH: Yes. As a matter of fact, he has a place, I think, in James Jones' book.

*Q: I know who you mean.*

WALSH: He was always boxing people and picking fights with people. What was his name? My goodness.

*Q: The one who wrote about Vietnam and the Kennedy cabinet?*

WALSH: He used to do it strictly in New York. But he did a novel that included the Paris riots, and at one point, he mentions the American military attaché standing on the balcony of the embassy watching the riots. At the same time, this is the '70s. It's 10 or 20 years before me. He would make arrangements for Kissinger to come in and talk to the French and so on like that. He made it possible, I think, for Mitterrand to go spend a day or two at one of our bases when things were very hot in Paris.

So, there's Walters, right? He is obviously working as the ambassador of the United States to Germany, and assuring the Germans that the United States will not pull the rug out for them and get them involved in— The Germans and the Central Europeans had this thing where it was always somebody else's fault. So, if you fell into, "Okay, we're going to be negotiating this over the next two or three years" – which would make all the lawyers and all the \_\_\_ really happy – that would be bad. Walters was keen on saying, "No. We will do it at a pace that the Germans and the rest of the allies feel is comfortable."

But while he does that, we have Baker, who is dealing with the English, the French, and the Russians. The Russians were a big card where nobody knew how that thing was going to go. So, anything Walters says gets international attention. Of course, he's not the person to whom you're going to say, "Sir, you need to get that cleared by the Department." You know what I mean?

*Q: Absolutely.*

WALSH: So, it was that sort of thing. As I used to say, it was a pleasure to work for Walters, but the next morning, the secretary would be asked, "What do you think of Walters' statement?" and we'd have to take care of that. So, that required nuancing and was a stone in the shoe. It was not a super disagreement. Additionally, Walters was in accord with the president and Scowcroft, so it was pretty good. He had good reason to be saying what he was saying. We never felt that we were under the gun. We felt there was irritation. Someone who was as obsequious as I am, I would do everything I could to make sure it was comfortable, and once again, as I said, smoking was a good tool to use. When the bus stopped, we'd get off and barter it, and we'd sit and B.S. about this, that, and the other thing. So, that was good.

*Q: Now, the president and Scowcroft were inclined to agree with Walters. Where did that come from? Did that come from both sides, or did one of those sides convince the other?*

WALSH: Let's just say we never had, as I said— When things would come up, like the little bubble in *Newsweek* that there were differences between Baker and Walters, he would get a handwritten note from the president saying, "Don't worry about this. Don't let stuff go." That's sort of like what Fauci's going through now. This is ridiculous. It's sort of almost the same thing. Walters didn't know as much about world law and trade law and so on like that as Baker did, but Baker certainly didn't know Germany as well as Walters did.

*Q: Okay. In a way, this is an ideal time. You had strengths and weaknesses that came together to create a coherent policy. How about that?*

WALSH: Yeah. As a matter of fact, when you look at the totality— First off, on the American side, you did have Baker. You had Eagleburger, you had Roz Ridgway, you had Condoleezza Rice, you had Jim Dobbins, you had Scowcroft at the apex. There was also President Bush and Walters. This is an outstanding crew. Can we say we've had an equally qualified crew ever since? Have we ever had a bench that deep on an issue that important?

*Q: Good point. Rhetorical question here, but I can't think of a period of greater expertise concentrated in the same cabinet.*

WALSH: Yeah. Frankly, if you look at what's going on now, some of the ones who are cautioning things with what's going on— You're looking at Robert Gates, director of the East European section of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), \_\_\_ and \_\_\_ Burt, looking

at— What was the other one we used? We called him the Dark Prince. His name will come to me. But the hard conservative side was pretty tight.

*Q: Oh, the Dark Prince, yes. The one who was selling weapons later.*

WALSH: Yes. But in the end, Walters had a better feel when he said, “The opening of the Austrian-Hungarian border is the end of the Soviet Union in Central Europe,” that is something out of his instinct, his feeling. The CIA was still saying, “This is a massive nuclear armed force with thousands of tanks and civilians and soldiers. Come on.” But what Walters recognized, and many others did too, was the economic rot that had set in in the previous 15 years in the Soviet Union. So, it was pretty clear.

So, the Two Plus Four negotiations and everything went apace. You had the summer— I think July was the Gorbachev-Kohl agreement. You had the Germans saying, “We’re going to exchange one West German mark for one East German mark, and we will support East Germany as time goes on.” We had that bump back in December where Baker goes to East Germany and Walters refuses. He says he’s ambassador to West Germany, and also, it’s not a recognized government. He made that clear. He had the fingertip feeling that East Germans were not, no matter what election they had— It would be subsumed by the West Germans.

So, yeah, things went along pretty quickly. So, by October 3<sup>rd</sup> – 11 months after the fall of the wall – you have the celebrations in Berlin for the reunification of the country. That was a magnificent moment. The celebrations were held on a platform outside the old Reichstag that had just been rebuilt. It was a fabulous sort of thing.

*Q: So, you were back and forth between Bonn and Berlin at that time, yes?*

WALSH: We were going back and forth to Berlin at least every two weeks, I would say.

*Q: When did you realize that there was going to be a move, on our part, of our embassy from Bonn to Berlin? When did that become clear?*

WALSH: That was becoming clear, and you would stand back and say, “How are they ever going to do this? Who will hold government?” This is, once again, the summer of 1990 while a lot of that is going on. By almost everybody’s discussion, this would be an almost impossible thing for the Germans to do, etcetera.

Now, here are two things— I don’t know if we ever want to write this down, but one of the first things the Berlin brigade commander said to Walters when he arrived in Berlin – this was the first four or five days after the wall came down – was that protocol-wise, it wasn’t wise for us to go there until after Kohl had been there and other Germans had gone. So, we fly in, and he’s met at the bottom of the stairs, and as we’re walking towards the cars, the brigade commander says to General Walters, “We can’t give them the golf course until the last second.”

*Q: Let's keep our priorities straight, right?*

WALSH: Well, there it is. That's your priority. That's one of the big gold coins in that guy's pocket, issuing licenses or memberships to the golf club. There's no other golf course in all of Eastern Europe. So, yeah, this was a big deal for this guy. That was fascinating. Then, at one point, Walters is talking to the team in Berlin, and he says, "So, you mean to tell me that we have been occupying Germany – and Berlin in particular – for 45 years, and the only properties we own----Under global occupational rule, the occupying power is paid for by the locals---- are my residence and the vacant lot where the old embassy used to be?" He says, "Is that true?" It was true.

These are meetings, then, that I really didn't take part in, because some of these odd things about Berlin I would only be brought into if there was something that would be public or disappointing to various factions.

—So, we're in country team meetings, and, of course, all the members of the country team are senior Foreign Service, with the exception of me. They're all counselors of embassies for political affairs, economic affairs, scientific affairs, and so on. Germany was our big trade partner, big military partner. They were important to us. So, the ambassador's talking to all these senior people, and they're all talking about what we're going to do about properties. Well, there was another base of the brigade, which was sort of out of town but still in West Berlin. We had those properties, and we built everything even though we didn't own the land or anything like that. We had that.

The ambassador pulled out a picture of the pre-war American embassy, and he said, "They will tell us to build on this property in Berlin. They'll give us a timetable." He said, "Also, they're going to drive the old plan, which was to drive \_\_\_ through the middle of the city, from the Brandenburg Gate and all the way through as a thoroughfare for the whole city." There was another question that he had. He said, "This is what's going to happen."

So, here is how things go along in real life. We'll take over the building that is housing the current embassy to the Democratic Republic of Germany in East Berlin. That'll be our new embassy. Somebody comes up with that idea, and the ambassador says, "That's temporary."

"No, no, we're going to take a 10 year lease on it. We're in great shape."

Well, that turned out to be the former headquarters of the National Association of Handicrafts. As things came along, the National Association of Handicrafts of West Germany, the successor organization because the West Germans were now the "national" people, said, "Hey, we want our building back."

The guys who made the lease said, "We did this."

They said, “You did that with the Communist government, and that’s going to disappear pretty soon. We’re going to have to do something there.”

Walters said, “Hey, we’re going to have to build on the old lot.”

“No, no. We’re going up to the brigade area. We’re going to go up there,” and so on. While I was on vacation that summer, I was in Italy and I bought a newspaper. The other objection to putting \_\_\_ right through the city was that it would go through the East German National Assembly building, a big Communist landmark. While I was reading the paper in Italy, I noticed there was a little box that said that health authorities in Germany had assessed the viability of using the National Assembly of East Germany for various meetings, and other things, and they found that the asbestos content of the building was such that it just had to come down. That made putting the thoroughfare through very dicey .

*Q: Okay. So, \_\_\_ became the East-West – pardon the expression – axis, I guess.*

WALSH: Yep. The debate over the downtown siting of the American embassy in Berlin went on for a decade or more. Construction did not finish until the early 2000s. First, it’s not a big lot, compared to what the relationship is today and the way embassies function today. Then, again, we had to get setbacks and other things for security. So, the embassy— You might say that the representational embassy – the ambassadorial offices, the political section, the econ section, the business section, and so on like that – is there, and the admin/counselor issues are back where the old brigade headquarters were.

But housing-wise, we had to build housing and do all these other things. The Germans supported our presence in Berlin fabulously. There was great housing. Everything in the houses was provided by the West German authorities. The furniture was better than in our places, as was the silverware, the plates, everything. It was so much better than in our places, but it was really cool.

To my mind, anything you could look at and say, “What do you think of that?” Walters would give you an answer and then the years would tell you that that was correct.

*Q: Wow. You’re saying that the West Germans were very cooperative in Berlin. Meanwhile, those who had formerly been officials in East Germany, did they disappear, or did they collaborate or were they helpful or what?*

WALSH: They weren’t in a position to make much trouble.

*Q: Would they have wanted to? The movie The Lives of Others implies that everybody was relieved when the whole thing was over and that nobody really wanted to be part of the East German regime. I don’t know if that movie is accurate.*

WALSH: It is. *The Lives of Others* is. It was interesting because in the immediate period after the fall of the wall, there were attacks or looters or \_\_\_going into— But they were

Germans. The Germans are not LA (Los Angeles). They're not Newark, New Jersey. They didn't light the places on fire. They went in, and they stopped the East Germans from burning and shredding files.

But once again, as Germans— I don't know, but they may have had guidance from the West Germans. At certain points, there were questions of how we would do this. I think the Westerners and Easterners— The East Germans, at that time, looked at what the West Germans were doing very positively. Their money was all of a sudden worth something. The resentments between the Easterners and the Westerners did not come up until, I would almost say, years later. There were sort of irritants. Former West Germans would come out to check their property, and be like, "Oh, wasn't that Grandma's house? Let's see what we can do with it." There was a lot of that going on.

But in terms of government, protecting the files of the \_\_\_\_\_ in the government was an important part in the agreement almost right away. There would be a very formal procedure to allow people to peruse their \_\_\_\_\_ files and have their files or copies of their files given to them. That was worked out, and it did cause a lot of problems. A lot of people got to see their files and saw that Grandma was reporting on them and so on like that. It was an object lesson to others like, say, the Poles. They kept their World War II and post-World War II files confidential right up until today, I think. Everybody did something to someone at some time, and there's no need to open that door again.

*Q: Okay. For Poland but not for Germany, right?*

WALSH: Well, for Germany it was, but it was lowkey, you know? You had old Marcus Wolter saying, "Hey, I ran the greatest \_\_\_\_\_ in the world." But still, it was done in a way that did not prosecute the formers. They went through, and I think there were some prosecutions for things that were done. I think they went down the line of people who gave orders or who actually carried out shootings along the wall, but altogether it was only a couple hundred people who were killed.

*Q: Yeah. Let's see. The Soviet Union was busy being dissolved and going down the drain. Were they just withholding their own opinions and potential force and just allowing this to go on, did it seem? Were they just observing, or were they helping?*

WALSH: They were observing and negotiating. You had the collapse or elimination of the Polish Communist government in June or July with the elections. The Communist Party did not get one seat, or maybe they got a tiny minority in the new legislative body. There were some seats— I can't remember the details of that, but that was the end of martial law, the end of the Soviet occupation of Poland. So, once again, your buffer state is going away.

Then, there were negotiations. Germany was going to pay a lot of money, and I think we paid a lot of money in terms of building housing and accommodating the Russian troops that were in Eastern Europe back into the Soviet Union.

*Q: Yeah. So, there must have been something happening behind the scenes between Bush and Gorbachev.*

WALSH: Oh, yeah. Again, I mentioned that there was a \_\_\_\_\_-Baker meeting. Baker was going back and forth there. I went up to Helsinki for a Bush-Gorbachev meeting, and that was to discuss the various European issues, but also to discuss preparations and the American approach to the takeover of Kuwait. While all this was going on during the summer of 1990, Saddam Hussein takes over Kuwait.

*Q: Oh, right.*

WALSH: So, pretty much everything was taken care of and sewed up on the German unification issue. It was still a huge issue we were facing. Then, all of a sudden, you have Saddam Hussein taking over a neighboring country. That was not a very good thing. Then, of course, you had the Thatcher-Bush meeting in Colorado when she said to George, “Don’t get wobbly on me.” Then, once again, you had Scowcroft, Baker, Eagleburger, Bush. You had Roz Ridgway for the Europeans, and you had some other very good assistant secretaries. for Africa. I forget who was the Middle East assistant secretary.

But you had all of these issues coming to the point, and so the building of the coalition began at the same time. I think most countries stood in awe of what the United States had done in terms of German unification and \_\_\_\_\_. We were the winners and the most influential at that time. So, you had a lot of back and forth. We had Colin Powell out to Germany two or three times. Cheney was all over Europe, back and forth. This was before his heart became truly evil. This was all diplomacy on a level that we just had not seen before, and it was incredible to see how this all intermeshed.

*Q: As I remember this period, this was mainly Baker’s work. I remember he had a meeting with the Finnish ambassador in Paris, because Finland had a seat on the Security Council at that time. It seemed like Baker did almost all of the legwork.*

WALSH: He did a tremendous amount. We wanted Germany in on this. The Poles, of course, were quite happy with this. “What a good deal – the Russians are gone, and we get to have a war right away with someone else! How fabulous! You need a member for your coalition, we’re here.” Back when we were looking at post 9/11, we were getting what, \_\_\_\_\_? No, we were really getting countries. I shouldn’t say that. That’s terrible.

*Q: Well, that is in contrast to the following Gulf War, when we did not have “real” countries. We had Vanuatu, Honduras, and—*

WALSH: Yes, the first five guys were from Samoa. It was embarrassing.

*Q: It’s an enormous contrast, the way ’91 was different from 2003.*

WALSH: Right. That is so—

*Q: Bush and Baker were gone by that time, so the brain trust was not there.*

WALSH: That's true. As subtly as they possibly could, going up to 2003, Scowcroft and Baker and others were doing op-eds, as subtly as they could, to say, "Don't do this." We had this movement of troops coming in to build on the build-up coming into Germany. So, a lot of stuff had to be worked out with the Germans. We wanted the Germans to be part of this. There was a tremendous amount of activity between us and the German intelligence agencies, because the Iraqis were very sophisticated, and a lot of their contracting came through Germany. Many of their defense bunkers and so on like that across their country had been built by German firms.

One of the more dramatic ones was a stop of an Evergreen plane right on the runway down in Frankfurt, and it was carrying materials for weapons of mass destruction to Iraq. It was just amazing. These were real ones. This was when he had them. So, yeah, this was fascinating. We needed a relationship there, and that's where Walters came in as the representative of the United States. Once again, through his actions throughout the process coming up to unification, he was an admired figure and could carry that sort of popular support for American policies.

*Q: So, he was still there during \_\_\_?*

WALSH: He was still there, right. He did not leave until summer of '91. Even as the coalition is getting put together, you're starting to get a little friction about what to do about Yugoslavia.

*Q: Oh, okay. That's another very painful and huge topic. You were observing this as a reader of newspapers, I think, and an aware person. That was a completely different scenario, I guess, with different people and everything different, I think. In fact, remind me, the European Bureau was bifurcated at that time, was it not? It was East and West?*

WALSH: It was East and West. It wasn't fully European.

*Q: So, you had a completely different team dealing with Yugoslavia. It was beginning to get bad, but it did not really hit the fan until '94, '95, something like that.*

WALSH: Right. That was in '94 or '95, but there were these smoldering things. I can't remember the time, but the Slovenians started shooting at the border guards or whatever on the Austrian-Yugoslav border. There was some friction there. That started in the autumn of '90. Of course, there were all sorts of ripples. Tito was gone, so what were we going to do? What was going on? Everything was falling apart.

So, as 1991 started, we had the war. That was over by the end of March. Real discussions were going on all the time between the United States and the Europeans, and the EU (European Union) and various countries. From early '91 to mid-'91, that's where a non-nuanced disagreement between Baker and Walters came about.

I think there were two sides in this discussion. Some of the \_\_\_ Yugoslavian people were pushing to do everything we could to hold Yugoslavia together. Jack Scanlan, R.T. Davies, and also Walters. I don't know where the president and Scowcroft stood. Baker had two things that came up. One is the Germans—\_\_\_ and Kohl were pretty much \_\_\_, and they were looking at their language cohorts, the Slovenians. They're sort of German-Austrian types. They thought we should go with the Woodrow Wilson thing, where everybody should have their own republic.

Also, as we tried to do Bush's bidding, to go a little slower, the Europeans said, "Hey, this is a European issue." The feeling I got was that Baker felt that if the Europeans wanted to try this, this was for them. This would be a good confidence-building sort of thing. Then there was the old school Walters, who felt that nobody could do anything without the Americans. Whatever happens, these guys are nice guys. Then the war started down there in '91-'92. Journalists were coming to me saying, "Where can we get an armored vest to go down and cover the story?" I recommended some local German security firms that had this stuff.

So, yeah, that's where Walters finally said, "I got a call from the president, and I have to be going." Now, fascinatingly enough, here's Walters, and he says, "They want to bring Bob Kimmitt in." At the end of '91 – he was still working as the secretary for Political Affairs and so on, and also he was a reserve general, so he had things to do in terms of the Kuwait issue, too – Walters was saying, "I guess they want to take me out." He was pretty sad. He wanted to do his full four years there. Then he said, "But, you know, for goodness' sake, here's Kimmitt. He's got five kids. He's a good Catholic. He's a saint. So, that's no big deal."

So, Walters did it. Then, he got pneumonia, so he went down to Frankfurt to the military hospital. Later in the year, we had a gap, but Kimmitt wanted to have a joint reception, which I've never heard of before. I can't remember if they did have it, but the plan was that they would have a joint reception when Walters got out of the hospital later in the year. I've got to think about that.

*Q: I guess the custom is that one has to leave before the other arrives.*

WALSH: Right. I can't remember. I know that they're very close.

*Q: The point is that Walters was okay with the idea of Kimmitt coming in.*

WALSH: Yes. He was obviously disappointed that he would not do his full term, but he saw that in a certain sense, that the message of U.S. foreign policy was to follow the Europeans in the breakup of Yugoslavia. Then, Walters could not be seen, necessarily, as a sincere advocate of that policy.

*Q: And when Clinton inherited that, it began to look like a bad policy, didn't it? The Europeans were unable to do anything about the war in Yugoslavia.*

WALSH: Exactly. That was Walters' seat of the pants judgement, and as I said, in those types of judgements he was never wrong. He said that the animosities and the ethnic problems— 50 years of unification under Tito just did not wipe out all of the resentments. He said, "You're going to have to use military force to make this happen, and the Europeans can't do that."

*Q: Right. We remember those Dutch guys chained to fire hydrants and humiliated. It was a terrible period. So, how much time did you spend with Kimmitt?*

WALSH: It was probably from September 1991 until my release a year later in 1992.

*Q: Oh, a whole year? Okay. Describe the contrast of Walters versus Kimmitt.*

WALSH: Well, it was a pleasure to work for Kimmitt. He came in, and it was sort of amazing, because he had a reputation that he could be rough on staff, but he wasn't. He was very good. The only trouble we had at some point was that Kimmitt was an incredibly fastidious and well-organized guy. His DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), George Ward, was also a tremendously fastidious and well-organized guy. With Walters, I could go in and say, "The DCM, George, is very upset about X, Y, Z. He heard that I'm suing a TV station up in Dusseldorf, and he's upset."

Walters would say, "Well, that's what a DCM is there for. He's to be keeping an eye on all those details. Let's get in the car and go over the mountain and have a cup of coffee somewhere else. Let's get out of here."

*Q: Not Kimmitt's style, I guess?*

WALSH: No. Kimmitt was very \_\_\_\_\_. I wouldn't say literally, but we would get into positions on papers that had to be cleared as to whether Kimmitt wants "glad" or George wants "happy." It was like, come on. Not every word has to be looked at. So, yeah. Kimmitt was getting used to that, after having a carte blanche with Walters. With him, it was like, "I have three kids to put through college. I can do this." We had a very good relationship with Kimmitt.

One interesting thing is that Kimmitt was discussing with me the president's issues, in terms of how they were going. We were negotiating a new Status of Forces, of course. So, I said, "Well, we didn't have a whole lot of problems, because Walters had a personal relationship with almost all of the generals and colonels and commanders. They all knew of him personally or had heard of him. So, when he said something, it was good." I said, "You also share some knowledge."

He said, "Yes, but they knew him when he was a general and they were captains. I knew them when I was a captain, and they were generals. It's going to be different." But it really wasn't. We worked out a good relationship. It was fascinating. I don't want to brag,

but at one point in the negotiations and the post-unification discussions, we had a case where the Air Force wanted to—. The plans to do these things take years.

So, there were to be the two squadrons of F-18 E's, who were going to be based in Germany. These are the night fighting versions of the F-18. I got a phone call, one time, from the USAFC – the United States Air Force Commander. This must have been in early '91, before Walters left, because this guy got fired before the Iraq War. He talked a bit too much about our capabilities. But he called me because General Walters—

At a meeting, I had said, “To base the squadrons here in Germany at this time is not going to go. We cannot have low-flying night fighters practicing here in Germany. They've got to go somewhere else.” There's a big area up in Canada where all the air forces in NATO practice and do their low-flying and so on. It's a big empty area with just a few Eskimos to bother. So, I said, “It's all going to have to be done out over the North Sea or in Canada. You can't have these guys flying overpopulated areas in Germany. Germany is pulling free.”

So, I get a phone call from the four star commander of the American Air Forces in Europe. This is the commander of the American forces from Turkey to Norway, and he's calling me. He says, “Walters says you are the person to talk to about this issue.”

I went through it with him, and I said, “I don't even think we should be talking about it. I bet if I called the Ministry of Defense and said, ‘What are we going to do?’ they'd say, ‘We can't do this.’” Once they have the military, they have their plans. They are in place to do this. Some of these squadrons have been formed just to do this thing. That was how detailed a lot of stuff got. Walters appreciated the things that I saw just by reading the German papers all the time and reading German commentators.

The political section and the military sections – and we had four or five military sections— We had guys who represented the United States Army in Europe, you had the Air Force in Europe. We didn't have the Navy in Europe, thank God. But you had all these people, as well as attachés. That was another great thing. Under Burt, there was always friction as to who was the senior military commander. Under Walters, that was solved in 48 hours after his arrival. As a former attaché, he made the attaché the senior guy, and that was it. He said, “I don't want to be talking to the other guys. I think you talk to them and then you talk to me.”

*Q: Yeah. There are many remarkable things about the fact that a four star called you, the IO. We haven't talked about this yet, but you were the IO. There was a PAO, but it seems as if the IO was at stage center during this period. Meanwhile, there was a PAO, but it sounds like your chain of command almost went around the PAO and the DCM and went straight to the ambassador because of a personal relationship. Is that fair to say?*

WALSH: Yeah, that pretty much was clear. How would things come up? First off, I think I told you the story of when I'd been there after about three months. It must have been December of '88 or January or February of '89. Terry Catherman and I got called down.

Terry Catherman was the PAO. He and I got called down to the DCM's office, James Dobbins. I just got a call, and Terry called me, and he said, "We have to go down and see Jim Dobbins about something. Let's go."

On the way down the stairs, Catherman says to me, "I just want to say thank you to you for how well things have been going with the embassy and our work with the journalists and the front office. We've had no problems. Before, it was just horrible. They were beating us up all the time."

I sort of said, "Gee whiz. Thanks a lot, Terry." So, we go in and we see Dobbins. Dobbins is chewing his fingernails. He looks out the window. He ignores you for a minute or so.

Then he looks at us and he throws this piece of paper at us and says, "What the fuck is this shit?" It was some announcement, a press release, from the embassy. I forget what it was. It was about a commercial deal or delegation that was coming or something like this. We would maybe be at a trade fair up in Dusseldorf or down in Frankfurt or something. He said, "What do you mean by releasing that without telling me?"

I said, "I tried to get you on the phone. I tried to get you here." We did have portable phones then. I said, "I wanted to get it on the news last night, therefore I had to get it into them by five o'clock."

Again, he said, "Don't you ever do that again. Nothing goes out of this embassy without our knowledge – mine or the ambassador's." Now, Dobbins— I still have tremendous admiration for him. I can't say he was warm and fuzzy, but he was a tremendous DCM in terms of thoughtfulness and, additionally, working with Burt.

He had a good working relationship with him. He was the one who, when Burt said, "I don't want to meet the cardinal in Munich," said, "You've got to make the appointment. You don't break appointments with the cardinal." Dobbins is the guy who was able to do that sort of thing.

So, we started going back up the stairs. I hadn't really had an ambassador jump at me quite that hard in my time. Of course, this is a big time embassy. So, I turned to Terry as we're going up the stairs and I said, "Geez, Terry, I'm sorry about that."

He said, "Oh, that was nothing." Which, woah. It must have been really bad. Walters, within days of his arrival— You could feel that the whole embassy wanted to make him a success – the Germans, the Americans, everybody. It was just a sort of magical personality. Because of the hard knocks Catherman had taken, he was glad to let me do whatever was necessary with the front office as long as I kept him informed.

His successor in the— She came in the summer of— She might have come just before Kimmitt or whatever. It was Cynthia Miller. She said, "Hey—" You see this, a lot of the time – a PAO or IO who is the whisperer, you might say, of the front office. She saw things were going well with the front office, and she said, "Hey, that's your territory."

One of our big message things here is Vernon Walters himself. So, do you have a good relationship with him? Let's keep it that way. That extended into the Kimmitt times, as well.

*Q: That's remarkable. I don't think this kind of thing would happen nowadays. I think IO in the '80s and '90s had way more prestige than they do now, partly because of the Internet and alternate ways of getting messaging out. Your comments on the evolution of that type of position, the position of the IO, have shown that they were a big deal. I think that has declined in the early part of this century. Is that your impression?*

WALSH: I haven't seen it. I've worked at five or six embassies, including Australia and consulates and so on like that. I don't think it's that different. That could be me, because I do it as I go along, and also, I have been a media and news junkie since I was 10 years old. One of the difficulties of being in Germany was that you had to have— This was before the Internet. You had to first read the wires. That means you have to read everybody's wires before everybody else does.

—started work at about 4:30 or five o'clock in the morning. I would come in at seven and get their first draft and so on. I would go through the newspapers myself to see that what they were saying was pretty much— It was just so I had a better feel for the story. At the same time, I had to do the wires – UPI, AP, AFP (“Agence France-Presse,” French Press Agency), \_\_\_\_\_, *Reuters* – just to see what they were saying. I had to get it all, because at 8:30 or nine o'clock, I had to go on stage to all of these guys who are big Germanists.

One thing that drove Catherman— Catherman had been part of the occupation army, for Christ's sake. He'd been a \_\_\_\_\_ officer, which is a guy who's in the town. That's the American officer who's running the town. I'd say, “Well, Professor \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_—” and Terry would go, “\_\_\_\_\_!” He'd slam his hand on the table. One time, he was talking about Olaf— I forget Olaf's last name, but Olaf was the political counselor. He talked about what beautiful German Olaf spoke. I said, “Jesus, Terry, he's been married to two Krauts. What the fuck? I think that's kind of unfair, talking about how good he speaks German. If I married two Germans, I'd be able to talk that way.”

But, yeah, I had a good relationship with all of them. Walters had given me a good rep when Kimmitt came in, so it sort of picked up without too much trouble. Actually, I got a superior honor award for contributions to German unification. I know I got it because of one thing. There was a— I forget her name. Molly \_\_\_\_\_. She wrote for *The New York Times*, and I still see her writing sometimes for them.

*Q: Oh, yeah, I know who you mean. Dowd?*

WALSH: No, it's not Maureen Dowd. She's a member of the family that owned *The New York Times*. She does these one on ones and so on. So, she wanted an interview with \_\_\_\_\_, a one on one. Walters had the political section call the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to see if this could be carried out. She was staying at the ambassador's residence. And no, it couldn't be done. She couldn't get any time on his calendar. This was before

unification. So, he came and said, “This woman has been good to me, and I would like to do something for her. Can you get her an appointment with \_\_\_\_\_?”

I said, “Well, I’ll see what I can do.” So, I called \_\_\_\_\_ press guy, who was later the ambassador for West Germany to Washington. The name will come to me. I called him up and said, “Look, here’s the deal. She’s a personal friend of the ambassador. I don’t know if she still has the same political weight as a commentator, but it’s good to be good to these guys.”

He said, “I’ll see what I can do.” So, he calls back and says, “Have her delivered to the Foreign Ministry tomorrow at the back gate at 12:30. She’ll have lunch with Minister \_\_\_\_\_.” So, I go tell the ambassador that here’s the deal. Just show up in your car at the back gate and there will be somebody there to meet her at 12:30. And it was done.

So, a day or so later, I’m in one office, and Walters is in the other office talking to George Ward – the George Ward who insisted that every word must be absolutely correct. He said, “George, do you know what Neal did? I couldn’t get anything down at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and he just picked up the phone and bingo. There was lunch with the master. Can you believe that?” He said, “We have to do something for Neal.”

I could hear George’s molars cracking from 30 feet away. The last guy Ward ever wanted to do anything good for was me. He found out I had called the lawyer to call— It was the national TV group, \_\_\_\_\_, I think. It was a national news group. Fritz \_\_\_\_\_ was a former correspondent for them in Washington. That was one of the good deals, because the Redskins were a great team. So, once again, you could get AFRTS within our community. Americans in the embassy had AFRTS. So, I had a great time. Anybody who’d ever been in Washington, either in the diplomatic service or the military or as a correspondent— I would have Redskins parties at my house. It was great.

But \_\_\_\_\_ did a news program one night. It was a Saturday night sort of weekly wrap up. If you remember, in the summer of 1988, an American cruiser shot down an Iranian airline. About 170 people died and so on. So, that night – this must have been in ’89 or ’90 – \_\_\_\_\_ goes through the history of the shootdown and says— Here’s what he said. He said, “The International Court in the Hague has ruled against the United States, and the United States has been assessed tens of millions of dollars to pay to the Iranians.” Then he said, “The Americans have refused to do this.”

So, I called him up, and I said, “Fritz, I think that was a little cavalier, because we did not refuse. We have agreed to pay those sums, and we have said that. But we have agreed to pay that money directly to the families – not through the government of Iran.”

Fritz said, “But the fact is they’re not getting their money.”

I said, “They’re not getting their money because the Iranian government is stepping in between us and the affected people.”

He said, “That doesn’t change a thing.”

“Well, I don’t know about that.”

So, we did a letter. The ambassador did a letter saying, “We’re very disappointed in this, and I think we should really run a retraction or correction on your weekly show.”

We got a very polite note back from Fritz saying he wouldn’t be doing it. So, George was away. We called the lawyer, and the lawyer got in touch with Fritz. Then, Fritz did a real mealy-mouse thing – he was a good guy, and I liked him, but this was a mealy-mouse thing – at the end of his show. He said, “Wait a minute. When we said two weeks ago that the Americans refused, that’s not really true. The Americans say they’ve paid the families, but the Iranian government doesn’t want them to be paid. This is between the United States and Iran.”

So, I got the apology, right? As an embassy, we do not have the right to sue people, though. That’s one of those other details that George Ward knew. If he had been there, he would have said, “Neal, stop this. Stop harassing these people.” At that time, I was very much— Liberals would use anything to criticize the United States. I just thought that was too snotty. George was not happy.

That was the time when Walters said, “What’s George saying?”

“George is very upset, sir.”

“Well, that’s his job. Let’s go off to Dusseldorf.”

So, that was it. We brought it up to the Loehr, and then what do we do after that? Unification. But I have to say that going through the troops, the passages of arms, the negotiations with the Germans as to how far and how much they will participate as a member of the coalition, what was their feeling— The German elites and the political elites, aside from the Christian Democratic Party, certainly didn’t want to get involved in a war. So, that was it.

Now, the German military, wow! What a chance! At the end of the war, when we needed equipment, materials, and so on, we had to go to the Germans and say, “Can you give us 10 helicopters and crews to help do this, that, and the other thing around the country?” This was after combat, and this was a big deal for them. They gave us tents, they gave us transport, they gave us all sorts of stuff in Germany. They cleared the tracks for us to ship two or three divisions out of Germany and into the Middle East. They did a lot of cooperative stuff, but they did not want to get their soldiers involved on the ground.

*Q: Right. Likewise, Spain, where I was at the time— Torrejon was a major transit point at the time, also. Those huge planes were coming in, usually every night, over Madrid. But I guess that equally or more so, Germany had that role. Well, very fascinating times. Just a*

*little postscript: Walters spoke perfect Russian, Portuguese, Spanish, and French. How was his Germany?*

WALSH: It was medium. It was good, but not— He could speak German and make himself understood and so on like this. He could understand the Germans when they were talking to him, and he could talk to them in a way they understood. But there would be some times when he would prefer to be exact and correct, so he wouldn't use German. But in terms of his language skills, at one time, we had a Portuguese journalist come through. He agreed to sit down with her. She said to me, "Can I speak Portuguese or English?" and so on.

