

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

DANIEL WHITMAN

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INTERVIEW

Q: Dan represents a special type for this program, in that Dan has been with us for some years and done a considerable number of interviews and has been avoiding interviews --

WHITMAN: Most energetically.

Q: -- until now. So I finally got him in a corner, and off we go. Dan, when and where were you born?

WHITMAN: Well, you think I’m going to answer that question directly? I’m going to evade it. For the record, I’m honored to be in a room with you, Stu, let alone to be the subject of your attention.

Q: OK, the flattery period is over.

WHITMAN: So this is an interrogation, I see. It’s not flattery.

I was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1946, the first anniversary of the Nagasaki bomb. I never knew Ann Arbor because my parents, New Yorkers, had gone to the far west beyond the Hudson River as soon as they could when they married, for a job. The next job was in Cleveland, Ohio, and that’s where I was raised.

Q: OK. Well Dan, let’s start with the pattern, what do you know about Whitman’s side of the family?

WHITMAN: Well, there you raise a flat rock and there are worms underneath that. My paternal grandfather at Ellis Island was given the name Whitman, though it was misspelled at that time. It was spelled W-I-T-H, I think by a benevolent but sort of illiterate customs official. I have no idea what my name would have been if it had not been changed at Ellis Island. So in fact, I know nothing about the paternal side of my family.

Q: Do you know where your grandfather or somebody came from?

WHITMAN: When I say Eastern Europe, you understand that with the borders changing in the 1900s—Lithuania, Galicia, Russia—nobody knows. I certainly don’t. And maybe I should have made more of an effort to find out, but by the time I asked my father what

his father's name was, my father was already gaga and could no longer remember. So I'll never know. I know a bit more about the maternal side.

Q: Let's bring your father's side up to your father.

WHITMAN: I know nothing, Stu. Under oath I will say my father is the only thing I know about the paternal line that I come from.

Q: What was your father up to?

WHITMAN: My father, a child of the Depression in New York City, did what all good Jewish boys do. He went to school to become a teacher. There were two options for people of low income in New York City during the Depression, I'm told. You could be a gangster. But if you weren't, if you didn't have some sort of connection, you could be a teacher or a social worker.

My father went to City College. He was very proud of that. I think City College was a fascinating place in the 1920s to '30s. He came out with a social work degree, and had never been west of the Hudson River until his marriage. He married my mother, Pearl Sapirstein. They hated New York, they hated everything about it. The poverty, the dense population, the ethnic nastiness.

My father described going to school -- maybe he made up some of this -- he said that he would walk through the various neighborhoods and would have to literally fight his way to school every day going through the Italian neighborhoods, the Irish neighborhoods. It must have been quite nasty. So what I do know is that at the first opportunity, a job was offered in the social work area in Ypsilanti, Michigan, and off they went. My mother had a similar training. They met at school.

Q: Let's talk about your mother's side.

WHITMAN: I know a little more about that side. I knew my maternal grandfather. He's the only grandparent I ever met. He was a humble, modest, very nice fellow from Poland, Isidor Sapirstein. I'm told that at the turn of the century, service in the local military for Jews was a life-shortening experience, and that they were sometimes used as target practice. I don't know if that's an exaggeration. And service in the army was a 12- or 15-year affair.

So this bland little fellow who was always just a nice, jovial presence. The family legend is that he escaped Poland. He hopped on to a train to Rotterdam. The ship went from Rotterdam to New York. The usual story, six dollars in his pocket. When it was time to be drafted the laws in Eastern Europe were such that if you were subject to the draft and did not show up, they would arrest a member of your family instead, usually the mother. So Isidor went from New York, back to Rotterdam, back to Poland, enlisted in the army, and then deserted and came back to New York a second time. Apparently, desertion was less frowned upon than not showing up for conscription.

My mother had two brothers. The eldest was chosen as the jewel of the family. That was Milton, who went to medical school. Joe and Pearl, the other siblings, were kind of left aside and Milton was the product of the family. He was a psychiatrist. He lived on Park Avenue. We think maybe his clients included people like Lillian Hellman. He maneuvered in very exclusive circles, but never included us in any of them. So Milton was the grey eminence at 983 Park Avenue.

As a child in Cleveland, New York to me was the dreaded yearly trip in the car, not to be on Park Avenue, but to be with my mother's father in the Bronx. He had remarried. The whole thing with the plastic seat covers and the smells of chicken soup coming out of the kitchen. I never looked forward to those trips. I never understood that New York had anything else other than the grandparents' smelly apartment in the Bronx. Later in life, when I discovered how much more there was in New York, it became to me the jewel of the East. I went there every opportunity. I took night buses.

Q: Let's talk a bit about Cleveland. As a kid, what was it like growing up there? What sort of place did you live in?

WHITMAN: We were in the eastern suburbs, in Cleveland Heights. People confuse Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights. There's no comparison really. Shaker Heights is the fancy one. Cleveland Heights is the one that abuts on Cleveland. Cleveland in the '50s was for a white middle class kid about the safest place you could be. As I look back, I see the racial division was absolute. There was Hough, the area where African Americans lived. And it was considered a no-go zone.

At the time, we didn't understand these things. We understood only that our parents and our schools provided protection and cared about our development. We played baseball in the street. We lived on a one-block street. Not an impasse, but a one-block street. We got up, we played touch football. It was an idyllic childhood. Only later in seeing a larger context did I see other aspects.

I probably should mention what it was to be Jewish in post-World War II suburbia. Because sometimes these things are glossed over. I was never bitter about this, never frightened. It wasn't animosity or hatred. It was the acting out of things that had been taught to young kids. Kids are taught to be bad. If you're not bad, you're not a kid. There was never any danger in it and there was never really any hostility. But there was an acting out. The day the kids at the Catholic school two blocks away put me in a hammerlock and said, "Lick your initials on the sidewalk, dirty Jew," I might have been upset. I was a little afraid, because they had my arm in a hammerlock and I didn't know if they would break my arm. It was kind of painful.

And I was thinking about this a little bit in preparation for this conversation. I think there were no ethnic difficulties in the United States comparable to what we've seen in Europe. There were racial difficulties, but nothing like we've seen in Yugoslavia. These kids were not malicious. There were no scarce resources. Nobody was going to take anything from

them. There was no internal reason at all to have any antipathy towards people of different religions. I'm sure this had been taught to them by their church and by their family.

It was leftovers from the World War II mentality, I think. We were raised to think of "Japs" as the Japanese enemy. We never understood who the Japanese were or why they were the enemy. But we were trained to hide under desks and to get away from the windows in case there should be a Japanese air attack. —That was all a residual thing from World War II; people were acting out. They were imitating things they'd heard about from before their birth. And any kid needs to be bad.

Q: How Jewish was your family in your upbringing?

WHITMAN: I would say I had zero Jewish interest or identification. My parents were very much the other way. My mother said that she never met a non-Jew until she went to college. She was a member of that generation. She tried to maintain some of the rituals. I found them meaningless. So did my father, actually, though he read Hebrew fluently. I don't know if he understood any of it. My parents spoke Yiddish, but never to me. This was the age of assimilation, the 1950s. There were endless boring discussions about identity and the religious identity: are we a race, are we a religion. And the adolescents tended to have no interest in this palaver. You can't fool an adolescent when there's hypocrisy.

The synagogue we attended was simply called The Temple. The leader was Abba Hillel Silver, who was one of the main sources of Harry Truman's anti-Semitism. Abba Hillel Silver was an impossible, nagging, insistent man. I knew him. Like Harry Truman, I too would have been dreading his visits.

He was one of those going after Harry Truman in the '40s, insisting that Truman recognize Israel at the first opportunity. Which he did. I think he was so sick of the courtiers and the people in the waiting room nagging him. I think he had decided to recognize Israel shortly after the creation of the United Nations.

Abba Hillel Silver was a notable Zionist. A most forbidding, unlikeable person. And he was the person at this institution called The Temple. We called it The Church, because it was so assimilated and so diluted that many of us wondered why we were going to this place. We behaved like Christians. Everything looked like Christianity, but the blessings were in Hebrew. We didn't understand as children: why are we fussing about this? If we are something other than Christian, why don't we just say so? Maybe we're Christians. I think most of us had no particular feeling.

Q: As a kid, did you run in a Jewish group, or was it a mixed group?

WHITMAN: It was mixed. We had our little group called the *Bund*. Sure, some of them were Jewish because of the demographics of Cleveland Heights High School. But half of them or two-thirds of them were not. None of us really cared. My mother's still alive,

she's 92, and she wants to know that I feel that I'm Jewish. That's really an ethnic thing, not a religious thing. Jews don't believe in much of anything, I think. They see themselves as a clan.

Q: Did Israel play any role in this period?

WHITMAN: To me personally, really not. I remember seeing pictures of happy Israelis doing folk dancing. It was very inspiring, I think for everybody. Not just for Jews. This young country, born out of destruction and genocide and people with a second chance. It was the kind of pioneer frontier spirit that Americans have in their DNA. I think most Americans looked with pleasure on those picture books of the folk dancing and the kibbutzim. I've never been. I must say, I'm sort of curious, but I've never been curious enough to actually go. I recognize where I come from. This has never been a big deal for me.

Q: As a kid, were you much of a reader?

WHITMAN: Sort of. I wasn't a bookish boy. I wasn't an intellectual any time early. I did what my school asked me to do and I was a pretty happy kid in school. I don't think I was unusually probing, as some of my classmates were. There were some geniuses in that class. I was not one of them. I read, but not obsessively and not a whole lot.

But I had an idyllic childhood. I ran around, I went to the woods, we played King of the Mountain. We had stick fights, but never hurt one another. And we just hung out in the most innocent way.

Q: Let's go back to elementary school. What studies did you like and what studies didn't you like?

WHITMAN: Well, I guess pretty early it seemed that what we used to call English, which is basically everything, was my thing. I had reverence for those who did music. I had enormous reverence. And many of my friends were musicians. But I understood I was not. I enjoyed reading things and doing what we were asked to do with them - little essays, presentations. I even sort of enjoyed Latin, which is, I think, remarkable. The legend was that our Latin teacher, Mr. Lee, had been a victim of shellshock in World War II. At a very young age, his hair was white. In hushed terms, we would talk about Mr. Lee and his shellshock. We now call that post-traumatic stress.

He was humorless mostly, until the day a wasp flew into the room, and he took the Latin dictionary and killed the wasp. He said, "And you thought Latin was not useful."

Q: (laughs)

WHITMAN: We had marvelous teachers. Anthony De Jovine, the English teacher, who was so devoted to us and to his teaching and who taught us the concept of irony. I still can't define what irony is, but everything we read for irony. Because Mr. De Jovine

assisted us. He was very benign, wonderful. We had great, supportive people. This was also the McCarthy period, when books were banned. *Catcher in the Rye*, for example, which has vulgar language in it, was forbidden in my school.

Q: Which means you read it.

WHITMAN: Of course. Mr. De Jovine, who died decades ago, assigned it to us. I think he got into a lot of trouble because the book was banned. It had dirty words. So did *Huckleberry Finn*, but those were words that were tolerated. We read *Huckleberry Finn*. We read Shakespeare, but we read a little of this and a little of that. We read *Julius Caesar*. That's about it. I think it was the glory days of public schools in America if you lived in the right part of the city.

My friend Bill Hendricks got me involved in the track team. I'm not really by nature an athlete, but I gave my soul to that track team. Oof, the efforts we put in. I ran the half-mile. I was the great promise of the sophomore class. I had the experience of having a second wind. It's an amazing exhilaration, getting a second wind. Anyway, the coach had great hopes for me, but I didn't amount to much the years after. But I ran cross-country and I ran and ran and ran for years. Until I lived in a place where you can't run. That would be Haiti, years later. That's when I stopped.

There were no sidewalks, there were no fields. There was the side of the road and the enormous trucks would pass by giving you maybe four inches of clearance. It just was too dangerous; the dogs would come and attack. So I really ran pretty, pretty regularly, because it felt good, until that time.

Q: Were you involved in many extracurricular things in high school?

WHITMAN: I went to Cleveland Heights, a high school of 3,000 students. Class of 750. Huge school, everything worked. This was in the days when it was permissible to be in an honors class. It then became a rogue activity in the '60s and '70s. It was considered elitist. I was in English, not math and not history. And we believed in ourselves. Our teachers believed in us. We were led to believe that we could and should go to college and that was the natural next step. And we did. I think we were promised that if we were conscientious, we would go to tertiary education and from there we would come into a place in society. As we all know, that kind of unraveled, starting at the period of the Vietnam War. And then with the economic downturn soon after that in the '70s and the promises that were made to us and that we believed, were not kept. And that's part of the drama of people born in 1946.

Q: What was Cleveland like as a city?

WHITMAN: Cleveland believed in itself in the 1950s. We had something called the Terminal Tower. Sounds like a bad disease. Terminal because that's where the trains ended up. And we were told many times that this was America's seventh largest city, and

the Terminal Tower was the highest building outside of New York. But even in the short time that I was a high school person there, we could see Cleveland going into decline.

There's something in Cleveland that has a death wish. The places that could have been of interest, the neighborhood around the university, the wonderful Italian neighborhood, the little alternative places of living and working were never accepted by the city elders. The city was visibly dying already from the '50s.

In the '60s of course many cities had big problems. Cleveland did in 1968 with the Hough Riots and has been in miserable decline ever since. It's a sad thing. Cleveland remains a friendly, attractive place. But it seems to have a low image of itself and is often the butt of jokes. It doesn't insult people from Cleveland, I don't think, when it works itself into comedic sketches about, "The place I went to in Africa was so miserable it was like Cleveland."

Cleveland still could be something of a paradise if it were allowed to just breathe. There's a certain suffocation there that could be the climate, it could be the type of people who settled there. I don't know. It was a lost opportunity. I left when I could. I never hated Cleveland. But clearly, if you wanted to live a life, you left Cleveland.

Q: What made Cleveland?

WHITMAN: The Carnegies. It was the oil. It was during that period around 1900, I think. The big avenue in Cleveland is Carnegie Avenue. And Carnegie had his headquarters in Cleveland, and that was oil.

Q: Carnegie did steel too, didn't he?

WHITMAN: And steel, yes. Manufacturing not so much automobiles but auto parts, and the corporate headquarters of some of the large oil companies made it an outsized wealthy place at the beginning of the 20th century. But you know these things never last. It goes to elsewhere. Detroit, Toledo, Cleveland are in very miserable shape, and deserve to be better. I go to Cleveland once a month to see my mother. People couldn't be nicer. Living is very pleasant. It's a good place to be. A good place to grow up and probably a bad place to stay.

Q: When did you graduate from high school?

WHITMAN: Graduated in '64. Kids need to be bad. And our form of badness was to go to forbidden areas. There was nothing wrong with Little Italy, it was lovely. And there was a pizza parlor, Mama Santa's. Miserable, rotten pizza. But we went there mainly because we knew it'd upset our parents. I still don't know why they objected. It was downtown. There was a certain disdain for anything that was legally in the city limits of Cleveland.

Anyway, we loved Mama Santa's. And in those days, maybe one person might own a car. Not like nowadays when everyone does. And we just drove around and went to forbidden places. And that was our pleasure.

Among the people I knew were some remarkable young musicians. Sometimes we would gather at someone's house and hear someone who had been working on the *Hammerklavier* of Beethoven. And we would gather around and listen. And then someone else would take to the piano just having worked on some Chopin. This was amazing. I was just in awe. I understood the incredible privilege of being in that room. I couldn't play the piano.

Q: Were you attracted to any instrument?

WHITMAN: I was attracted to all instruments, I was enthralled with music. As a teenager, I understood that it was too late to become a musician. I gave it up without ever trying. When I was at Oberlin College, which has a conservatory, I never set foot in the conservatory. Only six or eight years later could I no longer resist. I dropped everything I was doing and took up the cello when I was 26. I was very musical. I certainly had a passion for it, but I never had any belief that I could do music.

Q: Any summer jobs?

WHITMAN: Sure, camp counseling and things. One summer I was a copy boy at the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, the one Churchill said was the best name for a newspaper he'd ever heard. Once I had to go out on something called an "art chase," which was a question of getting a photo of a recently deceased person for the obit section. It wasn't fun, the person wasn't quite dead yet when I got to the door that day, he had doused his charcoal fire in the back yard with kerosene, and it blew up on him. He had just returned from multiple tours as an Air Force pilot in Vietnam, came back unscathed, Get the sad irony? Such was my very brief career in the newspaper industry.

We had internships back then, only we called them "jobs," and we got paid a bit. It never occurred to us to put this stuff on our résumés.

Q: On the social side, what were the dating patterns in high school?

WHITMAN: The word "date" was a word of enormous embarrassment to the group that I knew. A date was something that other mammals do to prepare reproduction. We mainly traveled in packs. I think we were just too flummoxed and embarrassed to get into that. We knew that dating was something you do because of having sexual desires and getting on to reproduction. And it seemed improper. We weren't starchy people, but this was all too daunting. We were boys terrified of girls. I know I was. Girls were much more prepared for life. Boys were under the pressure of information from all sides, reminding them of their responsibilities of having careers and stuff. The girls were beginning to have that. But marriage, which is related to dating, was something so remote. It was so remote. We had desires; we didn't act them out much. I think that's the way to say it.

Q: After high school what were you up to?

WHITMAN: After high school, the natural thing for people at Heights High was to go to college. I did the whole conventional thing. My parents took me to see colleges. I was charmed by the little places, and I was charmed by the known and the unknown. I remember being in great angst about feeling I needed to do the right thing.

I applied to a number of places. I went to Oberlin because they accepted me early and it just was the way to put an end to all the questioning, Oberlin being 40 miles from where my parents were. In 1964—I'm comparing this with some pain to what I see going around today—my father's yearly salary was maybe \$15,000. And he took less than a third of it and wrote a check for \$4,000. I didn't have a scholarship. My father was not rich, if he was making \$15,000. But he wrote a check four years in a row. And I did not have the burden of debt, I did not have the anguish of being unable to pay fees. When I see what's going on today, I think it's monstrous.

Q: We're talking about the extreme rates of tuition. You can get a law degree from Irvine University in California and end up with a quarter million dollars in debt.

WHITMAN: I've been dealing with this recently, skipping ahead a lot to today. I deal with students. I met with one and her mother on Sunday. They're in big trouble. And they're very angry about being misled. I think the university system is at the point of collapse in the U.S. I know that a college education does not cost \$50,000. But I know that universities are demanding that much money. I don't want to be too judgmental, but I see it as money laundering basically. I see it as a corporate scam.

Anyway, in the innocent days of the early '60s, my father paid a check and I went. Oberlin was great. Vietnam exactly coincided with my four years. The famous 1968—that was my graduation year. The famous incident of the Air Force recruiter coming to campus and the students surrounding the car and preventing him from recruiting, that would have been in '67. I remember things going on at Columbia, Stanford, all over. These are big troubles.

At Oberlin, we were innocent. We were talkers. We talked hours and hours about the merits and demerits of the war. And the North Vietnamese had a really nasty regime, but so did the South Vietnamese. We had endless nights talking about the issues, pro and con. I was there the day the Air Force recruiter came. I was in the group. I won't say I was an activist; I wasn't. I was just baffled by the whole thing. But I was in the group the day the car was surrounded, prevented from going up to campus.

What I remember was the distinction made between the system and the individual in the car. All care was given to the individual. The students brought doughnuts and coffee, they escorted him to the bathroom. They made it clear that this was nothing against this individual. This I think set Oberlin apart from other schools where things were

happening. There was a well-articulated sense that the system had betrayed us, not the individuals.

We had a series of speakers every Tuesday. We had marvelous people. Composers, occasionally the Cleveland Orchestra would come out. It was a small school, 2,000 students. And in Finney Chapel, every Tuesday there would be an event of some significance. Having been in that chapel, hearing Martin Luther King and his presence was quite something. Oberlin, as some people know, is the first college in America to admit African Americans, and also the first to admit women. It's always been sort of proud of that.

Q: What courses were you taking?

WHITMAN: I went to college knowing that I would either be a psychology major or an English major. Like all liberal kids from good public high schools. In fact I never took even a single course in either of them because of the requirements of students at that time. You had to have a language, you had to have biology. And I took courses that I would not have chosen. But two of them overwhelmed me in their appeal, and one was history and one was French. I was struggling with French. I was put in the wrong section. I was put in a course at least two years beyond my capacities, doing very badly in it. I went to my advisor and asked to be placed at a more appropriate level.

They said, "Nope, we don't make changes." And so my only alternative was to learn French very quickly, which I did. I never took English. I never took psychology (*laughs*). But history, French, these seized me. I was just enthralled. This had to do partly with the brilliance of the teachers.

Q: What type of history?

WHITMAN: Well, at that time of course it was European history. We weren't into globalism yet. But we had the most marvelous teacher, Robert Niel. Whatever he taught, you would go to learn that. We did a one-year course on Germany from 1648 to World War II. It was the most intense experience. I think I can't even describe it. I had no particular interest in Germany, but I knew that that class was the place to be that year. It was an enormous experience. Following the fate of a great country going through its traumas. It was emotionally and intellectually compelling.

Q: Did you find yourself really attracted to European history?

WHITMAN: I did. The rest of the world was unknown to me and to most of the people there. They had something called the Shansi program. I wasn't part of it, but it was something that went back 150 years. It had to do with missionaries to China. And that was part of the scene. I took some Japanese lessons because I thought it would be fun. I think I lasted two weeks.

I did have wanderlust. When it came time to think about junior year, I very much wanted to go to Lebanon. Lebanon had not completely broken down by 1966. There were troubles, but it wasn't as bad as it later became. My parents hated the idea of my going to Lebanon. I ended up going to France.

Q: What did they have against it?

WHITMAN: Lebanon. Danger. Danger. Bad things could happen to their only son. Their only child.

We had a terrible fight, my parents and I. I'm not sure I did this from conscience; I wanted to go to Alabama and open the voting system for blacks. I did it more from curiosity. I wanted to be with the northerners who went to meddle around in southern states during the Civil Rights Movement. Some of them got killed. I felt that this was the place to be. This was where history was happening. I wanted to witness it. I planned to go. There was a total impasse. My parents knew that some white liberals were being killed by white racists in the South. They said, "No, you have no money. You can only get a bus ticket if we give you the money to go, and we're not giving it to you."