I said, "I'm going to tell you, he speaks Portuguese." I could see from her face that—

*Q: She didn't believe you.*

WALSH: She was just like, "Yeah," but a lot of times, she had met Americans with the same level of Portuguese as I had German. You say you can speak Portuguese and so on. Walters comes out of his office. Once again, he was a very old school, genial person. He comes out of his office, shakes her hand, bends over in the European approach, and starts chattering away in this language. You could see from her eyes that she was blown away. He learned Portuguese by doing IV (Immigrant Visa) tours across the United States in 1941 and '42 with the Portuguese and Brazilian military to show them— He would take them to war plants, army bases, and so on. He was their guide for IV trips.

He did this for about six months. By the time he was done, they would have parties at the end of their tour, and they'd have Portuguese diplomats and everything. They'd roll him out and say, "Tell us where he learned his Portuguese." He could do both a Brazilian and a Portuguese accent. They would say, "He's a native speaker." That's how good he was on these things.

One time, in the summer of 1989 or '90— It must have been '90. We were sitting on the balcony of the ambassador's residence in Bonn, which overlooked the Rhine – a beautiful place. He said, "You know, Neal, here I am, the ambassador of the United States to a unified Germany once more. 80 million Germans in this country. I am also the de facto commander and guardian angel of 240,000 American troops, right here. All because I speak a few languages." He said, "If I were Danish, I'd be the maître d' at a major hotel."

*Q: That's a good one.*

WALSH: It's such a great line. Then he said, "You know, it frightens me. I wonder what they do to children who don't learn perfect English by the age of seven." He was a delightful human being.

*Q: My gosh. I did meet him, actually, in Denmark. He came just before unification and told a reduced country team— It was a great line that he may have used in Bonn and Berlin, also. He said to us, "I met my Soviet colleague the other day" – that would be the*

*Soviet ambassador to Bonn – “and I told him, ‘The difference between you and us is that we have a fixed past and a moveable future. With you, it’s the other way around.’” What a great line. I don’t know if that’s—*

WALSH: That’s not one I’ve heard before.

*Q: Really? It seemed as if he had just come up with it on the spot. An absolutely fabulous little thumbnail of what the Cold War was all about. Just amazing. Yeah, he was amazing. Well, Neal, here we are. It seems like we’ve gotten to a resting point. I’m going to stop the recorder. It’s still July 18<sup>th</sup> with Whitman and Walsh here signing off.*

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*Q: We’re now going, and it’s probably July 19<sup>th</sup> or something like that.*

WALSH: No, today is July 20<sup>th</sup>.

*Q: The 20<sup>th</sup>! Well, see, you’re ahead of me in every way, Neal – by a minute and a half, and also by a day. Let’s pick up from 1990, ’91, this crucial moment in Europe and the world. The whole system changed, at that time. We sometimes think we are the center of everything. The transition was now. Actually, there have been many crucial periods of transition, and this was one of them. From there, where do we go? Is there more to say about Vernon Walters or Baker or you? You were in Bonn. I forgot— You did not move to Berlin, right?*

WALSH: No. The embassy didn’t move to Berlin until later in the ‘90s. Actually, the construction of the new embassy didn’t take place until the 2010s or so, because the Germans were telling us to do exactly what Walters said they would tell us to do: “Put your embassy here.”

*Q: Right. So, there was no way of hurrying the process.*

WALSH: Well, everybody tried to get away with it, and there’s the wonderful thing. When you’re talking about Walters having a finger on the pulse of Germany, yeah, this is what’s going to happen. People tried to avoid that right until the very end. There were a number of times, going through Two Plus Four and then the new SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement) where Walters would talk to— Once again, when you consider the immensity— The Berlin lawyers and the occupational lawyers on all sides had made careers out of this. They were all very astute and very intelligent. So, they were doing— This was an immense task, to change the status of all these laws and regulations and still stay true to the ideas of Germany in NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization).

Additionally, at that time, there was a lot of thought that German permanent basing of NATO troops would not go across the current boundaries. How do you make that all happen? It was very tricky.

*Q: You've mentioned before how, at one point, people were saying that united Germany should be neutral, not NATO. Anything to add to how that ended up being NATO rather than neutrality?*

WALSH: That was something that nobody was absolutely sure of until Kohl and Gorbachev met in July 1990. Kohl had assured the Germans that there were various options that could be accounted for with Germany remaining in NATO – demilitarization of the eastern portion, status quo of the eastern portion without the Russians there, all sorts of different ways. But this was a Russian goal since 1945, a neutral Germany. It was interesting, because Gorbachev has gotten a lot of Russian criticism for allowing that to happen. Many people say that Putin's revisionist attitude towards the United States and Western alliances is because he saw the collapse of the Soviet Union as being the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of all time. But the alliance took advantage of Russia's weakness and pushed the alliance right into the heart of the Soviet sphere of influence.

*Q: Who are the people driving for that? Was that Walters? I guess Baker was a little bit more lukewarm on that, perhaps.*

WALSH: No. I think a lot of that, later, was— In the last couple years, Cheney was pushing that hard. There was a general feeling of it. But a lot of it also came in the Clinton administration.

*Q: Okay. So, there were no singular figures pushing one way or another?*

WALSH: No. There was Bush, and obviously Kohl knew that the Americans wanted Germany to stay in NATO. Walters was ambivalent. I know we would want Germany in NATO. That would be one of our goals. But it couldn't be a total dealbreaker on unification. We were not to tell the largest and most affluent member of the European community that they *had* to do anything.

*Q: Right. So, how much of this was settled before reunification?*

WALSH: Until July 1990, nothing was settled. Well, I wouldn't say nothing was settled, but this question certainly was not settled. A lot of the other discussions and other issues had been settled, in terms of joint finances, who's going to take the debts of the East German government, how it's going to be integrated into West German law, and all sorts of things like that. Additionally, assets of the East German diplomatic service and Foreign Ministry would be integrated into the West German system, and there would be an integration of the two military sides.

*Q: So, would you say Gorbachev played his hand badly?*

WALSH: Tricky. That's a real question of what— Obviously, the Putinistas and other Russians in general believe that that and the economic collapse during the '90s— They felt that the guys who were active in the coup attempt against him— Those people all

thought that he played a bad hand. But the fact was that he didn't have any good options, really.

*Q: Right. That's a good point. Now, we think of George H.W. Bush as being a very smooth, very kind, very compassionate person towards Gorbachev, very cooperative. You weren't exactly in the Oval Office, but is that the impression you were left with also? He tried to give offramps to Gorbachev. In fact, he did say, "We will not gloat." So, he understood the importance of leaving Gorbachev as much esteem in his own country as possible. I don't know if he ever was able to actually do that.*

WALSH: Absolutely. Now, obviously, Gorbachev had great faith that the United States was going to be able to provide a financial pillar and rescue the Russians, but there was no way they could do that.

*Q: A little bit naïve, I think. I wonder if the White House ever actually encouraged him to think that way. We don't know.*

WALSH: Nope. I guess that to my mind – and this is from a low-level view – Gorbachev had to maintain a visage of strength in order to get whatever concessions he could possibly get. There was a certain point when he couldn't say just how bad off they were. Our intelligence agencies still believed that they had the wherewithal – and they did – to change the face of Europe militarily. So, it was all a very delicate dance.

*Q: Any comment on the failure of the intelligence community to see what now seems so obvious but that they never saw? Was it events that were truly outside of the box, or was this truly a failure on the part of the IC (Intelligence Community)?*

WALSH: I always thought it was, in a certain sense. I think that in the late '80s, when it was noted that the Soviet Union— The demographics of their population— It was the only industrialized state whose population was not— Their death rate or average life span was going backwards. For anybody who was living in these countries, the shortages that came up were just sort of amazing. There was just no civilian organization. So, how that did not translate into a knowledge of the fragility of the state— Additionally, anybody who was talking to people in these countries realized that the government was really an emperor with no clothes. Now, that emperor had millions of soldiers, thousands of aircraft, and nukes. So, yeah, you can say, "These guys are going for a crash," but—

*Q: How is it that nobody listened, retroactively, to George Kennan, who did foresee all of this? Did they consider him old news? It goes back to the '40s, I guess. Maybe they considered him obsolete? He did predict all of this.*

WALSH: Not obsolete. He had a tremendous following in Germany by the Germans. They just had admiration for him. But there were many – General Walters included – who thought that he was too soft on the Russians.

*Q: Interesting.*

WALSH: He would stay with Walters when he came to Germany. He would stay in Berlin or at the residence. I had the pleasure of having lunch; the three of us.

*Q: Oh, you have to tell us about that.*

WALSH: Well, that was it. It was just in passing. But these were two guys who did not necessarily agree.

*Q: It's funny, because Kennan was the most fascinating person of the Cold War. He was seen as a dove by hawks and seen as a hawk by doves.*

WALSH: Yeah. He was a rational man.

*Q: But you had lunch with these two? Wow. Describe whatever you remember of that lunch.*

WALSH: It was just a very pleasant thing. They talked about various things, and it was just a very casual affair.

*Q: And it was you, not the PAO (Public Affairs Officer)?*

WALSH: Well, it was in Berlin.

*Q: Oh, okay.*

WALSH: It was at the ambassador's residence there. But, yeah, that was the sort of thing where I had a little \_\_\_ to be in the room with such legendary characters.

*Q: So, come on, a physical description of Kennan in his later years. Was he sharp as a tack?*

WALSH: Sharp as a tack, tall and lean. I think it must have been late 1990 or '89. It was the fall or winter. He looked sort of Nordic. He had a sweater on, very casual, and some active—

*Q: Fantastic. He would have been in his 80s. He was born in 1901 or something.*

WALSH: This was within a decade of his passing.

*Q: Wow.*

WALSH: I read his book about being stationed in the Czech Republic and so on like this during the early days, and then being in Moscow, and it was just fascinating. So, I made a point of not asking stupid questions. I was really not asking anything.

*Q: Oh, I'm so sorry you didn't, but what a great experience anyway. The biography of him— Anyway, that's another subject. Fascinating. He was a tortured soul, actually, but he had a vision, which nobody else had. What did you call him? A rational man.*

WALSH: A rational man.

*Q: So, there we are. We're getting towards the end of your Bonn tour. You've got a new ambassador.*

WALSH: He came in late '91.

*Q: Okay. You were saying how it was not a difficult transition? It was very congenial, he understood that his IO (Information Officer)— Well, I guess Walters told him, "Trust Neal Walsh."*

WALSH: I imagine he did. I don't know. I just know that for me, it was a borderless transition. —you know, as I said, the only difference to me was that I was under a lot more scrutiny because he was as detail oriented as the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission).

*Q: Right. Micromanaging, maybe. Was there a little bit of that?*

WALSH: To an extent, but not in a bad sense. It was nothing like you would get— Under Burt, it was very much the \_\_\_\_\_ mutiny sort of thing. With George and with Kimmitt, you just realized, here were their priorities and where they expended their energies, and that's not necessarily a negative thing.

*Q: Interesting. I'm pausing, thinking about how important personality is. You wouldn't think so when you're dealing with weapons and strategy and economics and law, but personality remains everything, as it did in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, in that regard. It's kind of amazing. Nothing much is different. So, what comes next with the young Neal Walsh? You were beginning to look at follow-on positions, I guess.*

WALSH: Well, in terms of follow-on positions, it was implied that I would go into the Public Affairs Office at the White House with Mr. Fitzwater. To that extent, it was arranged that I would go to the War College at the end of my time in Bonn.

*Q: This is Carlisle, right?*

WALSH: No, in Washington. The National War College.

*Q: NDU (National Defense University), I guess. Okay. The idea was that you would go from there to work with—*

WALSH: Well, the idea was that if the administration won reelection, I would go to the shop there.

*Q: Was this implied or stated?*

WALSH: It was never put in writing, but I had a letter of recommendation from Margaret Tutwiler to Fitzwater, saying, “We’re looking forward to seeing if you could find a place for Mr. Walsh.” Then, handwritten down at the bottom, she said, “Hey, \_\_\_\_\_, this guy is really good.” It looked like it would work.

*Q: But the election went the other way.*

WALSH: The election went the other way. I and a couple of other people at the War College— This is at the National War College, not the NDU. It’s different from NDU. We had that, and then, when the election came— Once again, having watched the Bush administration in action, I just could not imagine having another administration like this. Then again, we got a new administration. So, I went over and was interviewed over there with their people. I remember that it was sort of a cold, miserable winter’s day. It was a new period in the administration or whatever. I don’t know if it was later 1990 or early ’92, going into ’93. But there I was.

I remember saying, “Man, I don’t think I could do this anyway. I’m just—” So, I finished out my time there. Actually, the early weeks and months of the Clinton administration were just very confused. As a matter of fact, one person from the War College, Kristie Kenny, who had been a deputy executive secretary at the National Security Council, was pulled out of the War College and brought back to the White House. They never do that. They say that even in times of war they wouldn’t allow people to get out of school.

But they just took her and put her back in over there, because the paper flow was just— It’s a problem in this current administration that’s never been fixed. She was very good at it. She could say, “Here are the passages it has to go through before it gets to the president, and here’s how to get it there quickly.” So, she was brought over there.

*Q: So, were you disappointed? Maybe you weren’t?*

WALSH: Not so much.

*Q: You realized it would have been a long haul or stressful to be— The administration kind of caught its first wind later, but the first year was quite rough, if I remember correctly.*

WALSH: Yeah. It was not necessarily, at that time, an administration I wanted to be a part of. I was sort of sad to see the Bushes go.

*Q: Okay. So, any political clout— Luckily, you were a civil servant, in the sense of not belonging to an administration, so you were free to do something else. What was that something else?*

WALSH: Well, that something else was the deputy directorship for AF (Bureau of African Affairs).

*Q: Oh, that early? Okay. So, that's back at C Street Southwest.*

WALSH: Yep, 4<sup>th</sup> and C. Bob \_\_\_\_\_.

*Q: We don't need to censor anything about anybody. I know that there were ups and downs. This isn't a personality sketch.*

WALSH: Bob said, "Hey, would you like to come along?" and I said, "Sure." I had worked with him before. He'd been the cultural guy when I was there in the '80s.

*Q: You were there in that office? Oh, yes, you were AFE (Bureau of African Affairs, Eastern Division)? What were you?*

WALSH: I did some time in Central, South, and East.

*Q: Okay. Right, he was cultural coordinator back then. Yes, I remember. That's the job that I got a little bit later. So, he called you and invited you? Okay. Now, this time, you had some authority. You were no longer a desk officer; you were deputy director. You were basically the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of the office. You had learned a lot of administrative things from some of your past experiences, which you now cashed in on, I think. Any examples of how your previous administrative experience helped you get a foothold in AFPD?*

WALSH: Well, a lot of it— If you want— I have never worked in a regional office like that at State, but one of the things that was great – and you learn about it as you're a desk officer – is, first, of course, the needs of the posts: what do they need, what are their goals, etcetera. Then, one of the good things about USIA (United States Information Agency)— In certain regions, we were also able to do this at State. 20 years later, the PD (Public Diplomacy) budget is still independent. What you could do is move money between embassies, which State can't do. You can't borrow money from this guy's account.

So, in a way, being the deputy director, once again, you're not really up there saying, "This will be our policy." The policy is handed down from the White House and the Department. But you're operating, in terms of money and personnel, on a bigger canvas. So, if you have— You would look almost every quarter. Is everybody using their IV funds? Is everybody using their money for this? Can we take money from South Africa and use it up in Zambia? Can we take Burkina Faso's money and move it over here? Can we respond to needs that are coming up?

Of course, one of the first things that hit us when I went over to USIA in 1993 was Somalia.

*Q: Oh, yes. Poor Bob \_\_\_\_\_. Not poor, but what a rotten experience.*

WALSH: Yes, that was a horrible experience, but once again, you saw how the government would act, and here were some of the things— The first years of the Clinton administration were kind of rocky in a lot of ways. There was one meeting with the Asians, including the Russians, in Seattle that I went to, and another one in Tokyo, which was just— No, this was a major meeting with AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee)— Not AIPAC, for God’s sake—

*Q: No, there are the two AIPACs. There’s the Asian one and the Israeli one. Was it the G8 or something?*

WALSH: No. Actually, yeah, I think there was a G8— No. There were Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese there.

*Q: It could have been the Asian AIPAC.*

WALSH: Well, there was also a big one in Tokyo, and I was asked to go to Tokyo to work with the advanced people of the Clinton administration, just to say, “Here’s what we do from a local side. Here’s how we help things out.” That was sort of fun, showing them how to do things with foreign countries. They had never done it before. They were like, wow. It was sort of right up there with some of the advanced people from the Bush administration who would say, “All these Germans have the same first name.”

*Q: They’re all Hans, right?*

WALSH: Yeah. So, it was good there. Then, your moment of crisis in the initial time through was Somalia. Once again, Dobbins pops up at the NSC (National Security Council). He was very good, because we had these problems there, and then Clinton more or less said, “We’re getting out there,” but he saw the difference between— Once again, in Germany, we were working with the United States Department of Defense, which was amenable and happy to work with the administration.

Here, it was fascinating. I remember that on one joint phone call, after the attempts to get Muhammad Ali— Not Muhammad Ali. You know, after Black Hawk down and the Clinton administration had decided they would reduce our profile. Remember, the initial intervention there had been under the Bush administration. So, everybody was reluctant here, and everybody thought it was going to be a cakewalk and so on. It just was a horrible mess. So, they had \_\_\_\_\_ and others say, “Here is what we will be doing,” and so on.

I remember that in one of our conference calls, Dobbins from the NSC was just reading out, point by point, the points the president had made in his press conference and speeches about this, that, and the other thing. He said, “Now, there would be a secure passage from Point A to Point B,” from the airport to downtown or something like that. “Has that road or passage been established?”

There's a little bit of back and forth – “Not quite, not yet,” and so on like this. Dobbins very clearly said, “I'm reading from what the president said. ‘There will be a secure passage.’”

*Q: DOD (Department of Defense) didn't like that.*

WALSH: We were sort of going to be pulling out, and it was going to be a multinational force or something like that. He'd been reading it to them, and he said, “Thanks. You'd better do what the president said we would be doing.” I was quite happy and proud to see Joe Dobbins saying, “This is what you've got to do.” All of us, actually, sort of had a feeling that this could be done, that we could save Somalia. Well, that didn't work out.

*Q: We did not. Also, in the same period, we often say that Clinton did not do well in Rwanda in '94 because he had been burnt in Somalia. I guess that is the case. He really sort of blew it both times, didn't he?*

WALSH: Yes. You had— There, for Rwanda, you would have Prudence Bushnell, week after week, pounding the table, saying, “When are we going to do something?”

*Q: Right. Good for her. Yeah. What was she at that time? Was she AF?*

WALSH: She was deputy assistant secretary for African Affairs at State.

*Q: Meaning she was not PDAS (Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State), she was DAS (Deputy Assistant Secretary of State) for one of the areas?*

WALSH: No, she was pretty much the PDAS. She would be cheering when— My goodness, he was my ambassador in Geneva.

*Q: Not Bill Swing, no. Anyway. So, Bushnell—*

WALSH: Well, the point is that when the assistant secretary was not there, Bushnell was.

*Q: Since we're on this topic, and since you were— I was your assistant at that time, so I'm seeing it from a few levels below. But much has been said about the role of Susan Rice and Madeleine Albright. They came out of this not looking very good at all, especially Albright, who at the UN (United Nations) really censored any discussion. I believe she would not even be in the room if the word “genocide” came up. Were you able to see what Susan Rice was doing, at that time?*

WALSH: Susan was over at the National Security Council.

*Q: With Dobbins? Or under Dobbins?*

WALSH: Well, she was the— At a certain point in the third or fourth year of the Clinton administration – not necessarily during the '94 thing— She might have been an assistant over there, at that time. So, yeah.

*Q: Anyway, you were present at some of the planning meetings. Not all, obviously, because you weren't State; you were USIA. Let's see. Clinton blew it. Dobbins, you say, really did a fine job of making clear what the president's policy was and making sure that the DOD understood their obligations. Any other things of that sort?*

WALSH: At that time, no. Also, this is once again the idea of how many major problems can we face at the same time. Things were moving really fast in southern Africa.

*Q: Right, and the Balkans.*

WALSH: Yeah, so you had the Balkans, and you had southern Africa. Southern Africa was very close to \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, and everybody. So, we had all of those conferences. I think Mandela came to the United States before he was even inaugurated. He won the election and came to the U.S., to Washington and Atlanta. Those were the first foreign visits that he had.

*Q: He went to New York. I'll just mention Jack \_\_\_\_\_. It's a funny story, but it's a little bit on a tangent. Jack \_\_\_\_\_ and Nelson Mandela— Oh my gosh. Anyway, yeah, what an interesting time to be there.*

WALSH: Oh, yeah, Jack \_\_\_\_\_. What a character.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

WALSH: I'd be downstairs having my cigarette and a coffee when he'd arrive at the office. It would be pretty early. Generally, his wife would be driving the car, and he'd get out. He was so big that the car would rise on its springs when he got out of it.

*Q: That's pretty funny, yeah. Aside from being physically heavy, his brain was heavy, but anyway— We should let people rest. But, yeah, he really was an autocrat.*

WALSH: Well, I can remember election day in 1994. So, that would have been 1994. As I said, I still had positive thoughts about the old regime. That was the year that the Republicans won Congress.

*Q: Oh, yes, that was the Gingrich year. Right.*

WALSH: Before the end of the day, the offices of people like Mr. and some others were deadly quiet. It was just amazing.

*Q: So, they understood the gravity. It really did cause a lot of angst among higher ups. Wherever you were ideologically— In fact, things stopped happening easily. Things just*

*did not happen easily because you had the White House on one side and Congress on the other side. Soon, you had the shutdown. It was '95, I think. It was early '95 when the whole shebang was shut down.*

WALSH: Yeah. But once again— Now, the other side of working— Once again, it was so much fun to organize those seminars and so on like this for South Africa. We did programs for that. It did look like things were going really well in a lot of other areas, and the push within the Clinton administration for democracy was an important deal. They also got a lot of pushback from USAID (United States Agency for International Development). Actually, they were carrying the torch from the Bush administration. Under both administrations, USAID said, “We don’t do this.”

So, we had, in those years that I was in the African area in USIA – ’93 to ’96, so three years – more money, to a certain extent, for programs from USAID that we were able to use than we got from USIA or State.

*Q: I know. I mean, I benefitted from that in Pretoria. I had a very significant budget, and very little of it was USIA. How could AID possibly push back against an effort to democratize countries? What in the world would they have been thinking?*

WALSH: Well, their approach was very much that they were bricks and mortar and health and transport and agriculture. “This is what we do. That is a political sort of thing. We don’t want to get involved in it,” and so on like that.

*Q: Well, but what was the director’s name? He survived the gun to the head of the Clinton administration, when the senator said, “Kill AID.” Somebody in the Clinton administration said, “No, but we can give you USIA.” We only learned that years later. But I thought that AID, in fact, survived by accepting the democracy portfolio. They knew it was the politically expedient thing to do in Washington. I want to say Atkins. You know who I’m talking about.*

WALSH: Yeah, but they didn’t have the structure to do it. Many of their field people just refused to do anything on this. So, they would turn a tremendous amount of money over to us, and we did radio programs, acting programs, and all sorts of stuff that was just fabulous. We had election support, election guidance, and so on like that.

*Q: Did they do this at the Washington level? I know they were doing this in the field, like in South Africa, for example, but would they actually block out grants to USIA from their budget?*

WALSH: Absolutely. They stopped doing that in Washington— Let’s see, we’re talking 1993 to 1994, so probably about 1994, because that was starting to get under the skin of Congress. “We’re not allocating funds to you for you to allocate them to USIA.” By that time, also, ideologically, they started looking and realizing that the intangibles of democracy have a tremendous impact on the bricks and mortar, as well. So, yeah, this

sort of circle of virtue started kicking in over there. They realized that democracy building has as much to do with development as with anything else.

Also, a lot of their attention was off on Central and Eastern Europe and Russia. A good portion of AID— Some of them had worked on South African programs. Some of them had worked in Eastern Europe in the years up to the collapse. So, there were some of them who had good background about how this could work. But yeah, for a while, we were riding high with USAID money. It was just a wonderful time.

*Q: Well, once again, it sounds like you hit the place at the best time in its history. Soon, even two or three years later, it would not have been the vibrant place that it was then.*

WALSH: Yeah, it was great. I do remember that one of our directors— No, this was earlier. This could have been in the '80s. When the establishment of the National Republican Institute, NRI, and the National Democratic Institute, NDI, were put together, the money for international democratization programs was there. I said, "Wow, this is great." I thought – this in the '80s – that all these programs we were doing then could just be expanded.

John \_\_\_\_\_ and Kent \_\_\_\_\_ were the directors at that time, and they said, "Neal, you think we're going to see this money?" We become a pass-through agency for the funding for those guys. That had always disappointed me. So, when it came about in '92, '93, '94, '95, and we were actually getting money for democratization, yeah, this was great, getting that money. I just remember so many PAOs out in the field were doing great things. So, it was fabulous to work with things, then.

*Q: Right. That's including your mentor, John the Irishman who— Was he in Zambia?*

WALSH: Oh, Burns?

*Q: John Burns, yeah.*

WALSH: By this time, he was in Zimbabwe or South Africa.

*Q: Yeah, he was in South Africa by this time, just as you described, doing great things with USIA money and NDI money and AID money. Then, he handed it over to Bob \_\_\_\_\_, and he handed it over to Tom Hall. Fascinating. So, you really were in the middle of the action, as you have been many times in your career. I was going to ask you about— Any comments on Joe Duffy, or should we skip that?*

WALSH: Duffy was one of those— You know, he was one of those guys that felt that we should not be doing what we were doing, that we did not deserve— He had a historical perspective of the United States of America, and he felt that a country that was as brutal as ours didn't deserve to be telling people about democracy.

*Q: That's a side of him I never saw. That's fascinating. Many of us wondered— He didn't seem to believe at all in the USIA mission, so what the hell was he doing there?*

WALSH: That is the feeling I got too.

*Q: We didn't deserve— Those of us who didn't see it directly, as you did, thought, "He's been instructed by the White House to destroy USIA, and he did a damn good job of it without ever talking to anyone about how he was going to do it."*

WALSH: Yeah. I think he was comfortable with the academic programs, the cultural programs, and so on like this, but the information and the political programs just did not move him at all. He was a total liberal.

*Q: Well, yeah, that's apples and oranges, I think. The fact is that liberal or conservative, he just didn't believe in the mission of USIA, which had always been bipartisan. I'm sure you remember that there was a WorldNet, once, where he said \_\_\_people using floppy discs and new technologies, "Well, when I'm sitting in my hammock in the summertime with my lemonade, I really like books." He said that at one of the AF regional conferences. Six months later, he killed the book program. I mean, it just was unexplainable. I always ask people this, because I still don't understand him and why he did these things. He destroyed good things without any rationale.*

WALSH: Yeah. He was— \_\_\_\_\_. He was a '60s Democratic liberal. He came from Connecticut. He knew my family and he knew where I was from. He had been big in Democratic politics, but on different sides of the Democratic party, in Connecticut. I won his faith one time, though, and that was when we had a fire drill in USIA. I don't know if you remember how they were, but we were coming back in. Everybody's pushing through and trying to get to the elevators and get out. Guess who's in the midst of this crowd, getting pushed around?

*Q: Duffy?*

WALSH: No, it was a little old man who was the former governor and former senator from the state of Connecticut, Ribicoff. I went up to him and said, "Mr. Ribicoff, I'm Neal Walsh, Jim Walsh's son. I bet you're here to see the director."

He said, "I am."

I said, "Step on the elevator with me and I'll bring you up there."

Duffy had a sort of— "Oh, so you had Walsh coming around to get you?" They all had a good laugh about that. But he was— I always felt that he just didn't feel comfortable. He didn't believe in the product. He was sort of a guy in the sales division who didn't believe in the product. I think that overall, that was a problem.

*Q: Yeah. He was very deceptive. He would tell you he believed, and later you would see through his actions that that was not true at all. He was a liar, actually. Anyway, never mind that.*

WALSH: We were riding high in those years, in terms of the funding that we were getting for all of our programs. It was really good.

*Q: Especially for South Africa, where the elections were in '94, as was the Rwanda situation. Oh, my gosh, \_\_\_— And the Black Caucus was actually very helpful and supportive, I think.*

WALSH: Oh, yeah. John Lewis, who just passed away, you would see him. He would come around and talk to Bob and get money. He'd give us money, or we'd be begging him.

*Q: That's interesting. John Lewis would come to USIA to see Bob?*

WALSH: Yep. Well, I think that that's more of a mark of the man than anything.

*Q: Gosh. Speaking of elevators, I had an elevator ride with John Lewis once. It was so pleasant. He was such a nice guy, so down to earth and unpretentious and delightful. He's gone.*

WALSH: Yes. Well, once again, we had great staff out there in the field.

*Q: Yes. You made more trips to the field than any other deputy ever did, probably. You were out there quite a bit.*

WALSH: Well, we set up a deal there where Bob would write the EERs (Employee Evaluation Report) on senior Foreign Service officers, and I would write them on the ones below. Therefore, Bob would do Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya, and I'd do everybody else. I would do three six-week trips a year for those years.

*Q: Well, let's not be too modest. You did this for the purpose of stocking EERs, but you also gave great mentorship to people in the field. You were known to be the go-to person for getting FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals) properly placed at their proper level. That came up later in your career and after your career.*

WALSH: Yes. So, it was a good time. Getting to know all of those good people in the field— My goodness. You just look around, and we had so many good people and so many junior people. We had a lot of young people out there.

*Q: Very committed.*

WALSH: It was great to get out and see everybody, because in my previous life in AF, we were writing EERs— The desk officers would write them for the director and the deputy

director, and we would have posts where nobody from D.C. had visited in years. I thought that an annual visit, not only by the desk officer but also by the director or deputy director, was absolutely essential. You couldn't write an EER on somebody without seeing them do something.

*Q: Nowadays, first of all, that's unthinkable with the budget they have, but also there's the broken chain of command where the area office doesn't even do EERs anymore. PD (Public Diplomacy), as you mentioned earlier, has its own budget, but it does not have any chain of command. What's your take on that? What is lost by that?*

WALSH: Well, I think that what is lost is why we used to have two EERs done by the ambassador and the area office. That is because there are— Between Public Diplomacy and the embassy, our goals are so much longer-term in the sense that what we are doing is trying to build a presence, build perceptions, and influence perceptions. You do that by reaching out to people and sending them on IV programs, sending them on training programs to the United States. You send them on educational cultural exchange programs, book programs, library programs, all those things. An ambassador has two to four years to have a positive impact, so he wants to do this now.

We, with the IV program— Now, the timelines on IVs are much different. But we, because of the independence of our money, were able to respond to what ambassadors wanted. But you always had to draw a line, at times, and say, “No, sir, I can't invest my time and money or my staff on this or that.”

*Q: The weird thing is that we still have the money, but we don't have— In fact, they still shuffle around money as you were describing, but the PD office has no chain of command with people in the field. It's a crazy system, and old timers like myself feel this is a loss. I'm not trying to trap you into saying the same thing, but I think it's a loss, actually. So, anyway, this is a fascinating period of USIA's history. It's sort of the penultimate period. This was a great period that preceded its ultimate demise by four or five years. It was great until Duffy decided to kill it.*

WALSH: Well, there, those were the Washington games. Once again, we'll find his name, but the USAID guy just said, “No, this isn't going to happen.”

*Q: Atwood, yes.*

WALSH: Right.

*Q: Atwood probably was from the same mold as Duffy, I think, only Atwood was a lot smarter. He saved his agency, and Duffy did not save his. I don't know if it was Clinton-Albright who actually made the decision. We don't know.*

WALSH: Right. Then, Duffy was more loyal to Clinton than to his own agency. He never went to the White House, to Gore, and said, “Hey, here's what we do. Here's what would go wrong if we were amalgamated into State.”

*Q: Right. And unlike the much-despised Wick, who was always with the president and who increased the— You never get decency and money at the same time, it seems.*

WALSH: I don't know of any occasion where he – Duffy – went to State or the Hill or the White House with the express idea of telling them that this was a bad policy.

*Q: It seemed that he was fully on board with the policy. We don't know why, but we don't have to be happy about it. It was a very—*

WALSH: Well, in a way, he was very much like the current president. We'd say, "Hey, we've got to have 100,000 dollars to fight the good fight in this country where they're putting their journalists away and killing people and so on."

He'd say, "Hey, we're doing that, too."

*Q: Yes. That's horrible.*

WALSH: Those were thrilling years. Once again, we admired the fight and were brokenhearted to see that we did not take an active role or intervene in Rwanda. Then, it was fascinating to see— Pru Bushnell, once again, was the person who really led the fight at the Department of State. George Moose was the assistant secretary. I just— You didn't see him pounding the table with tears coming out of his eyes. With her, you did, and you just felt that overall sense of despair when you watched what was happening.

Probably the only major effect I had, at that time, was at one meeting, the weekly assistant secretary's meeting. The admin director, the director of AF/EX (Bureau of African Affairs, Office of the Executive Director)— Now, this was June or July. They said, "We have these Rwandan employees popping up in Tanzania, Burundi, Nairobi, Kampala, and so on like this. They're all drawing salaries, but they're not doing anything."

*Q: Oh no. That's horrible.*

WALSH: I have to say, 20 years later, I saw the same thing in Bujumbura. The admin officer at the embassy in Bujumbura when I was acting PAO there said, "Hey, the employees are coming in late and not doing this." It was like, if they drive a car, they'll get stoned. If they're on a bus, they might get killed. We're lucky they're even showing up. What do you mean you want to dock their hours?

*Q: The same thing happened in Eritrea. When some of the FSNs went to jail, the Department washed their hands of them.*

WALSH: That was here, too. "We can't keep spending money on people who—" I said, "Wait a minute." Pru was in the seat, I think, at the time, and I said, "So, this happens, and a couple of articles get into the local paper there saying that here are these people

who have lost their families, their way of life, everything, and they're being punished by us? We're taking away their slight— Look at the dour sums of money. You think this is going to look good for us?"

"Oh, I don't know—"

Okay, buddy, it's five. I've got to get upstairs. I have not been out of my house at all today. It is 106 down here.

*Q: It is not.*

WALSH: It is!

*Q: In that case, this was a great session. Next session, I ask you to be in 106 again, just for the sake of the interview.*

WALSH: Okay.

*Q: It's now stopping. Finished.*

WALSH: —used to have the PAOs like John Burns who would tell us, "If anything happens, I'll let you know." There wasn't a politician in southern Africa who didn't know John Burns.

*Q: Right. He had no time, no interest, and no need for demonstrating—*

WALSH: \_\_\_\_\_ he was, you know?

*Q: Yeah. That's a very good example of— He wasn't the only one. He was unique, but he wasn't the only one doing great things that can't be quantified. So, will we ever be cured of that? Maybe not. Maybe Congress, giving funding, needs to know what they're getting for their money. It's not unreasonable, right?*

WALSH: Right. So, you go back and forth with, "Here are your regular reporting things." Back in those days, we'd do a quarterly letter.

*Q: Right, I remember those.*

WALSH: That was good, because there, you could really pull that file out and read what people had been doing. That was good.

*Q: That's a good point. My question is, who ever reads those things? Supposedly the director and deputy director of the area office read them. They were a great instrument, but they were never really utilized, were they? Sometimes, the office director would send a response to the letter, and it would create a communication between two individuals. I guess you could say so what, right?*

WALSH: Well, you could say so what. Now, once again, and I think others found this helpful too, when you became the desk officer, you went through those files. You would get the background of that post. Sometimes, on rare occasions, if there's an issue at a post, you can go back through those reports and say, "Aha, here's the basis of this." Same thing for new PAOs. A few years of those letters gives you an idea of the level of the operations of the posts and so on and so forth.

*Q: Very good point. That's instead of the handoff memos, which many people never even do anymore.*

WALSH: Exactly. I used to be sort of compulsive about doing that sort of thing, and, additionally, hoping that my successors would want to follow along the lines I had gone on. When I succeeded good PAOs, I would always look for the things that they had been doing. So, that was very important to do.

One thing that I forgot when we were talking about Germany, and we should mention or put back in— After the July agreement between Kohl and Gorbachev, what happened?

*Q: Is this a quiz?*

WALSH: July 1991. Sort of a quiz. What happened?

*Q: The end of the Soviet Union.*

WALSH: Exactly. The coup. By giving leverage— Well, actually, \_\_\_ said, "Don't do this. If you get rid of the party, that's your job, pal. You're gone." But he did it. He dissolved the party. That came in January. But still, Russia or the Soviet Union was in turmoil from August through October.

*Q: Right. Now, these keystone cops, these silly military guys that did such a bad job— By the way, I've heard different versions. Was Gorbachev informed by them or was he part of the coup? He was at a "dacha" (summer house) apparently.*

WALSH: He was at a dacha in the Crimea.

*Q: Maybe they intimidated him and made him join them in spirit. Do you have any idea? You weren't there, obviously.*

WALSH: No, I wasn't there. So, I've only read about it. In reading about it, yeah, it was— If these guys had been more serious – and once again, this shows how bankrupt the Soviet leadership was— We're talking about the head of the KGB (Committee for State Security), senior military officers, and what do they do? They were drunk. It was obviously a spur of the moment thing. There were no months long preparations or anything like that. So, once again, you had to say, "Ah, so that's why Baker is so

concerned about German unity.” If those guys had succeeded, then we’d be right back to the Cold War.

*Q: Right. They never even came close. got on top of the tank, and there’s that famous picture. They really flubbed it.*

WALSH: And \_\_\_\_\_, with whom Gorbachev had been having years of friction as they went along, took all the ideological and political wind right out of Gorbachev’s sails.

*Q: Well, at the same time, he did put down the military cleverly, which is something Gorbachev supposedly would have wanted, though we won’t know what he really wanted, will we?*

WALSH: Well, his idea was that this showed the absolute bankruptcy of the party, and therefore, the party had to be eliminated. That just led to the collapse. would not grant him a state position. warned him – “You get rid of the party, and you’re getting rid of your job.” But he put it up, and so therefore, if there’s a godfather of German unity, it is Gorbachev.

*Q: I guess so, yeah.*

WALSH: So, yeah. Gorbachev was there for another six months to ensure that they lived up to their agreements on German unification. I think that everybody else realized there was no going back on this thing. So, there you go. Let’s go back to the African area, though, in the ‘90s.

I wouldn’t say it was a halcyon time, because fall and winter of ’93 to ’94 was Somalia, and then in ’94 in June or July, you had Rwanda.

*Q: It was April.*

WALSH: April. That just went through for the next six to eight months. There was the whole thing of the massacres and then Paul Kagame coming through.

*Q: Meanwhile, Nelson Mandela becomes president of South Africa.*

WALSH: Right, in ’94.

*Q: So, it was about as active – both positive and negative – as you can get.*

WALSH: It was. Once again, because USIA had its own budget and did its own things, in this case, in a national case rather than an embassy case, we were called upon to do all sorts of support for the Clinton administration to show their appreciation of what had happened. So, we had massive IVs. We subsidized the conferences in Atlanta and Washington. It was a big time for us. You were pretty active in that, as was Mr. .

*Q: I was. There was the Clinton White House Conference on Africa, which was pretty demanding. There was Mandela's visit. He came to say Jack \_\_\_\_\_. I say that with big air quotes. Yeah.*

WALSH: That continued on. What was Mandela's successor? He was the son of one of the ANC (African National Congress) leaders, Thabo Mbeki.

*Q: Right. Mbeki was kind of the caretaker. Mandela was more of a figurehead, really, when he was the president. They said that Mbeki was doing all the work, and this is why people thought that when he became president, it would be a smooth transition, but it was not. But that's another story.*

WALSH: Right, it was not. I said in a meeting when representing USIA— It was two meetings over the course of— It was with Mbeki and Gore. I think that was when he was still vice president. It must have been because—

*Q: It was the Gore-Mbeki Binational Commission.*

WALSH: Ah, okay. That was fascinating, because it was interesting. It was hard for me to put the guy who showed up to those meetings, who knew everything, who had his fingers on the pulse of U.S.-South African relations and stuff like this, who put \_\_\_\_\_, our ambassador, there, with the guy who said, "If you take more showers and drink this, you won't get HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)." It just went downhill.

*Q: It's so crazy. As you remind us, those meetings took place every six months, and they alternated between Washington and Pretoria. So, if you were in Washington, you would get one of those once a year.*

WALSH: Yeah. We'd have to do a lot of documentation – what are we doing, how do we look good, stuff like that. Who was our southern Africa desk officer? It was Larry Schwartz. Larry Schwartz was coming out of Pretoria as IO, I think, and he maintained a lot of contacts with the— As a matter of fact, he had a lot of contacts with the South African government. One of the funniest things that happened once was— This was for Mandela's trip. This must have been '94. A guy – I forget who it was – who was one of the executives in the Office of the President of South Africa called Larry. He said, "Larry, we're not getting any support from your people here, you know what I mean? We're coming up there, but what are we doing about our security guys? What's the protocol? How do we handle this?"

So, Larry was there. I told him, "You should have told them that they're in Virginia. Land at Dulles, stop in Chantilly, and buy all the guns you want." But, yeah, that is how well, I would say, the people in USIA were connected. You've got this guy who's like, "What do we do about the guns? I don't know. Oh, I know this guy in Washington, and he can help us." And Larry did put them in touch with protocol and the White House and the Secret Service and so on. He gave them the phone numbers they needed.

*Q: Yeah. John Dixon was also at that desk.*

WALSH: Ah, yes. Dixon. What a fine guy he was, too. So, yeah, he and Larry worked together. I wonder if they're still in touch. I still talk to Larry every couple weeks.

*Q: Oh, good. I'm going to turn the recorder off for this one.*

*Q: It's true that that desk – we're now recording again, by the way – was a key thing. Now, other things about that office. I remember \_\_\_\_\_ once walking in to say hello to Bob \_\_\_\_\_. What sort of memories do you have of the unexpected events that happened in that office, not directly related to the work but just because that office, as you say— Schwartz and Dixon and \_\_\_\_\_, they all had these incredible contexts.*

WALSH: Well, as I said, John Lewis, there he was.

*Q: Right. John Lewis, \_\_\_\_\_. I'm going to write these down. I'm sure there were others. It's incredible. That really was a highly functioning unit.*

WALSH: Not only that, but it also was part— This is one of the reasons why nowadays, you just go, “Oh, shit.” It was highly functional. Everybody was so dedicated and excited by what we were doing. Additionally, the overall sadness or upset that we all had, inasmuch as what was going on in Rwanda— The \_\_\_\_— We have this huge refugee problem in Eastern Congo and the collapse of Mobutu, but everybody's all of a sudden sorry for those guys. Well, wait a minute, they are the \_\_\_\_\_. They were the bad guys.

*Q: Right. They were mixed in. You couldn't tell one from the other. You mentioned Pru Bushnell that last time. I know she was passionately trying to do— Of course, we can say that the U.S. government really didn't do a damn thing except convince—*

WALSH: I remember working with VOA (Voice of America) and others about never mentioning the word “genocide.”

*Q: That was the Madeleine Albright thing. She insisted the word never be used.*

WALSH: That was because if we started using it officially, then in terms of international agreements and stuff like this, we're obligated to follow through.

*Q: What can you say about this, other than that it was very cynical and very cowardly?*

WALSH: How would you say— We were all trying to do as best we could to paper over the cracks.

*Q: Well, as directed by— You didn't make policy. It was Clinton, Albright—*

WALSH: At one time, it looked like we would indeed be intervening, and then we backed off because we couldn't get— The government, I guess, had been— They had brought military equipment to Uganda to come in and try to fix it, but nothing happened.

*Q: Well, I guess that that may have been from Clinton, who was burned in Somalia and not ready. A year or two later, he saw his error and did do stuff in the Balkans, but that didn't do Rwanda any good. What else, Neal? What about the process? You had more contact with the State Department Africa Bureau than the desk officers did. What was your take on how that bureau was functioning in general and on Rwanda? It was kind of shut out on making policy, I guess.*

WALSH: Yeah. Once again, I think that even George Moose really didn't say boo, but everyone was convinced we should do something. But the 7<sup>th</sup> floor and the White House were totally against it.

*Q: Yeah. Is this— So, how do we judge George Moose on this?*

WALSH: Well, wait, who was our secretary of State at that time?

*Q: Gee whiz.*

WALSH: It was a guy from San Francisco or California. They used to joke.

*Q: After Baker. It was not Schultz. It was not Baker. This is very embarrassing.*

WALSH: Well, you shouldn't be. The joke was, "If So-and-So were still alive, this wouldn't be happening." He was so ineffectual.

*Q: Oh. Well, we'll certainly correct this in the transcript.*

WALSH: I'll remember it tomorrow.

*Q: I'll remember it in about 20 minutes. That is funny.*

WALSH: So, it was— At the time, we had great dreams for Zimbabwe. We were pumping money into it, educational programs, IVs. We were doing everything we could. Everything looked so good. Mugabe was behaving himself. It just seemed to be a great moment in U.S.-African relations. By reaching out as much as we did, and here is the upside of it all— By reaching out to South Africa and so on, it changed perceptions, to a certain extent, about the United States. Obviously, during the period of constructive engagement and so on, we were not necessarily the white half throughout southern Africa. You had incidents, then, of— I think O'Brien was in the area for a while, and he was information coordinator. He had been bounced out of Zambia after it was found that we were listening to Ken Kaunda's phone calls.

*Q: Yeah. Mike O'Brien once joked that every city he had served in that started with the letter L he was persona non grata in: Luanda, London, and there was another one. Of course, Warren Christopher is the name we were looking for.*

WALSH: Warren Christopher. He was the secretary of State at that time. They would say, "If Warren Christopher were still alive, this wouldn't be happening."

*Q: Ay, ay, ay.*

WALSH: So, yeah, it was a glorious time. In terms of U.S. investments, we had \_\_\_\_\_ putting a billion dollars into Zimbabwean agriculture. It was just a great time. We all thought we were on the edge of great things.

*Q: I forget, when did Namibia become— Was it in that period, also?*

WALSH: It was later in the '90s.

*Q: Right. That was the other UN representative. We'll think of his name. Anyway, this was a period very rich in experience, positive and negative. That office— This interview may remind people of the importance of that office at that time.*

WALSH: Well, back in those times, with the democracy money that we had in just about all of those countries, and with the IV program and the speaker programs and Fulbright and cultural exchanges, we had a positive presence throughout the continent. With the South African changes and so on, this looked good. This was— You know, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, you look back at Mozambique, which wanted to join the Warsaw Pact, and it's like, come on. Everybody sort of reimagined the direction they might be going. For Angola, that was right to the bank.

So, yeah, there was good and bad, obviously, but it had great potential. The collapse of Zaire, because of the genocide and so on like this, was coming all along. The big question that a lot of us had back in the '70s, 20 years before, was "What would this place be without Mobutu?" Well, what did you have? It was terrible, because with Mobutu, you almost had the same thing that the Belgians did, where they didn't educate them because "they'll be trouble." Mobutu shuffled his military advisers and his orientation from us to the Israelis to the Chinese to the French. So, no one in the military could get strong enough to be a challenge to him.

*Q: He did the same with his cabinet. He would appoint people so as to put them in jail a year later. A colleague of ours, Bob \_\_\_\_\_, has stated that it's no coincidence that these profound changes in southern Africa occurred at the same time as profound changes in Eastern Europe. It could be that the crazy equations of the Cold War and forcing countries to decide one way or another between the U.S. and the East, when that was suddenly no longer a factor, this permitted dramatic change. It could be that the changes in South Africa were largely possible because the apartheid people could no longer say, "We are the bastion against communism." It just didn't work anymore.*

WALSH: There was that. But then you also did not have the Soviets playing power politics. You've got to remember. Up in Ethiopia, you had the Soviets and the Mengistu regime working tightly together. One of the big things that impressed everybody was that they were able to move the vision by air into Ethiopia all at one time. So, yeah, this was a liberation period. As a matter of fact, it was still, I think, in the Bush administration that Hank Cohen was the assistant secretary. He's the one who negotiated the peace agreements between Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as between the Amhara, the Oromo, and the Tigrayans, and so on with the other factions going on in Ethiopia. He brought that civil war to a halt.

—the Soviet policies went in. Kaunda became a democratic president, held elections, and lost. He just said, "Hey, that's okay." Mugabe behaved. This had an impact all over the place.

*Q: Interesting. Any recollections about the day-to-day operations in AF – the way it was structured, the way it interacted with ECA (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs), which was E, back then? Also, the direct connections between that office and the Office of the Vice President—*

WALSH: Yeah, you had that. Additionally, for us, for Bob and me, we would attend the weekly meetings for George Moose. We also had close relationships with the desk officers, and our desk officers had, in the case of Rwanda, South Africa, and so on, almost daily interactions with the desk officers at State. So, in that sense, it was cheek by jowl at all times.

*Q: A very fascinating period for you, and I think a very rewarding one. So, what happens next?*

WALSH: Well, let's go back to USIA. Now, I should have done this, at one time or another, just an accounting of— In terms of personnel in Africa, maybe for the 30 posts, we might have had 60 or 70 people. Then, some of the big posts, like Nigeria, we maybe had \_\_\_\_\_. Out of that, we got an incredible number of ambassadorships and DCM-ships after the amalgamation. In the first five or six years after amalgamation, it was just— Let's see. There was Cynthia, of course. Let's see. Cynthia Efird.

*Q: What was his name who went to Gabon? The British guy?*

WALSH: Not a lot of people, but there was Tommy Doherty. I'm trying to think of other people who became ambassadors and DCMs. More than one State person told me the reason that happened— Again, in 2001 and 2002, I was on the DCM committee, and people would say, "PAOs have salesmanship and management experience, so they did so well."

*Q: There was also Marcus \_\_\_\_\_. Yeah, that's true. So, what else about USIA? This was your last glance, I think.*

WALSH: Yeah, it was my last time in the building.

*Q: Of course, there was no way of knowing that it was going to be snuffed out within four years.*

WALSH: Yeah. At one time, actually— Duffy would have a weekly meeting of all the area directors. I was sitting in for Bob, at one time, and this must have been '96. This was when the idea of melding USIA and USAID into State came up. It was fascinating, because Duffy raised this, and he said, “Hey, what do you guys think about this sort of thing?”

*Q: Nobody said anything good, right?*

WALSH: Nobody said anything good. That was lucky, because if they'd called on me, I would have said, “As long as we're able to keep on doing what we're doing and we get paid, I don't care.” I think people had deeper thoughts about this than I did. They said, “We won't be able to do what we do,” and that's what happened. But we had— Barry Fulton was there. We had some brilliant people. Jake Gillespie was there. He was over at the White House, actually. No, he was over at the White House during the Bush period. He came back for some things.

*Q: He was Africa in the I Bureau (Bureau of Intelligence and Research).*

WALSH: Yeah. This was a group of people that you were proud to work with, and you could just feel the energy. I don't get that feeling at State, I have to say.

*Q: Well, absolutely not at this time. I can tell you from recent conversations that it's quite the opposite now. How it got to be there is partly a mechanical and bureaucratic thing, and it's also a question of personalities. It's not in very good condition now.*

WALSH: So, then one day in March or April of '96, Miller Crouch and Jack \_\_\_\_ asked me to come in and talk to them. I had had a number of go arounds with them on any number of issues, sometimes getting our PAOs and other people to get a post in Europe. I'd have to cut my wrists and pour blood to say, “This person is okay.”

*Q: Well, Miller had a soft spot for Africa.*

WALSH: Yeah, Miller did because he had been our personnel officer, and he had been in Ethiopia.

*Q: And he married an Ethiopian.*

WALSH: Yes. But they called me in, and they said, “Hey, how would you like to go to Geneva, Switzerland?” I said— I didn't even think. I could just visualize myself on the slopes. This was one of the first times I ever thought about a position without thinking,

“What will I do? What’s going on?” I just said, “Oh, what a lovely idea,” and that’s where we went. I was the press attaché for the mission in Geneva and the U.S. mission to the World Trade Organization for the next four years.

It was a great assignment. It was a great assignment, because you had an awful lot of trade issues that kept us going. You also had the human rights aspect of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva. That was always keeping the Sudanese from becoming the chair of the Human Rights Commission and all that. So, that was a fascinating position. Once again, there, I could feel the weakness of U.S. diplomacy. In a multilateral setting, the others are better than we are. I’m not saying everybody is, but the Mexicans, the French, and the others really use multilateral diplomacy to their advantage. Oftentimes, we did not.

I think that professionally, multilateral assignments are not necessarily seen as being career-enhancing. That’s not to say that you don’t get good people. I think that some of the people I worked with in Geneva were just absolutely fantastic. You had Brownfield, who later became the assistant secretary for INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research). As a matter of fact, let’s see, Brownfield was ambassador to Argentina, Venezuela, and Bolivia. So, that was before he became an assistant secretary. He was one of the political officers there. Brownfield was refugees and \_\_\_\_\_ was a political officer. He’s been ambassador first to Iceland and now to Guatemala, the poor bastard.

—became the secretary ambassador to Ecuador, the Philippines, and Thailand, and was counselor for the State Department for about six months until Mr. Trump’s people arrived. Then she was out of there in about two and a half months. Bing. She was one of the first removals.

*Q: And these were your colleagues in Geneva?*

WALSH: Those were my colleagues in Geneva.

*Q: Did you want or expect that this would happen to you as well?*

WALSH: That I would become an ambassador or whatever?

*Q: Yeah.*

WALSH: No, I didn’t really have that in mind. I went to Geneva because A, it wasn’t Africa. No, no. I’m kidding.

*Q: No, I know. You alternated, and that’s how you kept your energies up, I think.*

WALSH: Yeah. I loved trade issues. We did bananas, we did beef hormones—

*Q: Oh, the banana wars.*

WALSH: The banana wars were great. The hormone wars, too, were fabulous. There were a lot of those. I dealt with those things in Germany, and then here they were in Geneva. There was global financial regulation. All those things passed through the WTO (World Trade Organization). Then, we had three Clinton visits. That was interesting. You got insight into Clinton. Some of the people on those things were people I knew from the Japanese G7 and so on and so forth.

*Q: Now, in Switzerland, was the tail wagging the dog, in that, did the mission in Geneva actually have a larger scope than the bilateral mission to Switzerland?*

WALSH: Oh, absolutely.

*Q: So, Bern was a little village thing in comparison?*

WALSH: Oh, yes. Whenever anything came up, we would send people over to Bern. For the various visits we would do, Davos and others organized that and set it up, because we had a full operation there.

*Q: So, four years, wow. Now, a comment: The State Department never has four year assignments. USIA did them all the time for these so-called non-hardship posts. What do you think about four year assignments? They're gone forever, I think.*

WALSH: They are gone forever, and I think that is a mistake. I think that by the time you're in your third year—

*Q: You know what you're doing, don't you?*

WALSH: As a PAO, you should know everybody. You know everybody's history, and who did what to whom 20 years before, who went to school with everybody. That's as true in a multilateral post as in anywhere else. You accrete so many sensitivities. You can say, "No, that proposal was bought up by the French back in '97 or '98. It's just not going to work." This is where we are. You can advise the ambassador and the econ people.

*Q: Yeah. In fact, did State have four year assignments back then? I don't know if they did.*

WALSH: Well, in Geneva it was sort of interesting, inasmuch as a number of the people there— Ed Cummings was our representative to the Red Cross and also a specialist in the international law of armed conflict. He was seconded from the L Bureau (Office of the Legal Adviser) at State to Geneva. So, he was there for four or five years. The liaison with the World Health Organization, Ken Bernard, was a public health doctor. He was nominated by HHS (Department of Health and Human Services). He was there for four or five years.

*Q: I guess they would call them attachés.*

WALSH: Yeah. They were— They just knew their stuff. They just lived and breathed these things.

*Q: And these were your colleagues.*

WALSH: They were so good. Then, like any embassy, you had the seasonal processes. You had the World Health Organization convocation. You had meetings of the UN Human Rights Commission annually. At WTO, you would have the ministerials.

*Q: Was that mission involved in IOM (International Organization for Migration) at all?*

WALSH: Oh, yes. They were very— Once again, our relationship there— For IOM, the U.S— We would also get involved with the World Flu Program down in Rome because these are tremendously important things to the U.S., so a lot of times, the hiring and firing of their directors down there was a big deal for us. Their activities were, too. Our ambassadors would sometimes be getting a note from the Department to go down and talk to these people. By the same token, back to us, in terms of the mission itself, there would be various rumors about cuts and support and so on like this. You had the Agency for Pharmaceuticals or whatever. You had everything. You had the International Communications Union. You had everything there.

*Q: So, it was as important, in some ways, as the Secretariat in New York.*

WALSH: Oh, yeah. Well, once again, with the World Trade Organization, when you did financial services agreements, you would have a convocation where the ambassador would be meeting with representatives of American financial institutions at a hotel or in a meeting room downtown. There could be 100 people there, and she's talking to American businessmen about our negotiating stance within the WTO. So, it was a very big deal.

*Q: So, you hit the slopes. You made the best of it.*

WALSH: You could get to good ski places in 45 minutes. It was absolutely fabulous. I just loved it. So, the quality of life was the best of any place I've ever been.

*Q: I guess so. You had the French influence in Geneva, but then you also had the Zurich side, and you were close to everything in Europe, actually.*

WALSH: Right. The French border is 20 minutes away. So, you want to have a dinner? "Let's go to France."

*Q: I remember that border. I spent a summer there.*

WALSH: So, it was a delightful place. Trade-wise, human rights-wise, health-wise, everything passed through Geneva, much to the irritation of our current president. "These internationalists are running us wild. These trade agreements are the worst things we've ever had." In contrast, the whole theory of the trade agreements was to do well by the

United States but, at the same time, build up the infrastructure of the world so that it is a globe-spanning chain of supply.

*Q: Yeah. Well—*

WALSH: Once again, I bought into that completely. I thought it was great.

*Q: That's great. You were the IO. Did you have any particular challenges? You were in a friendly environment. I don't think there was anybody vilifying the U.S. participation in the various UN organizations. In that sense, it must have been a pretty gratifying period.*

WALSH: It was a gratifying period. Your international media there is much deeper than you'd ever run into elsewhere. It's probably the equal of Bonn. You get representation from the third world, Latin America, the Indians, the Chinese, the Japanese, Koreans and so on like that. There was a whole variety of journalists. These are issues that face everybody, you know? So, every major European newspaper like Le Monde and all sorts of others were represented there. I forget the names of the Indian newspapers and wire services that were there. So, a lot of them and the Europeans, of course, had nothing to do with us when it came to our agricultural policies and so on. We were part of what we called— Goodness. It's named after a city on the east coast of Australia. The free trading agricultural countries – the U.S., Argentina, Australia, Canada—

*Q: On the other side, you had the CAP, right?*

WALSH: On the other side, we had the Common Agricultural Policy, which we would explain all the way. We would say, “Look, we have no problems with your subsidies to your farmers. But we'd rather they didn't sell their goods on the world market because they can undercut us at every step of the way.” That was a lot of fun. Actually, you're not getting into, necessarily, “This is good, and this is bad.”

*Q: Yeah, it was nuances. It was basically friendly disagreements and agreements. That's what diplomacy's supposed to be about.*

WALSH: Yeah. So, you'd have any number of press conferences, discussions, on human rights or trade and so on and so forth. You had any number of visiting American VIPs (Very Important Person) that you had to really brief up well before they went before them. One thing that that press group had was experience.

One of my worst days in Geneva was when we were doing financial services, and the general agreement that the U.S. delegation had was that if we did not get some concessions from the Asians and the Europeans that day, then we would walk off and break the negotiations. So, there it goes. They're off. No big deal. I'm sitting in my office down at the World Trade Organization, at the WTO mission – I had two offices – and the ambassador, Rita Hayes, a former textile negotiator (textiles are tough) comes steaming into my office saying, “What the heck have you done?”

I said, “What’s the problem?” She had just gotten a call from the head of the U.S. trade representative complaining about an AP (Associated Press) story that the United States might pull out of the financial discussions. The USTR, the U.S. Trade Representative, had gotten a call from the former New York senator, Al D’Amato, who they used to call Senator Pothole . He had gotten a call from the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of Morgan Stanley complaining that we would be backing out, and why weren’t they informed ahead of time and so on.

We had computers then. I looked up the story and read it and I said, “Rita, this guy knows more about what we are doing than we do. He is taking statements from various representatives, and he has concluded that we’re going to try to blackmail everybody. That’s his take on it, and he’s right. That’s not our fault. We didn’t tell him anything. There it is.” That’s how good the people were.

*Q: Let’s see. Any sort of final remarks about U.S., UN, Geneva? It was a good time for you and the U.S. Multilateralism was working. It’s dormant now, but it could come back. Will we ever get back to multilateralism?*

WALSH: I think we will, because given the pandemic and given the lack of leadership – not only on the pandemic, but on the trade rows that Trump has gotten up into – everything has to be fixed.

*Q: I agree with that, of course, and I think a lot of people would.*

WALSH: On trade, like he said, “We gave China—” Did you see his press conference?

*Q: No.*

WALSH: He said, “We gave China Most Favored Nation status. We don’t even have that!” It’s like, what?

*Q: We’re the only ones who give it. Does he not understand that? You can’t give it to yourself. Well, anyway— Yeah, that was yesterday, I think. Oh my God. So worrisome.*

WALSH: So, all of this has to be repaired, and it has to be rebuilt. The economic and trade effects of the pandemic are going to go on for a year or two at least. Look at the Japanese. They sank 10 billion dollars to get manufacturers out of China and into Japan because the pandemic has broken their supply chain. This is part of our outlook in doing things. No one thought, when we did some of these agreements, that you would see the collapse of the American industrial base, because no one thought that our companies would be so short-sighted and go for the race to the bottom.

*Q: Well, now that we’ve reached the bottom— I hate to do this, but the call really is coming. Let’s see. It’s July 22<sup>nd</sup>, I think, with Dan Whitman and Neal Walsh. There it goes.*

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*Q: Let's start officially. Is it the 25<sup>th</sup> now?*

WALSH: It is the 25<sup>th</sup>.

*Q: Okay, it's the 25<sup>th</sup> with Neal Walsh and Dan Whitman. It's the 25<sup>th</sup> of July, 2020, and we were talking about multilateralism last time. You were in Geneva. That was a great tour, I think. We talked about challenges like the Common Agricultural Policy, the CAP. You had the interesting observation that the Europeans thought of us, I think, as being militantly opposed to the CAP, but you corrected that idea and said that actually, you can have any cap you want, but what we worry about is having imports that have been subsidized. You can do whatever you want, but don't expect us to buy your stuff. Is that more or less—*

WALSH: That's more or less it, agriculturally. Their farmers were getting highly subsidized, and then they were able to put products on the market below cost. Additionally, you had what we generally call non-tariff barriers to trade, in which they would find issues such as genetically modified organisms. To a certain extent, the Europeans' global propaganda worked against them because of their subsidies and the small size of some of their farms and things like that.

You could say that the more efficient products that we would be able to put on the market because of genetic modification didn't really bother them too much. Excuse me, they could not compete against it. And in Africa, you still have many countries that will not accept American corn or wheat if it is genetically modified. It was just terrible. There's no proof whatsoever that genetically modified organisms are any different from those that are bred in a normal way. It was just incredible.

Additionally, if you came into the deal with the hormone meat, it was almost theological. The United States uses growth hormones for meat, for pork and other animals, but we test it very carefully and we monitor it very well. The Europeans have and have had, throughout the decades, a ruling that you cannot use growth hormones in animal protein production. They have had any number of incredible scandals because they don't monitor the sale and use of those products. So, all of a sudden, all of the little boys in Italy are starting to grow breasts, and they're like, wait a minute, what's going on here? That was actually for veal.

So, yeah, these were some of the issues that we worked with in Geneva. They were absolutely delightful and fun, because when it gets into agricultural trade, there are absolutely no ethics whatsoever. So, it was a lot of fun.

*Q: I won't differ with you, but having visited feed lots in the Midwest, I can tell you that growth hormones have repeatedly been shown to be toxic. The reason I know that is that I've been to the same feed lots year after year, and they always say, "We just discovered*

*that last year our growth hormones were toxic, so we fixed them,” and then they’d go from year to year like that. It’s kind of funny. As you say, it’s not a clean business, maybe from any point of view. Monsanto no longer exists in name, partly because some of its practices really were harmful.*

WALSH: Oh, indeed. I have to say, these guys are not better than those guys, you know what I mean? Now, Monsanto, my goodness— The company that took over Monsanto— Bayer took over. Now, Bayer has been eaten up by another firm, which has been bought by the Chinese. So, this is just amazing, how all this is done.

*Q: It’s like supply chains. You can’t really pinpoint anything as having a provenance. They’re all mixed.*

WALSH: Exactly. Well, you can. The testing methods are really amazing. So, you can— Say, for soy, you can check to see whether this particular product has been genetically modified or not, you know? Once again, Monsanto’s involved in this, because you’re talking about— What’s the weed killer that we use?

*Q: Right, the one that does cause cancer.*

WALSH: Well, as I point out to my wife, when I use it, I have to drink a couple of gallons for every weed. Come on. But, you know, Roundup Ready Soy. Once again, Brazil was exporting tons and tons of soy to Europe because they pledged – once again, very much like the Europeans with the hormones – that we’d have to take their word for it. It was like, no. We would test the soy going to Europe from Brazil. It was all roundup ready. You’d buy your seeds. So, it was fun. It was a lot of fun.

Once again, the quality of the staff, both at WTO and at the U.S. mission – I think I mentioned some of the others – was just incredible. The Foreign Agricultural Service is a tremendously good, competent bunch of people. I just had a great time working with them. They were very knowledgeable, skilled, and good diplomats. They and their foreign counterparts very much spoke a common language and were very dedicated to getting American products. Additionally, when we talked about using multilaterals, our representation in terms of doing things on these issues, we just don’t invest enough diplomatic skills.

When we were giving a briefing of what we were doing and how certain negotiations, in terms of fungicides and so on, were going on to an American association of strawberry producers, they said, “How can we change some of these rules and regulations? How do we get a bigger market share?” The idea that came to me was, hire us! That was what we were there for, but frankly, you need somebody in Brussels to follow the EU very carefully. Then, you need salespeople to go around Europe.

You really have to be aggressive. These markets are open, to an extent, to us, but you really have to keep on a sales process. As we see with our Chinese and European working partners now, trying to blow the door down, as the current administration attempts to do,

and to penalize people is not right. In fact, the only time I remember we really penalized the Euros, we put impossibly high tariffs on Pecorino cheese, which affected the Canadians as well as everybody else. But you have to have that in legislation, that you can't just block other countries. So, if you— That's why ag is so big in Geneva. They are watching all of the things that are going on.

First off, Geneva is also the court where these cases go – the bananas, the hormones, the GMOs (genetically modified organisms). They're all adjudicated there.

*Q: Right, that makes perfect sense. The WTO, of course, is the elephant in the room. So, really, the WTO was more multilateral. Brussels is multilateral, but it's really Europe as an entity. I see the difference. Now, were you in touch at this time with your colleagues in Brussels?*

WALSH: Yes. We would be in touch with them, but that's sort of the long term. For Brussels and for Strasbourg, where the European parliament meets, that's sort of the long term. Their legislative process is slower than ours. So, that's— But you still do a lot of lobbying, and you want to know what we're lobbying for or against in Brussels.