I was enraged. I thought, "Life includes risk, and it's for me to decide." I think these conflicts happen with all teenagers and their parents. The teenagers are immortal and curious and have wanderlust, and the parents need to have them safe. Well, there's no such thing as safety, I think. So going to Europe in 1966 was an enormous adventure. I went on a ship and it was a very strange foreign place. The ease of travel, as people do now, was not the case back then. It was most exceptional to set foot in Europe in the post-war period before airplanes became so commonplace.

So it was a difficult year. It was cold, it was dark. Paris was not a friendly place in '66, '67. But I made my way to *The Paris Review*, I worked with them. The Paris editor at that time was Maxine Groffsky. And I was always welcome in that tiny little office with the paraffin heater. And I loved, but did not enjoy Paris, I must say. I loved the Luxembourg Gardens. I went there every day. I felt this was part of my life. I wasn't part of much of anything. I met Bill Styron in the *porte cochère* of the *Paris Review* offices on the rue de Tournon, after he had just sold *Confessions of Nat Turner* to the Book-of-the-Month club. He wanted Maxine to know.

Anyway, I worked on the French and came back pretty fluent and became more so when I was a student my last year at Oberlin. It was all French at that point. And we had students from France living in the French house, and they were instructed to refuse to speak English with us, and that did help. I learned French.

I learned French knowing that this was not going to lead to a career. But I still lived under that promise that had been given around the late '50s, early '60s. If you are a student, if you accept the terms of being a student, you will go to the university and there will be something for you. This was the implicit promise made to us. Well, it never worked (*laughs*). So other things happen.

Q: What about protests and all? Did you get involved in those?

WHITMAN: I did. And as I was mentioning earlier, I can't claim that I was really angrily involved in this. I was there partly from curiosity, partly from the wish to witness history. I knew something very significant was going on. I wasn't entirely convinced that the case was simple. I did go to the first protest in Washington. An enormous number of young people. We went on a bus from Oberlin to Washington. Frankly, I was kind of curious to see Washington in the springtime. I did participate in the protest. I was not one of the shouters. I was not one of the leaders. I just wanted to be there. Later when it became time to be either inducted into the military or not, then my ideas were quite crystallized and I determined not to be part of this thing. It was a foolish thing, this war.

Q: Well, was there ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]?

WHITMAN: Not at Oberlin. There couldn't have been. The students would never have permitted it. I didn't go there for that purpose, nor did I become a militant anything. But that's just the Zeitgeist of the place at that time. It was anti-military. It was not pacifist. I was one of those who wanted to be there to learn and to not have the learning disrupted overly by efforts that might be the right thing to do, but might have no effect at all on what American policy would be. Well, it did. A few years later we got Lyndon Johnson out of office, and...

Q: You got Nixon in.

WHITMAN: Got Nixon in. I've always hated both of them with all my soul. The way Johnson lied to Americans. He got a lot of young Americans killed. I suppose he's not guilty of all of the 50,000 who were killed in Vietnam, but maybe half of them. And I think he was a bloodthirsty monster. And the Gulf of Tonkin resolution was one of the most craven, deceitful things done ever, I think. We now know that nothing happened in the Gulf of Tonkin. I think that Johnson knew that.

Anyway, Nixon, though we hated him, promised to end the war. But he didn't (*laughs*). So that would be maybe for the next segment when I landed in Boston. That's about when Nixon came in. I graduated from Oberlin with a degree in French. It seemed obvious to many people, especially my father, that a degree in French was absolutely worthless. There's nothing you can do with it. I had many terrible fights with him. I wanted to prove he was wrong, so I did by getting a job teaching French. I also got a contract to interpret French for the State Department. At the same time, I got a summer job taking Americans to France and Switzerland to learn French as their teachers. So I got three jobs immediately upon leaving college. And I've been thumbing my nose at my father ever since. He was disgusted that a young man could do something so useless. I went on to teach French in suburban Boston.

Q: Did the Peace Corps grab you?

WHITMAN: The Peace Corps grabbed my soul. I wanted to do the Peace Corps and I applied, but I never heard from them. I applied in 1968, I applied to the Peace Corps and to VISTA, the domestic equivalent. The bureaucracies were so slow. I think I heard from them eight months later, when I was already living in Boston and teaching. Sure, I would have gone to the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps partly was a way of postponing or ruling out military service at a time when it was equal parts of fear and disgust, I think.

It took me a couple of years to figure out that Vietnam was just getting people killed on both sides and achieving nothing. Nothing. I didn't want to be part of it. I knew that being an American soldier in Vietnam, sooner or later you'd kill a child or a woman or something. And then you would yourself be killed or wounded. It wasn't really fear; it was disgust mostly that kept me away from that. So I was a draft evader. The teaching job served that purpose. Not perfectly, but I spent about half of those four years, '68 to '72, assured that because of the teaching job I would be not drafted.

The draft system was nuts at that time. It was arbitrary, it was unpredictable. The rules changed every month. If your draft board was in Cleveland, the rules were completely different than if your draft board was in New York. And everybody was gaming the system. Most young men were avoiding the draft. A few were eager to go into the military, to witness history. I just didn't want to do it. So the teaching served that purpose.

It wasn't easy because the deferment never came. The headmaster and I would request it in September, and I'd never hear until April. So I spent these long, cold Boston winters with the uncertainty: would I make it? Would I make it through that year? Would I even be permitted to continue to teach? This was a four-year period of uncertainty.

Long story short, I made it to my 26th birthday. I was never averse to serving my country; it wasn't that. I felt that President Johnson and President Nixon had got us into a deep cesspool, and I didn't want to help them with what they were doing. I guess resistance is the right word. I resisted. I would have gladly done national service of another type or military service. But not in this war. With the unflattering terms that they had for Vietnamese people, this was clearly a racist war and a futile one and one with no objectives.

I understood the domino theory, but I was seven years old when the Korea War finished. I never quite understood it, of course, because I was so young. But in retrospect, I see the Chinese were stopped. Communism was stopped at the border. I think that was a good thing for South Korea. But we were unable to do it in Vietnam. The domino theory was proven to be wrong. It's not true that if one country goes, the next one inevitably will.

Q: I had the feeling that if we hadn't been in Vietnam, albeit not doing very well, Indonesia could have gone.

WHITMAN: Absolutely. But as a consequence, this is the "what if" theory of history. Indonesia—you're quite right—was in terrible danger and had a horrible regime, which

we supported. I'm just not sure it's parallel. Would I have gone to war in Indonesia? I don't know.

I thought communism was appalling. It was inhuman, cruel, destructive, demeaning. I felt that my government wasn't doing a damn thing truly to show that we could outdo communism. We could shoot them, but we weren't doing any other thing. We weren't developing credibility. We supported the most dreadful dictators, Mobutu and such people. To defeat communism, we should have cut off Mobutu.

I'm not a policy person. I never was. But if you're asking me to put a uniform on, go over and kill some people and come back maybe missing a leg or maybe not alive, I just didn't see how this was going to make my country or any other country better. I just didn't see it. So I took the alternatives.

Q: So what were you up to then?

WHITMAN: Well, '64 to '68, college. The crescendo of need for soldiers in Vietnam came in '68. That's when the big riots were. I got a job teaching French at the Thayer Academy. Something that I did because of the circumstances. I didn't think I would be interested in teaching, but I very quickly was enthralled. I loved it. I would never have done it if I hadn't been forced into it through the backdoor. I learned enormous things about the transfer of knowledge and poise and compassion for younger people. Oh, it was fantastic. It was a nice little place, Thayer Academy. It was 13 miles from Boston, before the public transportation was extended out to Braintree. Most of my students had never been to Boston.

Q: Good God.

WHITMAN: Thirteen miles away. I went every day.

Q: What was the origin of the Academy?

WHITMAN: Thayer as you remember, was the person who founded West Point. I believe it's the same individual, or maybe a brother, who founded this little private school in Massachusetts. There was no religious background to it. Thayer was also the name of the judge who sent Sacco and Vanzetti to electrocution.

Q: They were anarchists.

WHITMAN: Yes. Judge Thayer sent them to capital punishment. Nobody quite understood what or who Thayer was. One student who went to Thayer but did not graduate was John Cheever (*laughs*). And our headmaster once made a pilgrimage to see Cheever and to ask him why he left. He was the one well-known person who came out of Thayer.

Again, it was sort of idyllic. And I learned French by teaching it. I never had learned the grammar, but I had to learn it in order to teach it. French is an ordinary language with an easy grasp of Americans. But not many Americans actually become immersed in it, unless they have family connections. I was completely immersed. I read stuff and I understood the grammar, and I think this made a tremendous difference later in the Foreign Service.

We're sitting here at FSI where languages are taught. I've met Americans who speak French, but who don't really. The difference in how you interact with people is just enormous. I was an interpreter for 13 years, on and off. That was my real training. I spent many months on the road with French-speaking Africans. That was when I really learned French. And later, when I was in Cameroon, Haiti, Guinea, a few other places—the manner of interaction, it was enormous. If you could truly speak as fluently as your counterparts, it is enormous. I obtained that level in Danish briefly at the end of my stay in Denmark. But I think I've lost it since.

So we are in Boston. Big part of my life there, I joined the Handel and Haydn Society, under conductor Tom Dunn. We performed in Symphony Hall and in Jordan Hall. Those were enormous experiences.

I learned as a tenor, sometimes baritone, what it was like to be taught something. I unconsciously used a contrived pedagogy, but this all became part of what I was doing. I lived in Braintree, Weymouth, Brookline, Beacon Hill, and Newton. I kept moving for various reasons. My salary, \$4,600 per year, didn't go very far. I needed to go where the cheaper rent was. At one point, I had no car. I had a motorcycle. Life was very light. There was no baggage. I was just moving around. That chorus was a really important part of my development. It was music. And it was a magnificent chorus.

Q: Looking at it later, what happened to the chorus?

WHITMAN: It's still there. The '60s and '70s in Boston were a special time of Boston immersed in its own past and own identity. I witnessed Yo-Yo Ma's first meeting with Rostropovich. Rostropovich had no idea who Yo-Yo Ma was. We knew who Yo-Yo Ma was, as a student at Harvard. This was a decade after Leonard Bernstein gave his famous lectures. Music, the plastic arts, and the intellect. It was marvelous. I don't know if Boston still has this prevailing feeling about itself as kind of an essence or kind of a renaissance city, which it was.

Q: During this time, you got the darker side of Boston, and that was the bussing business. That was going on, wasn't it?

WHITMAN: It was. When I taught in my suburban little school the students who'd never been to Boston, the students seemed to be very curious, enlightened, wanting to do something. So I created a tutoring program in one of the ghettos in a place south of Boston. For me, this was a way of opening up the world to my students.

The stated purpose of it was to have young African Americans assisted in their math and their English. They had lousy schools. Columbia Point was the name of it. It was one of these dreadful, badly conceived spaceships in the middle of a city. No stores, no transportation, no schools. Just a warehouse for poor people. People hated being there.

The program went pretty well for a couple of months, until the community began to be suspicious of having suburban kids there. They didn't like it. They felt that there was an invasion of some sort. They sabotaged the program in various ways, and it was very sad. I tried it again the second year. Same thing happened. The racial tensions were very high. I wanted to do something to mediate that. The kids liked us. Their parents did not. We were not all white, by the way. There were some African Americans at this little private school. I'm in touch with some of them still.

By 1972, tensions were very high. I had quit my teaching job and was driving a taxi. That year, taxi drivers were being murdered. There were six or seven murders. Taxi drivers were going into the bad neighborhoods—bad being a neighborhood where people would pull out guns and knives—and it became a dilemma for any taxi driver. If a customer said, "Take me to such a neighborhood," and the driver knew that several murders had taken place there in the past two weeks, the driver would refuse to go there. It was seen as racist. And it was, I guess, but it was also survivalist. I never refused to take anybody anywhere, but I admit I was pretty frightened when I went into some of the neighborhoods where these murders of taxi drivers had taken place.

I got advice from the veterans, who said, "If you go into a cul-de-sac, don't go head first. Go in backwards so you can be ready to escape if you need to." There were strategies. In fact, it was shameful that there was the Boston of the universities, and then there was the Boston that was excluded. The Columbia Points and even Jamaica Plain, which is a very beautiful, lovely place, but demographically isolated. It was very uncomfortably segregated and there wasn't a damn thing I could do about it. As a taxi driver I did what people asked me to do.

I was a terrible taxi driver. I never understood where I was. Boston was not a planned city (*laughs*), and there's no logic to the streets at all. I did what I could. Those were dark days for me because I think the best daily pay I ever got was \$20 a day. Usually it was half of that. It was a struggle. I sort of lost my footing. I knew I needed to quit the teaching job and proceed, but I didn't know where to proceed to. Other things happened. Graduate school and such.

Q: But were you taking a world view at the time of "Whither Dan?" and all that?

WHITMAN: (*laughs*) Absolutely. This was a very uncomfortable time for me, because I knew "whither" was the question. I didn't have a clue of the answer. I had no clue. That's always been a sore spot with me. What shall I do? And in retrospect, everything that happened almost makes sense, but as it happened, it made no sense at all. I went where there was an opening for me. I never had a plan and I really still don't. The Foreign

Service gave me a lot of structure and a way to do things and get things done. I'm very grateful for that. "Whither Dan?" No, never. I often asked, and I never had the answer.

Q: How about the rest of Boston as a cultural fleshpot?

WHITMAN: My center of gravity, although I lived in Brookline, was Cambridge. I was there all the time. Not because of Harvard so much. There was something about Harvard Square, which was the acropolis. You would inevitably see people you had known, people you hadn't seen many in years. There were little pubs, there was the Harvard Coop for looking at books.

Did I actually avail myself of the museums and stuff? Ehh, not so much. It was just a place, a center of gravity for me. There was a great theater on Brattle Street, the Loeb. We called it the "Low Ebb" but it was fantastic. There was the Cambridge Center for Adult Education, where I worked briefly. There were some marvelous bookstores.

There was also the Longy School of Music, where I later went full time. A tiny little school created by Madame Longy from France. She brought solfège to the United States, and Longy was where you went to learn solfège. And I was never good at it, but I worked at it and I took up the 'cello again. I was 26, way too late. But after repressing the wish to do it for many years, I finally gave in.

After leaving a four-year teaching job, my next year I kind of went nuts because it was the first year of freedom of my life. First time ever that I could actually do things based on what I wanted to do. So I signed up for 'cello lessons. And I traveled to Africa. You don't think of these things exactly together, but I wanted to see Africa. I just wanted to see it. I had no agenda there; I just thought it must be fascinating. And it was.

Crimson Travel bureau in Cambridge had a marquee that said, "Please go away." So I walked in one day in 1973 and asked when the next flight was to Africa. They thought I was crazy, probably correctly. But they sent me to Casablanca that week, the only destination they could think of that didn't have a visa requirement for Americans. From there I made my way to the Senegalese consulate, got a visa for Senegal, and from there, likewise to Mali. Did the whole thing for a thousand dollars, thanks to an arithmetic error. I thought I had two thousand dollars in the bank, but actually had only one. So I spent every penny, wouldn't have done that if I'd had my act together or any common sense.

Q: During all this time, what about news of the world? Were you following things in Israel and the Soviet Union, the coming of independence in Africa?

WHITMAN: I read the *New York Times* obsessively, and I saw myself on the front page every day when they discussed the draft. The word "draft" had such a negative effect. I hated that word even when it meant "air current," and it was on the front page every day for years.

The independences were earlier. I was too young – eleven - during Ghana’s independence in 1957. I thought the Cold War was baffling; it was frightening. I remember being pretty scared during the Cuban Missile Crisis when I was in high school. I believed what I was told, which was that the Soviet Union was an evil place. I didn’t believe that Russians were bad people. I didn’t know anything about it.

I read the *Globe* a lot. I don’t remember if I had a subscription. It wasn’t all that easy to get information back then. There was no email. I don’t think I had a television. *The New York Times* was too expensive. It was 50 cents, I think. Or maybe a quarter. I couldn’t afford it. So I read the *Globe*. The *Globe* is a bit more provincial. But yes, I followed things.

I still did not know the map of the world, but I knew things, especially places where I’d been. A friend of mine moved to Canada; I went to visit him and his wife. They moved from Canada to the UK, and I went there to visit. Then they went to Milan. I went there to visit. I went without agenda, without ever successfully dealing with this question, “Whither Dan?” but I got around mainly from curiosity.

Later, this all sort of made sense when I was in the Foreign Service and I had points of reference. I’d been to Milan, I’d been to London, I’d been to Ouagadougou and to Bamako and to Dakar and to Marrakech, just because that’s what I chose to do when I first had freedom. Freedom is having no commitments and a thousand dollars in the bank. That’s what I had.

Q: Did you ever get the urge to go to California?

WHITMAN: I did, of course. And did frequently, as an interpreter. I took them on what became my standard tour of San Francisco. I love San Francisco. Every trip—I think I took 40 or 50 trips total—every one of them went to California. It was San Francisco, Los Angeles, or San Diego. San Francisco is obviously the most beautiful. I saw a lot of America while taking foreign visitors to the hog farms in Illinois, to the slaughterhouses in Colorado, to the King Center in Atlanta. We used to go to Puerto Rico, to the Virgin Islands. I never went to Alaska. I did go to Hawaii where they had a certain kind of irrigation system that they wanted agronomists to see. I really discovered America in introducing it to foreign visitors who depended on me for the French and for the car rentals. I was the babysitter and the bartender and the companion of a lot of people. I started doing this in ’69, and I did it off and on until 1984.

Q: What about blacks in the South? Was this a problem with your visitors?

WHITMAN: Actually, the problem was mainly with naïve Southern white people. I remember one in Atlanta who wanted to show how adept he was at going in and out of other cultures. In fact, he was a self promoting fool. He took a Malian and me deep into some ghetto place where the vibrations were very negative toward foreigners and white people. There was a club, and I remember everybody in sight had guns and knives. They were looking at us very suspiciously. We were aliens. I don’t fault them. They had every

reason to think that we were intruding or maybe trying to find out something bad about them. This naïve white guy really was doing the wrong thing by taking us into a very dicey situation.

I don't know what went on in there, probably some illegal things. But there was a tiny little window latch, and the window latch opened. I could see a pair of eyes. The bouncer had some logic and some good sense. He just looked at us and he said, "Are you members?" And I said no. And that bouncer I think was a very benevolent person and may have saved my life. *(laughs)* He said it in a most gracious way. He said, "If you're not members, you're not coming in." There was stuff in there happening that people didn't want others to see.

And certainly not Africans. Africans, when they came, we wanted them to see African American communities. It was not always harmonious. Africans felt that what they saw were situations of enormous prosperity and advantage. There were some tense moments. I remember in the last days of semi-official segregation in the '70s, I took a group to North Carolina and there was the white college here, and one mile down the road was the African American college. I was shocked. I didn't know that we still had such things. I didn't know how to explain this to the African visitors. Both were equally inviting, equally hospitable. But the separation was clear.

When we went to the African American version—they were both state schools—we were told about the problems that the students had. Among them was the lack of available parking. My African visitors said, "Sorry, I think our interpreter has just gone off the cliff. Could you repeat that? You have a lack of parking? You mean the students have cars?" The Africans were just dumbfounded that any student would own a car. And in addition, would complain about having trouble parking the car.

It was beyond their comprehension. When I was in Africa later, posted in South Africa and Cameroon, it actually became more raw, more difficult, as African Americans came with good intentions of improving the lives of South Africans. And when they saw that they weren't being welcomed in the way they thought they would be, and when Africans reacted to them as intruders, it was quite painful to see.

We had people come to South Africa to teach race relations. Their interlocutors I think were light-years ahead of them in dealing with really raw problems, which obviously in South Africa came from apartheid. Those who came to train South Africans inevitably had more to learn than to teach, let's put it that way.

Discovering the South was delightful. We saw Faulkner's house in Oxford, Mississippi, which is a place like a shrine. It was for Africans as well. They understood who Faulkner was. There was a place there devoted to the preservation of the Southern culture: black, white, and everything else. A most marvelous institution. The U.S. government at that time wanted visitors to see a bit of everything. At that time, that meant cities, countryside, south, west, north. They tried to hit every type of place in the U.S.

That was enormous. Enormous for me because I think I went to at least 40 states, if not 45. I learned about my country. Along the way, always incrementally interpreting French, I learned how to be a better interpreter. This again, really served my interests later when, when communicating with people and not even having to think about how to say things, as my colleagues all did. It was a huge advantage. Africans taught me enormous things. Their slight separation in observing America in ways that we never did was tremendously revealing. They would look at the largeness of the industrial production and they would find hilariously humorous things to say about it that we would never question. That was great.

Q: Where do we go from here?

WHITMAN: I guess I should mention my interview with Amadou Hampâté Bâ in 1979. I'd read his transcription of an ancient epic poem, handed down by oral tradition through many generations. The *Kaïdara* was an account of a spiritual journey, on many levels -- but I had no idea how many, until I found Bâ in Abidjan in 1979, and spent an afternoon interviewing him. The text of that interview is included in the English version of the poem, which I translated into English later that year, then published it in the mid 1980s.

Imagine my astonishment when another Bâ – Tierno Bah, from Guinea, a Smithsonian scholar, found me by phone in Washington in 2007 and said, “Do you understand what you have done?”

I thought he was a crank, but I stayed on the line. “You have located the main human cultural contribution of the African continent, which we know from studies of bovine migration is thousands of years old.” Little did I know, or do I even now. But Tierno Bah has become one of my best friends and advisors, and it still is.

Do we digress?

Q: And how. Let's get back to where you left off as an itinerant interpreter.

WHITMAN: We go to graduate school and to my year as a Fulbrighter in the Congo. From there, it goes pretty directly into Delphi Research Associates, which was a year and a half of doing State Department work under contract and then into USIA [United States Information Agency.]

Q: What date are we talking about?

WHITMAN: Well, we're in about 1983 or so. After 13 years of nomadic wandering to the Congo and around the United States as a French interpreter, I finally took a job.

Q: In the Congo, what were you doing?

WHITMAN: I was a Fulbright professor, which sounds like a very fancy title. We used to call it the Université Marien Ngouabi, which was the name of a former president of

Congo-Brazzaville who'd been assassinated. This was a pitiful university with some very well intentioned people. I was teaching basic English in the language department. I called it—I hope this doesn't sound too disrespectful—"the ship of fools" because it was an international group. There were the Italians teaching Italian, the Russians teaching Russian, the British Council person teaching real English, myself teaching American English, and others. We were all in kind of an isolated bubble. It was a most delightful existence.

Q: Did you have a feeling you were almost canceling each other out?

WHITMAN: Not at all. There was no sense of competition. Not at all. It was very collegial. We had the Iranian guy who was there on a French passport. Some of us lived in a little academic ghetto in a suburb called Makélékélé. I did not know until 20 years later when the civil war broke out that these little sections of the city were actually ethnically divided. I didn't even know that when I lived there, because it was such a friendly place and people knew one another. It was just an idyllic urban environment.

Q: What was the political atmosphere?

WHITMAN: Congo-Brazzaville was a people's republic. It was rhetorically purely Stalinist, communist. There was no commercial advertising at all in the city, but frequent reminders of the ideology. There would be "wonderful"—I say in quotes with a little wink—political slogans like, "Work hard today for a better tomorrow." *All* Congolese people knew these phrases and all of them had the most wonderful sense of humor. Nobody believed in this ideology, not even the members of the government.

They were wonderful punsters. They would take, "Work hard today to live well tomorrow," and they would turn it into an ethnic comment, "Work hard in Makélékélé to live better in Poto-Poto." Poto-Poto was where the fat cats lived. In other words, one ethnic group was being subjected to the interests of another. Everybody knew it, and you would never see these things in print, but you would hear it all the time.

Q: What was the driving force behind this ideology?

WHITMAN: Oh, very simple. We were at the peak of the Cold War, and parts of Africa had decided—like Mobutu's Congo, the other Congo—to be aligned with the West and with the United States. Other parts had decided to be with the Soviets, because the Soviets had benefits and gifts and scholarships, and it was a simple matter. It was very pragmatic. I don't think any African country ever did any of these things for any real ideological reason. If the Soviets offered you a thousand scholarships, then you decided to have a Soviet-backed regime. President Sassou Nguesso, who I believe is still the President, was a—let's call him a benign dictator. He was certainly corrupt, but he wasn't murderous.

Congo-Brazzaville was poor, it was directionless. It was a country that had lost its identity a long time ago. However, there were friendly, personal feelings wherever you

went. People were friendly to you as an outsider or as a French speaker. They didn't much like the French.

Here's how it worked, Stu. The Soviets picked the government. The French ran the economy. And the Americans were just there. I was not connected with the embassy, but I was in Brazzaville during the last year that Bill Swing was there, the famous William Lacy Swing. He was a wonderful host to me. He was beloved by the Congolese people. I think many Congolese wondered, "Why are the Americans in the Congo? They don't seem to be doing much."

This was a parceled-out country. The Cubans were in charge of security. You never saw the Cubans, but they were out in the countryside making sure everything was the way the Cubans and the Soviets wanted to be. Very ironically, the oil enclave in Cabinda was being exploited—being drilled, I should say—by British and Americans, and was being defended by Cuban troops. There were these crazy paradoxes.

It was most enjoyable. I had a moped, which is an important social element. My colleagues at the university, who were paid miserable wages, could not afford to drive automobiles. The social expectation was that anyone in a professional position must buy an automobile, but in reality, they could not do this. In fact, they were always on foot. I had the privilege of having a moped and of not being a member of Congolese society. I was permitted to go freely wherever I wanted on my very inexpensive moped. You would see the professors walking and sweating under the hot sun. They would occasionally accept a ride with me on my moped, but would look very frightened that anyone might recognize them in this undignified position. Wonderful paradoxes, wonderful sense of community. I must say, in 1980, there was no sense at all of the horrible events that would happen in the '90s when the country fell apart.

Q: What about social life?

WHITMAN: Well, interesting you ask. At the end of my stay, I took Ambassador Swing, who was a magnificent ambassador and made every effort to be out in the community, out to dinner. I was a mere teacher. It was most gracious of him to accept an invitation. I could not reciprocate his wonderful hospitality in my tiny little dorm room. I took him to a restaurant. He said, I remember very poignantly, "Dan, have you been inside the home of a Congolese?"

I said, "Well, Ambassador, yes, many times. I have friends and they're most gracious."

He looked at me and said, "I've never been inside the house of a Congolese citizen." And I'm sure that this was because of Congolese love and respect for this man and the sense that they could not properly reciprocate his magnificent hospitality, so why even try.

I had the benefit of not being an embassy official. I was friendly with some Congolese, some of the writers. We went driving out to the tributaries of the river. We watched the sunset over the river. Incredible. The sun would set, and 100,000 bats would take off

from the island in the middle of one of the most magnificent rivers in the world and head for the mainland. The whole sky would darken with 100,000 bats. Recognizing sunset, magnificent things. Beautiful, spontaneous, natural, and communal occurrences.

I had the benefit of having complete access. If I had been a diplomat, I would have had almost no access, especially because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the very high level of tension at that time in the Cold War. There was no contact permitted on either side. I, however, was not a diplomat, and after asking the PAO in Brazzaville if there were any restrictions on my activities, I found out that and for me there weren't any. So I took some time at the Pushkin Institute taking Russian lessons, just because there wasn't much else to do, and here were free Russian lessons. They were wonderful to me. I had this marvelous access I would not have had if I had been officially tied to the embassy.

Q: In your contacts with the Soviets, did politics intrude?

WHITMAN: Never, never. On the contrary, one anecdote comes to mind. I was in the courtyard of the Pushkin Institute. There were maybe 40 people in the courtyard of the institute at the end of a long afternoon. The director was chatting with us in French. My Russian wasn't good enough, and the *lingua franca* there was French. I asked the director in front of everyone, "I'm unable to find Radio Moscow on my shortwave radio. Can you tell me the frequency? I'd like to practice my Russian. I can get Radio Moscow in English, but I haven't been able to find the Russian version."

And the director of the Pushkin Institute said to me, in front of 40 people, "I wouldn't know. I listen only to the Voice of America."

Q: (laughs)

WHITMAN: Ah man, what a wonder. Everybody laughed. There were extreme Cold War tensions and ideological differences in the greater world. In this little bubble, everybody understood. We're just here in this nice country. I don't want to romanticize this, but I don't think anybody believed much in any ideology. They just were interested in getting on with things and helping one another where they could.

Q: Here you've got a Congo River going down one bank of the country. What was the tribal influence there?

WHITMAN: I'm not an expert on the ethnic complexities of the area. I do know that the tribes completely transcended the river, and you had the same tribes on opposite sides, because like all European boundary lines, even though the Congo River was a natural boundary, it was not an ethnic boundary. You had Lingala, the market language spoken on both sides.

I went over the river a few times because I had to or because I should. I hated Kinshasa. It was dangerous, it was mean and nasty. There were creepy people who would come up

to you and ask for things. I saw starving people in the streets selling these portraits made of butterfly wings. It was a very creepy place.

When I came back to the Brazzaville side, my ideology as an American was more in line with the Kinshasa side and not with Brazzaville. Brazzaville became much more my home. The division was extreme. Toward the end of my stay, the corruption and the meanness of the Kinshasa side was just beginning to go over to the other side.

For example, the police had been apparently instructed by their cousins how to really be meaningfully corrupt and nasty. At the beginning of my stay in 1980, this was unknown to me. I'd never been hit up by a policeman. But a year later, it was beginning to turn nasty. This apparently was from ethnic connections on the other side. I don't mean to denigrate the people of Mobutu's Congo. In fact, the ones that I knew were funny and brilliant and great problem-solvers.

The system, I'm afraid, was absolutely broken down. Everyone was just struggling for a real daily existence. The Brazzaville side was poor, expectations were low, but people were eating. They were carrying on. It was the strangest pragmatic flip-flop. We think of capitalism or the western system as a more pragmatic system. In fact (*laughs*), I remember it as the reverse, that the ideological side, Brazzaville, in practice was more pragmatic. This may sound pretty screwy. I just want to emphasize, the feeling in Brazzaville was peaceful, friendly, and constructive. In the Kinshasa that I remember, it was quite the opposite.

Q: How about the students? How were they doing?

WHITMAN: The students were wonderful young people. I was put in a difficult situation. I was brought as a Fulbrighter to Brazzaville in October. I was told, "The academic year starts a bit late; it's not exactly set date. It will start at some time."

Well, I waited until early December before anything started. The students came drifting in. I was teaching language in an amphitheater two hours a week in one session. I thought, "This is impossible." I said, "Can't I meet the students more often?"

"No, no. We don't have the space. You'll just have to make do."

When I was briefed by the department chairman, he said, "In this department, normally we pass half the students and we fail half."

As a naïve American, I said, "I don't fail people just because of a curve. If my students succeed, they will all pass."

He said, "You'll see."

And while the students were very likeable, the productivity was zero. There was nothing. I began to wonder what was wrong. The students were not learning; they were not

coming to class. Is it me? Is it my method of instruction? They were retaining nothing. The one exception was a little group in the back of the room, who were taller than the others in the class and who were acing everything. I didn't understand. Later I learned these were Chadian refugees. They were absolutely brilliant. And they were leagues ahead of their Congolese comrades.

The Congolese, I later learned, had no interest in learning English. The students assigned to that class by the ideologically centralized government had been arbitrarily given professions to pursue. They all wanted to be lawyers. But the government had decided in every case which individual would pursue which major. I later learned that my students had no interest in learning English. They really wanted to just go to law school.

Q: Girls? Boys?

WHITMAN: Both girls and boys. Now that you mention it, I'm sure that women in general had more of a struggle to succeed than men. There was sexism of course, but I didn't see it in a flagrant form. There was a language department, and under that, the English department. The Congolese teachers had all been on Fulbrights to the United States and had all done their theses on African American protest literature of the '60s. I thought that was an interesting topic, but it was the only topic that any of them had done. This was a reflection of the ideology of their state. I thought, "Well, that's good. Maybe we can expand this and include more than that one single decade." The United States had a literature at that time of over 250 years. The students loved it. The students loved going into other forms of American literature. They had never been exposed to anything other than that one decade.

I remember in late December or January, the department chair came to me and said, "Mr. Whitman, are you familiar with the novels of Bernard Malamud?"

I said, "Well, sort of, but I don't know—why are you asking?"

He said, "Well, we have this class that's written their final exams on *The Assistant*, a novel by Bernard Malamud, and there's an issue with the professor. We need you to correct the exams."

There was great embarrassment. I said, "Sure, I don't have a copy of it. Maybe you could provide a copy I could quickly read? I've read some other Malamud, but not that one."

Anyway, it became clear what was happening: the professor had skipped town. He had taken a second Fulbright to go to the United States in January, but hadn't told anybody. He left his university high and dry. He gave the students the exam. They wrote the exam and by the time the exams were submitted, he was gone. So I got to read essay exams. It was a great insight. I read the essay exams written by these students, as taught by their Congolese professor, trained in rudimentary Marxism.

These essays, all of them, indicated that this novel was evidence of the failure of capitalism. I thought, “How odd. Maybe Mr. Malamud would be interested to hear this.” I knew a friend of a friend of a friend. I copied by hand—there were no photocopy machines there—one of these exams. It was in florid language that was ideologically absurd. I sent it to someone I knew could deliver it to Malamud. I said, “Mr. Malamud, you might be interested to see what’s being said about you in Central Africa.”

Malamud’s novels are very dark and tragic, and I had never known what a wonderful sense of humor he had. He actually answered me in a letter, which I still have, saying, “Mr. Whitman, most interested to see that my novel has reached Central Africa.” In the essay I’d sent, there was a two-paragraph florid rhetorical statement doing nothing other than identifying the name of the main character, Frank Alpine, in this novel. In Malamud’s terse response to me, he said, “I could say the student, in his essay, is approaching the truth.” That was my entire correspondence with Bernard Malamud.

What’s the point? I saw in these essays the drift of an ideology imposed on students who had no belief at all, but who understand that if they were to succeed in academia and in a centralized state economy, they had to do the Marxist catechism. And they did the catechism very well. They said what they were told to say. I am sure that none of them believed a word of it, but they were delightful young people.

When the professor teaching that course disappeared, the students would gather in the courtyard and just walk around aimlessly not knowing what to do. They used to come up to me and say, “Mr. Whitman, what do we do?”

And I said, “I really don’t know what you should be doing. I’m sorry, I’m glad to get together with you if you want to.” I think if I made a contribution as a teacher at Marien Ngouabi University, it was that I always showed up. I think I was the only one in the English department who did so. When I had a class at a certain time in a certain place, I was always there. I think this made an impression.

Q: Well, after working with this fertile academic world, where did you go?

WHITMAN: Ah! Well, I don’t know how fertile it was. My amphitheater, by the way, was often removed from my use, because it would be booked for political demonstrations. I don’t know if this was in order to prevent me from teaching, or whether these were actually legitimate activities.

From Brazzaville, I went back to Providence where I was living, just for a final few months. I thought I had received a job offer to teach French at University Amadou Bello of Kano, in Northern Nigeria. These were the days of aerograms. I received messages by rumor from seven or eight people, “Somebody’s been looking for you.” I had been away from my home. “They’re looking for you, and they want to hire you to teach French in Kano, Nigeria.”

I said, “That’s great.”

I sent some aerograms, and some telegrams. I couldn't get any answers. I would have called, but I didn't have a name or number to go by. I waited three months to get an answer, and then I did get a letter in the mail from the university there. I think it was April when I finally heard what they wanted, and the letter was dated something like December 10th. It said, "Your interview is in two days at 10 in the morning. Please be prompt." But I received this letter four months after that date. I often wondered about the path not taken.

So I came back to what any academic in humanities faces in the United States during an economic downturn, which is unemployment. I was an erudite taxi driver, as many others were in Boston. I did a variety of things. I did mainly freelance interpreting for the State Department. It was nice work, but it was only three or four months a year at most. Sometimes six months.

It was groups or individuals, International Visitors program. This was the heyday of Operation Crossroads Africa, which was a magnificent organization, destroyed by its own president some years later, I'm afraid. This was a very itinerant life. My friends were all itinerants because they were doing similar work. It was a bit scary not to have a home of any sort.

I very much welcomed the job offer in Washington from Delphi Research Associates to actually join their staff. My god, I had an actual job. Thus, relieving me of the constant stress of never knowing where I'd be the next week and whether there would be work or not. It was fascinating working with the people who came to visit and seeing America through their eyes. But the stress of not having a home and not knowing where I'd be in one week's time wore thin after 14 years. I was very glad to join the staff at Delphi. We did the planning for some of the International Visitor group trips, and we did the occasional contact work for the Embassy of Morocco, which wanted a brochure written about the fish industry. This came out of a conference in Rabat where I had been the interpreter in a conference on fish.

After the Korean Air Lines incident—when the Soviets shot down a commercial airplane and all the passengers perished—Cold War divisions intensified and all cultural exchange was halted, except for some scientific exchanges. There were things that American scientists could learn from Soviets, and vice versa. To this day, I'm not sure if there was something behind this, other than what looked like a scientific exchange. There may have been some hocus-pocus. Every month the president of Delphi would be in Moscow during a period of great diplomatic tensions. Let's just say I don't know entirely what he was really doing.

There were exchanges, though, and I did get involved in the logistics of it. With Yale Richmond, we published a little brochure on the protocol of hosting Soviet visitors. There were certain things, like the expectation between Americans and Soviets at that time that you pay for your own airfare, and the host pays for everything else. There were these little protocol issues which were known to the people who'd been doing this for some

decades, but we produced a little brochure explaining them to newcomers who might come along. I don't think it's much in circulation anymore.

Anyway, fascinating year and a half. It was hard work and not enough pay. There wasn't particularly good morale in that place, but it was a tremendous learning experience, seeing how a tiny private, nonprofit works in Washington. We were seeking funding from embassies and from USIA at the time. I wasn't involved in the requests for proposals in order to get these fancy contracts. I was the programmer once we got the contracts. It was enormously enlarging to actually be part of that tiny little thing. There were six of us at the beginning, and it grew to be a pretty large organization.

We did programming for multi-country IV programs that would come to see the Republican and Democratic National Conventions of 1984. We were hired to bring foreigners to observe the second inauguration of Ronald Reagan in 1985. We were given the funds to bring 30 people from 30 different countries to be at the inauguration.

However, I was not able to get tickets for my group to get into the inauguration. So I asked my boss to ask somebody to ask somebody in USIA to ask Charles Wick. This was all Charles Wick's idea, to bring people. I said, "Somebody above my pay grade has to get Charles Wick to ask the Republican National Committee for tickets." The answer was no, we couldn't get tickets. I was left in this miserable situation of having people coming from every corner of the earth to witness the inauguration. The program was ordered by Charles Wick, but we were not permitted entrance into the ceremony. What a snafu.

I remember going to sleep the night before the inauguration, feeling a looming catastrophe coming. We would have 30 enraged foreigners who would say, "You've brought me all this way to see the inauguration, but now you won't permit me into the ceremony!" I arranged for a little room and a television connection in a meeting room of the DuPont Plaza Hotel as a back-up plan. When I went to bed feeling a great sense of doom and inevitable failure, I turned on the radio news at 11:00pm, and it was BBC from London. I was notified by BBC that it was so cold in Washington D.C. that the outdoor inauguration ceremony had been canceled. This was the first I heard of it!

I thought, "Oh my gosh, what do we do with this?" So the back-up plan became the plan. And I took my visitors into this meeting room in the DuPont Plaza. We watched the indoor ceremony on television. I'm sure we had the best view of the whole ceremony.

Through dumb luck I guess I survived the Delphi experience.

This drew me not quite into USIA, but I was dancing around the corners. I used to joke that I was a USIA groupie. I had done everything except be a part of it. I had done the IV program, I had been a Fulbrighter, and I'd taken performing groups overseas. I had been a programmer in a private nonprofit doing programs for USIA. I'd done most everything USIA does except be one of its employees.

So that's what I did in 1985. I joined it. The whole Foreign Service Exam procedure, many people can tell that story. Let's just say that I was amazed to pass every phase of it on the first try. and bewildered when suddenly there was an offer. I never thought that this would happen. It's like winning the lottery. I wasn't sure I wanted to do it. I had finally, after 14 years of itinerant nomadic existence, bought a tiny condo, and I kind of liked having a home. Here I was ironically being asked to uproot, and I'd only been rooted for one year. The idea of now becoming an itinerant again was very daunting to me. But I did it. It was too good to pass up.

I do remember friends and mentors. One of them retired in 1984 as I was joining, and he said, "It's not like the old days," which of course is what we say now.

It's not like the old days. To me, 1985 *is* the old days. But there were people, including wonderful friends, retiring and saying to me, "It'll never be the same." We had huge staffs in the '60s and '70s when we were in a Cold War. We had local employees framing pictures and reeling 16-millimeter films and doing all sorts of things that were quickly cut back. Traveling art exhibits existed, but on a much smaller scale.

The vast numbers of local employees in the world were being reduced even while the USIA budget increased under Charles Wick. The whole operation became more centralized. It became more a question of information coming from Washington. The slogan on the front of the building was "Telling America's Story to the World." That implies a one-way directional communication. I personally was always into the reciprocity and communication both ways. This was permitted, but not encouraged, under the USIA of Charles Wick, Ronald Reagan's close friend.

Looking back at it, USIA was a marvelous, inspired, tiny group of people who were culturally alert, by and large. There were a few Neanderthals in the organization. But there were many who had eagerly taken the challenge of learning exotic languages and learning them damn well. I will mention Alex Almasov, who passed away in 2011. He was a Russian Argentinean, born in Buenos Aires. He married a Japanese woman, served in Poland, spoke everything. Alex was one of the most erudite people I'd ever met. He was later PAO in Moscow. These were inspired people. Some of them. Some not. But I'm not sure any of us quite appreciated it when we were new recruits in USIA.

Looking back at those years and compared to how things have changed, this was a remarkable period. The '80s was when I got to know USIA. I think the previous decades were absolutely marvelous in terms of creating mutual understanding. You don't just send out a message, you converse. That's what USIA was all about. In the old days—the '70s, the '80s—there were real conversations. That's what brought foreign publics into what we called culture centers. We even were allowed to call them libraries at one point, until it was forbidden.

A senator on a trip overseas noticed that the U.S. Embassy—or rather USIA, which was an independent agency—had things called "libraries." The senator was enraged. He said, "The U.S. taxpayer is paying for libraries in foreign cultures? What about my district?" I

will leave his identity with respectful distance. He said, “My district has a lack of libraries, and you’re paying federal money to fund libraries for foreigners? I disapprove.” And because of this brouhaha, we maintained libraries, but we were obliged to call them “information resource centers,” because the word “library” was politically charged.

Because of security concerns, our publics are radically reduced now that we’re in fortress embassies. We used to have non-co-located cultural centers, which had a separate identity from the embassy. People flocked there. They went and they felt there was a place of intellectual comfort. You could go there, get some air conditioning, read a book, and just come in and be welcome and comfortable. There were enormous audiences, certainly in Africa.

Now, with social networking and with scientific ways of identifying your exact audience, we no longer have large audiences, very sadly. If you have a high school kid coming into your library, in the old days that was considered something good. In the ‘80s, there was a great controversy over the age of the person in your library. If this was a retired person, this was a waste of resources. Because this person would not be a future leader. If it was a high school student, it was a waste of resources, because we had no way of knowing which high school student might become an influential opinion maker in their country.

There was increased attention focused on certain audiences, which was absolutely to the detriment of the mission. The previous mission had been to be a place of intellectual comfort for anybody who was interested. These were marvelous times when people from all countries turned to American cultural centers as a place that would welcome them. We now have extremely dedicated FSNs and cultural attachés and information officers who are doing their best, under these miserable conditions, to maintain a lively audience.