*Q: Yes. You use the word lobby. That's interesting.*

WALSH: That's what you're doing as a nation. You're trying to open markets for yourself overseas and make sure that you don't get legislative or other non-tariff barriers, or to cut the barriers down into a multilateral agreement. You're trying to do things. So, you have to watch and follow what the Euros are up to, as well as the Chinese and the Russians. The Russians weren't a member at that time. I don't even think they're a member now. You've got to watch them every step of the way. Embassies have to watch what a local delegation is doing. But once again, multilateralism, globally, is when the Africans get together, and the Latins get together, and so on like this. The \_\_\_ group, once again, has free agricultural traders.

*Q: I think it was Eagleburger who said, "Every American Foreign Service officer is a Commercial officer." That was kind of a metaphor, but it was an interesting notion that this should be— His idea was that it should be as basic as consular services.*

WALSH: Yeah, and I agree with that. That is a good one. I had a Pakistani friend, and I'm still in very close touch with him, who worked at the WTO. There was a nomination, and I think his uncle became the vice minister of trade for Pakistan. I said to him, "\_\_\_ is your uncle. Is he a textile person? We have our textile." They were very strong in terms of trade issues. I said, "Is he a textile specialist?"

He just looked at me and said, "Every Pakistani diplomat is a textile expert."

*Q: Yeah. That brings us back to reality. Diplomacy seems esoteric to many people, but this is very basic and fundamental.*

WALSH: Well, one of the things there to avoid— You had the sugar quotas, and back in those days, we had very strong textile quotas. One of the rounds of negotiations we had in Geneva got rid of those. It was a five to seven year period in which we brought down, we and the other countries, the barriers to trade, the apportionment of quotas to various countries. But you know, you would run into things where the Pakistanis would produce sheets and bedclothes and stuff like this and then ship them to Kenya, where they'd get a "made in Africa" or "made in Kenya" label and then go off and be exported to the United States, where they would fall under the terms of AGOA (African Growth and Opportunity Act).

You can see how this would happen. In the '90s – this was when I was in the African area – and also the '80s, things were changing. In the early '90s, things were changing globally. Governments were changing and growing towards getting governments that could roll out further. One of the big changes you and I have seen, of course, across Africa was the change in telecommunications. Back in the '80s, when various countries were trying to sell or privatize their government structures, we had a case where both American and German companies were looking at buying textile-producing plants in Tanzania.

They were bidding against us, and everything looked really good until it got to telecoms. The producers had to be in daily contact with the factories. But because it was running on an old style of telecommunications, you would not get any breaks from the Ministry of Communication in Tanzania for 24 data connections between the United States and Tanzania. The cost was way too high for private companies to do that.

Then, here we are, 25 to 30 years later, and Africa is one of the cheapest telecommunications markets in the world. It has leapfrogged well away from the non-digital processes.

*Q: So, clearly, what you were doing in Geneva had a profound impact on Americans in their everyday lives. I'm going to guess that most Americans don't pay much attention to that. What was your impression of how your own work was perceived by the average beer-consuming American?*

WALSH: Your average American citizen really has no concept of the warp and weft of the tapestry of regulation and discussion that has produced these seamless international trade groups. When things get to a certain level – be it rubber, be it bananas, be it hormones – these are things that will cost American producers billions of dollars.

*Q: Should USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) be lobbying the American people? That sounds kind of weird, doesn't it? It sounds like something the U.S. government should not do, and yet— What would you do to raise awareness in the United States? That was not your job, as you were Public Diplomacy, but who would be the right department to try to raise American awareness of that?*

WALSH: Well, you have USDA doing that. Its advisors \_\_\_\_\_ people and are giving advice to researchers and others, for example, “Here are the best seeds to sell in this place.” We have immense breeders producing seeds here for sale overseas. As a matter of fact, we have arrested and incarcerated quite a number of Chinese who have been going around to research farms and stealing the seeds.

*Q: Wow. Intellectual property. Actually, that’s a big issue, of course, with U.S.-China now. Was intellectual property a big part of your portfolio in Geneva?*

WALSH: It wasn’t a big part there, but WIPO, the World Intellectual Property Organization, is based in Geneva. IP (Intellectual Property) was a big issue with us and the Euros because we and the Euros have a certain cultural difference between how we look at use, possession, and making money off of that. The Europeans go for a much more academic approach, where these are gifts to all of mankind, etcetera, and then we are very practical in saying, “Hey, this is this person’s patent for the next 25 or 30 years.” So, the protection of intellectual property and its exploitation is another major portion.

Now, we did not have a lot of people. We only had one person from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Organization in Geneva, but then they would come quite often to work with WIPO. Some of the rules and regulations, in terms of exploiting it, were also a Geneva issue.

—Now, once again, on that, you didn’t have the press— *The Financial Times*, *Bloomberg*, everybody was there in terms of— As I said, the press knew more about these issues than we did unless we studied like hell. They were good. They’d been doing it. So, you had to be on your toes all the time to see that.

*Q: Yeah. So, who did you report to? There was a U.S. ambassador to Geneva, right?*

WALSH: Right.

*Q: Was that the chain of command for you?*

WALSH: Yeah. It was her or him, depending on who was there at that time, and then with the director of Public Affairs at USTR (Office of the United States Trade Representative).

*Q: Ah, okay. Did USTR have somebody—*

WALSH: Additionally, with the Public Affairs people within State—

*Q: Yeah. Did USTR have somebody in the field?*

WALSH: Oh, yeah. The ambassador was a USTR political appointee.

*Q: Okay. Well, this is— Many of us have never really had a full taste of this. We know it’s very important, but as you say, the minutiae, having to know the regulations and how they*

*work— You mentioned cultural differences in how Europeans and Americans look at intellectual property. This really is fascinating.*

WALSH: The thing that strikes me here, when you ask about how USDA does this stuff, is there's a certain thing— I told you earlier about Ambassador Walters saying, "Hey, if I was born in Denmark, I'd be a maître d' at a major hotel." The fascinating thing is that I would get calls from regional radio stations in England and Germany and so on like this, asking for an interview about the banana or the hormone thing, or something like that. Actually, I delighted in giving them, because their stuff wouldn't get into the international net. Therefore, I wouldn't have to cringe and say, "I've got to ask permission." I'd just have a great time chatting away with these people. Once again, the Europeans are so much more sensitive to multilateral life.

*Q: It sounds like you had pretty free rein, more than many people would have in a post like that, which I guess means that the ambassador trusted you as Vernon Walters had trusted you. It seems a little bit risky to be giving interviews freely.*

WALSH: As a matter of fact, we had Bill Richardson, who was active in that time. He would come through and talk about his discussions, because once again Geneva was the place for discussions with the North Koreans and so on like this. He was doing the hostage front, too. I remember one incident when he was having a press conference, and someone started asking about whales, whaling, and international fisheries. He said, "You're going to have to talk to Neal about that." These are questions that are important, of global consequence, but do not have any impact on the overall American life.

*Q: Right. Yeah. This is quite fascinating. So, was it four years that you did in Geneva?*

WALSH: It was four years. We finished up— Remember, we had this Seattle World Trade Organization global conference.

*Q: Yes, the one that was hot and jumping.*

WALSH: A lot of things did not take place because there were so many anti-WTO demonstrations. We had the turtle people demonstrating, and we had all sorts of other things. But going into this, for lowering barriers, we would not want to lower them. We had a Democratic administration that was going into an election period. So, we were standing fast for any new multilateral global agreements that had greater working protections. Actually, this was the time – and it's carried on – when the whole idea of the conditions of the Chinese and the Bangladeshis in textiles were such that working issues and so on were a big deal.

*Q: Were you at the Seattle WTO?*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: Oh my gosh. Were you setting up press centers?*

WALSH: Yeah, I would do the press programs for both State and USTR and the Department of Commerce.

*Q: Busy, busy. Wow. So, any other mountains that rise above the valleys in your U.S.-Geneva years?*

WALSH: You know, it was a steady and well-done time, and it was good. I think that, say for Geneva itself right now, the WTO is not a big issue for this administration. So, that's down. Human rights is down. Generally, you have three embassies there. You have the World Trade Organization and the ambassador to that. You have the ambassador to the Conference on Arms Control and Disarmament. Then you have the ambassador to the sort of \_\_\_\_\_. Then there's the ambassador to the United Nations.

*Q: Now, there's whispering, of course, that this White House has talked about maybe pulling out of the WTO. What do you think? Is it possible? If so, what would be the consequences?*

WALSH: I think it would be impossible. Now, I am a huge supporter of the WTO. I look at what they do and what they can do, and I see it as an effective international organization. Anything that undercuts its abilities undercuts us. If we leave it, guess what? That leaves everybody else to sit around the table and make their rules. Are they going to pay attention to us? I don't think so.

*Q: I guess that's what did happen with the Pacific Trade Deal. It was initiated by the U.S.—*

WALSH: Then it was followed up and \_\_\_\_\_ by—

*Q: Clinton, who later opposed it during her campaign. I guess she felt she needed to because she felt that sentiment was very against it. Whether that's right or wrong, I don't know.*

WALSH: It is wrong. If you think you're going to get— If you think that by getting out of these multilateral trade agreements— If you think you're going to profit by pulling out of them, you've got another thing coming.

*Q: I certainly see the logic. What I'm saying, I guess, is that apparently, she thought there were enough voters opposed that— Anyway, that's for her autobiography, not ours.*

WALSH: But at the same time, once you get the agreements in, you go in and kick ass about making sure that there's a portion in there in terms of labor rights, labor abilities, and so on like that. You push your partners to come up, because part of the whole thing, of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), is to bring everybody up .

*Q: Yeah, good point. Well, parting glances at Geneva, the WTO, CAP? Anything we have not touched on?*

WALSH: Well, as I said, we had a fair amount of Clinton and Mrs. Clinton visits. Let's see. The last one was in the year 2000. Was it 2000 or 1999? It was 2000. If you remember, in 1992, at the end of the Gulf War, there was a huge conference in Madrid.

*Q: Yep, I was there.*

WALSH: That was going to solve all of our problems in the Middle East. I don't remember you.

*Q: Were you there?*

WALSH: I was there.

*Q: Well, it was a lot of people. But yeah, I was there.*

WALSH: Were you in the embassy?

*Q: Yeah, I was posted there at the time, and of course, under Jake Gillespie, we were all deployed to that whole thing. I was at the royal palace, actually. I didn't know you were there.*

WALSH: I was there, and I was in the royal palace, also. I got to sit on a throne. What about that?

*Q: Well, that's pretty funny.*

WALSH: I remember that. It was a big deal.

*Q: It was a very big deal.*

WALSH: There was a woman there who worked for USIA. She was superb. I think she came in from Washington IIP. But yeah, I was in the press center there that we set up in that place. Then, I was getting people from one place to another. I worked again with the assistant secretary for Public Affairs.

*Q: Not Tutwiler. She was there, wasn't she?*

WALSH: Tutwiler was there, yes indeed.

*Q: But I guess she was USIA, wasn't she?*

WALSH: Well, yeah. But she, as a matter of fact— this was happening and she sent a cable to Berlin, saying, "Be in Spain on such and such day."

I had to say to Walters, “See. She doesn’t even know where I am.”

But he said, “Go right ahead.” So, I went down there, and it was pretty cool. I had a great time.

*Q: I’ll have to send you the photograph I found 20 years later of me in the room. It’s not that I was negotiating; I was just there. Anyway, the point being that the end of the Gulf War, in ’92—*

WALSH: Once again, as I was finishing in Geneva, what do we have? We have Clinton meeting old Assad of Syria. As a matter of fact—

Somebody was there to meet with Assad. The Syrians were all very much like, “How do we set this up? How do we do this?” How did it all go? I was working with the council for the Syrians in Geneva. We worked out the movements and everything and how things would be set up. So, I called the next day to see how things were going, and the assistant said, “Well, he had to get back to Damascus and go through all of this.” Then I realized that he had to go back to Damascus *personally* and go through all of this.

When you say, “He had to get back to Washington and check that,” it generally means somebody got on the phone. But no. That meeting lasted a total of 20 minutes, because somebody had sold Clinton and Albright on the idea that everything was going to get handled well, and that the agreement— I guess the Israelis convinced us that the Syrians were going to agree to a border adjustment, and everything was going to be hunky dory. They went in and discussed that for about 20 minutes, and then Assad said, “Hey, that means that I will never be able to swim in the lake as when I was a child,” and he got up and left. So, it was a lot of work for nothing.

Then, in July, or actually May or June, I left Geneva and went to the Office of the Executive Secretary. This was in 2000.

*Q: Okay. So, this was like S/SES, is that what this was?*

WALSH: Yes. What’s it called now? It was SS for a long time.

*Q: I think it’s S/SES or something like that. So, there you were on the seventh floor?*

WALSH: Yep.

*Q: Oh my gosh. How did that happen? That’s as high up as it gets.*

WALSH: Well, generally, it was just facetime with the Albright people and their thing. Once again, my colleague, Kristie Kenny, had left Geneva two years before, and was then executive secretary. So, she said, “I want you to be my deputy.” So, I got interviewed by

two or three people from the secretary's office, and one of the questions was, can you deal with some of the most evil, mean-spirited people you've ever met?

*Q: Let me guess, you hesitated on that one?*

WALSH: Oh, no, I said, "Well, that's our job, isn't it?"

*Q: That's the right answer.*

WALSH: So, I started there in June of 2000.

*Q: Fantastic. Well, that has to be a fascinating segment.*

WALSH: I was thrown immediately into another Middle East conference at Camp David. That took place in July of 2000.

*Q: The next month. Well, here we go. I think we should cease and desist, as they say. Let's get to your secretariat job in your next interview, because that's a big deal. I didn't know you were up there. So, agreed? Shall we leave that?*

WALSH: Yep.

*Q: Okay. I'm going to turn off the recording.*

WALSH: —I think I mentioned Madrid, and that's right, you and I were there contemporaneously. There was probably reference to the Camp David talks that came up.

*Q: Yes. It's funny I didn't see you in the royal palace in Madrid.*

WALSH: That's true. I sat on the throne and stood on the balcony there.

*Q: Oh, you were that guy? Okay. We remember— Just kidding.*

WALSH: That was kind of cool.

*Q: Yeah. I remember the photographers in the courtyard. Their bags were being examined by security with sniffer dogs, and one dog went nuts because he smelled a roast beef sandwich in one of the bags. That was funny. So, are we back to '92?*

WALSH: We're in '92. We've just done Assad. Well, actually, shortly before Assad, I had to go to Washington to be interviewed for the job. That was with Dick Shinnick and the head of Albright's security group. Then, I did a trip to see what it was like, and we went to Lisbon, Portugal. Then, from Lisbon to Sarajevo, Sarajevo to Prague, Prague to Brussels, and then I left them there— Well, they went back to the States, and I went back to Geneva. One of the items that had come up—

What was very interesting about the inner workings and the inner atmosphere of working in Albright's secretariat was first, they didn't know me very well at all. In Brussels, there was a call for her from Assad's office, for her to talk to the Syrian foreign minister. I forget his name at the present time. She was in the midst of doing something else. She came out of one room and went into a small room on the side. There was nobody there at all, so I stood outside the door of the room. I was not in the room, but I stood outside the door, because I didn't want anyone interrupting her.

Later on, Ms. \_\_\_\_\_, who was the chief of staff, complained to Ms. Kinney that she thought I was listening to the secretary's call. Ms. Kinney said, "I know Neal, and I think this is probably why he was in front of that door." But it was a very Byzantine type of operation there. So, I came back, and the first thing I noted was that there was a group of folks from the White House advance team who came in. They knew me from the past, and they said, "Hey, the president is coming here to meet Assad." So, we did a week of preparations for that. They sat down and talked, and then what happened there was—

Somehow or another, someone had promised the Clinton White House that the borders on a tentative map had been approved by Syria, and that this would lead to a peace agreement between Syria and Israel. Israel would give up part of the Golan Heights and other parts of Syria that they had annexed or taken over or occupied after the '67 war. So, they started talking, and all of a sudden, Assad said, "Well, wait a minute. If I don't have an agreement to go to the lake where I swam as a young man, this is over." He walked out of the meeting. It was 20 minutes, and that was the end of the day.

So, aside from farewells and so on like that, that was the end of my time there. George Moose was the representative that I worked with the most there, and I have to say that it was sad, to me, that the U.S. spent so little time on multilateral diplomacy. Right there in Geneva, you could have – and it almost did seem to be – something that was not necessarily cyclical, but at any given time, there would be issues on the table there, and you needed to work with other countries to get things done. Either before the Commission on Human Rights and the World Health Organization, the World Trade Organization, or the Arms Control and Disarmament Office.

Really, there's a focus on those offices. Other countries send some of their very best people, because trade is absolutely essential to their very existence, you know? So, it was, diplomatically, personally, intellectually, professionally, journalistically, a tremendously good place to be. It was a fascinating place.

*Q: Let's talk about multilateralism for a moment. Much is lost, I would say, and I think I've heard you agree with that, in our current approach. We are in an administration that has said they do not trust or like multilateralism. Geneva is the multilateral place, other than U.S. UN New York, it's probably the most multilateral place in the world. So, from what you remember, what were the benefits of being fully engaged with the other entities and countries, and what have we lost by not doing that?*

WALSH: Well, one thing, particularly in trade but also in human rights and arms control, is that other countries looked to the United States for leadership. What you can do positively in one field will bleed over and affect the other fields that you're working in. We would have separate ambassadors for Arms Control, separate ambassadors for human rights or UN issues in general, and, of course, a separate ambassador for the World Trade Organization. Many other countries, their ambassadors were sort of multi-hatted. Therefore, the games and accommodations that you make, and the issues that you can have a positive effect on in one area, will affect the others if you have the trust and support of the other countries.

The other countries often operate in blocs. South Korea was very good, Japan was fabulous, Brazil was— Getting their interest was crucial. In Latin America, Brazil might have great difficulties with Argentina, Chile, and so on, but at the same time, it would be getting the Latin Americans together to work on trade issues that were close to their hearts. You might say that the axis of evil worked very hard together to torpedo human rights. So, yeah, a small investment can give a tremendous boost. Additionally, you are in the buildings, going in and meeting and talking and just having coffee in the café with representatives from any number of countries that are not particularly allied to you but with whom cordial relations will pay off as days go by.

*Q: That's a very interesting point. So, everybody needs trade, and everybody is motivated to be in trade talks. There can be side benefits such as human rights and arms limitations coming smoothly hinged to that. That's a marvelous point, because you're physically in that same space.*

WALSH: Yeah. Also, in terms of telling America's story, you might say, of working with other countries, we go through various financial agreements, trade agreements, and so on. We have political pressure here in the United States – not so much now as we did back in those days – to include labor regulation and labor treatment in the agreements. Explaining that and working with other labor-rich countries, like India and China and, to a lesser extent, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Thailand, and so on — They would all look at us as if we were trying to squeeze them out of the market. They saw minimum wage, working conditions, and so on like this to be something that we're using to keep them from taking advantage of the agreements they had.

*Q: Right. And because you had cordial relations, you could explain to them the domestic pressures in the U.S.*

WALSH: Exactly. That's important, for them to be able to go back to their Ministry of Trade or Ministry of Foreign Affairs and say, "Look, this is an important political issue for the Americans. Therefore, it's in our benefit to work and discuss with them and compromise."

*Q: This is a great example. You mentioned USIA/USIS. I'm reading Bob Gates' book, and he clearly regrets tremendously the loss of USIA. Any comments on that? It was about*

*this period, October 1<sup>st</sup> of 1999, when USIA— I mean, we can do a post-mortem, or we can just say, “It happened. So be it.”*

WALSH: Well, I would say that I did not realize just how the merger would sort of strangle the very important sort of programs and goals of USIA. I thought, well, this is just a charity thing where it goes from one letterhead to another. That did not turn out. One of the reasons for that was that George Moose, who had been assistant secretary in Africa and been ambassador to a number of countries, more or less said— I think the agreement came up at the end of the ‘90s.

*Q: ‘99, yeah.*

WALSH: Well, George Moose— When did it happen?

*Q: It was October 1<sup>st</sup> of ‘99.*

WALSH: October 1<sup>st</sup>, ‘99. Okay. So, yeah, I was in Geneva, and Moose said, “This will have no effect whatsoever on our internal workings at Geneva,” in terms of my position as an agency head. Okay. But the seniority of your secretary, your housing, your \_\_\_\_, your representational status, and so on is all affected by that. George said, “Please, this is ridiculous. Neal keeps his car, his house, his cups and \_\_ his secretary.” Later on, we had these guys from Paris or Rome who came up and said that my secretary had to be dropped a grade or two.

Well, I said— George said, “If you do that, they’re not going to be able to do translations and representations and so on for me.”

*Q: Was this lack of awareness? Was there any intended deceit, do you suppose? That’s an unfair question. In retrospect, we can say that he didn’t get it. He didn’t see how this would disrupt Public Affairs sections.*

WALSH: Well, I think George had an idea of how much it would, and one of the reasons he did that was to say, “Things are going nicely here, and I don’t want to see any problems.”

*Q: Now, did Moose visit Geneva at this time?*

WALSH: He was the representative.

*Q: Oh, for God’s sake. Okay. Because we remember Moose as— What was he later? M (Bureau of Management)?*

WALSH: No, that was a different Moose.

*Q: Oh, okay. So, this is George Moose of AF who, at the time, was in an ambassadorial post in Geneva. Got it. Okay.*

*Q: Here we go. On to another. Okay. I thought this was coming from Washington, but this was actually a local—*

WALSH: It wasn't my problem, but my understanding of how this would go was pretty much, "It's no big deal. We're just changing the sign on the window."

*Q: Right.*

WALSH: That was not what happened.

*Q: When you were there— You weren't there a whole lot longer, but did you feel that your ambassador changed his thinking on that at all, or did you sort of go your own way before having a chance to see that?*

WALSH: When I left, it was still that way. I don't think it changed too much in Geneva, because I would say that the lanes of what you do are pretty much there. But as time went on, I just saw how devastating these changes were.

*Q: We don't have to go into it, but if you could think of an example or two of how this was devastating, for historic record, do you have anything you want to say about that?*

WALSH: Not right now.

*Q: Okay. So, '99, 2000. We're getting up to 9/11 here.*

WALSH: Well, we've got a lot of stuff before 9/11.

*Q: Okay, let's hit it all.*

WALSH: So, I get back, I do my transfer, and in July, I wind up in the secretariat. The first thing we had was the Camp David Accords with \_\_\_\_\_ and Clinton and the Palestinians. So, that was fascinating. There was not a lot of pressure on the secretariat to get it going. It was fascinating; it was my first encounter in a decade with Pat Kennedy. At one of the meetings, I have to admit we were talking about getting portable classrooms and stuff to be put on the grounds up there. Somebody said, "Well, will he fit in there?"

Pat Kennedy said, "Yes, he'll fit through the gate." Somebody else asked how he knew that. He said, "I went up and I measured."

So, we got an idea of how much depth and interest in the smallest things was taken here.

*Q: That is fascinating. Sorry, is this 2000?*

WALSH: No this is '99. This was supposed to be a big breakthrough. So, there was a lot of focus on the Middle East. My portfolio as a deputy in the secretariat was INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research), Econ, Middle East, Africa, and R – Public Diplomacy. So, all the paperwork dealing with those countries and those issues would come through my office.

*Q: That's huge.*

WALSH: Yeah. We did that with all the papers. Therefore, in the mornings, before the meetings, all the paperwork coming in about the Middle East or the other areas, and I would try to select the most important things and get them to her through her special assistant, Alex \_\_\_\_\_. So, that was it. It was pretty good up there. We stayed at the Catholic University, which was about six or seven miles from Camp David.

*Q: I didn't realize it was that close. So, you used Catholic University as a—*

WALSH: No, not Catholic University, but a Catholic university up there.

*Q: Oh, okay. Good. So, your materials, although you were dealing with R, were not actually press guidances. They were policy things that the secretary needed to know. So, for the reader or listener, R, at that time, I think overlapped both domestic and foreign press, but I guess that your function, suddenly— You had been an IO, but your function was suddenly not press-oriented. It was for Secretary Albright.*

WALSH: Right.

*Q: Okay. Any comments? You must have met her a number of times. Any comments about dealing with Albright?*

WALSH: None. She was a very nice person. As I said, her chief of staff was not necessarily really nice, but with things going along, she was very good. She didn't put her head into the secretariat that much. Personally, she was very pleasant and nice. She was a hard worker, and I remember that one time, it must have been Labor Day weekend of 1999. Or was it 2000? It would have been Labor Day of 2000. She and Sandy Berger were talking back and forth. She was at her country home. Her office was on the second or third floor, and her fax machine – now remember, we had faxes in this time – was downstairs or something like this. She was furious that the thing was not working.

So, she's out there. It's the long weekend. She's got a communicator out there – Lloyd was his name. I knew him from my first tour, practically. We had called in, and it was a phone call from Lloyd saying— I must have been on duty at that time. He was saying, "She's really pissed that we couldn't get this going. I can't fix the machine," and so on. I just got the picture of it being nine to five with the machine blowing up on \_\_\_\_\_.

We had to say, "Lloyd, just take your personal credit card and go out to Best Buy and buy a machine and plug it in." You just have those sorts of instances. She was very pleasant

about this sort of thing. So, we did that, and we did the big meeting. That came very close, with lots of high hopes. Everything was looking well, and then the Camp David talks collapsed. Then, two, three, or four weeks later, we all bundle up, and within 12 hours, we're off for another Middle East peace meeting with the president. They were really reaching out and hoping to get something out of these guys. We were in \_\_\_\_\_.

Then, in the interim, what else did we do? I did a couple of other trips. One was for the \_\_\_\_\_, the economic summit there, and that took place in Borneo. This was the cream of the crop, and that was a very weird place to do business. That was very cool. Everybody was there – Putin, the Chinese, the Japanese, everybody was there. It was pretty cool. But that was a big trip. It's two days out there, and two days back. She liked to stop in Hawaii. Everybody liked that, because we'd stay in one of those beautiful hotels overlooking the ocean.

Powell, when he became secretary, was always eager to get home. So, the plane would just get into Hawaii and switch drivers.

*Q: Gee whiz. And you had to be on the secretary's plane, I guess, right?*

WALSH: Right. So, you'd have everybody with a broken heart.

*Q: Yeah. You see Hawaii, and suddenly, it's removed.*

WALSH: Yeah. But that happened. That was that. Then, let's see. We had the election. You know that the election of Gore v. Bush was the \_\_\_\_\_. So, you had the election and no determination of who the president is.

*Q: Two weeks, I think.*

WALSH: Or even more. So, we left town and did an Africa trip. We went to South Africa, Botswana, \_\_\_\_\_, and Algeria.

*Q: Who's "we"? The secretariat?*

WALSH: Yep.

*Q: What for? To do information gathering?*

WALSH: We wanted to be out of town while all of this was happening. The secretary really has to stay above politics, and she didn't want to get dragged into this.

*Q: Oh, so this was Albright taking you to these places, or was it Powell?*

WALSH: We were working in support of Albright here.

*Q: Ah, the last days of Albright.*

WALSH: This was November or December.

*Q: Wow. That was 2000. Gee whiz. Bush took office in January of 2001. Well, oh my gosh. Was there a stated purpose for that trip?*

WALSH: Well, you know, it was for reinforcing relationships, etcetera.

*Q: Fantastic. The secretariat— It was a team. The proportion between content and logistics— Were you always doing both contents and logistics?*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: Talk a little bit about how you survive such a bifurcation? It's two halves of the brain going in very separate directions in terms of logistics and content. How did you keep that straight?*

WALSH: Well, actually, one part was support organizations, the \_\_\_\_\_ and the Operations Center and what we called FSES, the administrative division, which had a deputy secretary, Dick Shinnick, in charge of it. All these places were staffed by excellent people. One out of 10 or one of 20 who were not performing were there, but still, the energy, the delightfulness and the creativity of all the mid-level officers who worked there was just fantastic.

*Q: For the uninitiated, explain what the line is.*

WALSH: The line is the focal point of all the incoming and outgoing instructions, information and materials that the secretary wants from various divisions and through which the various bureaus send their information up to the secretary. So, therefore, let's say one secretary says, "I need more information about the history of the Ethiopian and Eritrean struggle. What's going on here?"

It would fall to me to do what we called \_\_\_\_\_. It goes to the line, and then to a young officer. They're generally in their 20s or 30s. That is one of their people who is sort of designated an Africa person or something like this. You say, "Hey, get in touch with the special assistant. Today at such and such a meeting, the secretary mentioned to the assistant secretary that she does not know enough about— She wants more background on today's Ethiopian-Eritrean relationships." Then you would get a note for the secretary from that assistant secretary giving the outline. First off, it would be run through and proofed by the line. They would then bring it to me, and I would read it more for policy and so on like this. Does this ring true to me? I'd sign off, and it would go to the secretary.

*Q: What's the average number of clearances that a memo has to have before landing on the secretary's desk?*

WALSH: Well, something like that would have maybe two or three, max.

*Q: Two or three within the executive secretariat, but—*

WALSH: Oh, no. Just two. It'd be designated for a desk officer. The outline would get to the special assistant down in the bureau, right? The special assistant would send it to a desk officer. The desk officer brings it back through that assistant secretary, through that special assistant, and then it would go to a DAS (deputy assistant secretary) or the assistant secretary. It'd be signed off on by that person. That is where Susan Rice— You got an idea of her management style, or at least I did. Anything going from AF to the secretary had to go through her. Therefore, she was out. We would wait for her.

*Q: It's funny to hear this, because in more recent days— You said two or three. Now, because I've been involved in these a little bit, it is up to 30 or 40 signatures required on a memo going to S (Office of the Secretary of State). So, while it may have seemed very bureaucratic at the time, I believe it's much more so since then.*

WALSH: Well, if you're dealing with stuff that's going to come up at a meeting with a foreign minister, then all of a sudden, you're going to be getting lots more stuff. It would go into various issues. It would still have to come from the assistant secretary. But if it was a trade issue involved in the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict, then you'd get a little sign-off from \_\_\_\_\_. If you're going to do the military set, then you'd have to get to \_\_\_\_\_ and get a slash. This could grow to immense proportions, and it would be the desk officer's job to make sure they were all there and correct.

*Q: This causes a lot of anguish on lower levels. I think people understand the line. They're not sadistic people.*

WALSH: They know that it has to go, and it needs that stuff.

*Q: I think people dread the line, although they may not dread the individuals in the line.*

WALSH: Oh, absolutely not. They have to understand the people in the line are fellow sufferers. Some of them might be very \_\_\_\_\_. You're dealing with a lot of important people and important issues. But in the end, they're given anguish if the thing is not completely right.

*Q: You mentioned the very high quality of people in SES (Senior Executive Service) at the time. That, of course, makes a profound difference to those being tasked. I know that the degree of cordiality from the line profoundly affects the morale of the rest of the department, so that's really an extremely important function.*

WALSH: Oh, yeah. I have to say, I really enjoyed working with these people. They were good young men, good young women, and just really on the ball. They were probably the brightest bunch of people that I've dealt with.

*Q: And they say that these are burnout jobs. Did you observe that? Did it seem like one year was the limit for most people?*

WALSH: Generally, these were two year assignments, but a lot of them would finish up ahead of time because they'd find a job somewhere else right away, which was okay. We had a long meeting, well, not a long meeting, but one time we had a meeting of the deputies, the four of us. It was Ms. Kinney, the director, who wanted to make sure we were listening and seeing how we could help their professional desires along. I remember talking, and I said, "Really, these are some of the best people I've ever worked with. I think the best thing we could do for them is get them a good job in Africa." I said, "Look, we're taking these people, we're beating the hell out of them, and then we're sending them on as the number three person in the economic section in Rome. That is not fair. They're better than that."

They were like, "Well, yeah, maybe for the harshness we've given them, we shouldn't be doing that." I felt we should get them to Africa, because there you do everything. You can have DCMs in small posts and so on like that.

*Q: That's very interesting. What was the reaction of those favored by this policy? Were they taken aback to say, "Oh, I haven't thought of Africa"? What was their reaction?*

WALSH: Dick Shinnick said, "Look at me, and look at Neal. Neal has only served in two places that were not hardship posts. He's been in Eastern Europe and Africa for most of his career. Now look at me: Milan, Rome, and London. Now, who knows more about personnel, me or him?"

*Q: Oh, that's great. That's a great comment.*

WALSH: We had more people going off to— Well, eventually, with some of them— Paul Jones was ambassador to the Philippines and ambassador to Poland. So, these guys really got good jobs, you know? Harry Thomas was ambassador to the Philippines, ambassador to Bangladesh, ambassador to Zimbabwe.

*Q: Wait, was Harry Thomas in SES?*

WALSH: Yeah, he was in SES. He was head of the Operations Center.

*Q: Interesting. Again, for those listening, if you want something promotable on a domestic assignment, find yourself something on the seventh floor. And when we say seventh floor, we're talking about the line, the Op Center, and basically those two things. Wow. Very valuable. So, did you do that for two years, Neal?*

WALSH: No, I did it for one year. So, I had five or six months with Albright, and then six months with Powell. We did that with Albright. We finished up. We got back early from our trip. I don't remember doing Thanksgiving overseas, so we must have gotten back— We must have done it either before Thanksgiving or shortly after, because shortly after

we arrived, I think it was early December when they decided the election. It might have been late November when they declared it. 225 fell in the right box for President Bush.

So, we were sort of looking to see what was going to happen, and Powell was named secretary. That sort of put a bounce in everybody's step, because his reputation was tremendous. That's not to denigrate Albright. She had done a tremendous job. But people were looking forward to Powell coming. Then, early in December, Powell drives up with his assistant, and there he is. They all come downstairs and say, "Secretary Powell is here."

We had a big suite of offices ready for the transition. Of course, everybody had written up transition papers and so on like that. So, I went down with Paul Jones, who was head of the line at that time, and welcomed Powell. There he was. I introduced him to Paul and said that Paul was the head of the line, which was really the heartbeat and the center of information in the building. "He'll be working with your staff to get everything in order."

Powell said, "I don't have a staff. You're my staff." So, away he went, and there it was. I just led them over to their offices and let them all go to work, and that was it. Powell was very much hands-off. He'd have some briefings, but he was very careful not to take responsibility as secretary of State until after the inauguration.