It’s more and more difficult as the restrictions increase, for understandable security reasons. Of course, it’s understandable that people going into an embassy should be subjected to something like an airport security check. However, what we’ve lost is the authority to have outside centers where people can go without these restrictions. It’s now not the style of American cultural exchange. It’s not public at all. It’s all done by invitation, by membership, by scrutiny of everybody that comes into an embassy. Now that non-co-located buildings have been closed almost everywhere, it’s a great loss. I still admire tremendously the people working in these conditions and doing marvelous things, despite the restrictions.

In Brazzaville we had a library. It was attached to the embassy. In those days, there was not the level of terrorism that we have today. People just came and went in the library. You would meet people interested in writing or reading. You would just drift into the library, and that was the place to be in Brazzaville. I think it was the only air-conditioned library in the country. People came in and they talked and they met one another and there were readings and events. I wasn’t officially connected to that, but as the Fulbrighter, I was often there. It was marvelous. It was friendly.

Sony Lab'ou Tansi, who was a close friend of mine, a great novelist from Brazzaville, was there all the time and was writing very sharp satires of Mobutu across the river. You couldn't write satires about Congo-Brazzaville. You'd be isolated or put aside. These wonderful plays were I think inspired by Alfred Jarry, *Ubu The King*. Sony Lab'ou Tansi actually produced a presentation of *Ubu the King* in the African manner. Oh my God, it was brilliant. And he wrote similar, more topical novels and plays about the excesses of the dictatorship of Mobutu. He received literary prizes in France, and was very recognized in his own country and in France. Not so much outside of the French-speaking world. We had a very pleasant friendship, partly because of the easy access into that library.

So anyway, when the time came in February of '85, I went over to USIA. It was six months of training. There was enormous repetition in the course. I'm not sure much thought had been given to how you train a diplomat. What do you do? There was really no methodology.

Q: Yeah, I think there's a tendency to over-emphasize law.

WHITMAN: Well, you were a consular officer and law was everything. For public diplomacy, I don't remember law being a major component. Frankly, I don't think they really knew what to do with us, and they just brought in area experts, people who claimed to know about the Soviet Union or Africa or Latin America. We would just hear comments about policy in different parts of the world, local cultures in different parts of the world, and the mechanisms available in USIA.

USIA was a pretty complex bureaucracy. There was the information side, there was the culture side, and there was the picture archive. Again, in a period before internet they had physical pictures, which were made available to the foreign newspapers. Copyright issues to be worked out. This was a bureaucracy that we had to learn how to use. But the course was basically on the bureaucratic structure in USIA and on other parts of the world. It was extremely general and many speakers—speakers who have egos—want to be the one who told you what you needed to know later in life.

We had a dismal repetition of speakers giving us supposedly confidential information about corridor reputation. I grew to hate corridor reputation and how it maligns innocent individuals. That's another story. But we got this over and over from speakers, each one of whom wanted to be our avuncular leader whom we would later remember: "Let me tell you a secret." And they would lean forward. We had 10 or 15 of them, until it became sickeningly repetitive.

I think I want to claim authorship of the term, "It's not brain surgery." and "It's not rocket science," because I said to my classmate sitting next to me after the eighth or ninth repetition, "You would think they were training us to be brain surgeons."

My friend thought that was a very funny comment. Because the comment was made in 1985 and the internet became standard within three or four years of that, I say I am the author of the expression, “It ain’t brain surgery.” And I defy anybody to prove otherwise.

Q: Well, how would you look at the bureaucracies of the other agencies you’ve seen?

WHITMAN: Good question. USIA, when I joined it, seemed like a vast bureaucracy. Many years later in 1999, when USIA was assimilated into State, we looked backwards at USIA as basically a mom-and-pop organization.

Q: That was my impression, being outside of it. I thought you could go out and get things done.

WHITMAN: You could. You could get things done. Plus, the chances of knowing your colleagues were very great, because there were few of them. There were I think 900 FSOs maybe. In State, there are 9-10,000. Because of the smallness and the specialized nature of what USIA did, you got to know the people you were working with. The people in my incoming class include the current Ambassador to OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe).

You run into the people you knew in 1985, and it’s like family. I think that’s the same with A-100 classes. The difference is our class had just 24 people. It’s much more like an extended family than an A-100 class, which has 100 and has all five cones in it. We were all one cone, which was public diplomacy. The positions we looked at and the colleagues we had were much more personal. I’m not one of the dinosaurs who wants to go back to that earlier age. We’ve all been told it’s never going to happen. Maybe it shouldn’t. I think much has been lost with the assimilation of USIA to State.

Coming from a nonprofit organization with six people into an organization with 900 FSOs and about 5,000 FSNs, USIA seemed huge when I entered. But within a pretty short time, as I saw familiar faces come back and as friendships started to form, I realized it was not a huge bureaucracy. The purpose was mutual understanding, and I’m not sure we have mutual understanding anymore. I won’t call it propaganda, but I think it’s unidirectional; it’s the U.S. government talking to individuals. We say we listen through social networking, but I have doubts about the type of listening that we’re doing. Looking back, it was a place of almost uniform respect for dialogue and actual conversations. In public. With foreign publics.

This was an unquestioned value of USIA, established by Edward R. Murrow. We revered him. We never met him, but we revered him as one of the early leaders. “Follow the truth wherever it may lead” is one of his wonderful sayings. He said that as a journalist, but he also said it as a bureaucrat. Engage with foreign publics. Do not expect to determine the outcome of your conversation. Allow the conversation to proceed. This was enormously respected in other countries, especially in the intelligentsia of other countries. When the Cold War ended, this whole thing was dismantled. I think it was systematically dismantled. I think it’s a great loss. I’m not the only one to think this.

Q: Okay. So whither after?

WHITMAN: I spoke French. That was my profession; I was a French interpreter. I figured they'd send me to French-speaking Africa or Geneva or maybe Paris. Of course, in the Foreign Service they always do what you least expect, so of course they sent me for Danish training.

USIA had a system, now completely dismantled, for every new employee to do a one-year rotation in all sections of an embassy. Some time in the Consular Section, some time in the Political Section, before actually entering a position one year later. It was a marvelous system. They were able to send people and have this marvelous training and to understand a little bit the aspects of every section of the embassy. This no longer exists.

So after a year as junior officer in a relatively small embassy, but in a NATO post, I was put into the information office (IO) with a staff of three Americans (PAO and CAO.) I was the third. I was the information officer. Now that staff has been cut to two, and maybe one at this point. I had joined USIA because of cultural exchange. It's what I had done for 20 years. Ironically, I never became a cultural attaché and I never worked the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). Not because I didn't want to, but because of fate. Fate took me to the information side, totally unexpectedly, and I loved it.

I was a press attaché. I spoke with journalists. I sparred with them, I deferred to them, I had snaps with them. I arranged James Baker's first press conference in Copenhagen when he first traveled to Europe. The first one he had in Copenhagen went very badly (*laughs*) because of unexpected questions about nuclear ship visits that he was unable to answer.

When he returned to Copenhagen a year later, he was great. James Baker was a smart guy and a quick study. He had a miserable first trip and a very good second trip to Northern Europe. Denmark, which is seen by most people as an insignificant, friendly little country, in fact was the dividing line of east/west issues. We called it "equidistance" and "moral equivalency." Danes saw themselves as a tiny neutral country being pushed around by the superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States.

Our job was not trivial. It was to remind Danes that they had repeatedly held elections and had elected leaders whose belief was that Denmark should be a member of NATO. Our task, which was quite difficult actually, was to remind them that they were not neutral. They were, in fact, NATO members. They had repeatedly expressed their opinion about this in elections unequivocally. They came to ask us, "We would like to see the Soviet Ambassador and the American Ambassador debate."

Terence Todman, a supreme professional, always refused to do that. He said, "It implies that Danes are buffeted around and are equidistant between these two systems, capitalism and communism, when in fact, they have chosen to be part of the Western alliance." Terence Todman would refuse to be put on a stage with Soviet ambassadors. We were

getting to the very end of the Cold War, and there were amazing perceptual changes happening. In retrospect, we now know what this was; it was the end of the Cold War.

As Eduard Shevardnadze and George Shultz met—in Copenhagen, in Geneva, and elsewhere—they were working on the INF (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces) Accord, which now reaches its 25th anniversary. They were working very closely, ultimately successfully, with the Soviet Union to remove an entire class of weapons for the first time in human history. This had never happened before, on the one hand. On the other hand, the Soviets understood very cleverly that Danes were confused about their identity. Very few Danes thought of their own country as part of the Western alliance, which it was.

The Soviets were very clever and noticed this, and conducted an extremely successful charm offensive in Denmark, triggered by Chernobyl. When Chernobyl happened in '86, there were a few days of concealment. I attended a session in Copenhagen. The Soviet Ambassador was saying, “This terrible thing has happened, and we want to tell you how really bad it is.” The Danes loved them. They loved them for being so frank and open, suddenly. We understood at the U.S. Embassy that this was a charm offensive. We were very pleased to see this openness, but at the same time, we knew it was part of a strategy.

To the Soviets, the game, we knew, was to take the Straits of the Kattegat, which are Danish waters. That would be the first military offensive so as to get the Soviet fleet out of the Baltic and into the Atlantic. Intelligence—now declassified - told us that that was their objective. In tandem with that was their public diplomacy objective of weakening the Danish resolve to be NATO members.

We were very friendly with our Russian colleagues. We were instructed to go out to lunch. We received cables from Washington saying, “We not only permit you, but we instruct you to invite your Soviet counterparts into the embassy if we have a discussion. We want you to get to know these people.”

This was a very dramatic change in how we do things, and that happened to be the beginning of my career. I hadn't been there earlier to see the bad times. We were collegial, and we were also mutually distrustful of each other. Later, after the breakup of the Soviet Union when Gorbachev was releasing all the information, it became public knowledge that the military strategy had been to take Denmark before doing anything else.

And the elections of 1988 were quite fascinating, because the Danish public, like Hamlet, are always divided in their opinion. Danish elections always tend to be decided by less than a 51 percent majority in one direction or another. Tiny, tiny changes will actually determine a voting bloc in parliament, the Folketing.

The 1988 election was actually a rather dramatic election. Svend Auken, the leader of the Socialist Party, publicly said during the campaign that Terence Todman, the American Ambassador, had intimidated him in some way. This was untrue actually. His campaign slogan was “*Vi kan gøre det selv.*” “We can do it ourselves.”

Every Dane knew that meant, “We will not be subject to American bullying.” This was the strength of the Socialist Party, in picking up this slogan. In fact, the election was extremely close between the caucuses, the voting blocs that might have gotten Denmark out of NATO, and the other side that would prefer for Denmark to remain in NATO. The U.S. Embassy was quite involved, observant, and frankly nervous of what would happen. If the caucus supporting withdrawing from NATO had won, I think our heads would have been on the plate in the embassy. There would have been scapegoating. In fact, the Danes voted by narrow margins for party coalitions that did keep Denmark in NATO in 1988. The Socialists were the largest party, but they lost their absolute majority. I would say *(laughs)* through dumb luck. I’m saying this, not as a cynic, but as someone who does believe in NATO.

Q: That was an interesting period.

WHITMAN: Extremely. One of the controversies was the SALT agreements, which limited mutually assured destruction. The strategy on both sides was to limit the defenses of your enemy as a peacemaking and confidence-building measure.

There was a lot of negotiation. The Soviets had a radar station, which probably was a violation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM), near Moscow called Krasnoyarsk. NATO had a radar station in Thule, in Northern Greenland, and both sides were accusing the other of violating the ABM. This very quickly became a press issue.

This became one of my main duties, trying to figure, what is a “phased array radar”? I don’t have the technical knowledge to know what that is. I would see the sniping in both directions. The Danes had a journalist we now know was receiving funds from the KGB, to publish daily articles in one of the newspapers. It was a daily feature on the upper left-hand side of page one, every day, about the Thule radar base and how it violated the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. At the time, we were stressed and puzzled. Why was this campaign being waged? We felt we had to talk about Krasnoyarsk. Years later, we found out, it was a simple matter. He was getting KGB money to do this.

Q: Where did the royal family fit in?

WHITMAN: Ahh, the royal family. They were just wonderful. Queen Margrethe. If you have to have a royal family, you can’t have a better one than Queen Margrethe. I met her once at a reception. She was having trouble balancing her plate and her cup. People are not made with three hands. I leaned forward to help her, and I said something in Danish. She, very charmingly and with great dignity, using the first person plural, said, “We can take care of this ourselves.”

Q: (laughs)

WHITMAN: She was a designer of set stages for theater. She was a marvelous artist. She was the mother of the country. Americans are trained to be skeptical about monarchies, but the constitutions in Europe seem to serve a function. People loved her.

When I was there she still had her bicycle, going to stores in the city. There were security issues; somebody broke into the palace at one point and made it into her bedroom. From that point on, no more queen on a bicycle. Very sad. But the old stories of the Queen of Denmark just bicycling around in her capital city and dropping in on places were true.

Q: After Denmark, whither?

WHITMAN: Whither after Denmark. I was unplaceable in the personnel system, because while I was a very junior officer, I was an information officer, in a NATO country. So that made me very junior and very senior, and it was most difficult to find an appropriate position for me. I went through maybe a record. I bid on 25 positions. And my personnel advisor kept calling and saying, “We want you to bid on Sri Lanka,” or “We want you to bid on Togo.” And I did. But in every case, when it went to panel, I was too junior or too senior for the position. I was, in fact, not placed.

In the late spring of ’89, they didn’t know what to do with me. I didn’t know what to do with them. I said, “Should I just submit my resignation papers, or what?” Then there was an abrupt retirement of an FSO in Madrid. I spoke three-three Spanish, and so in just a twinkling of an eye, I was in Madrid. You’re supposed to never go from a Western European country to another Western European country. It was one of those unwritten rules. But they had an urgent need in Madrid, and I had an urgent need for an assignment. So it just sort of happened, and I ended up in Madrid.

Q: You served from when to when?

WHITMAN: ’89 to ’92. I was in a lowly position, but witness to some things. I was the assistant information officer. I don’t think there is such a thing anymore.

Q: What was your responsibility?

WHITMAN: Well, they split up between printed press and broadcast media. And you would think instinctively that the senior person would take broadcast media, but it was done the other way. So the senior IO had printed press and I had broadcast media. The interesting thing about that was the year I arrived, 1989, was that it was the year in which private broadcast media was legalized in Spain. Since Franco and beyond, there had been TVE—*Televisión de España*—as the only monopoly television. Suddenly, there was a proliferation. I knew nothing about broadcast media, but I was able to get speakers and mentors from the U.S. who very quickly helped train the huge new media industry.

I remember seeing literally a hole in a ground, a ditch in Madrid. I was given a tour of this site by the people who had just purchased it. They said, “In three months, this will be a building, and we will be broadcasting.”

And I thought, “This is crazy. This is a ditch.”

Well, sure enough, three months later it was a major TV broadcaster. There was a very quick learning curve on the part of Spanish journalists suddenly employed by these networks, and it was very exhilarating to bring in Americans to give them basic suggestions on how to run a news program.

The late Bob Trachinger was an ABC sports producer, but later went into ABC News and was the producer of two of the famous Nixon-Kennedy debates. He produced two of them. He was terrific. He did have political beliefs, but he didn't purposefully make Richard Nixon look bad. Anyway, his experience went back that far. And he and his wife Helga and I went all around Spain. We went to the Basque country. He met the local journalism educators and broadcasters, and it was just absolutely an exhilarating time. So in my lowly position, it didn't matter. I was just in the middle of things.

Q: What was the situation in Spain at that time? I mean, you know, in various aspects?

WHITMAN: I thought you'd never ask. Reginald Bartholomew was in the final phases of negotiating us out of the three American military bases. The bases, Torrejón, Morón and Zaragoza. There was an Air Force base very near Madrid which was also a huge American commissary. If you needed M&M's, you would drive out to Torrejón, which was just beyond Barajas, the national airport. You would cross into the base and there would be an American guard.

Well, a few months later, after the negotiations were complete, you would go to the exact same spot. Instead, there would be a Spanish military guardsman allowing you in. This change vastly improved bilateral relations. I was in the Press Section, which was busy in 1989. In 1990, when the base withdrawal negotiations were complete, I remember the day the phones stopped ringing in the American Embassy Press Section. Bartholomew was able to negotiate the changing of the authority of these bases without changing in any way the capacity and the operations of these bases. It was a major change in U.S.-Spanish relations, which had been somewhat troubled since Franco died in '75.

We still considered ourselves to be in a post-Franco period as late as '89. We were getting frankly enormous resources from USIA to have lots of International Visitors, and we had a huge Fulbright commission. We benefited from being considered post-Franco, even though it was 15 years later. Between having those resources, creation of the networks, and the withdrawal of American authority from the military bases, we went into kind of a golden age of really friendly bilateral relations.

Q: Do we have any particular interests in Spain?

WHITMAN: Well, we send a million tourists a year to a country of 40 million. Not that the U.S. government determines the behavior of American tourists, but we know from public opinion surveys that Spaniards who meet Americans have a *much* more positive

view of them than Spaniards who don't meet Americans. USIA's surveys in Spain were interesting because in Spain we found the highest level of *unpopularity* of Americans in all of Western Europe. But we also found a very shallow nature of that unpopularity. We found that Spaniards by definition had a very negative view of the United States. This has to do with the War of 1898, with Eisenhower making deals with Franco. There were reasons why they had negative view, but they were historic and they tended to be abstract. As soon as a Spaniard met an American, we saw in the surveys very clearly that their negative view immediately turned out to be a positive view. So every contact that we had was in our favor.

With the help of our *immensely* gifted FSNs, who really did this—they were the intermediaries and they were immensely effective—we sent PSOE [*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*] people from TV on a voluntary visitors project to the U.S. The Socialists were skeptical. I think some people would say anti-American. They went to the U.S. for three weeks and they came back our friends. These were extremely effective exchanges that we did, official and unofficial.

So what else was happening? We still had the *peseta*. This was before the euro was created, and it was a little bit before Schengen. But the bilateral issues we had previously had were increasingly becoming EU issues: the size of the cucumbers, the amount of hormones in meat.

The one remaining bilateral issue for us was the military bases. Once that was solved, frankly, I'm not sure that the U.S. Embassy had a very defined mission in Spain. We just wanted to project a good image, but we had the million American tourists to do that. We were there for logistical reasons.

Otherwise, for me personally I didn't make policy. I didn't even explain policy. That was for the senior information officer. My assignment was to deal with journalism training programs in Spain, the best one being in the Basque country. Run by Opus Dei, by the way, the University of Navarra. That was the best one. Ideology aside, this was clearly *the* partner institution because their program was so much more advanced than any other.

Then there was the Complutense University, School of Communications, which had 4,000 students. This was a fifth-rate training program, really. I would see it as a social engineering program to keep young people off the streets, but this was my partner also. The FSNs and I did world nets on the environment with Spain's Ministry of Environment. The PAO at the time ordered us to stop doing that. He felt that it was not appropriate to do televised interviews on the environment. I thought that was a silly decision on the part of the PAO. I later verified with the Director of USIA that of course this was part of what our mission, to engage with foreign publics on issues of mutual interest.

During the time I was there, unfortunately Spain changed from being a transit country in the drug trade to a user country. We saw that in many places in the '90s. We were in denial in some of these places, saying, "It's not a problem locally. The problem is the

actual contraband going elsewhere.” But, inevitably—and I’ve been in two or three countries where this is the case—a transit country becomes a consuming market.

What else about Spain? I would say the embassy was not very well managed. That may be an understatement. There are things to be said about political appointee ambassadors. I don’t hate them, but there are good ones and bad ones. We had a couple of bad ones. I mean, really bad. Sometimes, if they’re quite insensitive to the perceptions of the local host country, they can do more harm than good. Maybe it’s better not to have one actually. I can talk a little about the great efforts we took to conceal the bad behavior of one of our ambassadors there.

We had one who was behaving inappropriately in public. I think readers of this interview can read between the lines. It had to do with going out in the evening with people other than his wife. The funny part of the story is that he did this very flagrantly. He used embassy staff and drivers to take him to assignations. Nobody in Spain is bothered morally by this, but this is the type of behavior that ambassadors are instructed not to do, or at least not in public.

There was an enormous amount of printed news. This was a golden age of media in Spain. They all had the story. They all had the photos. And as far as gossip goes, this is a pretty good story. When that ambassador entered Spain, the headlines were, “Spain Goes for \$40,000” because that was the amount that the ambassador had contributed to the Bush Senior campaign. He was a person who was never taken seriously, and it was very demeaning to the Spanish public to think that the U.S. Ambassador’s only qualification was having contributed \$40,000 to the presidential campaign.

While he was a likeable person, all of the newspapers had the story of his extramarital activities, they had the photos, and they were ready to print. They were like horses at the starting line of a race. The magnificent Foreign Minister of Spain, Francisco Fernández Ordóñez, was, before his untimely death at 62, the most beloved foreign minister, the most accessible, the most friendly to journalists. All journalists had his home phone number, and they all called him at any hour. They loved this man.

He took the effort to make phone calls to every newspaper and to say, “I know you have the story. I’m asking you to embargo it until we finish the base negotiations. We’re at a delicate moment.” These marvelous Spanish journalists—all of them—embargoed the story of the ambassador’s behavior because their beloved foreign minister asked them to. I think this is remarkable. He didn’t do this just for propriety or to be protective of the U.S. ambassador. He did this in order to make sure those negotiations went through successfully. And he made it happen. He is worthy of mention. He was a great man, the foreign minister.

What is the role of bilateral embassies in a part of the world which is now a multilateral entity, the European Union? Many of the issues that the United States government has with Western European countries are related to trade. All of these decisions are made in Brussels. I’m not saying we should shut down our embassies. But I’m not sure that we’ve

been really looking at the mission and purpose of embassies in countries where the issues are not local.

Q: Well, did we find that we were differing with the Spanish on '89 on outlooks toward any particular area? We were beginning to ask the question of which European countries were coming into NATO, for example?