*Q: Oh, right. Do you have a sense of what went on between Albright and Powell to smooth the transition?*

WALSH: Albright made it clear that whatever they asked for they should get. She made sure that in the transition, Paul Jones was working with Powell's people and whatever he needed was done. She made it very clear that we wanted to be as good and gracious as possible.

*Q: Isn't that lovely. That's the way it should be. Again, Neal Walsh, you have stepped into situations that seem to have been blessed or favored. It's so good to hear these stories, because this is the way things should happen and may happen again someday. It's important to remember what was normal back then, and why it was normal, and what the benefits were. So, leaving the secretariat after six months with Powell, should we just cite what came next and then save that for our next conversation?*

WALSH: Okay. Well, Powell— Once again, we did the Middle East. We did a Middle East trip, not another meeting. We did Israel, of course, and then Jordan, then Syria, then Saudi Arabia.

*Q: Were these familiarization trips for the secretary?*

WALSH: Well, for him, they were certainly not familiarizations, as he had trod this ground very much. In Jordan, King Hussein, the young son, drove out in his Maserati to the airplane, got Powell, and took him away.

—of the relations and arrangements for Saudi Arabia were almost all personal. I remember that I was on the phone with them from Jerusalem, and there was somebody on the other end saying, “Have the airplane in Riyadh at 4PM at this date,” two or three days later.

I said to them, “What’s your name? I need your phone number and address.”

He said, “What do you need that for?”

I said, “I’m not getting any official telegrams, information, or memos from my side of the shop, from the bureau or anything like that. You’re the only voice I have heard tell me about this. Maybe we’re talking to the Air Force, but if we show up and nobody’s there—”

*Q: It’s like, “How do I reach you?”*

WALSH: Yeah. I’d be out of a job fast. As a matter of fact, on that trip, also, was Kuwait. That was the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Kuwait. So, you had everybody there. So, Powell was there, everybody was there, and that was a big deal. We landed there and Powell came out of his room, which is at the front of the plane, and looked, and there were four seats behind there with tables with people from the staff. I know we landed a little bit late – probably about an hour or so for some reason or another – and Powell said to me, “So, Neal, what’s the drill here?”

I said, “Oh, no problem. You get off here, and you’ll be taken around and so on. The minister of Foreign Affairs is down there. Then, after a gathering of the VIPs here, you will be going off to downtown. As far as I know, it’s pretty lowkey.”

So, he looks out the window of the airplane, and he looks over at me with a little smile. He says, “Are you sure about that?”

I said, “That’s what I’ve got here, buddy.” So, away he goes. Now, as he’s going down the steps, I go look out the window myself, and it’s like something out of *Lawrence of Arabia*, with all these guys in white robes waving their swords in the air and cheering and so on. Now, this is the sort of thing that would have been a small atom bomb had it happened with Albright. He goes inside and they have a tea ceremony for him. They have a reception, practically, for him right there.

Later on, somebody tells me, “Neal, somehow your notes on the visit - \_\_\_\_.”

I said, “Look, all the other VIPs who have gone, they’re just going to put you in the car and bring you downtown.” It did not turn out like that.

*Q: Let me guess, Powell took that in stride? Albright was known to be an extreme stickler on detail. As pleasant as she may have been in the office, she really didn’t have much patience for things that didn’t work.*

WALSH: That put pressure on everybody, because you're trying to do everything right – schedules and so on like that. I remember when we were talking with AF about the post-election Africa trip, we'd have to wait all evening for Susan Rice to get to the papers that we needed to get for the secretary. As she got back from a reception, she'd go over all of it. She was very detail-oriented, and she had some very good deputy assistant secretaries. The PDAS (primary deputy assistant secretary) down there was Nancy Powell, who is a force in her own right. She's superb.

*Q: She was FSI (Foreign Service Institute), right?*

WALSH: Right. Pam Bridgewater was there, too. There were people who could have signed off on things. So, we were having a meeting in that post-election period. There was somebody working out where we would go after the election, and somebody raised the idea of going to Nigeria. Just the idea— This is a time when a number of airplanes had been stopped on the runway at Murtala Muhammed Airport in Lagos and robbed. They'd bring a car up on the side, jump inside the plane, and then run down the plane with a gun and tell everyone, "Put your wallets in the bag."

The idea of that happening to our plane just made me laugh. It must have been the end of a long, stressful day, because it made me start giggling. The picture of these guys robbing the plane like bandits robbing a stagecoach in the Wild West, and whatever I would have to say about that— You never wanted to have anything go wrong. With Powell, on the other hand—

On an African trip, they really overscheduled him, and once again, I'm the one who agrees to the schedule. It was just a horrible schedule. I watched it from the Pretoria office. I was seeing what was going wrong as the day went on. Powell just said, "We've got to do better tomorrow."

Everything we did with Albright was choreographed, right down to the second. When we realized Powell wasn't looking at his book— She had a meeting every morning, even if we were on the road, and it was at about seven or 7:30. We would go over the schedule step by step and explain to her, "Here's what you're going to do. Here's where you're going to meet. Here's how you're going to do this," and so on. We didn't have that with Powell, and we needed that.

By the next day, the staff had worked out a non-intrusive, non-meeting process to get him entangled in the schedule ahead of time so he could look up and say, "Wait a minute. Get rid of this."

*Q: I'm curious, because those schedules get tons of clearances. Do they not go to the secretary before getting final clearance for the book? They give them a book, I think.*

WALSH: Yeah. It'll be gone over any number of times – two, three or four – ahead of time with the secretary themselves and also with the chief of staff and deputy chief of

staff and the special assistant. As a matter of fact, it would be gone over on a daily basis with the chief of staff and the special assistant, and it would maybe be discussed three or four times with the secretary by them.

*Q: Yeah. So, I'm guessing maybe Powell didn't read deeply enough into these things to realize he was being overscheduled?*

WALSH: I don't know how that worked out.

*Q: Maybe he just had more trust in his subordinates. Anyway—*

WALSH: He did. He had an immense amount of faith that if I told him where he was going there would be VIPs there and they'd take him right downtown— He also had knowledge from the big organization.

*Q: Oh, yes, DOD.*

WALSH: Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong.

*Q: I think he was even the author of that doctrine. This is great. I suggest that we plan another conversation on Powell. You spent six or 10 months with him. This is certainly something we should go over. It is August 13<sup>th</sup> with Neal Walsh and Dan Whitman.*

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*Q: Neal, let me just start here. I've got to sign on. It's Dan Whitman and Neal Walsh. It's August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Off we go. You're on.*

WALSH: Okay. We were talking, and I had second thoughts after we talked. We were talking about Albright personality-wise, just in terms of working for her. First, she was not warm and cuddly, but she was not rude. As I said, I liked the way she operated, having the staff meeting in the morning to go over the schedule and see what we were going to do today. If you were the trip officer, you would be doing that. "You will go here, you will do this," and so on.

*Q: How often did you become trip officer, and how many people would be available to do that?*

WALSH: There would be four of us who did it. I did Africa and the Middle East. We did it by geographic regions. Another person did South America. There was Europe, and there was South Asia and Asia. There were four of us who did it. There was Bob Blake, who was later ambassador to Sri Lanka and Indonesia, and there was Carol Perez, who is now the director of Personnel. Who was the third one? Steve \_\_\_ did Europe, and he later on was ambassador to one of the Baltics and to Poland. Paul Jones was head of the line at that time, but he later came in. So, yeah, there were four of us.

*Q: A very distinguished group. And you did Africa and the Middle East, okay.*

WALSH: I did. I think I did a total of seven trips with Albright. She was quite a traveler. So, I did one in Europe; that was a training trip. I did another to APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), and then I did the Middle East talks. Now, if we had a Middle East talks sort of international affairs thing here, we would do that. We would not travel on a domestic program. For the Camp David talks, we did that. There were the Sharm El-Sheikh talks. Then we did another African tour.

*Q: Okay. Well, tell me about Sharm El-Sheikh, because there must have been high expectations. We know that, sadly, it didn't come to much, but tell me about that trip.*

WALSH: First, it was done six or eight weeks after Camp David. There were great expectations. You really don't get the American president out of his office and onto an airplane unless there's something that has already been semi-settled. Additionally, everybody realized how much and how dearly Clinton really wanted to get a Jimmy Carter-type agreement out of them. We were going on the hopes that the Oslo Accords, which had started out in terms of the Bush I administration and were still going on— The idea of a two-state solution to the problem was what we were hoping for.

So, there we were. It was just like, boom, boom, boom, and with three days' notice we were into the plane and on our way.

*Q: Three days' notice? Why such a short time?*

WALSH: At the end of Camp David, everybody was like, "We don't think we can do anything else or anything more." Then, all of a sudden, the phone calls come in saying, "Maybe we can do this. Let's see what we can get going," and so on. Prime Minister Barak of the Israelis was really— He was probably the last guy to really be flexible in terms of the Israeli side of things, and it all looked like it would go. One Sharm El-Sheikh went belly-up, then you had the \_\_\_.

*Q: Well, why did it go belly-up? What was the sticking point?*

WALSH: I can't remember closely what it was, but I think that once again, it was the Syrian border issues and settlements.

*Q: Oh, yes. Those remain the issues now, today. So, you had Clinton and Albright on that trip?*

WALSH: Yes.

*Q: So, how disappointed did they appear to be?*

WALSH: Oh, very. As a matter of fact— You know, there are a couple of areas here where you can really see, almost from the body language of the people involved, how

disappointed they were. There was this— Both at Camp David and Sharm El-Sheikh, you could see how deflated they were. That would be the only word to use. Of course, at the same time, we were talking to the North Koreans. I remember there was a point where the North Koreans were going to come and meet in the United States. They were on their way in the same summer. Once again, we are still in the summer of '99.

*Q: Was this the Christopher Hill period for North Korea, by any chance?*

WALSH: It could have been, yeah.

*Q: What did Clinton and Albright expect? Do we know why they sprang so quickly after the failed Camp David talks, and do we know what they thought might happen?*

WALSH: No, I could not tell you that. Once again, with the Koreans, it was \_\_\_\_, so I was just not in there. With the Middle East, I had a very good relationship with Aaron Miller and the other young man in that outfit.

*Q: We'll both remember together. But, yeah, Aaron Miller's been through decades of this. The poor man. Is this a man who should go disappointed the rest of his life?*

WALSH: I don't think so. They knew what they were getting into. Like I said, I was there at the Madrid talks, and there they were, and here we are, years later. Not years, but a substantial amount of time later. Here they are working away. They exemplified that same sort of dedication, knowledge, and professionalism.

*Q: Dennis Ross.*

WALSH: Dennis Ross. Those two really represented objective approaches to these things, you know? They were just very good people. Also, they didn't have— They had an approach to it that was not invented here. Various people had no hard feelings about the Oslo Accords or anything like that, but they were just like, "Thank goodness somebody else is getting the ball moving."

*Q: Aside from policy, what was Sharm El-Sheikh like? You had three countries within eyeball distance – Israel, Egypt, Jordan, I think. All of them were on the same beach with barbed wire separating them. What was it like?*

WALSH: Well, actually, it was a resort town. So, we were in this semi-palatial residence where we set up our offices. Down the hill about 150 yards away was the secretary. She was there. I'd gather up all the papers and bring them down every morning and every evening. Then, on the other side it was sort of like a big Hollywood layout. I was walking around, I went around the corner, and there was the press center with Larry Schwartz and all those guys. I had been there a day or two, and I didn't even know these guys were there. It was like how I didn't even know you were in Madrid. I went around the corner and there was this huge press center, and what a good buffet they had—

*Q: Well, wait a minute, Larry Schwartz? What was he—*

WALSH: He might have been IO in Israel. He was IO in Israel. So, there were all my former colleagues. That was great. That was a fine time. One of the great stories there is about how we ran things within the secretariat. I got a phone call from a friend of mine who was in the press— He was a correspondent, and he was going to Sharm El-Sheikh. He said, “Neal, I’ve been to Sharm two or three times, and I’ve never gotten a waterside hotel room. Can you take care of me?”

I said, “But of course.” I’d been in the job for one or two months, and I was like, “Of course I can take care of you. I am a big shot now.” So, I called down to the EX division, which is headed by another deputy – Dick Shinnick. So, I called over there, talked to the lady that was running the hotels and stuff, and said, “Hey, can you get So-and-so a room in the staff hotel on the water side?”

She said, “Yes, I can do that. No problem.”

So, about half an hour or 45 minutes later, Dick Shinnick comes into my office with this thick bundle of files. He drops them on my desk and says, “Hey, you like to do hotels, then you can do all of them.”

So, of course, I said, “Oh, no, no.”

He says, “Good. You take care of your job, and I’ll take care of mine.”

I had just arrived. I was the new kid there. It was like, ooh. So, I said, “Okay, put him anywhere you want. They got a kennel? Put him in there.” Then, after I’d been there a while, I also realized that for my trips, I was booking the translating equipment that would fly. If we needed translators, I would call Language Services and arrange for X, Y, Z in Arabic to come out. Kamal, the Arabic translator, and I were like blood brothers for this year when I was in there. He was a great guy with a great sense of humor. He’s an Egyptian. He could be Coptic; I’m not too sure.

But when I was making the arrangements, and we’d need 100 translation units for the press, or 10 or 12, or so on, I said, I think, to one of the secretaries, “What the hell am I doing this stuff for? The EX should be taking care of this and dealing with Language Services. I don’t want to forget and wind up in the middle of \_\_\_\_\_ without the translating stuff.”

They said, “Oh, you know, when President Clinton went to China, the deputy who had the East Asian office was a China specialist. All of the language instructors over at FSI called him and asked if they could be the translator for President Clinton in their hometown.” It was a real hopscotch trip. They said, “He made that arrangement, and Mr. Shinnick said, ‘If they want to do the translating arrangements, they can do it.’”

I said, “Well, that was like two years ago.”

They said, “Yeah, well, we’re still doing it.”

One of my great contributions before I left the secretariat was to crawl over to Shinnick’s office and say, “Please, can we stop doing this?” So, yeah, this was a very tightly disciplined, hierarchical organization with a good sense of ironic humor. That’s what you needed to do these jobs.

*Q: Well, you’re very good at that, Neal, ironic humor.*

WALSH: So, we did that. Sharm was— It was sort of sad to be on two losing negotiations. We then had the Korean talks collapse, too. It was a tough summer that way. But obviously, it was a campaign summer. Then, after the election, we left town and went to Africa for a week or so.

*Q: Right. Yes, very sad. Korea, plus two Middle East talks, all coming to nothing. Well, good try. So, after that period, then you had Powell, is that right?*

WALSH: Yes. Powell arrived the second or third week of December. He arrived with his chief of staff. I should find the book here and get his name out there, because he turned out to be very good. He had one of those PT Cruisers. He and Bill \_\_\_ showed up, and there they were. So, I went down with Paul Jones, who was head of the line, and introduced them around and walked them down to where their officers are. As I think I told you, I said, “This is where your staff will work,” and so on.

Powell said, “You guys are my staff.”

*Q: Right. When you said you went down, you meant you went to the garage?*

WALSH: Nope, we went right up to the front and down to the lobby. That was cool. They were very informal, very easygoing. They didn’t demand anything. Every division, every undersecretariat, as well as independent organizations like INR and so on, had done up briefing books for them. All of those were there. We already had a certain number of staff from the line, which was technically under my supervision but, for goodness’ sakes, I could never have done it without Paul Jones.

When I arrived, a couple of them said, “Have you ever worked in this building before?”

I said, “No.”

They just looked at me and said, “What a set, you poor baby.” So, without Harry Thomas in the Operations Center and Paul Jones in the line, I would have been a lost cowboy. Everything was finished up, and frankly, until the inauguration itself, we really did not hear from Powell at all, at least in terms of him wanting this or that. There would be a couple of requests for getting something, but it was all carried out by the line.

*Q: Well, that's very proper, if it's pre-inauguration. Any comments about transition? It's a weird thing, with elections in November and everybody knowing what's going to happen, but it doesn't happen until mid-January. That's a two-month period. It must be very weird.*

WALSH: It is. Like I said, we got out of town, because the whole thing was in question.

*Q: Yes, of course.*

WALSH: Actually, one of the things that came to my attention, as they were, was just making sure briefing books by all of the sections were ready, like for the African area and NEA (Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs) to bring the new secretariat up to speed. I wanted to make sure that they got their documentation and make sure that pretty much what was going through our office copy was copied to the new secretary.

The only other thing was that there had to be another convocation of the S Committee or whatever they called it that decides ambassadors. They had sat down, back in September of even earlier, to figure out who was going where. Then, you have a new administration. That required review. Some ambassadorships are going to be political, and maybe we already had somebody named for that position and so on. So, that was being shifted back and forth and so on like that. I didn't sit on that committee.

I sat on the Con Gen (consul general) and DCM committee. When they had nominations, they'd have some members of USIA, former USIA officers, who were nominated for various jobs. But Kristie Kenney, who was on the committee – she was the executive secretary – came out after one of those meetings, and asked, “What do you think of this or this?”

This is still what I think of as one of the funnier things that happened. She came out and said, “By the way, your guy for Guinea, not to worry. No problems there.”

*Q: Right, because nobody wanted it.*

WALSH: Yeah, I was like, “I don't think it's going to go that deep.” Actually, we didn't have a problem, but Greta Morris had been nominated – I don't know if it was at this time or a year later – for— What's that Portuguese island?

*Q: Oh, you don't mean—*

WALSH: It's off of Indonesia. Timor-Leste.

*Q: Right, but she ended up in some nearby other place, right?*

WALSH: Not nearby. She wound up in Mongolia, in Ulaanbaatar. But she actually was bumped by a former Republican congressman who had been a leader on Timor-Leste's independence and human rights issues. So, it just goes to show that you can never tell.

*Q: She did end up on some island in the Pacific.*

WALSH: Yes, Nauru. I think she went out and did a TDY (temporary duty assignment) in that area at one time or another as charge, but I was always thinking about her saying, “Geez, is it going to be the raccoon coat or the bikini? What are you going to have there?”

So, yeah, Powell came in. Now, as I said, Albright was not warm and cuddly, but at least personally, she was not offensive. Her chief of staff, and some of the other people around her, were very high maintenance.

*Q: Did she realize that and allow her staff to be— When you say high maintenance, to me that means abusive.*

WALSH: I would say yes. When things went wrong, they would want a name.

*Q: Oh my gosh. Did she know this was happening in her name*

WALSH: She might have known it, but she didn’t show it. So, Powell’s people, after a week or two— I went in to Bill\_\_\_\_, his chief of staff, and said, “We haven’t heard from you guys. We’re not seeing you every day, and we’re not getting X, Y, Z and so on.”

He said, “Hey, if there’s a problem, we’ll be down, but for now there have been no problems.” It was just amazing. That sort of puts you on a higher level. Well, not necessarily a higher level, but you want to make sure they don’t have to come down and see you. You’re trying to do things as— At least on a spirit level, you’re trying to do better than ever before. So, it sort of gives you an impulse to say, “Hey, let’s get this thing going.”

So, in terms of outreach to the staff, they were very correct. Powell never questioned anything or displayed displeasure with anything to anybody in public. He was very discreet. He was always very positive. I think that on some of the more disastrous times, when things were really bad, the worst he ever said to me, at least, is “We’ve got to do better tomorrow.”

*Q: He was really a gentleman with military discipline.*

WALSH: Yeah, he was just very good and very discreet. So, it was a pleasure to deal with him.

*Q: That’s what we all thought, we who did not have direct contact. It seemed like he did care about his personnel. He kept saying he did, and he really did, I think.*

WALSH: Yeah. In that sense, he was totally different from Albright. He looked at things, asked questions. People have said that George Schultz and Powell are the only two secretaries of State that we’ve had that were interested in the bones of the organization.

They would watch the efforts that were put into getting an agreement on the Middle East. Secretary Albright would have sold the tires off the secretary's limousine to advance the president's policies. Powell very much looked at the structure of the Department of State as an institution. Almost immediately, he was very concerned about personnel. He got the hiring freezes that had affected us for so long taken off and so on. He was going into a new hiring thing. As a matter of fact, your ambassador to Cameroon— What was his name?

*Q: Oh—*

WALSH: Your anti-corruption ambassador.

*Q: Oh, Niels Marquardt.*

WALSH: Yes. Niels was put in charge of figuring out how we got more people to take the exam and so on and so forth.

*Q: He was HR, right.*

WALSH: Powell looked at him and said, "Since 1989, you have expanded into countries all over Central Asia and places like this. Your budget has gone up, your personnel's been frozen, and we are in big trouble." That was part of his focus, that sort of budgetary or institutional focus. That certainly did not operate at all under Albright, or at least not during the six months I was with her. I didn't see that sort of interest at all.

*Q: So, we don't have privileged information at this time, but this morning, in The Washington Post and from a recent report from the Hill, from Senator Menendez, they've been saying that this is all completely grounded. The morale, the staffing, the senior positions being unfilled is all relatively disastrous. Any comments about that?*

WALSH: Oh, yeah. There is no doubt it's a disaster. Let's say that in terms of the various units, the assistant secretary or the undersecretary of various divisions are the ones who inspire, if you wish, the movement. They may be political appointees, but you have to have them in order to take all our interests and the interests of our region or of the policy to the secretary, to the people of the United States, and so on like this. Obviously, you can see here with this current administration, that you never hear— The last I heard— In EUR (Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs), the assistant secretary was acting, and he was the former assistant secretary for Public Affairs.

*Q: Yes, that was Phil Reeker who, according to today's Post— They didn't name him, but they said that there hasn't even been a name put forward for the assistant secretary for Europe and Eurasia. That seems like a pretty important post to be not staffing. Phil Reeker is the senior bureau official. That's his title. He's not assistant secretary. It's kind of more than shocking.*

WALSH: Yeah, so, here we are. We're moving more than 1/3 of our troops out of Germany – perhaps to go to Poland – and we haven't heard one word from EUR, from the assistant secretary. Generally, that would be a background briefing for the president on why we're doing this, how we're doing this, and so on like that.

*Q: But we don't have an assistant secretary. There isn't one. That's quite amazing.*

WALSH: So, Powell was very interested – he and Armitage, as well – in the institution itself and how it worked. As he said, he looked at his ambassadors— This is why he would do the swearing in if he was in the city. They were, as he called them, his battalion, his regimental commanders.

*Q: That's a good point. He almost always showed up to those swearing ins. Now, you remind us of Richard Armitage, who was D, deputy. What about him? He was a very amusing character. He was kind of like something out of Dr. Strangelove.*

WALSH: He was very gruff, but he wasn't like the general who took over his base or the one who \_\_\_\_\_. I would arrive at the same time, between about 6:30 and 7 in the morning, as him. When I finished parking and getting out of my car, he was getting out of his car. We would go up together and chat about this, that, and the other thing. He's coming from his morning workout. He was at the gym, working out. He was both in my job in the secretariat and then, later on, when I left in July the next year, I would see him every morning while I was in Washington.

*Q: He was a man with considerable charm. I guess the famous story is how he went to Pakistan, and he said to the prime minister, "I will turn your country into a parking lot if you don't cooperate with us on the Taliban." Apparently, the message was received.*

WALSH: Well, yeah, he could do that sort of thing, but he wasn't really like that. Powell and Armitage were the balancers within that administration.

*Q: Explain. What's a balancer?*

WALSH: Well, they were not as rabid – and this is pre-9/11 – as Cheney, Rumsfeld, Feith, Wolfowitz, and the others who felt that now, with the \_\_\_ mono-power, with a unipolar world, we had the right and ability to do pretty much anything we wanted.

They were incredibly suspicious of the Middle East and the Axis of Evil. This was prior to the Axis of Evil being incarnated by our president. We were having discussions about the independence of VOA (Voice of America), and VOA editorials used to come through to R. The new head of VOA's editorials would be really \_\_\_ on Middle East issues. Of course, they would be turned down, and then we'd get complaints from various people. Powell and Armitage would say, "This stuff is a little hair-straining, don't you think?" So, yeah, they were the moderates.

*Q: Yes. VOA, I believe, at that time had an editorial staff that was a little bit crazy. They had very strong political agendas, and it was probably beneficial that those editorials had to be cleared, because the founding document says that VOA will, in its editorials, project U.S. policy, which isn't any idea that comes into the head of any editor. It is a consensus document.*

WALSH: Yeah. I remember that somebody was named to VOA, and I mentioned it to Armitage. He said, "Oh my God, another nutcase." It was just— Actually, in the spring or summer of 2000, we had an incident on the weekend that sort of led me to really respect Armitage. There was a shooting down of an American missionary plane by a Peruvian airplane with an American advisor on board. It was one of those CIA contract sort of things. The guy couldn't find, "Don't shoot," in his dictionary in time to save the missionary plane. The plane was shot down. The pilot was killed. He was the husband and the missionary. His wife and child were saved.

So, this thing came up pretty fast. That happened on a Sunday morning, and we got the call from the embassy in Lima ? .. It was a Saturday or Sunday. Armitage was in the office, so he started following the track of this thing. We called in and updated the deputy assistant secretary of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Joe Brownfield. Armitage was absolutely focused on this. This could be a very bad thing for us to see. He wanted the tapes of the conversations, and any film from that airplane, brought to the embassy and sent immediately to the Department of State.

It was fascinating for two reasons. One, we were all waiting for this stuff. I went out with Harry Thomas and his assistant, Luis Arriaga. We went out to lunch, right? While we're having lunch, my phone rings, and it's Armitage going, "What the fuck are you doing having lunch?"

"There's nothing happening, sir."

"Get your ass back here."

So, I came back, and it was fascinating, because we then had a conference call with at least 10 participants – military, diplomatic, and intelligence. It must have been 10 people. Brownfield, the assistant secretary from Western Hemisphere Affairs, chaired it. We were listening to it. Armitage was sitting in my office, and we were listening to it on my speaker phone. It was just a fabulous chairmanship of this thing, you might say, by Brownfield. They would say, "Well, it's on its way up, and we want to have a look at it right away." He would say, "No. This will come to the Department of State, and we will then have a joint viewing and discussion tomorrow." He was very adamant on this. He just handled it so well. No voices were raised, but everything got done.

I have to say, at the end of it, Armitage said, "Hey, that guy did a good job. That was alright."

*Q: Of whom, Brownsfield?*

WALSH: Yep. Armitage was like that. He liked to get into the details of how things are going and so on like that. He was very good in a lot of ways. Let's just say that I admired and respected him.

*Q: He was also supportive of the people under him. You mentioned, a moment ago, the four mystery people – Cheney, Rumsfeld, Feith, Wolfowitz. Some of us gag when we hear any of those names. Any comments on any of them? Feith ended up at Georgetown, of all places, even though he was indicted for criminal actions. Wolfowitz was dragged out of DOD to be made head of the World Bank. I mean, what the hell? Who were these folks? Did you have any interactions with them?*

WALSH: Not a whole lot, at that time. I was just watching it. Now, remember, INR was part of my thing. You could see from the articles in the newspaper that they were building their own intelligence agency, you might say, over and above DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency) and so on. They did not trust the intelligence they were getting from the CIA and others. As a matter of fact, there was an article in the newspapers shortly before 9/11 that said, "In the bureaucracy of the State Department, guys are whistling and happy because they have such good leadership, and the people at the Pentagon are very unhappy because of the leadership they got out of this administration."

You were seeing these things, these little policy differences, between State and DOD coming up. This is pre-9/11. I think they were beginning to do something in terms of weapons of mass destruction and so on. The INR guys came and said, "Hey, we don't see that there's any nuclear \_\_\_\_\_ work on Iran."

*Q: I remember. That was even in the papers.*

WALSH: That was all prior to 9/11. They said, "What should we do?"

I said, "Hey, do your memo, and send it to the secretary. If that's your conclusion, you are obligated to bring it forward. We can't slow it down, and I don't think we should—" I alluded, with references to others, that this was what they had. That predated stuff from a year later.

*Q: Yes. Now or later, if you have any comments about Powell – formerly military, pretty strongly lined up against the four people you've mentioned, famously, though that came in '02, I believe.*

WALSH: W Like I said, before 9/11, even before that, when I would discuss people that might be going over to VOA or doing this or that— These were things that went back to the Reagan administration. These were guys who were with *The Washington Times* back in the Reagan administration. Armitage would say, "Oh my God, no. Not that guy. Not that wingnut."

So, yeah, they were just sort of bumping into one another, and that had already begun.

*Q: Wow. Lessons learned, but way too late, I guess.*

WALSH: Yeah. So, in July of 2000, Ms. Kinney was named ambassador to Ecuador, and Maura Harty took her place. I was relegated to be senior advisor to the undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, R. The incoming person has the right to name people to her staff. So, the two or three other people in the office— I think Blake had gone down to another job. So, my position was the most tenuous, you might say. I was ousted for another person. The only nice thing, I always said “Well, we had a nice little cake and happy goodbyes.” and so on. But Kinney, when she heard that Maura had decided to replace me, said, “Man, that’s a stupid move.”

Well, I don’t know. I would have liked to have stayed, but I didn’t really feel like it, so I wound up over in R. That was with Rick Ruth. Who else was there?

*Q: I think Dennis Roth was in and out.*

WALSH: No. He was—

*Q: I guess he gave a talk once to a small number of people at R. I believe you were there that day. Anyway, yes, R. Should we get into R? It’s very fascinating institutionally, administratively, and politically. Should we get into that now? Should we take a fresh look at our next discussion?*

WALSH: What time is it now?

*Q: It is almost five. I can go on. It’s up to you.*

WALSH: I’m trying to think if there’s anything else I should have, not on the R thing, but on the secretariat. Once again, it all went along. , the secretary’s chief of staff, left in the spring and went up to Syracuse. Another guy came in, Larry\_\_\_, to be chief of staff. Once again, it was the same as with\_\_\_. He came in, he was chief of staff. Powell was incredibly close to both of these guys, but they didn’t come down— Aside from coming down and saying hello to everybody, they never came down with a problem for the secretary.

*Q: That sounds like a very professional way to do it, instead of calling people out in public, which is always bad management.*

WALSH: Yeah. For Albright’s staff, it was—

*Q: Can we just say— Was it Rick Ruth who invited you to come to R? Who invited you?*

WALSH: Well, I was directed to R. Charlotte Beers had not been cleared by the Senate, so she was— This was July of 2000.

*Q: No, it has to be 2001.*

WALSH: 2001, you're right. My God. I should have a calendar. I wish I kept notes in a calendar, or that I kept a diary, for God's sake.

*Q: This is why we're doing an interview. This is much better.*

WALSH: This is July of 2001. They just said, "Go down and interview with Ms. Beers. Talk this over and see if she would like to have you." This would be to take— What was his name?

*Q: Somebody working with Rick Ruth?*

WALSH: He went off to be ambassador to Lithuania or something.

*Q: Not Brian Carlson?*

WALSH: Yep, Brian Carlson.

*Q: Oh, okay. So, was Brian in R, at that time?*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: Okay. And of course you knew him because he was USIA, right?*

WALSH: Yep.

*Q: Okay. So, you had a pretty positive relationship with Carlson, and Carlson, I guess, eased your entry into the office with Beers. Is that correct?*

WALSH: Very much. It was the same with Rick Ruth. I loved working with him, so he was glad to see me, I think.

*Q: This was the old USIA gang.*

WALSH: Brambilla was there.

*Q: Brambilla. Oh, my gosh, wonderful. Brambilla, Ruth, Carlson. This seems like family, doesn't it?*

WALSH: Yes, it does. It was.

*Q: Well, this gives me a good feeling, after the terrible incidents— Middle East conferences went back, North Korea went bad, Powell was a gentleman. Nothing much advanced U.S. policy. In any case, Maura Harty decided to have a bit of a shakeup in the*

*secretariat. So, instead of being out in the cold, you came to R, which was like coming home, in a way. I would suggest we pick it up at that point next time, because I remember— You and I overlapped in some indirect ways during that very consequential period, which was the buildup to March '03 and the invasion. Charlotte Beers— Well, I'll keep myself out of it. Let's see. Stay on the line. It is Dan Whitman and Neal Walsh, and it's August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020.*

WALSH: I was going from Powell's secretariat to R to take Brian Carlson's job. I was embedded there with—

*Q: Was this when Brian went off to Latvia to be ambassador?*

WALSH: Right. As somebody said to me at a party— This was the wife of one of my former ambassadors. "Hey, Neal, you should be looking at your ambassadorships. You should be right up there."

I said, "Oh, no. Whatever, it would be very small."

She said, "Well, Brian, went to Latvia, or maybe it was Estonia "He liked it very much."

I had to say, "It will be a very small country, and not in a temperate climate." So, I moved over there. Charlotte Beers was still getting ready for her stuff. This is summer of '01. So, what happened? We didn't have deputy assistant secretaries in the regions, at that time, for Public Diplomacy. We were running with the backwash of the consolidation.

*Q: Right. A year and a half before.*

WALSH: Remember, I was hardly touched by the consolidation, because my ambassador had said, "Hey, it doesn't make any difference to me. You continue to keep your car and your silverware."

*Q: Right, there were lucky ones and unlucky ones. I was in the middle. I was pretty lucky.*

WALSH: In some places, the admin officers went right into the house and took the silverware. It was brutal and just mean-spirited, in many places.

*Q: Yeah. Not everywhere, but that's true. Where I was, they took the house. They waited for me to move out. It was a representational house, and certainly a PAO or DCM kind of thing, but the admin officer took it because he liked the house. There were some insecure people.*

*So, Charlotte Beers. What an individual. You got to know her a bit while she was moving in and reading up. I remember her to be fastidious, hostile to us, distrustful, unlikely ever to learn any aspect of what diplomacy was from her Madison Avenue background. But that's only the way I remember her. How do you remember her?*

WALSH: A little bit of both. Obviously, after 9/11, everything changed. But for Charlotte Beers, she came in with an incredibly rich experience in marketing. She carried that through right to the point where, whenever I would mispronounce “Jaguar,” she would correct me. She \_\_\_ sort of brands. A big part of her was branding. Frankly, my feeling would be that if we were not to have had 9/11, she would have been an eminently successful person for Public Diplomacy in terms of branding.

She had that certain cynicism or looking askance at government, but she grew to appreciate what government could do. Additionally, she grew to appreciate what Public Diplomacy was, what the exchange programs were, what other things were. In a certain sense, no matter how bad things were after 9/11, the bones— It’s like when they go into a house to tear it apart and redo it, like on House and Garden Television, and they’ll say, “This house has got good bones.”

Now, I’ve seen this happen a number of times. We brief people and we do the paperwork and everything for them, we tell them how successful the IV programs are. We had \_\_\_\_\_; he’s one of our guys. There was Margaret Thatcher \_\_\_\_\_ for our sins. Merkel out of Germany, too. You’d put it on a piece of paper and so on for the Fulbright program or the English teaching program or whatever. It was only after a couple of months that they’re dealing with these things that they start realizing, “Wow, this is a big deal.” That is something that our State colleagues – political officers and others – never get.

*Q: You’re so charitable, Neal. The majority of them never get it, never want to get it, and never will. But we can edit that out.*

WALSH: Well, when you get to be ambassador or DCM, and they meet Minister Such and Such who has a beautiful wife and they want to send them to the States for an IV, then they start to appreciate what we can do. In those days, we could do it in a matter of months or weeks. Now, you’ve got to have a fucking plan a year and a half ahead of time.

*Q: Plus the visa issues.*

WALSH: Well, that’s a visa issue, yeah, and that comes up in this period, because there was great friction between Secretary Powell and Mary— What was her name? The woman who was the assistant secretary of Consular Affairs for life. She’s gone now.

*Q: Maura Harty’s predecessor. I know who you mean.*

WALSH: Yeah. She used to fight this stuff in the post-9/11 period very forcefully in the meetings, and she was very good at it. I often thought that in the end, her getting fired by Powell – particularly since she died shortly thereafter – was sort of kabuki. “Let’s stop giving visas to Saudis. No, wait, we can’t do that.” Blah, blah, blah. Powell’s position was that if we didn’t give half a loaf to the Department of Homeland Security and Immigration or whatever it was—

*Q: INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) at the time.*

WALSH: —they're just going to move in and take over.

*Q: That's very interesting. Now, I hadn't even thought of that as an aspect of your job at R, but it did affect exchanges, didn't it?*

WALSH: Oh, yeah. We had to beef up R and the undersecretary with all the statistics. How many billions we were making just from the Chinese, for God's sake. Once we started putting in those visa restrictions, bingo. The Australians, the Brits, and the Canadians said, "Hey, you speak English? Come on down. We have some schools for you." They started mowing our lawn, and it was just horrible. Look at how we're doing now.

*Q: We're doing it even more so. Chinese students who were spending a million per year are now maybe down to almost nothing next week, when classes resume. That's a lot of money, aside from the image, the actual exchange of gray matter. It's a huge loss for everybody.*

WALSH: That's sort of a sidetrack, but yes. Working with Charlotte was not unpleasant. There was the problem of starting at the beginning. "This was what we did, this was how we were doing it, and— Fulbright was a senator. You might have heard of him." We had to go back to the very beginning. So, yeah, that summer was taken up with a lot of briefing, a lot of work with her, a lot of explanations. It was sort of getting used to things.

*Q: Were things being channeled through you to her?*

WALSH: They would be channeled through me, but also there were so many people in our organization that knew so many more things than I did. So, I would get people in to talk to her.

*Q: But you were the gatekeeper—*

WALSH: Sometimes, I would just watch them talk to her and shudder. But yeah, for IIP, we had— Oh, God, he was an Irishman, and his last job had been as PAO in Rome. He had a beard. He was actually from Connecticut. I don't know whether he was from Bridgeport or Waterbury. Maybe he was from Waterbury. He was IIP (Bureau of International Information Programs). Miller, I think, was still EUR at that time.

*Q: ECA (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs), maybe? Did you say Miller \_\_\_?*

WALSH: No, Miller may have been PAO in Paris. He may have been EUR director; I don't know. For NEA, we had Judy\_\_\_. For Africa, oh my God, we had this woman. Her name was Hovanec; her husband's name was Vince. They'd gotten a divorce. Vince was a lot lower-keyed than she was.

*Q: You had David Arnette for EUR, too. So, you were with—*

WALSH: With Rick Ruth, you had the whole history of the R front office. So, he was fabulous.

*Q: Who was that?*

WALSH: Rick Ruth.

*Q: Yeah. Well, he was there at the creation, as they say. So, a lot of briefing, a lot of getting ready, and then boom, 9/11.*

WALSH: Boom. 9/11. Actually, 9/11 was sort of interesting for me, because one of the things that I had been tasked with was for a history of the positive highlights of the Middle East peace process. So, I beavered away on that. Guess what? I didn't come up with a whole lot of positives.

*Q: Yeah. Oslo, Madrid, Camp David— Nothing.*

WALSH: Even going back to Arafat and Carter and that poor fellow who got knifed, Rabin. So, yeah, in a way, that was helpful. I got to meet and know a lot of people in NEA, and I hadn't worked with it for a year or so in the secretariat.

*Q: How was she with that? Was she satisfied with the facts, or did she want to twist them?*

WALSH: She was satisfied with the facts, and even as we would discuss them, she would go, "How do we twist this?" One of the good things there is that it was nowhere near as blatant as this became in the Bush administration, at least in terms of— We were not leveraging everything to the Israelis. We had been pretty much a really good broker and intermediary. The Israelis were pissed with Clinton. Barak wasn't so much, but the conservatives were. So, it was fascinating. She said, "We seem to be doing all of this in good faith, and we get ripped for either side once it looks like we're on our way to an agreement."

I said, "Yeah, that is the painful position that we are in. We're trying to sell this to either side. What we can underline is how much money we pay to support the Palestinians and the Jordanians," and so on.

*Q: What was your purpose? Was it to project a positive— I mean, her job was to project a positive image, but was she trying to project it to anyone in particular – to Arab countries, to Israel, to Palestinians? What did she have in mind?*

WALSH: I think that in her mind this was an issue in which a lot of people had a lot of interest that she did not have a lot of background knowledge on.

*Q: So, it was more for her than for putting it to use.*

WALSH: Yeah. Once again, it was preparing her for her Senate hearings, and it was for getting her feet on the ground. She seemed comfortable with European and Asian issues, which she ran into a lot in her marketing and so on like that.

*Q: So, was she confirmed before 9/11?*

WALSH: Nope.

*Q: Interesting. So, was she acting?*

WALSH: No, she wasn't acting. When you're waiting for Senate confirmation, you can't take even the most unofficial position that would look like you are backing a policy.

*Q: So, who was fronting R? Was it Rick Ruth?*

WALSH: Who was acting for R at that time? It was Helen or Helena. She was acting.

*Q: Oh, yes. She had been in Israel.*

WALSH: She was very intense, a little high-pitched but a total ECA person.

*Q: Were you running R at that time?*

WALSH: You could say that, but I didn't try to. My big focus was money and programs, and VOA, not policy. I did get caught up in the VOA issues.

*Q: Tell me more about that, since VOA's such an issue right now.*

WALSH: Well, it wasn't quite like that. Really, we were bumping along pretty much on— Our back and forths never were with the news issues and so on like this. Now, they've hired some guy from the right wing, from Breitbart or something like this. It wasn't like that.

*Q: No, it's quite different.*

WALSH: For the Asians, for Radio Free Asia, Radio Free Europe, VOA, all these things, aside from the editorials, content was pretty easy and no big deal.

*Q: Oh, you're saying you did money and programs, not policy and VOA. I get it. So, we're going to talk money and programs.*

WALSH: Well, in terms of policy, I was informed enough to be able to read a VOA editorial and then win the battle to go between PD and the area offices, the policy officer

down in EUR or somewhere else. It would get up to me and I'd have to go to the VOA director and say, "I don't think this is going to work," you know?

Sometimes, Armitage would say, "Hey, I hear you're having a hard time with the assholes over there."

I would say, "Yeah," but I could do that. So, that came along. I was working mostly on protecting the money.

*Q: Wait, when State or PD in general had issues with the editorials, would that go through you to VOA?*

WALSH: Yeah. That was left for R to work out, and for the regional bureaus to work out with VOA. If they couldn't, then it would come up to our office.

*Q: I see. But that happened twice a week or more, right?*

WALSH: Well, not that often. Every couple of weeks, there'd be one. "The U.S. is absolutely firm on the regime change in Brazil."

We'd say, "Well, we might have some problems down there with the sugar imports or something, but I don't think we're going to pay for a coup." That was where things would start to bubble up.

*Q: Yeah. So, you were kind of running the show. Charlotte Beers was not confirmed. We all remember what happened to us individually on 9/11. What happened to you that day?*

WALSH: What happened to me that day? I came in as usual at 6:30 or so in the morning. I probably ran into Mr. Armitage. Then I walked down into my office and started taking calls. At 6:30 or 7 o'clock in the morning, people would call, and I would be able to say, "Who dares to call me at this hour?"

Then, we had the kerfuffle with everybody watching TV and an airplane flew into the tower. I, of course, said, "This is not something for us to waste our time on. Planes have been crashing into towers in New York since the 1940s."

*Q: Brilliant, Neal.*

WALSH: On TV, the plane looked really small. It did. It looked like a Piper .

*Q: We all thought it was one of those helicopters at the top of the Pan-Am Building crashing once again.*

WALSH: We had no idea. So, everybody goes back to work. Then what? 20 minutes later, there's another one. I sort of thought—

*Q: That was about 9 o'clock, the second one.*

WALSH: Yeah. That sort of made me think, "This is trouble." So, I said, "I don't have any money, and this could be a long day." I went right down to the Credit Union, and even as I'm going down, they started evacuating our building. They did not tell us that there was another plane out there somewhere, right? It had already hit the Pentagon. So, everybody's running out of the building, going wherever they're going. I'm going against the flow to get in because I needed money right away. I had no cash.

So, I got cash just before they closed the Credit Union. Then, everybody was outside, so I went up to the office, locked everything down, went over to the secretariat to let Armitage know that I would be around, and Larry \_\_\_\_\_, the secretary's chief of staff, said, "Hey, I'm around. I've got my phone. You can call me."

Then I left, because they were saying, "Get out of the building." So, I went out of the building, and Rick is on the sidewalk. He's very concerned and very emotional because when I said, "Everybody stop watching TV and go about your business; this has nothing to do with us," the ECA woman, the acting assistant secretary for ECA, had a meeting at the Pentagon, and he sent her over there. He told her to stop watching TV and get over to her meeting at the Pentagon.

Here we were, standing out on the lawn across the street from the Department, and there was this huge billow of smoke coming out of the Pentagon. Rick just— It gives me an idea of the depth of humanity in him. He was terribly worried about this. I was sort of like, "Hmm, maybe they got her. Would that be so bad?"

Right about then, they said, "Okay, everybody. All you who have cars, get them out of the parking lot." Right then, they did tell us to go home, too. So, I went in and got my car. I remember still: just as I was pulling out of the parking garage, the first tower started to fall. That must have been about 10:30 in the morning. I didn't know what to do. Nobody was calling me. The whole transition process also involved continuity of government. So, the transition gives you time to go through that. The secretariat had gone over to FSI, where separate offices were available to them.

So, Powell was down in Argentina, and Armitage was in his office. He stayed in his office. On the side of Public Affairs, Phil Reeker was with him. Phil was Richard \_\_\_\_'s deputy, at that time. So, I pulled my car out and parked right in front of the Department, on the street leading up to the Department. I parked my car there and then started wandering. As I wandered around, I ran into various people. I had a coffee and a cigarette with Dennis Ross. I chatted with a couple of young people from the line. I talked to them and said, "We're talking two, three, four planes. This is a lot of paperwork." Then there was Kamal, the translator. I said, "Maybe it's the Black September."

Kamal said, "Black September? It's al-Qaeda. I think it's probably al-Qaeda." He said, "Come on. Black September and the Palestinians— You can't put two of them into a phone booth without an argument. They couldn't organize their way out of a telephone

booth.” So, we chatted. It was fascinating, because all of the federal buildings were evacuated, so you had people walking all over the place. You had uniforms. You had people from the White House kitchen with their chef hats and their white shirts or whatever with the little thing that said, “White House Mess.” It was a very surreal time.

When everybody realized the subways and buses weren’t working, it was like, “Oh, damn. I’ve got to walk home.” Once again, cultural things show. There’s Kamal with a pair of beautiful alligator loafers. He lives three miles from downtown. “I’ve got to walk home. Are you kidding me? What am I going to do?” It was just sort of amazing.

So, then, I swing back to the Department.

What they did is, they took the State Department journalists over to the Foreign Press Center. So, I went over there and checked to see that everybody was being well taken care of. Nobody needed me and I didn’t need to do anything. I did a headcount of who was there just for the historical record. “This is who we’re dealing with.” I went back through the building, and there we had a number of journalists and so on camped out on the lawn across the street from the Department. I was chatting with them.

Interestingly enough, even as we were chatting away, I saw Armitage and Phil come out of the front of the building. They’re just going for a stroll around the block. The journalists don’t recognize them, fortunately for everybody, in the sense that it was probably not the time for them to go rushing over and saying, “What do you think about this?” So, I sort of left them, went over, and chatted with Phil.

Armitage said, “The secretary’s on his way home.”

I caught a glimpse of the president’s appearance when he went to some airfield in the center of the country. It sort of looked like he was hiding behind a desk. Yes, it would have been great if he had just said, “Fly me into Washington,” but nobody knew.

*Q: He was being told different things, and he actually did not know enough to make a good decision. It was like reading that child’s book upside down.*

WALSH: Yeah. So, I spent about 40 or 50 bucks of the money I got out of the credit union on coffee and smokes and taxis.

*Q: You found taxis? That wasn’t easy, was it?*

WALSH: Taxis didn’t take credit cards in those days. So, that worked out. I went from the Foreign Press Center back over to the Department.

*Q: Wait, you went from the Department to the Foreign Press Center?*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: And your car, meanwhile, was in front of the Department.*

WALSH: Yeah. You don't give up a parking spot. I didn't want to be driving my car around when we didn't know what was happening. We had the national guard out on the streets by two or three in the afternoon. So, there you are. I just hung around until— I had this deal in my mind. The only person who could \_\_\_\_\_ my mind was Powell, and he was. When he got back, they put him on TV. It was sort of the thing. Whenever they needed somebody that people could trust, they would put Powell out in front. First, he was very non-threatening in the media, in the sense of how he comported himself— You really didn't want Cheney, and the president didn't look like he was quite prepared to talk about this.

*Q: Well, he was hiding and going from one airplane to another.*

WALSH: Yeah. So, I probably left town at about 10 or 10:30, when the secretary got back. I drove home on 95, down the road.

*Q: I certainly hope you claimed annual leave for those six hours.*

WALSH: Absolutely not. I was working and fretting and planning.

*Q: Well, okay. We don't need to go through it at this late date, but I'm not sure you spent the whole day productively.*

WALSH: I did. I really did. Actually, all it was that I didn't have much to do in the sense of— All I really did was say, "Hey, you guys are doing a good job. That's pretty cool."

*Q: R would not normally be directly in the line of fire, so to speak, during a crisis. They would be coming afterwards.*

WALSH: Right, but for me, it was sort of in my DNA. What's the message, and are the journalists being taken care of? That was it. Also, were the bosses being taken care of? Obviously, Armitage was in great hands with Phil. was with Powell. So, all was pretty good.

*Q: Yeah. Now, Phil was the subordinate to \_\_\_\_\_, right? So, he just happened to be with Armitage? That's not a normal thing, right?*

WALSH: Well, with the secretary away, I don't know how the morning meeting would have gone. Generally, there's a meeting of the secretary and the assistant secretaries, and Phil would probably be there for Armitage. That would be right about the time that airplanes started slapping into buildings. I have a feeling Armitage reacted a bit more seriously than I did. He didn't look at it and say, "This is nothing. Get back to work."

*Q: Well, we all were lacking information, let's put it that way.*

WALSH: I think Armitage said to Phil, “You stay here. Don’t go anywhere.”

*Q: So, how long did it take before R decided it had to do something about all of this? Was it a day, a week, a month?*

WALSH: It was in a matter of days. I remember waking up at the usual time, 5:30 or 6 o’clock, ready to go to work, and thinking, “Something happened last night.” It was interesting, because I didn’t get home until 10 or 10:30, but there were people all over the streets in Fredericksburg talking to one another. This was a big deal. So, I woke up and went, “What happened?”

When I drove home, I drove home on 395 past the Pentagon. The fire was still burning away there. In the morning, when I drove in, they had already erected a temporary microwave tower up where the old Navy Annex was. That sort of let me know things had changed.

*Q: That’s where I was working that fall, the Navy Annex.*

WALSH: Really?

*Q: Yeah. That’s where EUR/PD (Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, Office of Public Diplomacy) was temporarily. But that’s a very different story. We can talk about that at a different time. It was David Arnette.*

WALSH: Well, I’ll tell you. On this’s and that’s, the other thing I did was, I checked around for the regional directors or whatever we called them at that time. It struck me. Larry Schwartz was the information guy for NEA. I think it was Patterson who was the assistant secretary at that time, and he was with her at her house. I have to say, when I put down the phone after checking with him, I thought, “That is weird. R people should be with their assistant secretaries.” I would imagine Arnette stayed in close touch with whoever was acting assistant secretary.

*Q: That was Beth Jones. She had the largest bureau, so people were very scattered. I actually don’t know, between Arnette and Jones— Jones behaved very well that day and figured out her own procedure of how to keep people in touch. There was no plan for this, of course, and she kind of made one on the spot.*

WALSH: Well, it was one of those things where, as much as we’d gone through the continuity of government exercises, it just doesn’t get below the seventh floor.

*Q: Right. That’s like the emergency action plan in an embassy. Something goes down, and you’re like, “What’s the combination to the safe again?” Then the plan is long gone.*

WALSH: Yeah, it’s like, “Who’s got the keys to the cars? What’s going on here?” So, yeah, it was one of those things. As you say, assistant secretaries weren’t \_\_\_\_\_. So, the next morning, the day after, was everybody wondering what happened yesterday and

trying to figure out where it came from, what we're saying? We were saying, "No matter who did it, we will find them."

As the names and faces started appearing and it started being seven out of eight who were Saudis, who had been there in the country for a year or so, learning how to take off but never to land planes. The CIA knew they were in America but never told the FBI. You go, "Wait a minute!" There were a lot of embarrassments there. So, that wasn't good. We started having weekly prayer vigils to say how bad it was.

It was like, where are we going? Within a week or two weeks, Beers was confirmed by the Senate. They would have confirmed her \_\_\_\_\_. A lot empty. The Bush administration had people. You were dealing with, I think, a Democratic Senate and Democratic House at that time, so the nominations weren't going through quite as well as they could have. So, there was this new spirit in the government for us all to start pulling together.

That was, until two days after. We had this immense meeting over at the Executive Office Building, chaired by Khalilzad. It went on and on. What can we do, etc.. Then, "Let's get the extra money. Let's start doing something." I have to say, I looked at this as manna from heaven. We were going to get a lot of money for exchanges and so on. This was good. These were things we wanted to do but had not been doing in the Middle East. What else came along? What media could we do? Where could we go?

*Q: Khalilzad was what, NSC? NEA?*

WALSH: He was President and Senior Director for Southwest Asia, Near East, and North African Affairs at the National Security Council.

WALSH: Maybe it was Rice, and he was regional. He was South Asia, I know. Was Rice already on deck? I'm not sure.

*Q: It doesn't matter. You had Khalilzad, who since became all sorts of things, running the show on that day.*

WALSH: Right. In this meeting, towards the end of it, Judy\_\_\_ raised her hand, and I had not had a chance to talk to her before we went over. I should have talked to her and said, "We don't say we're here. We listen. We write notes. We remember who said what. But we don't raise anything. We are R." As soon as we say something, the politicians are going to be like, who the fuck are they?

So, she comes up with an idea that I had had for ages, and she said, "Look, Al Jazeera has a lot of empty time. We could get our people out there and have our people do this and that."

All of a sudden, it was like a propeller started taking off out of Khalilzad's head and lifting him up towards the ceiling. "I was talking to the vice president about Al Jazeera

last night and he wanted to pick up the telephone and threaten them and threaten \_\_\_\_\_ or whoever it is.” “They are radicals! They are fanatics! They are this and that!”

Frankly, at that point in my mind— Now, I’m not an NEA specialist. I had always looked at them as another 24 hour station dying for programming.

*Q: Which is exactly what they were.*

WALSH: And they’re all ex-BBC (British Broadcasting Channel) guys. So, I’m thinking, “That’s a good idea for Judy. Pat on the head for Judy. But I don’t think this is the place to raise it.” He just started pounding the desk and going off. By the time we walked to State—This was a 20 minute walk, or not even that. They had called to say she should never attend an NSC meeting again.

*Q: Oh my gosh.*

WALSH: That sort of—It didn’t kneecap us, but NEA was going to be involved in what was going on in the future there, so it was unfortunate.

*Q: So, what happened? How did NEA get itself heard at the NSC after that?*

WALSH: Well, she could send Larry and do other things. I certainly never told Judy that she had been blacklisted, but they were—It was horrifying just to see. I got a very negative vibe about Khalilzad from that one meeting. That’s the one time—I’d seen him in \_\_\_\_\_, in meetings, where he was as quiet as everybody else, but obviously he had spent the evening of the attacks with the vice president. That made me angry.

*Q: Then there was this weird relationship between Khalilzad, Cheney, and maybe Rumsfeld in the coming months. I think Khalilzad was kind of the whisperer behind the idea. I guess the whole administration was assuming there would be military action in Afghanistan. The Iraq action—*

WALSH: The Iraq action was still about four or five months down the line.

*Q: From September to March, right. But Khalilzad, I think, was a voice for invasion. We don’t really know exactly how he did that, why he did that, what was his own personal agenda. We know that the administration was putting a lot of credence in a very small number of people, who were kind of arbitrarily selected. There was Khalilzad and a few others. They were only listening to two or three people, which doesn’t sound like a good way to make policy, especially if you’re going to do military actions.*

WALSH: Right. So, we realized that we had to get Beers confirmed. We needed a boss. So, she came on board about two weeks later. In the interim, the House and the Senate approved 80 billion dollars for military response and whatever they call it – supplemental. We’d have weekly meetings of the \_\_\_\_\_. My instructions were, “Gin up the programs. Gin up ideas. Congress is never going to give us anything.”

We'd been living with a balanced budget for three years, which was really pretty nice because it gave us an idea of what was there and what we could spend. It was really much better than the usual reduction \_\_\_\_\_ and then spending money at the end of the year. Those three years were healthy \_\_\_\_\_. I said, "Congress is going to wake up tomorrow and say, 'Where did we leave the car? We've got to get a hold of that money right away.' So, in all of your discussions at the bureau level, you should be talking to your people about expanded IV's for Muslim leaders, Muslim students. We should be doing this. Get me \_\_\_\_\_. Whatever it takes. Whoever they are. Get me \_\_\_\_\_."

I remember Cynthia— What was her name? She was in AF?

*Q: Efird.*

WALSH: Efird, right. This was one of those mornings. She goes, "And what if we don't? Is that a threat?"

*Q: That sounds like Cynthia.*

WALSH: It was so contrary to my whole way of being. I said, "Well, yeah, what it means Cynthia is that if you don't come up— You've got some good ones. You've even got them in Rwanda. You've got them everywhere. You can find them in Africa. So, yeah, dig them out and get them up for IV's. Also, no, it's not a threat. It just means I won't be able to give you a lot of money. But if you do it, I will give you a lot of money. That's how it works." I was just operating under the way I always looked at it, where if I didn't come up with programs that said what they wanted me to say, I'd never get any money. So, I'd give them programs that say what they want to say, and I'll do what I can.

*Q: Well done.*

WALSH: I remember that this was just a shot right across the table, and the rest of the table just fell silent.

*Q: I can imagine it.*

WALSH: I just was like, "What do you mean by that, Cynthia?" So, there you go. Beers was coming in. Over at the White House, you had the president's former always Public Affairs woman. What was her name? She later became the R, I think. The Texan.

*Q: Tutwiler?*

WALSH: No, Tutwiler was ambassador to Morocco at this time. Let's see. I'll look her name up.

*Q: We'll get it later.*

WALSH: Then, also at ECA, we had an assistant secretary there from the Republican party out of New York, but more from the Rockefeller Republicans than from the Giuliani Republicans. She was a very New York person. She was at ECA. She was good. I think *Variety* or some big magazine did a piece on the three women leading the Public Affairs charge. It was sort of an interesting time there.

But as we waded through this, our first question was, what is our message? It was not necessarily in the hands of rational thinkers. I guess I was still thinking of things in terms of IV programs, training programs, and so on like that. In terms of message outreach, I was thinking we love everybody except those who blew up our house and so on. Of course, the 48 hours that it took, or the two weeks that it took, to conquer Afghanistan—

Everybody was afraid of us, at that time. They were like, “Look at what they did. That’s pretty cool.” So, messaging-wise, we were in pretty good shape. The world had incredible sympathy for the United States of America. The NATO alliance immediately invoked Article Five. “Whatever America wants us to do we will do, because you have been attacked.” It was incredibly positive. I can’t say how well it all seemed to be going. Then, it all got mucked up.

*Q: Yes, it did. Between then and March of '03, it went down, down, down, I remember. That was in terms of public opinion and other countries' willingness to go along with it. Uh oh. My battery— Wait.*

*Q: Now I'm recording again. Let's see. 9/11, Beers, the three women, the NSC, Khalilzad. I think things going down, in terms of public opinion and support for actions that came after Afghanistan, is where we were.*

WALSH: Yep. One thing that should have raised a flag for us was that two days before 9/11, I forget his name, but the fellow who was leading the fight against the Taliban in the Fergana Valley was assassinated by a suicide squad that purported to be TV interviewers from some Arabic station. When they started filming them, the camera blew up and blew up everybody there. That must have happened two or three days before.

I didn't sit in on the secretary's meeting. Armitage led it, but there were comments about that assassination. Nobody was seeing it as the preparation for a massive move by al-Qaeda. In the aftermath, everybody looked and said, “Hey, that was to get him out of the way, because his people would be the only people able to be helpful to us,” and in the end, they were. But we did nothing, if you remember, until Columbus Day, October 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup>. That was five weeks later.

*Q: You mean the Afghanistan operation?*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: Yeah, I thought it was about three weeks.*

WALSH: By that time, we had pretty much set up – mostly on the information side, but also on the program side---- because we were realizing how much money we were talking about. We were saying, “Hey, this could be a good deal.”

*Q: No, I get it. There was something good coming out of something terrible. Resources for Public Diplomacy are always good, and there are never enough. Whatever brings resources—*

WALSH: Yeah, it’s an ill win that blows no good.

*Q: So, there were resources. Charlotte Beers got confirmed. There was the action in Afghanistan. Suddenly, I’m thinking that this is such an important period that maybe in our next talk, we should get that whole period from 9/11 to March ’03.*

WALSH: That was a year and a half.

*Q: Yeah. That was a period of doubt, confusion, discord, and— It was an object lesson in how democracies react and maybe how they should react better during a crisis. I think this is important enough to get its own session. Does that sound okay?*

WALSH: Tomorrow at four.

*Q: Wait, I’m going to sign off. Did I ever sign on? This is Dan Whitman and Neal Walsh. It’s August 18<sup>th</sup>. Goodbye.*

*Q: We’re now recording. This is Dan Whitman and Neal Walsh talking on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020. We agreed that among other things, we would talk about the period between the military action in Afghanistan and the military action in Iraq. Let’s go into that. That was a very crucial and distressing period for everybody.*

WALSH: Now, in the days after 9/11, there were any number of meetings. As I mentioned yesterday, there was a big meeting of about 20 or 40 people at the NSC. That was chaired by Khalilzad. Generally, there were people there from military public affairs and psychological warfare. Then, there were people from the CIA and other organizations and so on. It was more or less determined that there would be a whole government approach to messaging and so on that would be coordinated from the White House.

*Q: This was two days after the attack?*

WALSH: Yeah, the initial meeting was 48 hours after the attack, and then over the next week or two, this thing got firmed up.

*Q: That’s pretty incredible, given the uncertainty, the doubts, the agony and anxiety. In 48 hours they’d figured out— They said there would be an interagency process. Do you believe that that actually did happen?*

WALSH: Well, it's like anything in that world. It was sort of fluid. Not everybody was showing all their cards and their predilections. Everybody had an opinion. So, all that had to be hammered out. The lead would be at the White House. For the international messaging, that would be the NSC.

*Q: Okay. So, was Khalilzad running this whole thing? Was he basically the leader, on that occasion?*

WALSH: Well, yes, for that particular meeting. I don't know. Condoleezza Rice was the advisor, so I don't know where she was sitting or what she was up to .. Then, in terms of what we were dealing with, there was obviously an NEA/South Asia issue. So, we went through those two bureaus. I don't believe the South Asian Bureau was even there yet. Was it? I have to admit that until all this happened, they really never paid much attention to South Asia. It was one of those things where it was like, don't go there.

*Q: It's interesting that the National Security advisor wasn't even there.*

WALSH: Not at that particular meeting. This wasn't a deputy's committee meeting or anything like that.

*Q: Well, there was a lot of stuff going on at once.*

WALSH: Yeah. So, that gradually came together. What you also have to remember is that in these first months after the attack, there was a very strong coming together where we all had to work together. So, there was a lot less bickering and backstabbing. All that is good in the sense that everybody was trying to get resources to do good things. So, that worked out pretty well. Eventually, we would have a weekly teleconference with DOD, us, and the NSC.

The NSC named a guy I had never met before, a colonel— I can't remember his name. He was an Army colonel who had worked in intelligence and psychological operations. Pretty much everything was going along well.. So, what was our idea? "If we take over Afghanistan, I guess we'll have to translate and print up a lot of copies of the Federalist Papers."

*Q: Yeah. Well, actually, who proposed that? Not DOD, right?*

WALSH: No. Years later, I came into a conflict in Kenya with them about printing background papers on democracy and the formulation of constitutions and so on like that for translation. Remember, they said they would give us personnel from their special forces and logical operations. When we'd find out we had these highly talented people and a lot of money allocated for guys who were doing designs for shoulder patches for various countries, we'd go, "Wait a minute. Let's do something here."

So, yeah, there was a lot of stuff like, "Let's go do this. Let's translate some books. Let's get things going." There was the creation of what was later called MEPI, the Middle East

Partnership Initiative, which sort of came up. It was probably anachronistic, but it was like, “We don’t care what you call it. Just give us the money and we’ll make it work.” That was held off for a couple of years before that thing really got rolling. Ms. Cheney became the driving force when she was the deputy assistant secretary in NEA. Liz Cheney.

*Q: I would love to come to a screeching halt on that issue, because I remember that she attended meetings that I went to – different types of meetings – and we suddenly realized that the vice president had a daughter who was a deputy assistant secretary. Woah. Now, she’s a representative in Wyoming. How do you remember Liz Cheney?*

WALSH: Positively.

*Q: She was very friendly, I must say.*

WALSH: She was very friendly. She returned phone calls and she was responsive to a lot of good ideas.

*Q: She was a DAS in NEA. What was her portfolio? What was she actually assigned to do there?*

WALSH: I don’t know. I know that she had a hand in MEPI, and that was good, because it was good to have somebody with her background shaking the money tree. Later on, a year from this time, there was in August or September 2002 an editorial in *The Economist* saying, “Yeah, given what this guy’s done and what he’s capable of, we think removing him from power is a good idea.”

So, I sent that to about 25 or 30 people, saying, “If we were going to have a message, some of the themes in this thing are of value.”

*Q: If I remember correctly, since that time, The Economist has said many times in its editorial that that position they took was a mistake.*

WALSH: Yes, they did, later on. But at that time, no, they were on board. Like I said, I sent that around to all the PDAS – probably 25 or 30 people. The only person who came back to me and said, “Thanks for sending this around; this is of value,” was Liz Cheney. I have to say, I don’t know whether I’m proud or ashamed of that. But she answered her phone, and she answered her mail.

But to get back to what we were doing, looking at what was happening and the money coming out and so on, this seemed like a good time. Really, my attitude was to get everybody out there, get some projects up, get IV programs, and so on. Additionally, we were looking at what we could do as we went along—

Now, one thing that stuck out to me was training. We had been absorbed, about 1,000 of us, into the Department of State. We had always relied on an A-100 course of our own,

and then our people would go into the A-100 course. But then we also relied on JOT (Junior Officer Trainee) training. People were assigned to these training assignments by who was a good mentor out at post. Some of your classic or lead posts generally had a JOT or two because their leadership was generally pretty damn good.

*Q: But we mainly lost that in 1999.*

WALSH: Exactly. Nothing was in place to fill it. So, the PD training bureau at FSI still had a number of FSN training programs which were pretty good, and it had a one or two week PAO program. That was it. They might have had a one week CAO (Cultural Affairs Officer) or IO program, but that was pretty ad hoc.

*Q: It was extremely thin gruel, yeah.*

WALSH: So, we said, “We really need a real program.” What did other people have? There was the political course, the econ officer six month course, the consular officer’s four or five month course, and all these other things, but there was no PD. We said, “How about that? How could that happen?”

So, we went to the Office of Personnel and said, “We really have to do this.”

Now, the Office of Personnel said, “You can do it, but you have to use your own money.”

Kathy Peterson was the director of FSI at that time. We approached her, and she said, “This is brilliant. I’ve been wondering and worrying about this.” So, that was there. We worked up a little taskforce. The woman who was running PD training at that time was very, very good. I’ve got to remember her name. Jesus, she was good. So, we got a couple hundred grand from Mrs. Beers out of the PD allotment, and we got this group together, and they started talking to people who were specialists in developing curriculum.