WHITMAN: Right. The Spanish public knew nothing and cared nothing about this. I personally didn't deal with the Spanish government. What did happen in '91 was the first Gulf War. The Spanish government and the Spanish people were absolutely terrified. Spain was a 20th century country culturally and 17th century in many ways socially. I don't mean that to be derogatory. On the contrary, the rich culture of Spain in the 17th century included ingenious and original ideas of honor, people, and society.

Spain was a somewhat provincial country in the sense that Franco had the country pretty isolated politically and economically. Even 15 years later, they looked at the world in sort of blocs. They knew that there was something called the Soviet Union, but they had not much interest in it. However, they had prenatal memories of Spain having been occupied by Moors. They referred generically to North Africans, Middle Eastern people, and Muslims as *los moros*, the Moors.

In '91, the Spanish people were bewildered and terrified by the idea of being used as a resupply base, which they were. All of these huge supply planes came from the U.S., resupplied or refueled in Torrejón, and went on to this enormous airlift of troops and materiel. They referred to Saddam Hussein as "*El Moro*." Even though he was 5,000 miles away, their sense of outsiders came from the south and from the east, they clustered them in their minds to be "*los moros*." I think they had a fear like we might be afraid of wolves from Grimm's Fairytales.

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: So did we differ? Well, Spain understood that it was a NATO country. But I tell you, they were absolutely terrified by what the U.S. was doing. They were stocking food, they were preparing for a state of siege. This was not rational. But I think it was actually hearing the enormity of these transport planes coming every night through Torrejón. They felt that this was very local. When it was time to decide whether the Spanish military would be part of this operation, there were warships leaving from the eastern coast of Spain to go across the Mediterranean and these extremely emotional scenes of mothers saying goodbye to their sons on the ship. This was on television, and it was very emotional for them.

The other thing happening was ETA [*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (Basque Homeland and Freedom)] was still active in killing people. I was sitting at my desk one day, must have been 1990 I think. From my window at the embassy, I could see a bus stop on the Calle Serrano. I didn't see the people being blown to bits, but I did see the bomb. There was a *poof*. There was an explosion. I remember doing my morning press work. I remember

seeing a plume of smoke going *way* up in the air, maybe 300 feet, and just sit there for a while. This was ETA. And everybody was very troubled.

That day, after many debates internally, Spanish television had to decide whether to show the films of a woman, a victim of these bombs, who had lost her legs but was conscious in the street. I spoke with them later. They made an editorial decision that this ghastly film should be shown to the public so the public would understand the horror of what ETA was doing. They showed this film over and over and over again. A scene of a woman lying in the street not yet aware that her legs had been blown off. There were police and nurses tending to her. You couldn't see the pain, but you could see the confusion on her face. It's deeply embedded into every Spanish television viewer. I still remember it vividly myself.

There was a long debate. Would the public be traumatized? Would they be offended? Should this sort of thing even be on television? Will children be psychologically affected? They discussed this at length, and their decision was that it's best that people know how horrible these things really are. This was not anything that had to do with the United States government. But of course we were very disturbed by terrorism.

Q: Hmm.

WHITMAN: The ETA—not the Basques, but the ETA—was behaving very badly. I remember a few times sitting in my house at breakfast hearing, *boom, boom*. Could hear the explosions at the other end of the city. This was otherwise a very calm period, 1990, 1991. This had nothing to do with bilateral relations. It was just part of the atmosphere. Western European countries were definitely, absolutely, victims of terrorism long before Americans had any sense of what terrorism was. Since 9/11 we've heard --

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: -- Europeans express their sympathy for 9/11, while at the same time reminding us, they've had this for decades and decades themselves. The IRA [Irish Republican Army] in Ireland, the ETA—and we know that the IRA and ETA were in touch and exchanging information. The FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)) was part of this network. They were all in communication and trading technologies of terror. This was a real issue. I know the U.S. government was concerned about this. The U.S. people were not, but this came back at us after 9/11. London was familiar with terrorism in their metro system. Spaniards were victims of ETA. There weren't thousands, but there were hundreds of random victims. Ireland, of course. France. The bombings in the 1980s and in the department stores. Western Europe was quite experienced at this and had to gently remind us after 9/11 that terrorism was not created on 9/11.

Q: Did we take any particular stand on the Basque movement?

WHITMAN: Certainly we were assisting the Spanish Police in combating not the Basques, but the ETA. There was a bit of friction between France and Spain on this. The Spanish ETA would escape across the border. Spain would ask the French police to extradite them. There was great happiness when French police complied, and great anger when they didn't. I'm sure that the U.S. government was encouraging greater cooperation with Interpol [International Criminal Police Organization]. I wasn't part of that, and don't know the details.

But we did learn that the Basque country was a gorgeous part of Spain. It's a very industrially active part, and it's a wonderful part of the world. What we learned was that even if terrorists comprise a tiny percentage of the people, which is usually the case, it takes only 15 per cent of the population to either sympathize or be willing to look the other way, for the terrorists to succeed. You can have 85 per cent of them very opposed, very offended, very antagonized, but if only 15 per cent are willing to not take their information to the police, willing to look the other way, willing to provide safe houses, you cannot successfully combat that terrorist operation. That is what the ETA had.

Again, this is absolutely not to demonize Basques. On the contrary, 85 per cent of them were horrified by all of this. It's still an issue. The ETA says that we're in a ceasefire now, but they've said this many times before. These are very nasty people.

Q: How did you feel? What would you say our attitude towards the other separate movement, Catalonia?

WHITMAN: Catalonia. Good question, Stu. Many people think of these together, Basques and Catalans. In fact, it's very different. The ETA were violent monstrous people interested in causing random suffering. The Catalan separatist movement, in my opinion, never was that. There was almost no violence. There were a couple of incidents I think in the '80s, but the Catalan movement has to be one of the gentlest separatist movements in history. These are people who go into the streets and demonstrate peaceably.

There was a demonstration two months ago actually. There wasn't a single piece of glass broken. There wasn't a single little finger bleeding. There wasn't a single bit of violence or harm to any person or any property. You just had a million people in the streets asking for independence. This is outside of the time of my stay there. Four or six months ago there was a local election in Catalonia. There was not a plebiscite on independence, but there was a vote. One candidate said that he was in favor of separation and something beyond autonomy, more like independence. He was elected back to the local parliament. However, with a smaller number of parliamentarians than before. So I guess the issue is settled for the moment. Catalonia will not become independent.

I guess the anger there is they're very productive, and they pay taxes to a greater extent than they receive services back from the central government. That's the case in New York City also. It's the case in any country that has unequal amounts of taxes going on in. The rich places get less back because of a central authority. I think with modern states,

that's just the way they work. The Catalans are very special people. They have a national anthem which has to do with a military *defeat*. How many national anthems are set to commemorate a military defeat? In a biased way, let me say, I think these are wonderful people. They are at the vanguard of design and literature and cinema and trade and production. I didn't live in Catalonia, but I became very fond of it. I think it's a great place. And yes, they are separatists. But they are not anything comparable with ETA.

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: A comment, if I may, about what diplomats should do in general. But this is an anecdote. In the Spanish culture—and I think it's true in many cultures—when you converse with someone, it's extremely rude to get to the point of your conversation at the beginning. It's extremely rude. There's an expression in Spanish, "*llegar al postre*," which is dessert. Conversations often take place at lunch. Lunch is a two or three hour commitment of time. If you take an interlocutor seriously it means spending two or three hours.

There was great difficulty in dealing with our bosses, who were so clueless. We were advised by our brilliant FSNs. The FSNs would tell us, the midlevel officers, "You know, your bosses are burning their bridges by breaking this rule. You must get them to delay the moment of decision making to later in the conversation. It's culturally offensive otherwise."

We told our bosses this. Let me not mention names or personalities or even the names of their positions, but they just wouldn't do it. They would go to lunch with, let's say the managing editor of a major daily newspaper. This would not be the wonderful Bob Meade, who was a great IO and who's now teaching history in Virginia, but another individual. He would go to lunch with a major important opinion maker with an audience of maybe two million. He would violate this cultural rule time after time.

We would tell him, "Please don't do that. You're making a bad impression." He would disregard us.

When this individual went to lunch and made a fool of himself, he did more harm than good to bilateral relations. Often we would get a phone call at the end of the afternoon from the Spanish lunch guest. This would be a one-on-one lunch. The Spanish journalist would call his friends in our section and say, "Well, here's what your idiot said today." We would receive the call and we would know everything about the conversation of the boss, even before he returned to the office.

Now, this is kind of a gossipy, trivial story. But there's a point to it. It may seem unbelievable that American diplomats still blatantly disregard the requirements of the local culture time after time, despite being advised. But they do. And honestly, they do so much more harm than good. They really should not be posted overseas. It's just astonishing.

The gentle tolerance of the Spanish media allowed us to get through. They understood that America was not a bad place, even though we had the occasional fool who would be named to be an important official. They understood this. They had a rich and ancient culture. They were not easily offended personally. They just knew that these people were idiots. I don't know how the Foreign Service can correct this. It still happens in many countries where our ambassadors and our senior officials and our public diplomacy people are completely clueless and have no intention of learning anything about the public.

Q: In the Middle East I've heard many consul people say, you sort of knew when you started a conversation, you had to go through the litany of how the family is --

WHITMAN: Absolutely.

Q: -- and all this. Well, it set things on a better plane.

WHITMAN: Not only that, but people are paid a hell of a lot of money to do it right. People's 20,000 pounds of household goods are shipped overseas, and their children are sent to private schools. And by golly, with all that money I think the taxpayer deserves to have the American official do it right. It's not so difficult. If you can't make chitchat, you shouldn't be a diplomat. That's your job. Otherwise we can just use the Internet. We don't need people who are that stupid.

Q: Was there much of a youth culture then or not?

WHITMAN: In the older cultures, and I would say Spain is such, the sense of its own identity goes back so many centuries. Such countries tend to have fewer formally organized groups. Because they know who they are, I think. There were a hell of a lot of Spanish youth hanging out with frankly nothing much to do. Unemployment, which is now beyond a crisis in Spain, was something like unofficially 18 per cent at that time, but we knew it was more like 25 per cent. It was scary to have so many young people have no real hope for their own future.

Now, this was a relatively wealthy country, so we didn't have gangs and there were youth who were misbehaving, but we didn't have organized gangs or even organized NGOs; we just had young people disaffected. It was concerning. Again, I think just dumping them into these huge universities that didn't train them for anything was a humane way, I guess, of keeping them occupied. I think if the university population had been released on a given day, you would have had major civil disturbances. But they were siphoned off to universities.

Q: What else was happening at the time?

WHITMAN: Well, '92 was the commemoration of many things. It was the 500th anniversary of 1492, the Reconquista, where Christians took back full control of the Iberian Peninsula. It was the Barcelona Olympics, and it was something called *Sefarad*,

which was the remembrance of Muslims and Jews from the 15th century. Most of whom had been expelled or killed. When I was there I believe there were 7,000 of each. It was a coincidence: 7,000 Muslims, 7,000 Jews. As I remember it, the Spaniards I knew were intellectually curious. They wanted to know more.

The King of Spain, Juan Carlos, actually said some touching things in public about both of these groups. I think he actually said the prayer over the dead in the Spanish transliteration of a Hebrew prayer. There was a tremendous reaching out to cultures their history had tried to expel. I remember no antagonism. I could be wrong, but that's the sense I had. People were just simply curious. Muslims and Jews were pretty unknown to them, and yet they knew they were part of the Spanish past.

Spain is a great melting pot actually, racially and culturally and religiously. They understood that they'd been Catholics since the 15th century, but that there was something else. When I was there they were just quite interested in it. And so was the king. He had shown some leadership. In the late 20th century, they were actively recapturing. Things went a little bit sour later. But in 1992, when there was a big fuss made about this, I believe it was a very positive thing culturally. There was an inclusiveness. At least the king made it so and so did the prime minister and many educational institutions. It was actually a pretty positive period.

Q: What about the Church? I had served not too long before in Italy where you had the feeling that the Catholic Church would become more and more a woman's institution and then men didn't bother with it very much at all.

WHITMAN: I think Spain was always more Catholic than Italy, actually. When I was there, I would think of it as more an old person's institution. I actually went to Christmas Eve Mass once in a church in my neighborhood. Oh my God, it was almost empty. And we were in a period called *la movida*. After the death of Franco, Spain went nuts with a new freedom that they'd never had before. I don't think they were anti-clerical, but they were increasingly indifferent to the church, which had defined Spain for many centuries.

After Franco's death there was great libertine expression and behavior, doing naughty things and staying out late at night and not going to Mass. What I remember were a few elderly people in Mass and almost nobody else. Everybody wanted to get their children into a church at some point so that they would understand the cultural background. But I did not have a sense there were many who went to Mass regularly. I think they were a small minority.

The Middle East Peace Conference. The Madrid Conference under George Bush Senior. The embassy was never given a heads up. Felipe González was in Israel, and made a joint announcement with the Israeli Prime Minister Shamir that there would be a Madrid Peace Conference in seven days. Nobody had any advanced notice of this. We all heard it on the television. I don't think the ambassador knew. Someone in Washington must have known it, because of things that were said between Israel and the State Department and the White House. But nobody on the ground had any idea that this was happening, and it was

an enormous logistical challenge. Every head of state in the Middle East was present in Madrid. It was October, 1991.

Q: I'm listening to somebody recounting who said, "And many who didn't have a stake in Israel, but wanted to be there."

WHITMAN: Well, for example, the Palestinians were very ably represented by Hanan Ashrawi, who was a very skillful, brilliant person, and I think was trained in Virginia.

Q: I think she was.

WHITMAN: UVA (University of Virginia) maybe. She was brilliant. And now we're talking about Palestine being the equivalent of a state because it has observer status in the UN and there's all this talk about what actually was Palestine. Back then, everybody accepted that it was not a state. Even so, the Palestinians were represented at this peace conference. They certainly had a stake. I wouldn't say they're outsiders, but they were all in a room.

I do remember quite vividly James Baker. My gosh, what a skillful, powerful personality he was. I remember him putting his hands on the table and leaning forward, looking very threatening, something like a threatening lizard. This was a scary man I think, in a benevolent way. He always knew what he wanted. Enormously skilled diplomat. I remember when everybody was in the room at that first session, he leaned forward in an extremely threatening way and said, "The United States government has brought you together to a table. If you leave this conference without a result, it will be *your* responsibility. Not ours." And I remember the sense of awe and frankly terror in the room because of the power of James Baker's personality. I very much admire what he did that day.

Now, the conference itself, it was hilarious. By the way, I was a gofer. I didn't do anything of significance. I was in and out of the hall; I was assisting the press. In those days, there were VHS and actual tapes to be delivered to motorcyclists. Nothing digital back then. And so I used to deliver things to motorcycle drivers for broadcasting.

I later understood, connecting the dots, that everyone in that hall wanted the talks to fail. But no one wanted to be the guilty party in making them fail. Only Middle Eastern leaders are smart enough to play this game. No one else in the world can do this. And they were all equally gifted at knowing how to sabotage a conference while avoiding the blame for doing so. This is a concept I think unknown almost in Western countries.

What happened was the Syrians threatened to walk out. And that would have been the end of the conference. This was maybe two or three days before the end of a five-day conference. Let's just say Prince Bandar, good friend of the Bushes'—let me be careful how I put this—convinced, with some form of remuneration, the Syrians to stay in Madrid. He did this as a friend of the President of the United States. And if you come with me to the Royal Palace in Madrid, I can show you the very place where it happened.

The Syrians were convinced to stay. Then others threatened to walk out because they were afraid that an agreement might be reached and they didn't have the domestic political backing to be able to go home with an agreement. Nobody at the table could go home with an agreement that would be acceptable through their local publics. They were all brilliant.

But as a poker game, the winner of the game was the Israeli, in fact, because on Friday morning one day before the announced end of the conference, Shamir said to the group, "You know that the rules of my religion forbid me to travel on the Sabbath. Therefore, I must be back in my home before sundown tonight." And he left the conference, escaping the blame of sabotaging the conference, which he did. He did sabotage it. He physically left Spain in an airplane, so as to get to Tel Aviv before sundown on the Jewish Sabbath. The Muslims were furious, because they realized they could have done the same. But they hadn't thought of that in time. It was actually hilarious, also very tragic, because they came close to really making progress on negotiations that could have resulted in real peace, or peace process.

There were some advances made at that conference. Ultimately, it didn't solve the problem because no one present at that conference wanted to solve the problem at that time. No one. It wasn't the Israelis alone who sabotaged -- they all shared in the sabotage. The Israeli was the one who was able to actually sabotage the conference without being blamed, because he could cite his religion as the reason that he left earlier. Fascinating.

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: Yeah. And that's Spain. We can almost conclude my four years in Spain. I guess '89 to '93. I would say in a very badly managed embassy.

Q: You say it was a badly managed -- one doesn't think of the ambassador in most embassies as playing any role in the management.

WHITMAN: That's correct. Again, I want to not malign anybody. But the ambassador is irrelevant in a properly functioning embassy. The ambassador's not the CEO of a company. He's the president. Things like housing for diplomats at the embassy -- what an atrocity. We were given little five-by-seven cards with names of possible apartments that we could go out and rent. I had never been to Madrid. I had 3/3 Spanish, but didn't have any knowledge of the city. What a waste of the energies of a diplomat to send him out for six weeks looking for his own apartment.

This was just stupid. It's a practice that was entrenched when I was there and then was phased out after I left. The embassy later understood this is a waste of their time.

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: I did find an apartment of course. It took people an average of six weeks fulltime. Now, that's just an example. Some of us raised this question at a kind of a town

hall meeting. The management asked for our opinions. I said, "Are you considering any other alternative other than sending us out on our own for six weeks of our time?" I remember the person who gave the answer. There was a one word answer. It was "No." And the person then got out of his chair and then left the room. This is not good management.

Anyway, I guess the Foreign Service has a brilliant, ingenious capacity of making life very pleasant for diplomats in unpleasant countries and making their lives unpleasant in pleasant countries so as to equalize people's motivation to bid on both. And it works. Works very well. Hardship posts tend to be much better managed than non-hardship posts.

Anyway, there was that issue. But more importantly to me and my work, I was discouraged, obstructed, and actually forbidden for no reason at all from doing what I guess should have been my work, which was to have frequent friendly relations with journalism training schools. I was told, "Don't do that; that's the work of the CAO." Well, the CAO was very busy doing other things and was very happy having me be the educational liaison with journalism training. So when I was told not to do that, actually what it meant was nobody was doing it. The CAO didn't have the time or the expertise. I had the expertise.

Q: Who was telling you this?

WHITMAN: I don't want to say. But in fact, there was very little room to maneuver. With the help of my brilliant FSNs, we did some wonderful voluntary visitors programs for the management of TVE, the main government broadcaster. As I said earlier, these guys were all socialists and all skeptical, but willing to be friendly. Put it that way. When we went as a group to the U.S. on a volunteer visitors program, they came back and they were our great friends. So this is clearly what public diplomacy should be doing. Reaching out to people who disagree with us --

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: -- but who are willing to be interlocutors. This is clearly what we should be doing, and maybe this sort of thing has been fixed in more recent years. But in the '80s, I was in two posts where the idea was the contrary. It was, if they distrust us, let's stop talking to them. And this is just simply stupid. And I hope that public diplomacy has recovered from these ancient, archaic ideas. I'm afraid they prevailed in the 1980s. "If they say something critical, we will no longer talk to them." Of course it's the opposite. The more critical, the more you engage with them.

Q: Well, I always think the epitome of stupidity is the general diplomatic practice withdrawing the ambassador if relations get bad. This is a sign of disapproval. My feeling is you can maybe hoist your flag up backwards.

WHITMAN: *(laughs)* Yeah.

Q: You want to, say, give a sign of disapproval or put a big D in front your embassy.

WHITMAN: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Every case is unique, of course. If Bashar al-Assad becomes a real genocidal murderer, well, you withdraw your ambassador.

But, but we didn't have anything like that in Western Europe. We had publics who distrusted us mainly because they were politically to the left of us. They always will be and always have been. And so, OK, you talk. You talk.

Q: Did you sense that Spain at the time was particularly close to maybe Germany or to France and the socialists? Did they have any countries which they were particularly akin to, either politically or for some other reason?

WHITMAN: I remember in the late '70s, long before I was there, there was an election in various European countries—Italy, France, and I think Spain—where there was the question of the left, the left taking over entirely.

Q: The European communism was a big deal at that time.

WHITMAN: Yes. Yes. Communism and socialism were working together. They found common cause. I think this would have been in the mid '70s, in many countries. And in some cases they did form coalitions that ruled the country. This was not the Cold War. This was genteel communism.

Q: Italy was a question at the time.

WHITMAN: Yeah, the Mayor of Bologna at the time was a communist. And Italian communists were extremely bland compared to real Marxist Leninists. Because they weren't real Marxist Leninists.

So the question is Spain's connection. When I was there the PSOE, the Spanish socialists, were entirely in control of that country. They were entrenched. I guess they were friendly with Mitterrand. They probably were friendly with their Italian and German counterparts in a kind of a cordial discrete way. I don't think there were formal alliances.

The PSOE was becoming a corrupt party. And Felipe González was featherbedding some projects, for example the high-speed train to Seville, which was his constituency. Actually there was no need for a high-speed train. The Spaniards are great jokesters. The joke goes, "The man from Madrid says to the man from Seville, 'Do you realize I can get on a train at eight in the morning and be in Seville at 11 in time for doing business?'"

And the *Sevillano* says, "*Pa' que?*" Whatever for? And you know, the enormous investment that went into this clearly to strengthen his domestic political base, this is corruption.

The thing in Spain was that the memories of Franco were so vivid and painful that Spaniards were divided, irreparably divided. They were not going to repeat anything like the Spanish Civil War. There was never any open hostility. They were not going to go through that again and there was a genteel acceptance of one's political rivals. They weren't ever going to duke it out again. However, socialists would never consider voting in any other way other than for socialists, and it was likewise for the re-creation of the old Franco party, the *Partido Popular*.

Socialists were getting chills up their spine seeing the personalities they had known from before 1975 still present in the Spanish political spectrum. And they were horrified, disgusted. In fact, these people did go through changes and they modernized in some ways and let's just say, if they'd been comparable to the Nazi party in the '30s and '40s and '50s and '60s, they were not in the '80s. But anyway, there were right-wingers and left-wingers. Typical of Europe, right-wingers never become left-wingers and vice versa. Not like Americans, who have something called "the undecided."

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: They have no undecideds.

Q: Like the neocons.

WHITMAN: There's very little movement. If your father's a socialist you might be a socialist all your life, or if you're a conservative, likewise. In many European countries, very few undecideds. And so what happened, unfortunately, the Socialist Party had carte blanche to do anything, and they did a lot of featherbedding. It wasn't major embezzlement, but they did stuff that bolstered their own political and economic and personal interest. As anybody does, if they're in for the long haul. And I don't blame them. I don't think they're more corrupt by nature than anyone else. But they made the best of it for themselves.

As we all know, after the Atocha bombings there was a tremendous change in Spanish politics. And the trauma of a terrorist attack changed everything and did sort of mix up the whole political landscape. But until that incident, socialists were socialists. The conservative parties—there were several—were also unchangeable and there was very little dialogue possible. I remember as the outsider talking to socialists saying, "I think the point of democracy is for the public to express their satisfaction or their dissatisfaction with the performance of a government. That's why we have elections."

The socialists have really gone beyond. I don't know what I would be in a Spanish system, but I do believe in alternation. If a party—any party, right, left, or center—performs badly, I think a democratic system requires them to be removed at least temporarily, until they get their act together. This argument was anathema to Spaniards. They would not hear of it. They would say, "My father was in jail under Franco. I would never ever vote against the socialists." It went deep back in their personal lives.

Q: I would think that given the Franco experience, Castro would be anathema. But Castro always seems to have a following in Spain.

WHITMAN: Actually, the famous incident in the Western Hemispheric Summit, King Juan Carlos went to some of those summits and I think it was Chavez, blah, blah, blah, Chavez, blah, blah, blah, pro-Castro, pro-Castro. And the king said—only a king is allowed to do this —“Could you kindly shut your stupid mouth.” He said this in public. And he was adored by the Spanish public for having the cojones to say this to Chavez. A politician can’t do that, but a king can.

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: So I think the Spaniards were mainly embarrassed by their very bad history in the Western Hemisphere. It was never mentioned to me. In the final years of the Central America War, this was a big issue in Denmark, so I thought it would be in Spain too. Never ever was I confronted with any questions about U.S. policy in Central America during the war. I’m quite sure it was because Spaniards are ashamed of the very bad things they did in the Western Hemisphere, including in Cuba. And would just as soon wash their hands of the whole thing.

Q: Well, and you left --

WHITMAN: Yeah, ’93. I received a phone call from the Africa Bureau in Washington. We still had USIA at that time. And thus began my long professional relationship with Bob LaGamma.

He called me from Washington from the Africa Bureau of USIA saying, “You’ve been out for seven years, would you be willing to come back and be the cultural coordinator for the Africa Bureau in Washington?” And I think I thought about it for about 15 seconds and then I said yes.

I want to highlight him here because he’s been so helpful to me and still is to this day. Bob was the Director of the Africa Bureau in the old USIA. We’ll talk later about the destruction of USIA. But Bob was an inspired leader. Not everyone got along with him, but nobody doubted his passion and his brilliance in bringing mutual understanding between the United States and various countries in Africa. He was one of a series of titans. Bob Gosende was another. There were a series of remarkable leaders who led that office. I guess we all get nostalgic when we think of what seem to be better times in the past.

I thought about it for less than a minute when he made his offer, inviting me to be the cultural coordinator for that office, a post he himself had held when I had last known him. I was very flattered that he would entrust to me something he himself had done. You know, people tend to be proprietary about the positions they’ve had and they don’t lightly invite others to take their place. So I was very honored, and I still am, at the thought that he would have me in that position.

I had gone into USIA in 1985 because of cultural and educational exchanges. One of the ironies of my trajectory is that I never have been a cultural attaché and I never have worked in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. It's fine; I had other unexpected discoveries. But there I was, the cultural coordinator, in a geographic bureau. It's an important distinction. I wasn't administering cultural programs. I was advising ECA (Educational and Cultural Affairs) offices on the needs of the African area. Now, I was hardly an expert on that. I tried to become a quick study. My gosh, I had lived in Africa, but I had never served as a U.S. government official in Africa. So I felt at the same time quite unprepared for this, but also marvelously assisted by Bob, who took me off to regional PAO (political affairs officer) conferences and where I traveled briefly through a dozen countries. Suddenly this whole African area came to life to me.

The very first day I was in that office Amy Biehl was murdered. She was a Fulbright scholar in South Africa. And she was working on a project to see about improving the status and possibilities of women. I don't like the term "empowerment," but the idea was to see how this might be improved in some of the townships in South Africa. In particular, the township called Crossroads, outside of Cape Town.

Q: What were the circumstances?

WHITMAN: She was going home escorted by a local friend. There were definitely security issues in the townships. There was anger—well-placed anger—among the people relegated to those miserable conditions. She was obviously a foreigner. She was of a different race than those who lived in that township. And some teenagers, I think misunderstanding what she was doing there, killed her.

This was of course a big crisis for the Fulbright program. This was extremely concerning, not only tragic for Amy Biehl and her parents and her brother, but for the whole Fulbright program, which was really traumatized by this. There were all sorts of discussions—I guess I was part of them—about where the line is between perfect security and safety, and on the other hand, getting into the communities where our presence was most needed. There is always a fine line there. With anything we do as travelers or diplomats, there's always some risk. We saw that in Benghazi earlier this year.

Her parents became quite famous later. They were people of means and they established a commemorative organization named after Amy, which directly involved the young men who had killed her in trying to make their situation better. It was very moving.

I met the Biehls, her parents, a couple of years later when I was in South Africa. Inspirational couple. What they did was beloved by many people. Not including Amy's siblings though, who felt that the murder of their sister could not properly be forgiven by anyone other than Amy herself, and that this was not the prerogative of the parents. It was a fascinating and very sad event. It did lead to some astonishing, terrific programs, which the Biehls did in close cooperation with USIS Pretoria. It was the U.S. Information

Service, which no longer exists, and with the U.S. embassy. They were great friends to the embassy and to the South African various communities.

So that was a challenging first day. I didn't even really know where my desk was, and there we were sucked in. It wasn't just me, but it was mainly the Fulbright office. Now, as cultural coordinator I was dealing with all of the educational and cultural programs that had a stake in Africa. And it quickly became very fascinating, because these various closeted offices were stove-piped, I guess you would call them. There was the Fulbright and the International Visitors, the Voluntary Visitors, the Humphrey, the English Teaching Program, the Academic Advising Program, and quite a number of others. I quickly found that the only vector of communication between one of those offices and another was me. In some cases, I was introducing people who'd worked down the hallway from one another for decades but who had never met. So what a fascinating opportunity this was to learn the whole ECA structure.

Q: You were under what?

WHITMAN: I was under the geographic African Bureau. The equivalent today would be the Bureau of African Affairs. But in the smaller USIA, which did only press and culture, this was a big fish in a small pond. The pond is gone now. But this was an amazing, quick education in the various cultural and educational stages. And the various struggles that we were already fighting in a period of retrenchment—because retrenchment did start back in the '90s—were to see that the Africa region would get its fair share. It was usually the short end of the stick.

Q: Well, these groups that each had a piece of the action, I take it they were all sort of trying to find suitable candidates to support them to come for education. Was that pretty much it?

WHITMAN: Pretty much. What you had, of course, was embassies nominating candidates to come as scholars or visitors or the Voluntary Visitors Program, which is a similar program where the visitors themselves pay the plane tickets, or their ministry does. The Washington side was pretty much number crunching, and there wasn't too much second guessing of what embassies were doing. Embassies chose people to come from all regions of the world, but I was dealing with the African area. The people in Washington would receive the visitors from this side and try to make their programs the best they could. At the same time, if American scholars were going or if we had something called cultural specialists, AmCulSpecs who would go to the field, there were people in Washington to try and make that a smooth process also. But, as I say, these various offices were stove-piped.

Actually domestic assignments tend to be mundane and bureaucratic. But there were a number of interesting things. For example, just anecdotally, another crisis was the plane crash with the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi in April of 1994, the signal for the genocide to begin. I happened to be the duty officer that day. Duty officer at USIA does not mean you have great responsibilities for evacuating Americans or saving people's

lives, but to be aware of the ramifications for educational cultural exchange if there are things that need to be adjusted or canceled. That was another traumatic moment.

I remember receiving that call at my house and thinking I had no idea of the meaning of this, but I understood this was a major, major disaster, that the presidents of two countries would be killed in the same airplane. I remember receiving that phone call. Oh my gosh, these are small, insignificant countries, but this is a huge event and it's going to be a big problem. I had no more prophetic wisdom than that, but I knew something was up.

I want to mention something about the political atmosphere at USIA and State at the time. Republicans who say that USIA was mainly staffed by Democrats are somewhat correct. This is not a completely misguided judgment. In fact there was also a healthy mixture of political parties. However, most employees at USIA frankly were relieved to be in the Clinton administration.

Q: I'd say this would be true of the Foreign Service or in State Department. I mean it's the outlook.

WHITMAN: To be frank, that is the case. The reason I mention it is President Clinton was the worst period in the history of USIA, because he abolished it (*laughs*). And he did this with his appointed Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, and their henchman, Joe Duffey, a person who is pretty easy to dislike. Without any explanation, without any airing of information, without any public discussion, quite deceptively and in secret, they had plans to dismantle the whole thing. We all knew this but only by rumor; there was no information coming to us.

So while some of us had a sense of destiny of the country going in a positive way, we certainly were absolutely betrayed by that administration in the dismantling of our agency. I think the only person I even went to single out ever in an interview as far as scorn and spite would be Joe Duffey. He was the former President of American University, and a very disliked person there. I know that because I'm at AU now. People think of his regime at AU as a disastrous time. At USIA, we had political appointees -- all presidents send political appointees in increasing numbers to their partners and bureaus and agencies. We were an agency at that time. It seemed to us at USIA as if the people who were too incompetent to be placed in important departments were sent to us. And we had people of very little experience or mental ability sent to be our overlords. We referred to them as "the invading army," even though these were people of the same political party that many of us shared. We were just dumbfounded at the mediocrity of the people sent by the Clinton administration to be our bosses. These people were affable, they were agreeable in some cases. In other cases, no. Vainglory was very much part of some of them, not all.

We had a sense that our agency had been singled out for destruction or conversion, if you want to be less apocalyptic. But we were just amazed at the incompetence of the people sent over to tell us what to do. I'm not going to name any of them, but let's just focus on their leader, Joe Duffey. He had a funny little smile, which was never seemed genuine

and which never disappeared from his face. He once said in a television interview, “You know, I’m really fond of books. I like books. In the summertime, if I’m sitting in my hammock, you wouldn’t expect me to turn on a computer or go to a floppy disc. It’s a *book* that I want to have.”

Now, even as he said this on television, we know now that he had *already* planned to eliminate all printed matter published by the USIA. This was deceptive; it was wrong-headed. He was speaking to an audience mainly of Foreign Service Officers. And of course we were charmed by his reference to a book as something that’s friendly, something that creates and nourishes intellectuals. When we were allowed to call them libraries in Africa in the old days, these were the breeding grounds of a whole generation of African intelligentsia and political leaders. He was so determined to eradicate it all. It was like the destruction of Carthage. He stopped the publication of the wonderful periodical, the magazine *Topic*, which was enormously popular in Africa. It was one of the few, maybe the only periodical magazine in a continent that does not have *Time* magazine or *Newsweek* or *The Saturday Evening Post*. All they had was *Topic* and they loved it.

When Duffey decided to shut that down, I remember Bob LaGamma was very upset. Rightly so. He went to the director and said, “We need to have *Topic*. And if you don’t want to pay for it, I will, out of my geographic bureau money.” Normally, this money should come from another bureau, not from the geographic bureau. But Bob felt so strongly that he volunteered to give a large chunk of his own budget to keep this going. The answer was no, no! I can only think of the Romans putting salt in the grounds of Carthage to make sure nothing would ever grow there again. I remember when the Public Affairs Officer in Stockholm at that time dismantled the library in Stockholm and wrote a paper, an instructional guide on how to destroy a library and to make sure it will never come back. This individual was promoted various times. He was rewarded for creating this manual on how to destroy a library. To destroy a library, you don’t just give the collection to a local library, you disperse it. You disperse the books to make sure that the collection cannot exist. There was something very mean spirited about this.

Q: Had there been problems with libraries? In other words, were they considered to be sources of foment or, I don’t know, what the hell?

WHITMAN: (*laughs*) On the contrary, they were adored overseas by us and by the local publics. The only problem we ever had were congressional delegations that would see libraries overseas and would go ballistic because they would say, “The taxpayer is paying for books for foreign people? What about my district in Oklahoma or Illinois?” And so, because this became a political issue—I would say a minor political issue—first we removed the word “library” and we created the term “information resource center.” As we know, these IRCs still exist. They’re functional; they’re used by many people. But they’re more and more withdrawn from the public. They’re inside the new embassy fortresses. They’re inaccessible to normal people. And it’s a tremendous loss.

I want to not establish myself as a victim of nostalgia. There are groups that want to revive USIA now that it's dead. I'm not one of those. I know that USIA is gone and that other forms of exchange can be very nicely organized. But I would say that the unexplained destruction of that agency was an extreme disservice by the Clinton administration. We're told that we were traded for a vote. Jesse Helms said, "If I get your vote," -- no, "If I *give you* my vote for a chemical weapons treaty that you want, then you have to give me USIA in exchange." We were a horse trade and the whole agency was dismantled in exchange for a vote on a treaty.

We know that Madeline Albright and Jesse Helms had a peculiar, positive friendship. I'm all for friendship; I think that's nice. Certainly ideologically, they were opposites. So we were very puzzled. I think I speak for others. Madeline Albright was a great Secretary of State in some ways. But I don't think she ever set foot into the agency that she dismantled, until the day that she had a town hall meeting explaining that the decision had been made. At that point I don't think she had never even been in the building, as far as anyone knows. We saw this as disdainful, unhelpful, not collegial, and we were quite dismayed. The actual dismantling took place a few years later. But we were hearing rumors.

During this period, when the decision apparently had been made, I remember serving on two committees, as the geographic advisor to Africa and to the Bureau of ECA [Educational and Cultural Affairs] on cultural exchanges. One committee met weekly for six or eight months to determine the future of a program called Arts America. I actually wanted to be on that committee because I believed in that program. We met dutifully for six or eight months. It was about one afternoon per week, something like that. We produced a report. We gave some counsel and advice in writing, and we gave some presentations. The deceit of Joe Duffey in having decided *at an earlier time* to abolish that office entirely, while encouraging us to discuss a fictional future, I think it was just astounding.

Q: Now you're working at American University -- what do you know about Joe Duffey?

WHITMAN: Only anecdotally, I remember at the time that I lived, as I still do, in a neighborhood not too far from American University. I remember going into the local bookstore. We don't have many bookstores anymore; it's 2013. But there was a lovely little place called the Cleveland Park Bookstore. I went in there and bought some books about South Africa. I remember paying for the books. There was this young man, the cashier. And he very nicely said, "I see you're buying books about South Africa. Are you planning to go there?"

I said, "Yes." I explained that I was in the U.S. Information Agency.

I remember the cashier looking at me with enormous compassion, saying, "*Ugh*, Joe Duffey. Yes. I'm so sorry for you. We had Joe Duffey. So sorry that you have to have this experience."

Now, this is an anecdote. The bookstore clerk had been a student at AU. I don't know what went on. But I do know that the morale was rock bottom wherever Joe went.

Joe Duffey was the opposite of colorful. As I say, he had a permanent half-smile. Something you would have had in a plaster cast, I think. And I guess the real truth of it was the other half of that mouth that was not smiling.

One more anecdote before, if I may. The International Visitors Program. One of the incompetent people—again, we called them “the invading army”—took over the International Visitors Program. The worst bureaucrats take a program that's flourished for 40 years. In their determination to leave a mark and to be known and remembered for something, they will twist it around, modify it, change it, tweak it, so that their name can be attached. A person whose name I won't mention came in determined to radically change the nature of the International Visitors Program. Still today one of the best programs the U.S. government has ever had.

Q: Oh, I mean it's so obvious, the plus in our diplomacy --

WHITMAN: Well, thank you, Stu. Thanks for that endorsement. That comes from Stu Kennedy, which is a voice of authority.

This individual wanted to modernize it or change it in some way. It wasn't clear. The person wanted to increase the number of visitors and decrease the amount of money and effort being spent on the program. I saw this as what I used to call the East German Bus Tour version, where you would pack 30 people into a bus and you would have a propagandist at the microphone narrating during a windshield tour of a city. I thought this would certainly be the destruction of a fine program.

So I connived to get myself onto the committee that was looking at “modernizing” that program. I also invited a friend of mine with the same take that I had. I said, “You have to join me here. Look at the danger to this program.”

Well, after nine months of debate and agony and tears shed and personal insults and wounded feelings, this went on and on. The two of us, I won't name him, were able to obstruct the modernization of the program. I'll take some credit myself for having assured that the IV program would remain intact.

When we submitted the report, it was a consensus document. I don't think I personally hurt anyone's feelings, but there were squabbles. It was a turbulent period. The report we submitted was kind of funny. The day that that individual received the report the committee was all, maybe 15 of us, in a room. And the person spent 20 minutes showering us with praise and saying we were all such fine people and our work was so much admired and respected.

I knew after 20 minutes that the other shoe was going to drop. At that point, the individual said, “Your report in its current form is unacceptable.” And then we had a one-

hour harangue on how we had failed to understand the mission that had been given to us. I figured after an hour and twenty minutes I'd had enough, so I just left the room. But apparently the essence of the report stuck, and the essence was, "You can make some changes. There can always be improvements in a program. But we advise you not to dismantle it." And we succeeded in doing that. That's one anecdote.

Other things to remember. The White House Conference on Africa. In 1994, in July, President Clinton decided, I think very inspirationally, to have a White House Conference on Africa. It was an academic conference addressed to a wide variety of participants. And in our tiny little office, Bob LaGamma really was the lead on actually doing the arrangement of this large event. I was his deputy, so we worked closely on this. It was the White House, it was the NSC, it was the Office of the Vice President. Vice President Gore was very personally involved in this.

We never were sure exactly why President Clinton decided to do this conference. But we were thrilled that he had decided, and it seemed an opportunity to showcase our continent in a way that attracted positive attention to it. We had scholars and we had notable people. This involved several months of preparation. There was no money available to do this. The OVP – the Office of the Vice President - had to go out and raise private money even to cater a lunch. The White House did not have funds for this. So I'm not quite sure what was behind this. It might have been a point of reaching out to a political base that Clinton had. There was a Black Caucus, which is a group of some importance. And we know that Clinton's attachment to that caucus was not phony. He genuinely honored and liked the people in the Black Caucus. It might have been partly to get some domestic political capital. But in any case, he did it.

I remember being at the event. We were amazed. There were academic breakout sessions, one of them involving environment, you won't be surprised to learn. Al Gore attended that session. He did not chair it, but he attended it as a participant. It was a two-hour session. He stayed the whole time, and he read and digested every academic paper submitted. He had helpful comments. He was active. Of course at the time we didn't know yet what a major figure he would be in the environment. But this was gratifying to see a vice president intellectually involved in something not purely for political purposes. He was not there just for the photo opportunity. We were thrilled that both a president and a vice president would be taking a personal interest.

Q: At that time, you and maybe your colleagues looked at Africa, in a Foreign Service sense, as a place with an awful lot of posts in countries not particularly going anywhere. I mean AIDS was coming along, lousy governments, a lot of mineral wealth, but a population that wasn't particularly productive.

WHITMAN: You're absolutely right.

Q: I mean it was a slow neighborhood in the world practically.

WHITMAN: Absolutely. And there were many people saying why bother. We were a small, intrepid group, defying that attitude. And maybe quixotically, we all were fond of the continent because we had all lived there in some capacity and found that our lives had been enriched by it. So it was an irrational thing. But indeed, Africa had plummeted. The great optimism of the '60s turned to disillusionment in the '70s.

Pardon me. Pardon everybody. And discouragement came in the '80s and then cynicism in the '90s. Notwithstanding our affections, the division of resources to the various continents reflected this. I mean frankly, Europe got the most. Then it was Latin America and Asia. The Middle East had not exactly been discovered, but was had a kind of a constituency. Everybody took the Middle East seriously, but nobody knew quite what to do with it, in policy obviously, but also in education, cultural programs. In Africa, though, the story has always been different.

On the one hand, as you say, Africa got worse and worse in the '60s and '70s. I think we're now getting better and better. It seemed as if there wasn't much there to work with. How were our direct interests affected? Well, they were, in the case of Nigeria and South Africa. But maybe minimally by the others. On the other hand, this is the one continent which always gratefully received our efforts. The only one which always loved having us. Of course, this made working in the African setting—on or with the African continent—very pleasing, very satisfying. Americans who went there loved it. Africans who came here, they may have been from dysfunctional countries, but they were very brilliant people. So it was just so enjoyable. We all became sort of champions of an underrepresented continent in terms of money, and we had a great time with it.

Clinton did introduce the phrase “trade, not aid.” Although the phrase has gone, that increasingly becomes what is our pretty reliable policy toward Africa. No longer the basket case, we will work with them. We say this; we don't always do it. But the idea which he created was they're not our children – in fact they're not children at all. We could do things with them. We have mutual interests. We want their minerals and their other resources. They need our technology. We have mutual needs. They understand malaria and we don't. Doctors in the United States don't even recognize malaria when they see it. You need an African MD even to diagnose it. So there was a genuine need on both sides. We tried not to be patronizing and I think we succeeded.

Q: Well, I look upon it as sort of a place where they've very nicely absorbed the do-gooders.