—and one of our former directors of USIA Personnel, Jeff \_\_\_\_\_ had left the Agency and had a public affairs training program for corporate executives. So, he and some other professional people, along with some people Mrs. Beers knew who did corporate communication training, they came in, and they developed a curriculum. Now, this took place over a period of six to nine months, maybe, but it was coming up in the next year. In fact, it was a year after 9/11, that next September. This was the next rotational series. We said, “Wow, this is coming along.”

So, this worked out very well with the curriculum thing. We were ready to do testing and get people into mandatory courses. They would have to take these courses if they were going to be CAOs or IOs or PAOs. The courses were— To be the PAO, you had to take the CAO and the IO course, as well as a two or three week PAO course. The same thing was true for the CAOs and the IOs. It was two or three weeks. I’m not too sure how long that training was.

So, as that went on, we came up with that. A year on, this is in 2002, we said, “Hey, we’re ready to roll on this.” Now, one of the interesting things there was that in her weekly reports to the Undersecretary for Management, M, she would note that preparations for the Public Diplomacy course were underway, etc. If a new curricula group came in, she would put it in her weekly report. He, at M, would mention in his weekly report to the secretary that the program to build Public Diplomacy training was underway.

*Q: This was not Pat Kennedy, was it?*

WALSH: No. M, at that time— Kennedy was A, Admin. M was a colonel, an associate of Powell. So, all of that was going on. So, in the summer of ’02, we approached Personnel. At that time, the Acting Director of Personnel was another Irishwoman. She had formerly been a deputy director at FSI. Later on, she was a director at FSI. The name will come to me. But I went to see her, and I said, “Okay, we’re ready. Now we need money for the training. We paid for the formulation, textbooks, course outlines, and so on, for the day-to-day class things.”

Beers was keen on this, too. The State Department’s attitude towards Public Diplomacy was that anybody could do this, you know? We’d always see how good they were at it, and say, “Maybe we could use a little background on this.” So, we said to her, “We’re ready for it, and we need money from Personnel.”

She said, “What sort of money?”

We said, “Per diem for the people who are taking the courses, what do you give to the econ officers and the political officers for their writing courses? What do you do for the consular officers? Doesn’t that all come out of Personnel?” Maybe it was Ruth something or other.

*Q: Oh, Ruth Davis?*

WALSH: No, Ruth Davis was the Black woman.

*Q: She was later.*

WALSH: No, this was contemporary. She wasn’t head of Personnel at that time. She was director of FSI. Her deputy, Ruth something, was the acting director of Personnel at this time. This got to be a bit of a problem. I had to point out to her that Kathy Peterson was really excited about this, and the undersecretary for management was really excited about this, and the undersecretary of Public Diplomacy was really excited about this, and the secretary was excited about this. If we had to pay for their per diem and for the teachers and for printing and working and everything, if that didn’t come out of FSI, it would have to come out of Personnel, too, because that’s what you do.

She said, “No, you’re going to have to take it out of PD.”

I said, “That would really soak a lot of money out of us. We don’t have that sort of operational money because in the past, we had it.” You know, Congress, with about 48 or 50 million dollars, had come to USIA. We used to call it dead money walking. That had come to State from unused allocations from USIA over the years. That money had been taken up by State. I don’t know where it went, but it went. Actually, it went on— Guess what?

*Q: I don’t know, supplementals?*

WALSH: Construction and classroom building over at FSI. A lot of it went over there. So, I said, “Look, this would be really bad, because the Foreign Affairs committee and the Foreign Affairs—” One’s the committee and the other one’s the whatever. The Foreign Relations committee was very interested in State’s stewardship of USIA money, particularly old friends of USIA. This was money controlled by \_\_\_\_\_ and other guys like that. Additionally, we wouldn’t want to disappoint the undersecretary of Public Diplomacy, the undersecretary of Management, and the secretary himself by saying we were going to put this off until next year so we could ask for more money.”

*Q: Oh, good one.*

WALSH: So, we got it.

*Q: Excellent. From HR, right?*

WALSH: From HR.

*Q: Excellent.*

WALSH: I put that down as one of the good things I had done.

*Q: Well, great. In telling the story, you keep using the first person plural. Was this you, Rick Ruth, and who else?*

WALSH: Well, a lot of it was between me and Ruth, as we had worked together before. It was one of those things in the aftermath of the consolidation that landed up in R’s office for whoever wanted to pick it up.

*Q: So, the team working on getting these resources, and which came up with the idea of mandatory training that would make PD comparable to the other cones, came from you and Rick Ruth?*

WALSH: Me, Rick Ruth, and the \_\_\_\_\_. They were all very much in favor of that.

*Q: But when it was time to talk to HR, that was you? Or you and Rick Ruth, maybe?*

WALSH: That was me.

*Q: Well, thank you very much. Well done.*

WALSH: Later on, when I was teaching at FSI and Ruth became the director there, one of the first things she asked was, “What’s Neal Walsh still doing here?” So, as a matter of fact, that was about when I went over and saw you in order to get my file out of A Bureau. All my \_\_\_\_\_ had disappeared from A Bureau. Kennedy had moved on. Everything was going differently. I was like, “Time for me to get out of here.” So, there was that.

Then, let’s go back to September, October, November with the assault on the Taliban. We did not have too many bad stories. Those were good stories. That was a good thing to keep on rolling with the guys on horseback. We had a film where the Taliban executed women in the stadium and so on. It was really pushing on an open door in a lot of ways, except for certain people who have been popping up for the last 20 years now. We were saying, “What these guys did, that was not good.” We had Karzai, who looked like a fine democrat. He’d been running a restaurant in Baltimore for a long time.

*Q: Little did we know.*

WALSH: Well, he was the lesser of a lot of evils, like Dostum and other guys that we had to deal with. You had Dostum. We had Dostum going around packing Taliban prisoners into freight vans. Sometimes they got cooked. Sometimes they made it to the prison. Still, it was just really bad taste.

It was like, okay, how do we handle the prisoners? A number of issues came up on the prisoners’ list here. What do we do with them? Where do we put them? Just on the side, we would get called into meetings where this was being discussed. You would think— Once again, you were thinking you were in a Monty Python movie.

“We had all these prisoners, but what are we going to do with them?”

“We’re going to put them away.”

“Well, where are we going to put them away?”

“Well, we don’t want them to have access to U.S. rights. We don’t want them to come under U.S. jurisdiction.”

*Q: They were prisoners of war, I guess.*

WALSH: Well, they were prisoners of war, but— They were horrible people. So, we have to find a place where we have sovereignty.

*Q: Sounds like Guantanamo, to me.*

WALSH: Well, there was Guam, because their status, at that time, was a little bit iffy. Some places in the South Pacific, then, too, and then Guantanamo. One of my colleagues was down in the counsel's office, and his specialty was the laws of armed conflict. When he told me this, I was listening to him and thinking, this sounds like something out of a bad movie or a comedy or something like this. But indeed, it happened.

I think it might have been in November, or later on in December, when I got a phone call. It was \_\_\_\_\_ calling me from the National Security Council. He used a phrase that I had read about, but I had never had it used with me. He said, "People here are very surprised that the secretary has not supported the president in terms of the disposition of the prisoners that are a danger to the United States."

Right. Now, I had to say, "Well, here's the deal. There are dozens of people over at— Now, the president has spoken, and I think that's a good thing, but there are dozens of people at Justice, Defense, and right here in this building whose specialty is determining how we will treat these people. There are laws, regulations, and reciprocities. If we don't do it the right way, what will happen to our guys? So, until that is all worked out" – and there had been off-site meetings and all sorts of meetings about this issue—

The president had said, "We're going to put them away for a long time."

I said, "\_\_\_\_\_, you're just giving me a hard time because you're upset about the VOA editorials." His brother-in-law was chief of that office. I said, "You're just getting a lot of complaints from your brother-in-law."

He said, "Ex-brother-in-law, Neal."

I said, "Oh, sorry about that. I didn't know. You guys should send out announcements about that." So, I chatted with him a little bit back and forth, saying we would wait, see how it develops. But the NSC's position hadn't come out yet; I hadn't seen a decision memo for the secretary or anything. So, I hung up.

About half an hour or an hour later, I got a call from the deputy secretary of State. He said, "I have had a phone call from someone in the White House who says that you were very impertinent." It was something like that.

*Q: Flippant, I guess. Was this Armitage calling you?*

WALSH: Yes. I said, "I'm very sorry, but this is an issue. What's the Public Affairs stance on the prisoners? We do not have a stance at this time. I will send an email to Richard to let him know that this is a big deal."

He said, "Well, just keep up the good work."

*Q: Oh! I'm very amazed that the National Security Council, if it had trouble with the secretary of State, would call R instead of calling the front office of the State Department. Why would they call R?*

WALSH: I don't even know if they knew R was in place yet.

*Q: But Elliott Abrams knew you personally? Doesn't that seem like a misplaced call?*

WALSH: Yep.

*Q: He should have called the front office of the State Department, right?*

WALSH: Well, not the front office. Maybe the front office for Public Affairs.

*Q: But his complaint was about the secretary of State, right?*

WALSH: Well, it was more that State had not said anything of the sort. We were not supporting.

*Q: Okay. So, their issue really was with R, in that case, with the messaging, I guess. Okay. Very weird. Had you dealt with Abrams previously? I guess you probably did.*

WALSH: Distantly.

*Q: He was mainly WHA, right? And you were not a WHA (Western Hemisphere) person?*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: Okay. He's still around right now. He's doing Venezuela and Libya or something like that.*

WALSH: God knows.

*Q: He keeps popping up. He's like an evergreen.*

WALSH: Additionally, another thing that came up with the new organization and the absorption of USIA into State was that VOA, its so-called Voices – Radio Free Europe, Radio Free Asia, and Radio Marti in Cuba – became independent. However, they were run by a board of directors. BBG (Broadcasting Board of Governors). The secretary was to be on that board of directors. But the secretary does not have time for monthly meetings with the board of directors. So, I became the de facto representative.

*Q: Neal Walsh! Let that be recorded in history. So, you stood in for the secretary on BBG matters. Okay. Well, what are your recollections of BBG? It's now USAGM (United States Agency for Global Media), and it's structured differently, but did BBG— It administered VOA and the surrogates, right? But it did not make policy? Is that correct?*

WALSH: Well, yeah. Policy was reflected in the editorials.

*Q: But that was like five minutes a day. So, there was all the rest of this stuff. Why was everybody in later years so disgruntled with BBG, including Hillary Clinton, who said that it was dysfunctional? Why were they so angry at BBG? I never understood that.*

WALSH: Well, I'll tell you. That was one of the things there that I explained to the secretary at one time, and to other senior people and to Mrs. Beers. There it is, off doing its own business, but it's talking to millions of people. It also has very good friends on the Hill. Therefore, if and when there is a contretemps or disagreement— Additionally, many of their journalists are powerful in their indigenous political organizations. It's a creative organization, also. So, something always comes up that is viewed as a problem.

*Q: Yeah. But why would they blame BBG instead of the radio station?*

WALSH: What do you mean by blaming BBG?

*Q: Well, in later years— This was probably not true in '02 and '03, but when Hillary Clinton was secretary of State, when she left, she said, "BBG is in shambles. It should be taken apart." I don't get it. Weren't they kind of a pro forma organization?*

WALSH: To a great extent, yes.

*Q: I guess the question is how do you remember those meetings? What were the topics?*

WALSH: A major topic at that time was a plan to replace VOA Arabic with a Middle East broadcasting group.

*Q: Right. I guess that it was six of one, a half dozen of the other.*

WALSH: That was pretty much my attitude.

*Q: They just changed the name of it, right?*

WALSH: Well, there was also its content. The Arabic program was very much politics and culture and very serious sort of stuff.

*Q: Right. There was also a second station, which was mainly music, right?*

WALSH: Exactly.

*Q: That's the one the taxi drivers all listened to.*

WALSH: Exactly. When that went on, the numbers were just immense. It had its supporters on the BBG board. Let's see. Ted was a former chief of staff to Biden. He was

a member of the board. There was a string of radio stations. He was from California. He was just pure Hollywood. When he smiled, you'd think there was a switch in the back of his mouth that would switch on his teeth. It was like, woah. This guy was something else. He was great.

There was the Republican lobbyist that used to be called the 101<sup>st</sup> senator. Then, there were directors of various things. There was the VOA director, the director of Radio Free Asia, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Marti, of course.

*Q: So, we can divine what the authority of BBG was if we can look at some of the decisions they made. Was it BBG that created this new Arabic service?*

WALSH: Yes. That's how to get change within a really \_\_\_\_\_ organization. That was very hard to do. Norm Pattiz was the name of the guy. I think he was a Democratic Clinton appointee.

*Q: Yeah, because there are supposed to be four plus four plus on, or something like that, right?*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: Well, that's very interesting. So, were there regular monthly meetings? Did people have to fly in from California or wherever?*

WALSH: Yes, they would fly in or phone in to the meetings. I would send the agenda to the secretary and say, "Here's what they're going to talk about. Here's our position. Agree or disagree?"

*Q: But then you were given pretty much free rein to— Having written the memo, you would go and advocate on behalf of the front office.*

WALSH: Yeah. The only time we really had to get the secretary involved in anything was on what would be a minor personnel issue, but one that had come up in the past when I had been deputy director in AF and so on like this. That is that the ambassador's responsibility is for all USG employees in the country – their lives, their security, and so on. Sometimes, we'd have problems.

In West Africa, I remember that when the Ivory Coast devolved into civil war, since it was a relatively stable and affluent place, we had a VOA francophone correspondent based there. He was traveling throughout the region. The ambassador put in a complaint that the guy was traveling all over the region, not telling him when he was moving or where he was going and so on like that. If he got killed, we'd be liable.

*Q: Actually, we wouldn't, because the VOA people should have traveled on blue passports as journalists. I don't know though. That's a conflict that came up over and over again.*

WALSH: It did. Usually, in AF, we could solve that problem by saying, “Okay, go to Ghana, rent a hotel room, open your office there. Since you won’t be on that ambassador’s list of USG employees, you can go anywhere you want.”

The ambassador in Ghana would say, “Sure, no problem.”

But obviously, things were getting a lot dicier, so you had, say, a VOA correspondent in Pakistan. You had language people there. They were traveling all over the region. Nancy Powell was the ambassador. She’s not one to wink at regulation. So, she said, “Hey, this has got to be fixed.”

I said, “Nancy, please. Come on. If he dies, I’ll pay for the funeral.” But we had to start running it up. This was the one time the secretary got involved. Everybody got in on it – the lawyers, the regional bureaus, R, and everybody got together. The paperwork in VOA was about an inch and a half thick.

“—here’s the decision to make. You and the director of VOA have to make an agreement here.” So, the director of VOA came over, and they had a meeting and discussed it. They reached an agreement where VOA correspondents would not be under the ambassador, even if they were getting their salary from us. They would be an exception to the ambassador’s Status of Forces agreement.

*Q: Actually, I’ve read the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) because of a recent issue that I had in the field. The MOU is very detailed. It actually leaves quite a few questions unanswered. For example, is an administrator of VOA a journalist or a USG official? That MOU never tackles that issue. Anyway, the problems keep coming.*

WALSH: I’m sorry for the absence, but we were talking about journalists, at that time. We didn’t even think about administrators.

*Q: Yeah. This has come up, actually, with a recent VOA director who was in the field, both as a journalist and as a director. There were terrible problems that came out of that. That didn’t have anything to do with that individual, but there were problems. Anyway, the point is that this is an unresolved question. There was a very detailed MOU, I think at the time you were describing, which was a good try but did not really answer all the questions.*

WALSH: A lot of blood, sweat, tears and typing went into that thing. It was background memos for everybody. Having talked to both the VOA director, and the ambassador, and the secretary, I was sitting there watching this go back and forth and going to meetings with lawyers. You go to meetings with lawyers, and what do they say? “No.”

The fear of our lawyers was that if we caved on this, it would be seen as a diminishment of executive control. The vice president’s lawyer, who was a big deal on this sort of thing, might come back and kick it all back into the ground.

*Q: Did you have a personal opinion about VOA journalists coming under chief of mission authority? What were you told to advocate?*

WALSH: That they should not be under chief of mission authority.

*Q: And this was the secretary of State telling you this?*

WALSH: Well, he wasn't telling me this. This was an issue he never even thought of. But he realized they would have to go into danger if they were to do their job. They could be subject to kidnapping, and they could be targets.

*Q: The reason I'm interested is that it seems that it's counterintuitive that the front office of the State Department would advocate VOA journalists not being under COM (Chief of Mission) authority. The battles that I've seen had to do with the State Department officials – the DCMs, the ambassadors – wanting to control VOA. So, I'm surprised to hear that the front office, at that time, really saw VOA journalists as independent of the embassies. For our little world, that's a very important issue.*

WALSH: Yeah, 20 years ago, it was, and the front office said, "No, they should not be under chief of mission authority or responsibility."

*Q: Most interesting. I thought that that impetus came from VOA, not from State, but you're clearing up the record on that.*

WALSH: Maybe it was because I had spent time and effort with that issue before myself, as deputy director of AF, but this was a pain in the ass issue, and it wasn't worth the time and effort that we were putting into it.

*Q: Until somebody gets into trouble.*

WALSH: Well, if they get into trouble, again, that's part of the job.

*Q: Very good point.*

WALSH: Would they be more in danger, or would they realize that they were in more danger than the AP (Associated Press) correspondent? So, there it goes.

*Q: Right. They would argue that they were identical to the AP correspondent, but they weren't really. They were paid by Uncle Sam.*

WALSH: There it is. But the whole thing was, you know, this ate up more time and effort than it was worth, so we were like, "Let's get rid of it." That was my feeling about it. I think both the director of VOA and the secretary of State agreed. As a matter of fact, some of the objections that came up were from our lawyers, who were worried about what OVP (Office of the Vice President) or the Office of the President would say. They

were scared of those lawyers, and would see this as, once again, an abdication of authority.

*Q: Right. This may seem arcane to some readers, but it's very important to people dealing with—*

WALSH: To the fourth level, down. Also, good bureaucrats who do not wish to get tagged. If you have an ambassador or a DCM who's going to a country where there's a VOA or RFE (Radio Free Europe) or RFA (Radio Free Asia), nowadays, there will be a correspondent, and you have to advise them to get professional insurance just in case he gets knocked off. You're going to have to hire a lawyer. But, yeah, down in the bowels, this is kind of an important thing.

*Q: Yes. Especially with journalists getting into bad situations everywhere in the world. It's not just theoretical, unfortunately.*

WALSH: Yeah. You can see it with, like, Lukashenko right now. Actually, broadcasts in Russian and Ukrainian came up as a big deal later on in my tenure there. But the other thing we had that worked out with VOA was the world of international broadcasting, which is a rather small one. A company out in California was manufacturing two 50,000 watt AM broadcasting things, which are first, not cheap, and second, being made for someone. But 50,000 watts is a lot more than anybody is authorized to use. I don't know if you ever knew of KBW in Buffalo. You'd have some stations that were chartered, back in the 1920s and '30s, when you needed 50,000 watts to broadcast. They'd come out at night and cover half the country. So, the engineers at VOA just let us know that these things were being manufactured. But who were they being manufactured for?

*Q: Foreign buyers, perhaps?*

WALSH: No! American buyers. They were making these for the United States government.

*Q: Oh, how very interesting.*

WALSH: How fascinating. So, we take over Afghanistan. We don't have a radio station to broadcast our good intentions to the people of Afghanistan. So, we inform Mr. Armitage, Deputy Secretary Armitage, that there is a possibility of getting a 50,000 watt AM broadcast facility. That would be very helpful. So, a number of documents go around, and we ask if he might want to intervene and talk to somebody about getting something like that. He figures it's a lot cheaper to go get one from somebody else than to have us build one, right? So, he got it. I don't know how he got it. He's a good arm-twister. So, we got it. The first nationwide broadcaster for Afghanistan was put up in Kabul.

*Q: Fantastic. So, the company that was making these, who did they think the client was going to be?*

WALSH: The engineers talked to one another. and they were talking to us because we had one of these over there. Then they say, “Neal, do you know that this thing is really going somewhere?” It’s like, wait a minute, I could use one of those. And we got it. That was great. We worked out an agreement with the Afghanistan government to get it licensed, get it set up. We would use it for X number of hours.

*Q: Fantastic.*

WALSH: I imagine that it’s still broadcasting 20 years later.

*Q: Remarkable. I see. You’ve mentioned Armitage three or four times. I guess you talked to him all the time.*

WALSH: Not all the time, but yeah.

*Q: I mean, he had a lot going on. He was—*

WALSH: He was into everything. He was Powell’s best friend.

*Q: Yeah. He was very loyal to Powell. He was a hard worker. He was blunt but a gentleman. It must have been kind of exhilarating, working around Armitage. He was a funny guy. He had a sense of humor, I think.*

WALSH: It was exhilarating to work among all these people, because they were all very upfront, all very talented, and very, very dynamic.

*Q: Yeah. Good.*

WALSH: Our relationship was much more positive than with Elliott Abrams

*Q: Well, there’s hardly anybody who gets along easily with Elliott. He’s kind of a force of his own. Plus, at that time, he was not State; he was NSC. So, little did I know that when we got into this period between the Afghanistan conflict and Iraq, there would be so much interesting material on BBG, the affiliates, and the surrogates. That was a big part of what Public Diplomacy had to suddenly turn into following the 9/11 attacks. I think we’re not even— We have lots more to talk about regarding that whole period between October ’02 and March ’03. It’s a crucial period.*

WALSH: That’s a good period too. But in terms of September ’01 to June ’02—

*Q: I meant October ’01 to March ’03, yeah.*

WALSH: Right. But you’ve also got to remember that here, I am ignorant. There are two things, in terms of my ignorance. One, as I said, I’d never worked in the building before, so I had no experience with how to do things. Second, a lot of this was happening in an

area of the world that I'd just never dealt with. I never knew what a Uyghur was. Suddenly, they were important, and we had to get the broadcasts straight to Uyghur-land. What the heck was going on there? Who were they? You just got this picture. It was like the Land of Oz or something.

*Q: So, we could say you had to be a quick study, and you were.*

WALSH: So, I'd say that there were huge gaps in my ability to understand what was happening. I would try to do my best, you know?

*Q: Well, your job, I guess, as it evolved was to get resources for PD to deal with this sudden crisis, and you did so.*

WALSH: We did.

*Q: Well, great. Let's see. I think I'll sign off for the recorder. It's Dan Whitman and Neal Walsh. It's August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Goodbye for now.*

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*Q: This is Neal Walsh and Dan Whitman, and I think it's August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020. We're picking up from last time.*

WALSH: Let's go back to 9/11. Now, in a sense, what happened then was that it was your regular programming cycles. First, we were looking for money, and we were looking at money from the military and the supplemental 80 million dollars the Congress voted on for the war on terror, as it was beginning to be called. There was also an increased tempo of operations as we reached out to the world to explain the situation we were in, and additionally to try to reach out to audiences who may have sympathized or been pleased to see the United States get a black eye, or who just did not understand the viciousness or hatred that al-Qaeda had for the United States.

Once again, they justified the attacks on the fact that Saudi Arabia had opened its gates to infidel military occupation, you might say, or cooperation. These people were on the soil of the holy city. So, that was a very multifaceted messaging program. That had online daily and weekly output, commentary, from serious people in the United States, following the news of positive outreach of American communities to Muslim communities here in the United States.

There were statements of sympathy and statements of support from the American and European Muslim communities, trying to make sure that this did not start looking like a religious war between the United States and Muslim communities. We understood how different they were, and our posts also understood how different they were. Be it the Philippines, Indonesia, India, Rwanda, even the PAOs and ambassadors and Americans in almost all those countries had some outreach to the Muslim community. We needed to expand that a hundred fold.

*Q: Yes. These days, our lives are completely enveloped in social media. Back in the 9/11 period, social media was in its infancy. What was the talk of— Tell us about the context. Social media was kind of a novelty, 20 years ago. It was not yet commonplace. Didn't this make it challenging to figure out where the audience was and how to reach them?*

WALSH: Well, it was, and it wasn't. First off, the PD people, if you wish to use that term, were the advance people for social media within the Department of State. I think our experience, particularly after 9/11, mirrored thousands of other organizations, be they huge corporations, small artists like my wife who had a webpage, or anything like that. At that time, it was very much like, let a thousand flowers bloom, but be very careful what you do. So, people started doing a lot of programming and things on social media. Additionally, they were setting up.

Then, we realized – not immediately, obviously, because we're the government and it takes a couple of months to realize these things – that yes, we had to have an embassy webpage and a public outreach webpage. Some places had it. Some places were quite active. I had one in Geneva. We had a Web Master and we had two websites. So, here we are, four years later— Actually, it was only two years later. We were trying to get everybody on board to do this. There was a lot of wrangling that I heard as to what the best organization was. How do we do this? How do we set these things up? That was both administrative and, in a certain way, also political. Once we got content, we had to watch out for copyright, and the question was, how do we do this?

So, that was a fascinating thing to do. Additionally, we began having weekly or every other day meetings with the Bureaus, asking, "What are you doing in your region?" and so on like that, so that we could get a sense to the front office of what we were doing at that time. One of the important things was making sure that you have both lateral and vertical communications, that you know what people are doing and see ideas in one post and go use them.

*Q: So, there must have been a lot of trial and error, because this was kind of in its infancy. As I remember, the impetus kind of went back and forth between IIP and the posts. They were asking posts to create websites, and then they realized that not all posts had the capacity to do that, so we were going to centralize it. There was a lot of experimentation, wasn't there?*

WALSH: Yes, there was. As I said, this was a period of letting a thousand flowers bloom. Hey, I've got to get off for five minutes and call another guy.

*Q: That's good.*

*Q: We are on. So, we were talking about trial and error in this kind of infancy stage of social media with the demands going back and forth between IIP and the posts. So, you were involved in actually getting these things started. Do I remember that Twitter was also involved, or did that come later?*

WALSH: That must have come later, because that was not part of my awareness, at that time.

*Q: That sounds right.*

WALSH: I did not run into Twitter, in terms of organizational or State Department social media, until 2012 actually. It was 2012 or 2011. Then, there, I remember talking to various ambassadors to say, “Well, who clears your message?”

*Q: Big question.*

WALSH: I got these guys saying, “Oh, I do it myself. No problem.”

*Q: Well, actually, that is an issue that’s always intrigued me. How is it that a government can communicate a policy if the communications go out uncleared at the whimsy of an individual, whether it’s an ambassador, a PAO, or someone else? I see that as really problematic. What do you see?*

WALSH: Going forward 10 years, I was working in EUR. Now, they had a brilliant young guy who was their social media guy, but this was also a bit of a headache for him. We didn’t have anything like a centralized policy guide. We didn’t have a message for the day. The Chinese do that. “The message of the day is—” But we did not. I preferred to deal with, thinking of myself in my olden days as an information officer. You know, there were some ambassadors at that time, like the ambassador to NATO, who didn’t do Twitter.

*Q: Nick Burns, right?*

WALSH: No, it wasn’t Burns, at that time. It was a former general. Then, down in OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) territory, the guy was Twittering all the time.

*Q: Okay. So, no uniformity of style or content. I’ve always found that really puzzling. How can that work in communicating a policy? The policy is supposed to be a consensus process within the USG. Doesn’t this go completely against that?*

WALSH: Yep. I imagine that if this administration is not reelected, there will be a general, thoughtful discussion of how we are going to do this.

*Q: That was always a kind of muted question from the very beginning. I remember Margaret Tutwiler telling COMs and PAOs, one day, “Tweet now and ask forgiveness later.” It sticks in my memory because it seemed odd.*

WALSH: That is very un-Margaret.

*Q: Yeah. I don't know if she might have regretted saying that later, but she definitely made that point very strongly. I think it was '07, '08, something like that.*

WALSH: Okay. Let's get back to 2001 and '02. Frankly, once the absolute shock of the events of 9/11 had sort of sunk in, and we realized how universally this was going to change things – there was going to be a new normal, after that – we had to be very agile and in step with other organizations. So, we were looking at a whole of government approach. So, we would be having not only almost daily meetings of the \_\_\_\_, but also weekly video conferences with the NSC, DOD, and others.

*Q: Agility is not the first word that comes to mind when thinking of bureaucracies and the State Department. What was the degree of tension between needing immediate and current agility and the institutional caution of that bureaucracy?*

WALSH: Well, in terms of agility, I would say that within weeks or days – within two weeks – of 9/11, embassies were coming in with suggestions as to communities where they could expand their outreach to Muslims. This was in France, Germany, England, Burkina Faso, anywhere. How do we reach out? Ambassadors were making calls on prominent Muslims, and we went into—

Here we are, 20 years later, but I have to say that when I was serving in semi-Muslim communities, like Cameroon, and in Germany— That doesn't sound semi-Muslim, but there is a Muslim community. There were also prominent Muslims in Geneva. We never did an Eid dinner or a break your fast dinner or so on like that. Within months of 9/11, this was de rigeur.

*Q: Yes. A colleague of ours once said, "Why should we be doing Eid dinners? They should be inviting us."*

WALSH: Well, now you are, two decades on. You have Muslim communities including American ambassadors, American diplomats, and so on like that. That's just like in Christian or semi-Christian countries. We added the Muslims to our regular outreach.

*Q: Well, Eid was never regular on the part of U.S. diplomacy. It was an innovation after 9/11.*

WALSH: That's what I mean. A normal stop for an American ambassador overseas would be with the Vatican nuncio. A normal stop if you were traveling would be a regional bishop, be it Lutheran and so on like this, or a cardinal. These are influential people. We had been totally blind to the influence of Muslim preachers.

*Q: Imams, yes. So, this is quite an amazing circumstance. Suddenly, you are in a key, central position at one of the crises we've ever had. It sounds as if you flourished in this. You came up with immediate ways of getting more funding, but not just for the sake of money, but also to have meaningful programming.*

WALSH: It was meaningful programming with an audience we had not paid a great deal of attention to before. Once again, in Cameroon and others, we did indeed work with Muslim institutions and so on, because they were there, and they were influential. But they weren't treated as a specific community. In the Middle East, of course, people knew all this stuff, but we didn't.

*Q: Was it correct, in retrospect, to treat them as a community rather than just as citizens of different countries? In some cases, they were annoyed or embarrassed to be approached as Muslims rather than as citizens of their countries.*

WALSH: Well, that's a six of one, half dozen of another problem. We could approach them either way and enhance our image by doing so.

*Q: Who were the individuals leading these innovations? Charlotte Beers and who else?*

WALSH: Well, you had Charlotte Beers. You also had— My goodness, who was over at IIP? What it came down to for us, at that time, was Joe Johnson at IIP, who was a big guy on social media and electronic outreach. Barry Fulton, too. We hired Chris Ross, former ambassador to Syria, and he had been a USIA guy who had worked in NEA and had become ambassador. I think he was ambassador both to Algeria and to Syria. He spoke fluent Arabic. He was a very experienced guy.

*Q: Right, he was keyed in.*

WALSH: So, we reached out to him. He was retired, and we hired him.

*Q: So, there was kind of an ad hoc group of those who, on the one hand, had some understanding of the cultures, and on the other hand, those who were realizing how you could use the Internet and social media to convey messages. This was done in a big hurry. I suppose Charlotte Beers was cracking the whip and making these things happen.*

WALSH: We were all like, "Get me an imam!" We realized that these are communities that we should be dealing with and that we had not been dealing with, outside of NEA.

*Q: How long did it take to get this concept in place? What was the way that R had of getting posts to buy into this new structure?*

WALSH: Well, first off, we would just communicate with all of the posts through their regional offices and say, "This is a national crisis. We have to reach out with our message to these communities." People reacted to that right away.

With the Europeans, I think Paris led, and then, of course, we had the Balkans and so on like this. So, you had some driving countries there that appreciated what we were doing. Some of the others, like Poland or Scandinavian countries and so on, weren't really attuned, but they would put out information about what we were doing in other countries.

*Q: When you say countries, I guess you're talking about our colleagues in those embassies, right?*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: You said that Paris stood out, and some of the Scandinavian countries—*

WALSH: They did not, because they didn't have much of a Muslim community.

*Q: They did in some cases. Of course, now those communities are quite significant, some years later, because of refugees and immigration and asylum seekers.*

WALSH: Right. But at that time, Germany was involved because of the big Turkish community and the refugee community. France was involved because of the refugee community and immigrants. England was the same thing, with immigrants from India and other places. So, you had posts that were sensitive to it. The NEA posts, obviously, had programs in waiting, IVs in waiting. To them, it was like, "Hey, this is what we can do."

*Q: So, what was your sense of the general degree of ability and cooperation in this brand new endeavor?*

WALSH: There was enthusiasm and unity, but there were some glitches. At one time—I think his name was White. The colonel over at NSC, who was the international messaging director, in one of the video conferences—We'd go through a whole thing: "This is what's happening here, this is what's happening there. "Here's this." The three or four person node over in DOD—as a matter of fact, their director was a brigadier general who had been in the War College with me—they were very excited. They saw very much to our book translations and so on. They were pretty good.

But in one of these meetings, the guy from NSC said, "We're having a great deal of trouble with the Hezbollah radio. They're advocating violence and so on. I think we have to look at a kinetic policy with them."

This guy speaks before his brain is engaged. I just said, "What the heck are you on? Are you out of your mind? *Hezbollah*? Last time I looked, they haven't done anything to us since the '84 bombing. That was terrible, but all their efforts are empty. They're not anti-U.S. They are, but only as spillover. You're talking about blowing them up? Guys. That just makes it a lot worse."

Then, I realized that this guy who was yelling and gesticulating on the TV monitor was me.

*Q: So, let me guess, that didn't go down extremely well with DOD and NSC?*

WALSH: DOD understood it. NSC did not.

*Q: That's interesting, because DOD used kinetics.*

WALSH: There were no more calls for kinetic activity against radio stations.