WHITMAN: Yes (*laughs*). I guess so, maybe we were in a little bubble. It's true Amy Biehl was murdered, but not by terrorists. They were misguided adolescents who later repented and begged for forgiveness. So we didn't have that meanness to deal with. Not like Boko Haram now and the situation in Northern Mali, I'm afraid that this section of zealots has come into this kind of idyll.

Q: Well, did you feel that in dealing with African affairs you were all sort of missionaries or, you know, spreading the good word or something like that? Which was

condescending in a way. But, looking at the situation in that whole continent, there was a sufficiency of reason to make this attitude sustainable.

WHITMAN: Absolutely.

Two reactions. First of all, Africa policy in Washington was the lowest priority of any geographic area. Working on Africa policy, therefore, was much more *fun*. We had much more latitude to do things without our bosses second-guessing us. Anything we did received praise and thanks because the expectations were so low. So in fact, I quickly understood, this is the fun place to be. Because it's a low political profile, the people working on it have more freedom.

Secondly, you mention missionaries. A friend of mine published a book last year, Greg Garland. The book is called *Why Do They Like Us?* It's a history of U.S.-Africa relations. Africa is the only continent that consistently in our surveys likes the United States. Maybe for the wrong reasons, but they look up to us.

First of all, we didn't colonize Africa. England, France, Germany, Portugal, and Belgium did that. So whatever resentment they have for the western world is pretty much focused on the former colonizer. Except for Liberia, we didn't do that sort of thing.

Secondly, the only American presence in Africa, prior to the independence movements of the 1960s and later, was missionaries. Missionaries, think of the movie *The African Queen*, were patronizing; they were this and that. I can't judge or say whether this is right or wrong, but Africans generally have a positive recollection of Americans who were involved in their countries who were not representative of the U.S. government. Because we didn't have embassies and we didn't have colonial offices. We only had missionaries and teachers and adventurers. Africans liked them. Many Africans learned English from them and are grateful.

At a later point, coinciding with the independences was the creation of the Peace Corps. And many Africans to this day remember the high school teacher they had. Now they're government officials sometimes. I had a conversation with a Kenyan couple of years ago. Said his whole life was changed for the better when he was lucky enough to be in a classroom with an American Peace Corps volunteer as teacher. Someday this will matter, when Africa becomes more important. But inadvertently, we've invested enormously in a cultural and human contact, not in an official context, because we didn't have official presences. In cases before independence where we had any relations at all, it would be through the U.S. Embassy in Paris or London or maybe Lisbon. After independence, where the former colonizers held on economically and became very entrenched in their former colonies, we didn't have that former label.

I remember when I was a Fulbright teacher in Brazzaville in 1980, in a country with an ideology, a Marxist ideology. I wasn't a Marxist, but they just loved having me there. And I guess Greg Garland is right. He's a great FSO and a great scholar. He spent the year at NDU (National Defense University) doing his study. And his conclusion is

because they knew us from our human and cultural and educational and missionary contacts way before we had any official government contacts. This may not be a good commentary (*laughs*) on whether embassies work. Because here's a whole continent where people actually like us, partly because we did not have embassies. And it seems to sustain us to this day.

We're seeing public opinion surveys where America is liked, regardless of who is president. It seems to be a consistent thing. And someday soon, Africa will increase in importance. They have minerals, human potential. They have the potential to do bad things and good things. The world is shrinking. It's globalization. Very soon, Africa will be of enormous importance. If not for any other reason, it will be important for its mineral resources. I guess we didn't know it, but we've made a good investment. We didn't think this through, but it all worked out for the better. There are some very ominous things happening. Northern Mali, Boko Haram and Nigeria, a possibly unraveling South Africa. But these have become now of strategic importance to the United States. And like it or not, we're going to be increasingly involved.

Q: Well, let's go back to what we're talking about, sort of the chronology. So how did this inter-program-job work? Was there competition among the various outfits?

WHITMAN: Well, again, in the case of Africa the resources were so tiny that actually there was a very collegial sense that we were all in it together, we who were in Africa. Those who controlled the purse strings were not us. So collectively, we worked, I would say, extremely harmoniously. And we became wonderful friends and we were always making the argument. This would be Bob LaGamma, with his meaty fist. He would put his fist on the table and demand a fair share for Africa. He really was quite successful, given the things that we were all up against. We needed a strong personality to champion the continent.

I think the higher-ups, the Joe Duffeys and the people controlling the budgets, had a mixture of dread and admiration when they saw Bob come in to a room with them. "Oh my God, there he is again." They would pull up their socks and try to behave. And in many cases, they actually did increase our pitiful resources a little bit. When I say pitiful, by the way, this is not only a relatively small budget we were given, but also the very high cost of airfares to Africa. So if we were given X amount of money, this same amount in Latin America or Europe would allow those regions to have twice as many people coming and going. The extremely high airfares basically cut us in half in terms of numbers of people.

Every year in the '90s the USIA budget went down, down, down until USIA was eliminated altogether. I remember the very last year, 1999—I'm skipping ahead—there was a big class action lawsuit, the Hartman case. I believe that if USIA had a budget of a bit over billion, I think half a billion was spent in settling that lawsuit. So this was an ignominious end to an agency that had played a very positive role since post World War II until 1999.

Q: So what happened with you?

WHITMAN: In 1995, when he knew that he was going to Pretoria to be the public affairs officer from his position in the Africa Bureau, Bob LaGamma said, "I'm bringing you."

And I said, "No, you're not." Because I was tired, I was burned out.

And then a week later he'd say, "Have you thought about my offer?"

And I would say, "Yes Bob, I've thought about it, and I'm not coming. I have other things to do."

And we had this conversation five times until I realized, "Oh, I guess there's no way out of it; I'm going to Pretoria." Bob created a position for me at the embassy called the program development officer. Again, I'm very honored and flattered. But he felt that in addition to an information officer and a cultural affairs officer, there should be a third. There should be a triumvirate of equal level, all of them reporting to the PAO. So he created something called PDO slot, which was bureaucratically needed, partly because of the Binational Commission between Vice President Gore and Deputy President Mbeki of South Africa at that time.

Bob just kind of pulled me up by my shirt, and dragged me off to South Africa. While I went with great resistance, as I think I've gone to all my assignments, I immediately loved the country, I loved working with Bob, I thought the embassy was fantastic. And by the way, my stay in South Africa exactly coincided with the presidency of Nelson Mandela.

Q: So you were there from when to when?

WHITMAN: '95 to '99. Mandela was elected the spring before, and inaugurated the spring before I arrived. By the time I came in the summer of '95, he was the president. All the world noticed. It's not only in retrospect that the world has had such affection for this man, Nelson Mandela. It was fully, fully the case back then. I can't imagine a more fortuitous time. I don't know how much use I would have been during the election period. I don't have political instincts. But I was simply parachuted into this situation at exactly the most favorable time a few months into the Mandela administration and it lasted four years, as he did. I totally attribute this to Bob LaGamma. He gently coerced me. I resisted, foolishly resisted. And it was just an inspirational experience to be there with him at that time.

Q: What was the situation in South Africa at the time as you saw it?

WHITMAN: I think very few people have had the opportunity to see such rapid change in a country that needed it. I happened to be taken to Pretoria, one of the political capitals, but the administrative, executive capital. Because Cape Town and Bloemfontein, there were three capitals in South Africa, following the Dutch pattern. In Pretoria, when I

arrived, there was a little shopping center called Hatfield, almost walking distance from where I was given a residence. When I arrived, it was a sleepy little town. I think it was still forbidden for movie theaters to function on a Sunday. Everything was closed at six p.m. It was a very conservative town, only one or two years before I was there, there had been incidents of black South Africans found illegally in the wrong part of town and being handcuffed to a telephone pole because they had broken the curfew. I mean this was an extremely reactionary bastion of Afrikaner society and everything bad that that had.

There was also a marvelously good side to some Afrikaner individuals, and we can get into that. Not two years later, Hatfield came to life. I remember seeing it before, during, and after. This was the kind of commercial center at this time. This shifted many times. But what had been a guarded little place for Afrikaners and, and English speakers to do their shopping, within the four years I was there became like a *souq*, a marketplace, a gathering, an agora of people and things and new establishments and a very rapid increase in cultural mixture. Now, there should be a debate about whether that was superficial or it was genuine. I've had interesting discussions with people about that. But it was, let's say visually, an enormously rapid change. I was really inspired by this.

And my job – what a privilege. I had a bit of money mainly forwarded to us by AID, because AID I think had its largest mission in the world in Pretoria, a 100 million dollars at that time. I had one half of one percent of their budget to do quick turnaround study tours, whether Americans coming to coach South Africans on things or vice versa, sometimes in the context of the Gore-Mbeki Binational Commission, the BNC. Sometimes we did other related programs, funded by AID in instances where they knew that their own bureaucracy was too heavy to provide quick turnaround. If the brand new ministry of social affairs needed to study a certain statute in the U.S., like the American Disabilities Act, my office could send them quite easily and quite quickly. I did so under the supervision of AID and with their money and with their thanks. Because legally, USIS at that time was more able to quickly transform money into programs. AID was more of the long haul. And their own internal rules didn't allow for speed in doing programs. So I had all the fun, I must say.

We had a young man from Clinton's Justice Department come several times as my house guest to assist the South African government in looking at affirmative action. His name was Deval Patrick, now governor of Massachusetts. And at the time, he was a pretty high-ranking official. I believe the exact social background, the same age and the same college pedigree, as Barack Obama. Deval Patrick was from South Chicago. He was a Harvard law graduate. He was from a poor family and somehow he got a scholarship to do something. I know that Obama and Patrick are in communication. I don't know how close friends they are.

Q: How did he treat his escort?

WHITMAN: That was me.

Q: So he treated you fairly?

WHITMAN: I could show you a photo of us hanging around in shorts and walking around in sandals – I mean he was staying in my house and what marvelous memories. Even if they didn't take his advice on the letter of the law, he had a profound influence on policy, on racial policy in South Africa. One has to be nimble in offering advice to other countries, understanding that what works in the U.S. may not be the formula for a different place.

Deval became a wonderful friend and he came several times. He was a little bit disappointed that he couldn't convince the new South African government to drop the idea of quotas, I remember. He argued the case many times with his interlocutors, who liked him very much—that affirmative action, in order to properly advance the country, should not be strictly linked to quotas. The South African government decided after listening to him a number of times, and I think listening carefully and attentively, not to follow his advice. They did—I don't know if it was *de facto* or *de jure*—embed quotas into their hiring schemes in the public sector. It was not his intention. He did draft some of the laws that are now in place in South Africa, though redrafted and tweaked in a way that he would not have done himself. But that was the nature of what we were doing.

I call it gray matter exchange. We never sought to impose an American formula on a newly emerging democracy, at least not in South Africa. What we did consciously was to try to bring people together and then stand aside, just let the experts meet, let them pursue their discourse, and try to let it happen in a very free manner.

One of my favorite programs was a forensic nurse from Colorado who volunteered to come and assist the South African police in doing forensics on rape cases so that rapists could be prosecuted. Because rape was always unconscionably high in South Africa. Still is, by the way. But there were almost no successful prosecutions. They didn't know how to bring evidence into the court. So this forensic nurse came and trained the police on how to do that. That doesn't mean the problem is solved, but there have been some prosecutions. And my gosh, that was a good investment. She came twice. I think the whole cost to the U.S. taxpayer was maybe \$12,000 for two trips. And it transformed the judicial system.

Q: Well, were these rapes just sort of indigenous rapes? Or were these pointed at foreigners, you might say, getting rid of years of frustration?

WHITMAN: Curiously, a group to combat domestic violence was created in my living room. We learned that this was not just the black community, it wasn't the colored community. All strata, every bit of South African society, including the white elites, were all completely overtaken by domestic violence. There was something mysterious. But this went absolutely across all strata.

When we formed this little group, we noted that the people most able to assist others were in fact the African women from the townships who had more experience in

defending themselves than the elite whites did in their state of denial, and in their need to keep appearances positive and push things under the rug. Many white women were being raped by white men or African men, and they were clueless in terms of what to do about it, how to defend themselves, when to make a public, when to denounce them, when to go to the police.

The women in the township of Mamelodi, outside of Pretoria, had this all worked out. They had a tiny little office where victims would come and tell their story, and then right across the street was the police bureau. After listening to them and advising them on what to do, the caregivers would take them straight to the police station, get the thing registered. And so in fact, in the poor communities they had a much better system in dealing with this than the elites in denial. And so, it was fascinating seeing the disenfranchised teaching the elites how to protect themselves.

Q: Now, were the great perpetrators being sentenced, at the poor end?

WHITMAN: Very seldom. Occasionally there were some successes on the part of the communities in shaming the rape perpetrators. And by the way, homicide, likewise, is out of control. Enormously high rates of homicide. Prosecution was rough. There weren't too many successes. But it was just beginning. They needed advice from outsiders because rapists and murderers had pretty much gotten away with it for decades.

Now, one grotesque thing that needs to be mentioned, the *sangomas*, the natural healers in some cases were telling men with AIDS that if they could be cured if they had sex with a virgin. I know this sounds like a myth, and we've all heard this story in other countries and it's sort of hard to believe. I'm quite sure this was happening in South Africa. And so, to find a virgin you have to go younger and younger. And we had these grotesque cases of six-month-old girls being raped. From the belief that having sex with them could cure AIDS. This is not a good thing happening. This is a deeply entrenched rationale. It's skepticism of medical doctors, police, government authorities who had only existed for persecution up until the 1990s. So understandably, the communities distrusted all of these people and turned inside to their own advisors. And sadly, there was a lot of superstition involved in what they were being told. I don't know how widespread this was, but I know there were many cases of infant girls being raped. This wasn't just from men being horny. This was a belief that this could cure them of an incurable disease. Southern Africa has always been the worst place for HIV/AIDS. And this was an intense area of effort during the 1990s, the early 21st century. If you don't fix it in Southern Africa, you're not going to fix it anywhere.

Q: I would think this would inspire vigilantism among particularly the whites.

WHITMAN: Absolutely. Actually, more among the black townships, I think. The sense that police would never be there to protect you, in fact this did inspire vigilantism, in terms of theft. And this is generally the case in Sub-Saharan Africa. If an individual is publically accused of stealing something, that person will probably be killed by the crowd. That was the case in some townships because the police just were never there.

And vigilantism among whites, I don't know. Again, the elites seemed to be in a state of denial. "This doesn't happen in our lovely communities."

I don't know the percentage, but anecdotally, there were a number of supremely inspired noble Afrikaners who were actively involved in making the transition smooth. Names like Beyers Naudé. I met him several times. He was from the Dutch Reform church. He was under this peculiar banning situation, because he had advocated social mingling and intellectual openness at a time when his church was opposed to that. He was a minister. The Afrikaner regime had him under—let's call it house arrest—for eight or nine years. Permitted to see only one person at a time. Permitted to be in his house, but his written materials banned. I mean this is not a long time ago. This would be in the 1980s.

There were many members of the judicial establishment. They were mostly Afrikaners. And they were just so inspired to have the opportunity to assist in South Africa's transition. Again, I can't say whether the stereotype, rigid, reactionary Afrikaner was entirely accurate. There were many such people. There were also many exceptions, very, very enlightened individuals.

Q: All right. OK, so we've talked about some of the problems of rape, violence and all. But we'll talk more next time about developments there and all, your view of Mandela and his government. And obviously it was a time of adjustment on the part of the whites.

WHITMAN: Let me just say, it was more than adjustment. Whites were sick to death of being pariahs outside of their country, and being shunned in Europe and despised in other places. I would say there was more than adjustment, there was something like euphoria in general among all social classes, social, racial, and economic classes. Of course, this is the honeymoon. Then comes after the honeymoon.

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: But this was the period of euphoria. Before the legitimate government, the one actually elected in '94, the United States and other countries were actively involved in sending aid and assistance in community building. Because we didn't trust the apartheid regime, the money was going to NGOs. Now, there's a little irony here. Somebody counted them up once and there were something like 20,000. Repeat: 20,000 NGOs in South Africa. A lot of them were getting money from the EU, from the United States, from AID. When a legitimate government came in 1994-'95, there was a major shift in aid and development of policy away from NGOs and into the government of South Africa.

Q: Of course.

WHITMAN: For very good policy reasons. There were, however, consequences. NGOs had been doing this stalwart work for decades, and they'd been engaged in communities. And suddenly they were cut off. It's an abnormal situation for AID to bypass a government. And now we were getting back to the normal, which then excluded NGOs

from funding. While I was there I remember seeing a lot of pain and a lot of distress. If there were 20,000 NGOs, I suppose 90% of them perished. And so again, this was probably a correct policy decision, but there were consequences and there were bad feelings in the NGO community. Some of the large ones that survived, IDASA and ACCORD. IDASA, which was once called the Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa. After the Mandela government came in, they kept the name IDASA, but they removed the word “alternative,” because they had a government that was legitimate.

There was a lot of shifting and adjustment that no one would have guessed was needed. Again, hard feelings in the NGO community? Absolutely. Because they felt they had to dance the dance of something called “donor driven agendas.” NGOs have a mission and a purpose. But if the donor defines the money in a way that shifts the mission of the NGO, the NGO begins to feel like prostitute, and they say so.

Q: What about Mandela, then?

WHITMAN: The recent film, *Invictus*, is very haunting, I have met Mandela a couple of times. I can tell the circumstances. That’s him in the movie. It’s just an amazingly accurate portrait.

Q: Morgan Freeman. It deals with Mandela and an all-white rugby team.

WHITMAN: I was not in the country at that time. Actually, the time depicted in the film was less than one year before I came. The film begins with a rugby defeat in Pretoria at Loftus Field. And that was my neighborhood. I used to sit at home and hear these enormous cheers of crowds. I have to confess, I never went to a rugby match (*laughs*). But this was certainly an Afrikaner sport. And what Mandela did in putting on this shirt of the team was --

Q: The Springboks.

WHITMAN: Springboks, thank you. A nimble mammal that prances through the savannahs. Beautiful animal. I do remember Afrikaners unable to get into Loftus Field, because it did have a capacity, and if you didn’t get there in time you didn’t get into the stadium. So then you would park in the various neighborhoods, including in front of my house. They would come with these little trucks with their *braais*, which is the barbecue. They would turn on the radios at full blast and cook the *braai* and have a picnic. Sometimes, if I tried to even leave my own house they would look at me as if I were intruding into their barbecue.

Loftus Field is very accurately depicted in the movie *Invictus* as a very important part of the culture of that part of the country now called Gauteng, formerly the Transvaal. The field was a tremendous magnet for large groups of people. During the four years that I was there, there was the beginning of a racial mixture. Very much so in the city. Less so in the sports field, which is why actually Mandela was so insightful in putting on that Springbok uniform. That was smart. And it was inspirational.

Just a few names of people. Pieter-Dirk Uys is one of the funniest people in the world to this day. He did comedy, one-person plays, you could say. Much of it improvised. And Pieter-Dirk Uys would ridicule the crazy rapid changes in South African society. He did it *very well*. You would be doubled over with laughter as he would imitate the voices and the compartments of the different ministers in any government, past, present, or even future.

He disliked the Mbeki regime quite a bit and was very vocal about criticizing them about denying HIV/AIDS. I mention Uys because he was the recipient of an American Embassy grant before I was there. He went to the Iowa's Writer's Workshop. He benefited from that. I just wanted to mention in this interview the amazing ability of many, or maybe most, South Africans to see humor. I mean really, *really* funny stuff on the crazy rapid social changes.

I can think of a number of funny anecdotes. Things that I think in the United States people would be reluctant to mention. I think we'd get into maybe the area of political incorrectness—example: the same movie director who made *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, Leon Schuster, made another movie—I'll just mention one—and let the reader decide whether this is appropriate humor or not. The Afrikaner radio broadcaster has been working at the radio station for decades. And it's a habit, he comes in every day at 9:00 and he sits down in his chair. But social change has happened in a very rapid fashion. He comes in one day, sits down in his chair, doesn't even notice that the chair has been occupied by an African South African who very politely taps him on the shoulder and says, "I've replaced you." I think that's a hilarious scene. The misunderstandings, the sudden adaptations. People in unexpected circumstances -- it happened so quickly.

I would say South Africa was coming from a more formalized racist system. We in the U.S. have lived racist systems. They weren't codified as much. We did have Supreme Court, Jim Crow, and we had certain elements of an official racist system, but never like South Africa. South Africa changed so quickly in the legal and political sense—not in the economic sense—that I think we have more to learn from South Africa than to teach them in terms of getting different ethnic and racial groups together in a nation state. We sometimes are a bit glib in the United States about having done this for 200 years and we're better than we used to be and we still have some defects. But South Africa, in a tiny brief period of five years, I think is astonishing, it's admirable. Very imperfect because most African South Africans still live in economic circumstances. But at least the legal system and the politics changed. I want to give them credit for that.

People who came while I was there. Peter Edelman, who created AmeriCorps for President Clinton, the husband of Marian Wright Edelman, came. And what a marvelous program that was, taking Peter Edelman around to the different provinces in the country, to introduce the notion of AmeriCorps, which is volunteer service that's remunerated in the form of chits that can pay for tertiary education. Fantastic system. It requires some money up front on the part of our government, and South Africa was not ready for that at the time he came. Actually I was with him while he was doing the final edits of his

famous cover story in *The Atlantic*, really slamming President Clinton for welfare reform. The cover piece was “The Worst Thing Clinton Has Done.”

This was a huge break: both Marion Wright Edelman and Peter Edelman broke apart a longstanding friendship with the two Clintons, and very publically. Fascinating to see it.

Arlen Specter, the late senator from Pennsylvania who never could figure out what party he was in, came to South Africa during the U.S. government shutdown. There are many amazing anecdotes about that trip in which we were forbidden to work because the U.S. government had shut down. We were not *permitted* to work, but we were *required* to “volunteer” to take care of Arlen Specter. I won’t say too much more about that except Arlen Specter was not well liked in Africa during his trip.