*Q: Interesting. So, DOD—which is one of the agencies that does kinetics—was the first to understand that this was not a good thing. Interfacing between DOD, NSC, and the Department of State: how did it go?*

WALSH: Oh, we'll talk about this offline. In NEA, Matt \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ were there, and I think our African person— It was either Hovanec or Efird. They came and said, "Hey, thanks for saying that, man. This gets a little crazy." So, yeah, I was kind of pleased that my colleagues felt the same way I did about it. But that gives you an idea of just how— There's a Dr. Strangelove and a Monty Python approach to these things.

*Q: Right, and you never know where it's coming from. It could be NSC, DOD, or Department of State, or anything.*

*Q: So—*

WALSH: So, that was it. That period lasted, really, right up until spring of 2002. I thought we were getting monthly remembrance ceremonies for 9/11. It was like, are we going to have every week?

*Q: Actually, that reminds me that as you said in the last interview, there seemed to be universal support for the United States. There were all the famous French headlines and all that. We also know that that did not last even as long as a year. At what point did it turn completely opposite?*

WALSH: Well, this is totally subjective, but everybody was talking about national unity and how we were getting global support and so on. I don't know if you remember this, but there was a CD (compact disc) that had been lost or left on a bench or whatever – maybe leaked – in Lafayette Park. It was a presentation from Carl Rove to the inner circle. It said, more or less, that we could build on this to create a Republican majority for years to come.

*Q: Oh, no, I don't remember that. Oh my gosh.*

WALSH: This is in my mind. I don't know. But I have to admit, that was when I started to get a little bit like, "Hey, this is not as universally supported as I thought."

*Q: Yeah. I was thinking about other countries outside of the U.S., but no, I don't remember that Rove thing. I think that in the lead-up to the Iraq action, March '03, you could say that in October, November, December of '02, that's a time when world opinion went very much against the U.S. What was going on? Why did so much sympathy turn to antipathy within such a short time?*

WALSH: Well, I think that one, we, as a nation, became quite hubristic after the seemingly perfect Afghan War. If we could do that, so many thousands of miles from our homeland, then we could do anything. That really did— A hubris really did sort of come up. Just weeks before 9/11, there had been a column, I think, in the *Washington Post* talking about how people in the Pentagon were depressed to have— Goodness, who was their secretary of Defense?

*Q: Rumsfeld?*

WALSH: Rumsfeld. He was such a micromanager, an arrogant guy. We, at State, were lucky to have Colin Powell. Then, Rumsfeld, I have to say, did the right thing on 9/11. He went right down to the area of the Pentagon that had been bombed and helped carry wounded people out. He did the right things and said the right things. He was still very arrogant.

Then, you had this sort of thing that harkens back to the late 1980s, early 1990s – '92, really – and that was the Pentagon's idea of national defense. I forget what they call it. It was the National Defense Review or whatever. That was put together. The last one, under Cheney, really didn't get released, because it was pretty much— Remember, this is post-Gulf War. It was basically saying, this is now a unipolar world. As a matter of fact, that did not get distributed, but I know it ran into a wall. Scowcroft and others just said, "Hey, this is not what we're going to do with our New World Order. It's not one we're going to be in."

*Q: Yes. There was the famous '02 document, the National Security Strategy, where Condoleezza Rice was talking— Am I getting this right? She was talking about preemptive war. I think it was the National Security Strategy.*

WALSH: That could have come up.

*Q: That would have been at about the same time. It was very controversial. The first thing President Obama did six years later was to go in the opposite direction and say no to preemptive war. So, these documents— Well, tell us what these documents were worth. Who reads them? Who follows them? The people who sign them, like the president of the United States, don't write them; they just sign off on them. Are they worth anything, these national security documents and these QDRs (Quadrennial Defense Reviews) and QDDRs (Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Reviews)?*

WALSH: Well, yeah. These are things that people reach back to use to justify what they're doing today.

*Q: Okay.*

WALSH: Think of Condoleezza Rice. I think she was secretary of State when this happened later on, but in the lead-up to Iraq, the thought was, “I don’t want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud.” That was one of her points.

*Q: That was a very misguided statement. She was talking about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.*

WALSH: Well, in the post-Iraq period— I don’t know whether she was still NSC or was the secretary of State, but part of bringing democracy to the Middle East was having elections. The Palestinians were forced into having elections.

*Q: And we didn’t like the results.*

WALSH: We did not like the results. They split, right? Hezbollah or whatever took over the \_\_\_ or whatever. The old corrupt guys, the old school guys, took over the occupied— We saw the tension, and she said, “Oh, these are the birth pains of the new world.”

*Q: That’s a good quote.*

WALSH: You just have to say, “Wait a minute, what were these guys smoking?”

*Q: These guys who promoted democracy, you mean? Those guys?*

WALSH: Well, in a sense, all of your regional specialists said that the Palestinians were in no shape to have an election that year. They were like, “What are these guys smoking?” The ones who advocated for the Iraq War and for the Palestinian elections were just so removed from reality. It was incredible.

*Q: This is also subjective. What I think I remember of 2002 – I was in Washington – I remember there was a general astonishment that invading Iraq would even be a question— People are usually very careful what they say on elevators, but they were saying, “This is crazy!” Is that how you remember it?*

WALSH: Absolutely.

*Q: Everybody was in favor of us, and then everybody was opposed to us.*

WALSH: In November of 2002 we got a letter on a government of Niger letterhead discussing yellow cake. They were talking about volumes of yellow cake, and Niger was a small country. Additionally, the French monitor that mine.

Then there was a small node in DIA, saying, “Hey, this is dangerous.”

*Q: We know that Colin Powell knew that.*

WALSH: Exactly. When Powell got his first batch of information from the intelligence community to prepare for the speech, it was practically the same stuff we had gotten in November four months earlier. He and Larry went over to the CIA, settled down over there, and said, “We need better stuff than this.”

*Q: We don't know what really happened during those 72 hours that he lived at the CIA. In his autobiography, he said something like, “I regret—” Any comment, Neal?*

WALSH: They suspected and thought that the material they had was very thin. But I do believe in my heart, to a certain extent, that Powell believed some of it.

*Q: I guess only he knows. Something happened during those 72 hours that he lived and slept at the CIA.*

WALSH: A lot of my colleagues said he should have resigned. If he had resigned, perhaps he would have stopped that war. It took me a couple of years to come to that conclusion.

I do not know a person working in NEA at that time who thought the goals of the invasion were sensible.

*Q: That's how I remember it also. Do we know— Was it Rumsfeld, Cheney, Bush? Who really was behind giving green lights on everything?*

WALSH: This was very much Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and Feith.

*Q: Okay. That's important. I sometimes forget Wolfowitz's role here.*

WALSH: Oh, no, remember. It's no longer called *The National Interest*, and it's no longer published, but it was a conservative magazine.

*Q: Yeah, National Interest.*

WALSH: No, *National Interest* is still being published. What was that one?

*Q: Oh, yeah, the neo-con one.*

WALSH: Yeah. They had a cover piece shortly after the invasion focusing on Wolfowitz. They called it “The Genius.” I remember that they called me because I had cancelled my subscription. They were calling around, saying, “Mr. Walsh, would you like to renew your subscription?”

I just started giggling. I said, “What? A magazine that considers Paul Wolfowitz? You're out of your minds.”

*Q: Yeah, I remember.*

WALSH: Well, this was still part of the post-9/11 hangover, but there were Democrats like Biden, Pelosi, Hillary— All of them voted for this.

*Q: All of them except Obama. Yeah. This whole neo-con phenomena is a subject in and of itself. I propose that we address that in our next conversation, or at least whatever you remember. We were all kind of amazed, looking at it, but very few of us had direct contact or direct experience. It's all like the blind man describing an elephant. I'd love to get your recollection of who was doing what among the neo-cons. Why did they prevail? Why did they get to decide everything? I would like to get into that, if you want to, in our next conversation. Let me just conclude the recording. It's Dan Whitman and Neal Walsh. It's August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020.*

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*Q: It's Dan Whitman and Neal Walsh. It's August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Neal, we were last in the '03 period, leading up to the military action in Iraq. We were talking about the role of émigrés in the White House's decision to go into that military action. We did touch on the late Duncan McGinnis, and there may be more to be said about him. What else do we need to know about that very turbulent period?*

WALSH: Well, I would say that 9/11, and then the invasion of Afghanistan. The first sort of feeling that things were not going to go just the way we would have liked them to go was when they thought they had Osama Bin Laden and his guys all surrounded in the mountains of eastern Afghanistan. They were surrounded. Then, they got away. I think there were a couple of things that went through my mind, like, how did that happen? How did they escape into Pakistan?

There was the usual bickering. I have no idea what the facts were about that. Well, we relied on local militias. Wasn't that interesting? Then, in the western and northwestern areas, we had \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ people just delivering us prisoner after prisoner. I forget where it was, but you had the prisoner uprising in one place. Even the guys who tied up—They killed this CIA guy. Actually, I guess they tore his throat out. He sort of walked in and was like, "Hey, guys," and then—. They just killed him.

You just got this sense of, is this the way it should be? But I still had confidence that we could do what the Russians didn't do. You had Karzai being interviewed and doing great things and saying great things about America and so on. So, yeah, it was pretty good. Then we started to get the drumbeat for Iraq. That sort of threw things off, too. You had the meetings of the Iraqi Democratic Front, you might say, with \_\_\_\_\_ and his guys. Powell and Armitage. Their initial thoughts were that that would be a White House conference or a State Department conference. You had Armitage and Powell saying, "No, this is not a good idea."

Like I said, “If we’re going to have giveaway bags, it’ll be with Rolex watches and Hermes bags.” These guys didn’t do anything. There was the idea of setting up and training a militia in Czechoslovakia, and only 20 guys showed up. It was just like— All of a sudden, there were big cracks there.

That whole year of 2003 was a big blur to me, because we kept trying to do good things. Posts and embassies and regions were doing good things. I remember reading the report from Rwanda, of all places, where three or four imams went on an IV. They came back absolutely enthusiastic about freedom of religion in the United States and how well Muslims were living and so on like that. Frankly, there’s not an African country without a diaspora in the United States. We could have shown everybody that they were living well, that the United States was not the great Satan.

But there was a dither going on from DOD, the DOD Policy Office, the Office of the Secretary of Defense. From DIA, they set up their own analysis unit that would analyze everything. They would double check. As I said, prior to 9/11, State’s statement from INR was that they were totally incapable at the present time of developing nuclear weapons. They were almost afraid to bring it in as our submission to the NSC because that was not exactly what DIA said. The CIA said, “Probably not, but you can never tell.”

*Q: This is, of course, very troubling. We’ve heard this history with different narratives. There have been a lot of books and articles written. Why do you think DOD took over? Was it weakness in the White House?*

WALSH: No, they were totally marching in step with Mr. Rumsfeld. Cheney and Rumsfeld were working in step together.

*Q: Well, excuse me, but there was a president. Where was he?*

WALSH: Well, that was it. He was the decider. He wasn’t the reader, I guess. He did it. Part of Armitage’s— Now, this was in 2003, when he was doing that TV interview and I approached him asking if we could go and get the other 50,000 watt tower of power. He said, “Hey, if you think I am going to go bother George Tenet right now to get another goddamn radio station, you’ve got something else coming.”

The fact was, that was shortly after Tenet had said to the president that this was a slam dunk. So, there were things going all around here.

*Q: Well, the slam dunk I thought had to do with the likelihood of military success.*

WALSH: No, it was—

*Q: Oh, it was the weapons of mass destruction.*

WALSH: Exactly.

*Q: Was Tenet— Any idea if Tenet believed what he was saying?*

WALSH: You know, I think that there was a possibility that this was there. They couldn't account for all sorts of things, and there had indeed been transgressions in the past. Also, Saddam and his government were working like hell to prove that they did have these things so they could counter Iran.

*Q: I guess the other question is, were Cheney and Rumsfeld bullying Tenet?*

WALSH: I wouldn't know that, but this is right where Cheney left off when he stopped being secretary of Defense. He came up with the unipolar world. Eight years later, he's ready to roll with it again, with this idea that we should use our force for "good."

*Q: That's a brief definition of what we call neoconservatism: use our force for good. I don't know if neoconservatism even exists anymore, but it was an odd appearance of a new way of thinking when, previously, we had been neither idealists, realists, internationalists, or isolationists. Neoconservatism just didn't fit into that matrix at all, and it ran the world for—*

WALSH: For 75 years.

*Q: Well, neoconservatism ran the world for two to three years, I think.*

WALSH: Oh, right, yes.

*Q: Anyway, it was a very odd thing. You don't know and I don't know— I guess only George W. Bush knows at what point he climbed onto this train as it was leaving the station. He didn't —*

WALSH: Well, there was also this whole idea that they got slapped by what they didn't know. Therefore— They saw some alarming gaps in terms of intelligence. The CIA knew members of the 9/11 crew were in the country, but they didn't tell the FBI. So, there they are, standing around saying, "Holy shit. Anything can happen." Well, we wanted to stop anything from happening. So, you could see where that was going.

But everybody who knew anything about Near East relationships was saying, "Hey, let's not do this. This is not a good thing. Yes, Saddam's regime is a bloody regime, but the only reason Iraq stands as a country is because he has a bloody regime. He is maintaining the Sunni minority." Like I say, for me, almost from January 2002 to March 2003, it was sort of a blur. How do we get good news out about America?

*Q: I think it was for everybody. We should mention that in the very destructive war between Iraq and Iran prior to that, we were solidly on the side of Iraq and were supplying lethal weapons, I think including chemical weapons.*

WALSH: It wasn't chemical weapons, but precursor chemicals.

*Q: Okay. We know there was a meeting between Rumsfeld and Saddam Hussein in Geneva, I think, not too long before this. So, there were these other things in the background that were elephants in the room. We had actively supported Iraq in an international conflict. This was one reason why Hussein was so understandably confused when the U.S. turned against him. He said, before his execution, that he thought we were his best friend. He was a little stupid, maybe, but this goes beyond your experience and mine. We're in guesswork here.*

*You mentioned the blur of those three months. The IV program was doing some good things, by the way.*

WALSH: Well, all of PD worked hard to reach out to Muslim communities worldwide. Here we are, 20 years later, and I think that even in Australia, where I've been doing TDYs, when it's Eid or—

*Q: Ramadan.*

WALSH: Ramadan. There, we were putting on a dinner, inviting the guys in, and so on. When it comes time to consider IVs, scholarships and so on, we're very active in that. The English teaching program has been revitalized and gotten back into the daily operations of the Public Diplomacy Office by outreach to underserved Muslim schools or communities. We're bringing kids in for special English training. It's a great program. It starts with grammar school, and we follow right up to secondary school and then keep an eye on them as potential Fulbrighters. This is great stuff. People were doing this, getting it organized, getting it going, and so on like that.

But there was no positive spin we could put on the ideas encouraging active kinetic action against Iraq. Our Western allies certainly didn't like the idea. Certainly, the Poles and the Czechs and others joined this alliance and said, "Now we can have our war! This is great!" But the Germans, the French had some very serious questions about this. They were wondering how we could do this. That was NEA's thing. Ryan Crocker's memorandum, "The Perfect Storm"—

The day they launched was in late February, early March of 2003, when\_\_\_, and you could hear a pin drop down on the sixth floor in the NEA corridor. Everybody was just plain depressed. For Charlotte Beers, this was a big reach, because she had come in and had some great ideas on branding. She looked around and said, "We're doing all these great things around the world and we're not getting any credit. We've got to work on this." We started working with AID and others to get the American brand out there and make sure people know that— Well, PEPFAR (President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief) wasn't invented yet, but—we are doing it for their benefit.

*Q: So, she was apparently very much on board with the military action.*

WALSH: Oh, yeah. I remember that Tommy Franks came in to see her. At the same time – and this would be in September of 2002 – I and Chris Roth went over to the Pentagon to talk to their Public Affairs people. One, we were very concerned that there really wasn't a real public affairs office involved in the preparations for the invasion. What are you going to do? Who's going to run this? How about information programs? What are you going to have? What's going on? It went on like that.

They said, "Yes, we'll be in touch with you. Thank you very much. We'll work hand in glove with you." We made another visit over there a couple of weeks later. Let's just say that the phone never rang. They never called to say, "Hey, can you give us a hand?" or "What do you guys think about this? How should we do this?" Not at all.

*Q: And this was in \_\_\_ days, when they were still using that term. They had a very different notion of what public diplomacy was. They used the term, but they were doing it with "low footprint," meaning they were trying to disseminate a message without it being known that they were doing so. That was very different from what the State Department was doing.*

WALSH: Well, they actually had no organization whatsoever. There was nobody tagged to be the minister of information or the minister of education. The Pentagon's idea was that they were going to get in and get out. Without putting any structure in place. Now, a former director of the VOA was out there and he was going to be organizing information. Margaret Tutwiler was seconded from ambassador to Morocco to do messaging. She worked mostly with the Kurds, actually.

You had a lot of stuff going on, but nothing was coordinated, period. There was no overarching message. Why are we doing this? What's going on? How are we going to reestablish a government? There was nothing. So, there it went. It played out almost page by page from Ryan Crocker's warnings. You had the collapse of society, the looting. Then, later on, they disbanded the army and disbanded the party.

*Q: That was Paul Bremer, right?*

WALSH: That was Paul Bremer. You know, I don't know what they were thinking. Anybody who had worked in authoritarian or totalitarian societies, like Poland or Russia, realized that a lot of people— It's like President Trump saying, "There are a lot of good people out there." A lot of people joined the party to get a job or to keep their family from getting crushed or to protect their religion and themselves. If you're Sunni, you were surrounded by Shiites, and you had to do this, and you had to keep the old Kurds down.

So, that started, right off the bat. Next thing you know, you've got the Kurds going this way, helping us but not helping the country, as such. You just had such terrible things going on, you know? For me, one of the things that broke my heart was, as the city of Baghdad was taken over, if you remember, they put a couple of tanker rounds right through the offices of Al Jazeera.

*Q: Oh, yeah.*

WALSH: Now, how did that happen? It was an “accident.” But since I’d gone through a couple of discussions with them before about getting kinetic— You can’t tell me that that was an accident.

*Q: There are two parts to public diplomacy. One is building relationships, and the other is conveying a message. In this case, you’re describing a huge difference. The building of relationships as you remember it was going very well worldwide. The conveying of a message was going very badly. Both of these were in your portfolio. How did you deal with that?*

WALSH: I hired Chris Ross because he was a Middle East expert, and I just tried to stay as far away from it as possible. I would say that for that year, I just didn’t— Like I said, in late 2002, I was sending emails around saying, “Look at what *The Economist* is saying. Maybe we should say the same things.” I was saying, “We do not have enough information to explain why we’re doing this.” The documents that we got were ridiculous.

So, yeah, I didn’t have my heart in this at all. I thought it was— Unfortunately, I made a joke at a staff meeting or two. They would say, “How do we do this?”

I said, “We have to hire actors. ‘Look evil, Ahmed. Get the poison gas over there.’”

*Q: Oh, gosh. You and NEA and the IC. We know the IC, at the working level, were just astonished and dismayed and really couldn’t believe this was all happening. Well, this all goes above our paygrade.*

WALSH: Yeah. It was just that trying to make it work, the messaging just would not work. The relationships that I saw that we had with the exiles – that was already very superficial – and some of the other relationships we had out there looked poisonous to me.

*Q: Good point. Poisonous. That is exactly the way I saw it. So, what pressure were you under to deliver a message that was a bad-smelling message?*

WALSH: Well, you know, you were at the meeting where Mrs. Charlotte Beers was looking for positive B roll or evil B roll. You saw how futile that was. You couldn’t get good people— The NEA office, at that time, was very good and had good people. , McGinnis, and so on. They couldn’t really do this, even.

*Q: Yeah. They did the best they could.*

WALSH: But they held their noses, too.

*Q: Of course. I think we all made ethical decisions, and maybe some of those decisions don't look so good in retrospect. But we all thought that by being there, we might be able to make it better. I think that's what many of us had in mind. We did not succeed.*

*Okay. Let's go on chronologically. Chris Ross. Wow. You hired him. In other words, he was brought on as a consultant, I guess, to R? Is that right?*

WALSH: How did we hire him? I think we hired him on a WAE (While Actually Employed) basis or whatever, you know?

*Q: Right. I do remember a meeting, I think, in your office with Chris Ross. He was the brains, and he, too, was trying to do his best.*

WALSH: Yeah. He went on Al Jazeera any number of times in interviews and things like that.

*Q: So, chronologically, what comes next for you?*

WALSH: Well, let's just say— I sort of plodded along. I wasn't getting squeezed out. I think Mrs. Beers lost faith in me, and I know— I was talking with Chris Ross one time about how I should be moving on and I didn't know what I was going to do; I would probably retire and do this or that. Ross said, "By the way, that's sort of what Charlotte would like me to do. She wants me to talk to you."

I was saying, "Well, you've got to hire somebody." Barry Walkley was coming off his time as ambassador to Guinea. I said, "We've got some stars out there. We've got Barry. We've got Tom \_\_\_\_\_. We've got people who can do really good stuff and know stuff and keep things within bounds. I don't have too many friends around here anymore. I'd better get out of here."

He said, "Well, you know, that's sort of what Charlotte's been intimating that I should talk to you about."

I said, "How about that?" Next thing you know, though, Charlotte's gone.

*Q: Did she give up in disgust? How did that happen?*

WALSH: I don't know. For me, even though I was working in the same suite, one day she was there and the next day she was gone.

*Q: Of course. I never realized that. Then it was who, Tutwiler? I mean, Karen Hughes, rather?*

WALSH: Yeah, Karen Hughes took her place. In the interim between Beers and Hughes, the ECA assistant secretary was acting as R. I forget her name. She was out of New York. She was a very common sense person.

This must have gone into 2004, because I was still in that suite when the Abu Ghraib story came out.

*Q: Ah, yes. That did not encourage any of us, did it?*

WALSH: You know, if you're in public diplomacy relationships or messaging, that was the worst possible thing that could have happened. That was the result of a lot of different things flowing together to make that happen. You just had to say, "I'm out of here." So, I just sort of dropped out.

The lady—I've got to get her name. She more or less said to me, "Neal, you've got to figure that we can help you go anywhere but here."

There were also a number of small embassies opening up in non-temperate climates. People would say, "Hey, why don't you apply for this?" But I was just burned out. I was done. I didn't have anything left.

In the immortal words of Dick Shinnick, "You'd better make good decisions." Well, also, one of the attractive things that came up was working for Dr. Birx as a public affairs person for PEPFAR. That was being organized at that same time. But I just wasn't interested in anything. I was preparing to retire and Dick Shinnick called me up and said, "If you don't accept the fucking job, buddy, you are going to wind up stamping license plates at Lorton."

*Q: Oh, wait a minute, that's not nice!*

WALSH: That was a euphemism to describe going to Declass.

*Q: Oh, I've got it. Okay. People use that as a metaphor for a dark cave. Actually, it's quite interesting, I am told, if you have any interest in history. But no, that's where people are sent to go and disappear. Most of the people in that unit are retired. It's certainly not a bridge to any glamorous follow-on. So, did you retire at that time?*

WALSH: I was assigned to Declass. There was no job that I was interested in at that time.

*Q: Interesting, okay. So, you worked in Declass.*

WALSH: This was not a government, at that time, that I felt comfortable representing. It had gotten to the point where I was not comfortable representing it to my fellow colleagues.

*Q: This says something, Neal, about your integrity and your solid moral character. It does. I'm not saying that politically you were right or wrong, but you had a conviction and you lived by it. This does say something very powerful about your good character.*

WALSH: Oh, I don't know. I look at guys like John Brown. I think one of the things I'm kind of disappointed by was that more of us didn't resign. John Brown did resign. There were some others.

*Q: Actually, out of 7,000, four resigned. That's not a very big number.*

WALSH: Nope. I know Syracuse University was looking for specialists in public diplomacy, and they approached me. I called John Brown to say, "Hey, this is opening. I've mentioned your name to them, and if you'd like to follow up, you can."

He said, "No, Neal, thank you very much, but I'm doing okay."

*Q: You graduated from Syracuse, didn't you?*

WALSH: Right.

*Q: And this is the Maxwell School?*

WALSH: Yeah.

*Q: John, because I know him quite well, had absolutely had it. He had the same inner feelings you did, except more pronounced. He went out with a letter. He did not go totally public. His objective was not to get attention, it was just that, as you said, he'd had enough. There were others who did make public statements.*

WALSH: Well, first off, there were things that took place as they were talking to me about putting in a letter. You submit a memo for the committee to describe that you would be a good fit for a certain ambassadorship. For me, it was Rwanda and Lesotho or Swaziland, I think. I just couldn't picture myself doing something good in those places. I just couldn't picture myself talking to an audience about what we were doing in Iraq.

*Q: Gee whiz. So, you could have been a COM, possibly?*

WALSH: Possibly. I know that when I talked to Powell, Nancy Powell, she said, "Yeah, DCM in Lagos." I just thought, oh, fuck that job.

*Q: So, there were people looking out for you. R had become a little bit clouded, or there was mold forming on the walls there for you. But in HR and in the CG, they actually talked to you. So, there were two things happening. One was that R was getting quickly worn out of you, but there were people in the rest of the Department wanting you to continue. So, you went to Declassification.*

WALSH: I went to Declass. A day in, I put in my papers to retire. I didn't miss a day. One day I am on the regular payroll at Declass, and the next day, I am on the WAE (When Actually Working) roll at Declass. So, I started there in 2004, and I was there for three years. I loved it. Well, I wouldn't say I loved it, but I liked it. It was fabulous. We

were so behind that I could start out at the beginning of my career and go through all the cables coming out of Warsaw in the early '70s and so on. Then I could go to an interesting area like Lebanon, Zaire. I was just reading these things and it was fascinating. It was great. Sometimes you get special requests. I remember a number of boxes came down to us from the National Archives, and we had to go through them. They had passports of Errol Flynn and all sorts of other characters there.

*Q: I've never been there. I've always thought of it as quite an interesting, fun thing to do.*

WALSH: Yeah. Working there was fascinating. One thing I saw was, in the passport of an American—Roosevelt wanted to send this guy, who was an economist, to England to consult with the Brits about post-war financial planning. The lady who ran passports at that time wouldn't give him a passport. There's a handwritten letter to her—It wasn't handwritten; it must have been typed with a signature. But it was from Roosevelt to say, "Can you please give this man a passport? It's in the national interest." And she didn't!

It's fascinating sorts of stuff. You'd see all kinds of interesting stuff in there. I don't know—They don't tell you why you're going through this ancient 1940s stuff. They probably have a request from an author or somebody to go through it, just to make sure there's nothing too terribly secret or too terribly embarrassing.

*Q: Now, FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) goes to the Historian's Office, not to Declass, is that right? Does it sometimes land at Declass?*

WALSH: Oh, it lands at Declass.

*Q: Okay. So, some of that might come from there. Okay.*

WALSH: The guys over at the American Society—

*Q: Well, there's a unit at the GW (George Washington University) Library called the National Security Archives. We call it the other NSA (National Security Agency).*

WALSH: Right. They pretty much know the schedule of Declassifications. 25 years after a certain date, they'll say, "We want to see all of these," you know? So, you have authors, you have journalists, you have other people calling in on FOIA. For FOIA, the initial request goes somewhere else. Some of my colleagues in Declass would handle the initial request and so on like that.

But, yeah, it was a fascinating place. I asked, "How long can we work here?"

They said, "Until you forget where the men's room is!" There were guys who were there for years. They were great guys, you know? It was a great bunch.

*Q: There seems to be a very consistent theme in your career, Neal, which is that you took whatever came, and you really made the best of it. When you were at R, you made the*

*best of a very bad thing. It wasn't just you or me. Karen Hughes said in public, "There's nothing positive here that we can say." I heard her say that in public. So, it wasn't a political thing. It really was an impossible task for PD at that time.*

WALSH: Yeah. You'd just see things going wrong day after day after day. These were people who should have known that there are incredible tensions between the Sunnis and the Shiites, and they're not going to sit down and sing kumbaya.

*Q: Right. All of NEA knew that, as did the IC, but the White House never caught on.*

WALSH: Well, they bought \_\_\_\_\_ thing of, "Oh, it'll go up. We can do this," and so on. It just didn't work at all. Anybody could have seen it.

Of course, this was a great idea for the Israelis. We were going to change the whole complexion of the Middle East, you know?

*Q: I've heard that. That was a consistent line coming out. I don't know if those who said it—I'm thinking about one person I won't name who was the head of a unit, and we don't know if he believed it or if he was saying it because Liz Cheney was sometimes in the room. But that gets into personal things.*

WALSH: Well, every once in a while, you would see something that would indicate that the Israelis were advising some people. You'd say "That's the craziest thing in the world." This has been going on for 60 years, and they don't seem to have worked it out, so how do you think we're going to work this out?

*Q: Well, that's American hubris.*

WALSH: It was. We talked about \_\_\_\_\_. It's like talking about \_\_\_\_\_. It's like talking about \_\_\_\_\_ among the Vietnamese, and our many Latin American friends who can tear people's fingernails out and sell drugs and then retire to Miami. You just say, "Hey, how about the good guys?"

*Q: Again, let me observe that this interview has been in a very bright light all the way through, but suddenly, we're in a very dark place. We're cooperating with dictators and torturers and drug dealers, and we're getting to the conclusion of this narrative. Glass half full? Glass half empty? We may not be ready for this quite yet, but from what I've heard from you, there's great optimism and enthusiasm and encouragement and delight, and then suddenly the lights go out at the very end. Any comment about that contrast?*

WALSH: Not really. It was just the knowledge that my country had a war of choice carried out in a situation that just could not be a success. It's one of those things that is—I used to say to some of the other officers that I supported the war in Vietnam, to an extent, because I had this idea that these guys knew what they were doing. Surely, we could not be extending so much treasury on such an effort without a firm understanding of why we were doing it.

In my time in R in the post-9/11 period, I knew as much as anyone could possibly know, I think, and I couldn't understand why we were doing this. We're talking billions and billions and billions of dollars.

*Q: Right. Two trillion by— We're still at it, but it was two trillion by '08 or '09.*

WALSH: So, yeah, it was like working for GM (General Motors) when GM was making shitty cars.

*Q: Yes. Again, this leaves us in a very dark spot. Looking back at the whole experience, from Poland and being a student in Leningrad— It may be time to see some themes here. I think it is. Personally, you had tremendous development in your life and great productivity. On the other hand, you saw policy at its ups and downs. How personal did this become to you?*

WALSH: Well, obviously, in 2003-2004, I was not going to the office with great hopes. Now, one of the things was that certain programs— As I said, the English-teaching, the IV program, the Fulbright program, as well as responsibility for personal public outreach— All of these things that I believed were part of the foundations of Public Diplomacy, as well as educational advising, had withered in the last years of USIA because of budget cuts. In the post-9/11 period, we were able to get money for it. All we had to do was find a couple Muslims. , but the realization that we need to reach out and explain ourselves and tell America's story to the world— That was absolutely essential. Those foundations got reinforced.

*Q: Material and resource backup.*

WALSH: Right.

*Q: Who decides these things? Congress? White House? Who got the resource increase? There was no Charlie Wick anymore. Who did this?*

WALSH: Well, it was a bit of Charlotte Beers, because when people finally explained to her what the programs were, what the results were, and so on like that, she was pretty enthusiastic. She obviously would have liked to have branded us a bit better than circumstances allowed. But she got that money, justified it, and continued. As we were at that point with the training programs for CAOs, IOs, and PAOs and so on, she also got money for that. Then, we were able to get money out of the State Department's HR budget to support it, as well.

*Q: That was largely your doing, I think.*

WALSH: Not necessarily. The people who had worked on that – Kathy Peterson over at FSI as the chair, the woman who was the PD director who was also very forceful and good— You had a lot of people there. So, what we had was a great product. What we

didn't have was money. I had always assumed that they would fund. I was quite surprised that day that HR said, "No, we don't have any money for you guys."

It took a question about what happened to the 90 million dollars that came across with USIA— We do get questions from Congress about whether State was a good steward of USIA money. Then, of course, the secretary, the undersecretary, the undersecretary for Management were all enthusiastic about this. Then it was like, "Geez, I'd hate to have to tell them that we can't do this this year." So, we got going. That was good.

*Q: It was indeed. You had the status of your position— You mainly just had a good argument to be able to get HR to come up with money that they had previously given. First you got your ducks lined up, and you were able to say that others more important than HR wanted this to happen. So, you convinced them. That's a very good thing.*

WALSH: One thing we didn't change that we could have changed was the career track for PD officers. They would now become regular State Department officers. So, they would have to do a minimum of a year of consular work.

*Q: Right.*

WALSH: Sometimes, during their careers, they'd have to do two years in another cone.

*Q: I think that's the same for all cones, maybe.*

WALSH: Oh, yeah.

*Q: But they had a kind of protected status under USIA, and then— It's not that they were treated worse than other cones, but they were then just put into the cones like everybody else, I guess.*

WALSH: They were put into the cones. So, you would get somebody who wants to be a PD officer, and they'll go four years, sometimes, before they even get a JOT's job. We could not break that.

*Q: Unfortunately, that was the case for Political, Economic— I guess only consular and management really did not suffer. But PD, Political, and Econ were all in that situation of just marking time. Many people resigned before they ever got to do an assignment in their own cone.*

*So, Neal Walsh, this is your life. There may be more to say about post-retirement in another chat we'll have. There may be a few thoughts, looking back, or you might want to give this a bit of thought and we can come back to it. But I would say that we've reached— It's not the end, but the marking of the time you spent in the Foreign Service. I'm only the interviewer. I'm not the judge. But I've been very inspired by your story.*

*I thought I knew you, but I did not know a lot of what I just heard about how you took any situation, including very unexpected ones, and you made the best of it. You were troubled by U.S. policy at the time of '03-'04. Everybody was. Everybody had to make their own personal decisions. You made yours, I think very honorably. I think I'm going to sign off for today, unless there's something compelling. Anything to add at this time?*

WALSH: Not at this time.

*End of interview*