There was the famous telegram that proceeded him to all African posts designating the requirements. If you get a congressional delegation with Senator Specter, you need to have a squash ball of a certain diameter and a certain weight. You need to rent a squash court locally. Why he couldn’t travel with his own squash ball, about two or three inches in diameter, in his suitcase, I don’t know. But the requirements were monstrous. And again, I repeat, we were not permitted to work, but we were obliged to volunteer to do that.

Q: During this period, obviously the South Africans had to be to a certain extent feeling their way.

WHITMAN: Absolutely.

Q: Were there instructions or something about saying how we felt it should be done. Jump in with both feet, should we punish the wicked?

WHITMAN: The answer to your question, Stu, is not an episodic answer; it goes down decades. Because we had had the very lively debate in the 1970s and ‘80s. Chet Crocker, working for Ronald Reagan, introduced something called constructive engagement. And that side of the argument said, “Don’t be punitive; work with them. Don’t create conflicts. Maybe they can evolve.” Everyone agreed that South Africa had to change and become a more just society. But the different views of how to do that were pretty lively debates, as you remember in the ‘70s.

Q: Well, when I was with INR and the Africa Bureau back in the ‘60s, we used to talk about the Night of Long Knives.

WHITMAN: Yes. The Day of Reckoning, yes.

Q: They Day of Reckoning, when South Africa --

WHITMAN: Yep.

Q: I mean it had to be coming and it was going to be bloody and awful.

WHITMAN: Of course to the astonishment of the world, the Long Knives didn't come up. Mainly. I mean there were a few incidents, a number of casualties during the election period, but astonishingly few. The election, as everybody remembers from those dramatic photographs of people lining up very patiently, was a miracle. It was a miracle that this country made its way through. As you say, they were feeling their way, but boy, did they do so quickly.

Your question also leads to some discussion about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Desmond Tutu, in the '70s some people thought that he might be president of South Africa, but he very gracefully retreated to the background as an Anglican bishop and became a kind of moral voice, and was selected to create this thing called the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Which again, was an astonishing success. When you think of the many times in the late '90s when these things actually happened, you had the murderer or the torturer face-to-face with the relative of the murdered person or the person who had been tortured in the same room, the idea being if there can be a purgative, the psychological approach... As opposed to the long knives, this was the path of South Africa, under Mandela. I stress that only Mandela would have done this. Other leaders would have been more into retribution. The temptation for vengeance must have been enormous.

The TRC was not a perfect institution. The policy was a little bit weird, because the idea was people were supposed to vent -- tell the story as they remembered it, the perpetrators, the victims. And the rule, if I understood it correctly, was there would be no prosecution of the guilty, *unless* the crime had been considered "bad enough" to require prosecution. Well, where do you draw the line? Again, through a miracle, the process worked. And I think there were a small number of prosecutions. There were no lynchings or if any, there were few. There may have been some settling of accounts, but there were no mass lynchings. Nelson Mandela decided and said to his country and to the world that he believed the future of his country depended on not having retribution.

By the way, under the advice of some enlightened Afrikaners at UNISA, the University of South Africa, Mandela made a personal decision to exclude the death penalty specifically from the South African Constitution, going against over 90% of public opinion. More than 90% of South African stated a preference for capital punishment and Mandela said no. So again, the importance of this individual is enormous.

Q: Something was uncorked. Maybe it came later. A lot of this plain criminality, particular rapes and break-ins --

WHITMAN: Again, that goes way back. The simplistic way of looking at it is there has always been a huge amount of crime in South Africa, and still is. To be reductionist about it, some people have said, "The crime used to be political." Then I guess you don't call it

a crime, you call it an insurrection. Whereas now, the crime is more opportunistic. Well, the harsh truth is that this is a country of *enormous* physical violence.

As I mentioned, the women from the black townships were much farther along in dealing with this problem than the privilege white ones in the suburbs, and had a lot to teach them. Some of the Afrikaner women selected from among them to do counseling were in fact so traumatized, that they had to undergo therapy themselves.

Q: Well, South African men particularly were –

WHITMAN: Violent. Very brutal. Some of them. Countries seem to have their own destiny, I guess. I think South Africa will always be on the edge of succumbing to civil violence. And if the future reflects the past, they will always succeed in not going off the cliff. It will be most fascinating to see how this country evolves. They seem to be at the edge of catastrophe. Always have been. Maybe they always will be. And maybe they will always stop before getting to the brink.

Anecdote, 1998, I think. They were preparing their second parliamentary election. In the embassy we met with some of the organizers. And we said to them, “How do you expect to do this? You haven’t set up the voting districts. You haven’t set up the apparatus. Don’t you have a plan?”

And the answer they gave us, in line with your question. They said, “Well, in ’94, we were saved by a miracle. Our plan is to repeat that for the next time.” (*laughs*) That was their plan.

Q: Not long after the period you’re talking about, we’re going up against the AIDS epidemic and denial of it.

WHITMAN: Mbeki, let his name come forward. He was the one who said he didn’t believe it. And his health minister -- this idiocy about taking showers and eating garlic. And this was a very damaging, stupid policy of Thabo Mbeki. We all had great hopes in him as the deputy president under Mandela. We know that Mbeki was running the country. Mandela was already of the older persuasion and was a figurehead, he was a tremendous moral voice, but he was not the CEO of that country. It was Thabo Mbeki. And we all thought that it would be a smooth transition, Mbeki would have learned everything from Mandela and continue at least some of the approaches. But he didn’t. He made radical departures.

He’s a public figure, so I can say this. I think his administration was deeply corrupt. There was a creation of unneeded weapons and the money was going to private business and there were slush funds. I think there were a lot of unacceptable degrees of corruption and denial of HIV/AIDS, which killed tens of thousands of people just through ignorance. It has not been easy for that country.

I was there at a time of euphoria. When Mandela was there, it wasn't just blacks out there. Everybody was in euphoria. White South Africans, many of them, had ducked under and accepted apartheid, or maybe benefited from it. But many of them were never comfortable. It came from the top of that bad administration. Most people complied, as people do in stressful situations. You could condemn them, but they did. Once there was an opening, an opportunity to be otherwise, they really welcomed that opportunity.

I saw enormous amounts of cooperation on the part of English- and Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans going out of their way to prepare the new system, training those who they knew would replace them *and* their sons and daughters, who because of quotas were excluded from the normal careers that they might have had. Something motivated them, and I saw it many times, to train, to prepare, to encourage, to empower the new people coming in who were unequipped in many cases with coming from an inferior educational system having no experience in management. But by God, they learned it quickly and they learned it with the help of their own compatriots.

Q: This is somewhat off to one side, but still just wondering because of timing, was the subject of Israeli treatment of the Palestinians at all mentioned or not?

WHITMAN: It's funny you mention that, because there was the World Court, the South African judge who did do that in the last six or seven years, he said the Israeli treatment of Palestinians is comparable to apartheid. Judge Goldstone. I don't think this was a big deal in South Africa, but it was a very big deal in Israel. Resentment of being judged like that. And everyone remembers that Goldstone said that, but not many people remember that he recanted two years later and said, "That's wrong. That's wrong. I've studied this some more and it's not comparable. And I apologize." He did say that a couple of years after submitting that finding. But people hear to what they want to listen to.

I think South Africa being so geographically remote and so unique and so its own place, has mostly been self-absorbed. Others would disagree with me, but I think they've been self-absorbed with their own issues, their own destiny. I don't remember South Africans particularly involved in policy in the Middle East. I think they were more taken with fixing their own home country. Of course Jimmy Carter compared the two situations. He wrote a book referring to the Israeli situation as "apartheid," creating a lot of animosity. I'm happy to say that I know so little about the Middle East that I can't have an opinion. I think people who have strong opinions are mostly bluffing and dealing with ignorance.

Q: Well then, Dan, maybe it's time to move on. Where --

WHITMAN: Let's move. So I got this phone call (*laughs*). I want to mention Gary Pergl, he's such a wonderful colleague. We're in the very last days of U.S. Information Agency before it was merged with State. This was in 1999. That was the year it happened., the year of the merger.

I had a talk with Gary, who was the personnel director for people of my rank. There were a half dozen people guiding visit to Washington. officers to their next assignment. And

Gary, in the most collegial way, said, “Dan, you’ve been in Copenhagen and Madrid and Pretoria? You realize you can’t go on like this. Nobody can be this lucky.”

And of course he was right. And I don’t want to say exactly how the conversation went down, but I do want to say Gary Pergl was a magnificent person and handled it so well. It had been decided that I would go to Haiti. I didn’t know that (*laughs*). And because he’s such a gentleman, he said, “Would you consider going to Haiti?”

I said, “Let me think about it.” The answer was no, I didn’t want to go to Haiti. He called me a week later, having thought about it. I said, “I told you, I thought about it. The answer is no.” We had this conversation five times until I suddenly realized, hit my forehead thinking, “I’m so stupid. What’s happening here is we have a gentleman, and he’s trying to be nice about it, but the fact is, I’m going to Haiti.”

Haiti I thought of as a troubled place with assassination and disease and misfortune, which of course it is, but I knew nothing much about Haiti. Once I realized I was to accept the assignment to be the public affairs officer in Port-au-Prince or quit, well that was easy. I went to Haiti. And actually from the moment that I realized this was happening, I started reading about Haiti. I came to Washington that summer later and learned some Kreyòl. And went all around the city talking to everybody who knows anything about Haiti. And my God, I loved it (*laughs*). It was involuntary, but this is an illustration of the genius of the system. The assignment I most resisted became my best assignment.

Q: Well, you were there from when to when?

WHITMAN: I was there ’99 to 2001. The book which is sold out of this building is my account of the three lousy elections which took place in the year 2000. These were terrible elections. Rigged and fixed by Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who I think has betrayed his country terribly. The fact is, I moved from South Africa to Haiti summer of 1999, two months before USIA was put to sleep and we were merged.

It was administratively challenging because I was a public affairs officer, meaning I was in charge of a Public Affairs Section. I’d never done that before, so I didn’t have the administrative experience. But as soon as I even learned about it, everything was changed. Little things, but they became big things. For example, the drivers in U.S. Public Affairs Sections who were familiar with public affairs people and the Ministry of Education and the newspapers. They knew mental geography of their places as needed by the Public Affairs Section. And these, these are enormously valuable individuals, the drivers. Well, in the merger with State, we lost that. And that was a tremendous loss.

I sort of bartered a deal in Haiti where the administrative counselor was nice enough to look the other way basically while we kept these wonderful professionals. They had seen everything. They had seen all these programs over the decades, they knew what worked and what didn’t. Nobody ever asked them their opinion, but the driver that I spent many hours with, many days, Maximé, became my most trusted advisor. He wasn’t very

articulate, but I would say, “Maximé, what do you think about such and such?” And from the expression on his face, I would know instantly whether a program might succeed or not. He would frown, and that would mean don’t do it. Or he would look with his eyebrow raised, and he’d say, “Hm, interesting,” and then I knew *that’s* a program to do. And with many wonderful advisors. Foreign Service Nationals, just magnificent people.

We did some wonderful things in Haiti. My move from South Africa to Haiti was summer of ’99. This isn’t the only time this has happened to me. The only person who knew anything about my budget was a Foreign Service National who wasn’t there. She was on annual leave. She was gone. It wasn’t her fault. Some fool had permitted her to go on vacation during the last six weeks of the fiscal year. I didn’t know if I had a hundred dollars or a hundred thousand dollars. How could I plan without having this information? It’s happened to me since. Anyway, she came back. And you know, the fiscal year ends on September 30th. In late August she came for vacation. She was a wonderful colleague. And she said, “Oh yeah, Mr. Whitman, you have money.”

“I have money. How much money? I need to know. I’ve got five weeks. Do I have a lot or a little?”

She said, “Eh, you’ll be fine. You’ll be fine.” In fact, she didn’t know. She had to calculate. And it turned out I got into the last five weeks of the fiscal year. We were a modest little agency then, USIA, to have \$30,000 was a big deal. And to spend it in five weeks, wisely and productively, was an enormously uphill climb (*laughs*). So I think I had five weeks to spend \$30,000.

Here’s how I did it. And I attribute this much more to luck than skill. Coming from South Africa, a country in transformation, I had detected in South Africa the judiciary as the sector of civil society that was going gangbusters, going forward. I found it so productive to work with them that I did. And I kind of did more judicial training programs maybe than all the others combined. And I said, “Well, OK, I have contacts in Washington. I know some judges and some bailiffs and we can sew that in Haiti.”

However—again, this was luck more than skill—I realized Haiti might be different (*laughs*). Maybe the judicial sector isn’t the one -- let’s figure out what this is. So I spent a modest amount of money bringing a hundred people to a hotel. It was once a Holiday Inn, but had become so shabby that the Holiday chain removed its name. And all I did was pay for some taxi fares, for lunch, and for loudspeakers so we could talk with different sectors of civil society. We spent a day. I think there were 100 people.

They were journalists, they were police, they were from the church, they were from the government, they were from political parties, they were teachers. I was trying to figure out, I’m going to be here for two years, that’s not a long time. How can I make the best in contribution to this very troubled atmosphere? They were supposed to have elections in October, but they were postponed four or five times until the following spring. I got people in a room, and by the end of one day it was obvious to everybody: journalism, journalism. This was the sector that was pulling themselves up by the bootstraps. This

was the dynamic sector. And I was certainly open to doing programming in different sectors, but this was the obvious one. The others were on the ropes, they were disorganized, they were well intentioned, but there was just no structure to work with.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you got there?

WHITMAN: Tim Carney. Who was a pretty wonderful guy. And who had also been political counselor in South Africa. Well, he went to be our envoy to Sudan. Yes, he was the last one who actually lived there. The following ones had to be posted in Nairobi. But Carney taught me a lot.

And what a fantastic assignment. The journalists just were so eager to have anybody from the outside encourage them, be present, get them together. At the mere mention that the U.S. Embassy is going to have a training session in Fort-Liberté, a dusty little town up country. Journalists are welcome. We'd get 600 people. We'd get anybody in that town who had any interest in civil society. It was nominally journalism training. In fact, these were enormous platforms for Haitian citizens troubled by the lack of structure in their country, wanting to do some things.

These are dirt-poor people. All of them were willing to do *anything* to make their country a bit better. Sometimes they would call me "Ambassador." They didn't know really what a public affairs officer was. In many of these towns they'd never seen a diplomat. And I worked closely with Ady Jeangardy. I should mention him. An inspired colleague and teacher. Most journalists in Haiti at that time had been trained by Ady Jeangardy. He's currently minister of information. He was a magnet for admiration and hatred. He was a major character in Haiti.

I don't know what went through his mind, but he scrutinized me. I remember him sitting that morning in ex-Holiday Inn, out in the edges, with his arms folded just observing this. And I think he was trying to judge whether this newcomer, me, could be trusted in any way. He'd seen so many coming and going, some better than others. For some reason, he decided to trust me. And once I gained his trust—I don't know how I did this—we worked, I will admit, as a team. I've had colleagues who say, "You shouldn't favor one individual." But I must say, I really trusted him. He really trusted me. And we were in an abnormal situation. We were supposedly in an electoral campaign. President Préval was most obstructive, most negative in even having that election take place. He was a curious fellow. A very bad president, I think. We had extraordinary circumstances. We had starvation; we had desperate conditions. A yearly budget of maybe \$100,000, and two-thirds of that would pay for salaries and expenses. So really the money that I had was very limited.

I had to choose. And I did. For better or worse, I saw journalism as the sector that was most agile. We created a national association of journalists, an informal private association. There'd never been such a thing before. Each of the nine provinces, called *arrondissements*, had their little journalism association, but these are like four guys sitting under a tree having a beer. They didn't have a typewriter, they didn't have a

telephone, they didn't have an office. But they were an association. And separately, they could do almost nothing. But combined with their colleagues in other provinces, *arrondissements*, they became a really formidable force.

There were 200 radio stations with no capital at all to support them. Most of these very active radio stations were run by people. In the daytime they would fix punctured bicycle tires and make \$4 a day. At night they would literally get on the bicycle that would create generated electricity for a two-watt transmitter, and they were *journalists*. Which in social terms in Haiti is *extremely* prestigious.

To be a journalist is to be a leader. To be a visionary of how society can be organized better. And they had a spirit I cannot really describe. They had confidence and courage and determination, without resources. These are among the people that I've met in my life that I most admire. With everything going against them, the gangs and the killings and the intimidation and the death threats. Any time they would say something that was true, they would be threatened. I was threatened myself. We can get into that later. I had the protection of an embassy; they didn't. And I kept going to them saying, "Guys, what we're doing could be dangerous. Do you really want to do this?"

We had this discussion many times and each time, they'd say, "Mr. Whitman, we appreciate the question. You do your job and we'll do ours. It's not your job to keep us alive. That's our job. Your job is to show us the way. We have decided that it's worth risking our lives to create reliable information for the public. We've made that decision. Thanks for the concern. We know that we could be killed, but we've decided to deal with that. Your job is to show us how to do what we want to do."

So I had this discussion many times, and a dozen of those people were killed. I do have that on my conscience in a sense. On the other hand, they were very clear to me, "We want to do this. If you can give us four days in Miami to visit *The Miami Herald* and to see the Haitian community in Miami, please do that." And I did. I would send them on these little trips to Miami. These were not International Visitors Programs, they weren't Voluntary Visitors Programs. Because Port-au-Prince is so close—it's a 90-minute flight, nonstop from Port-au-Prince to Miami—it was pretty easy to get dozens, dozens. I think I sent a couple hundred just to Miami where the Haitian expatriate community was ecstatic to meet them, to talk to them, to share with them what they had learned since planting themselves in the United States.

These were mutually suspicious groups. The ones in Miami saw Haitians as wanting what they had. The Haitians saw the expatriates as the lucky bastards who got out when they didn't. There was initial distrust. But a glass of beer can do wonders. Whether they were pro-Aristide or against, and that's how they wind up, in one faction or another. Nevertheless, I went with them to Miami sometimes, and I saw their mutual interest far transcended the differences that they had, the suspicions, the belief or the disbelief in Aristide, who was everything to Haiti. I think he terribly betrayed his country many times, but many people believed him at that time, as I did initially until I found out otherwise. So the differences were extreme. And yet, there's something about the Haitian

civic spirit, which doesn't usually get mentioned. But it's so powerful that their ability to cooperate amongst themselves, even when they drastically disagree on things, it's exemplary.

Q: The formation of Haiti, back during the time of our Revolution or so, you had the mixed bloods against the --

WHITMAN: Yes, you did.

Q: -- Africans, pure Africans or something. And the corruption has been outstanding.

WHITMAN: *(laughs)* Exemplary, yes, yes.

Q: I mean doesn't seem to square.

WHITMAN: No, absolutely. The civic spirit, the ability of Haitians to get along with one another? The big factor was the imposition of corrupt structures from the outside, which is what we're talking about. This is a country where 98 per cent of the population descended from slaves. They didn't set up a system. The system was imposed on them by their French masters in the 17th century. The Spaniards were involved. The American government was terrified to have a nation-state nearby that was dominated by former slaves and wasn't really recognized until Lincoln sent an emissary there, Frederick Douglass.

I don't see this as squaring or not squaring. I see it as apples and oranges. The Haitian society, based on hardship, punishment, hard work, death at an early age, disease. They were always extremely able to mobilize their very sadly violent history as proof of that. If a leader, whether mulatto or black, organized an army, *oof*, the army was there. There was the commitment.

The term *Lavalas*, which is the party of Aristide, means "flash flood." And the sense of a society becoming so homogenous and so collectively committed together for a purpose. Where the circle is not squared is where structures were imposed from the outside, I would say from France, from the United States once the United States decided that this was our backyard, on not incompetent people, but defenseless people. They had nothing. They had no material wealth. They had no weaponry.

They had been enslaved, it's an amazing story of the creation of Haiti in 1804. I think the only country in the world made up entirely of slaves, which liberated itself in its own country, without having to go to another place. It's a very unique, remarkable history. Troubled from the start. And people say, "Why did it work in Dominican Republic next door better than Haiti?" I have an economic theory, which is worth what you've paid me for. I think the Haitian Revolution in trying to bring social justice to their country divided the units of production, the land, equally among people.

Now, this was a great social revolution and a great policy. But economically it was a disaster, because in the 18th century and early 19th century, production depended on *haciendas*, large holdings, maybe unjustly owned by one owner and treating the workers very badly. We have to divide between social justice and what works economically. I think Haiti has been a basket case since the 1830s or 40s. They were quite a superpower for about 20 years. Later, they declined very quickly.

Why did the Dominican Republic succeed? Well, they had larger units of production. It didn't make for a good life for workers. But it was more productive. And this was the same island, producing sugar and coffee. And the most valuable real estate in the world in the 18th century was that island. Now, if you were a slave, it didn't matter that there was value there because you weren't benefiting. But what had created wealth was lost during the reorganization of that country. It's an extremely tragic history of people really committed, incredibly courageous, and willing to lay down their lives for the cause of social justice, and being betrayed time after time.

They were betrayed as much by individuals inside Haiti as out. But I want to make a distinction between Haitian society and culture. This is my reading, which I see as extremely civic and cooperative and helpful. Look at what happened in the earthquake three years ago. People whose houses did not fall down in the earthquake, went into the streets and invited total strangers to come into their house and eat their food. I mean where does this happen? Nowhere. It's the corrupt leaders and the outsiders, I think, which have made Haiti such a sad case.

Q: Well, while you were there was Aristide the ruler?

WHITMAN: (*laughs*) Again, a marvelous question. Préval was nominally the ruler. The story was that because of the complicated previous period where Aristide was elected, deposed by military coup, living in exile in Washington D.C. on 7th Street at the Lansburgh in exile. Meanwhile, the clock was ticking. He'd been elected. When he returned to Haiti, under the Clinton intervention—we call it the “intervasion”—of '94, he returned with only a little bit of time left in his elected period of office. So he said to the Americans, “I deserve my four years. I didn't get them.”

And the Americans basically said, “Look, we have to get this thing going. Kindly step aside and you can become president again at a later time.”

Why the United States had the arrogance to even be saying these things is part of the problem. But he was persuaded to step down and to allow in his friend, Préval, who was a baker by training. He had no background at all in administration or government or anything. He was a friend, a protégé of Aristide. Everybody knew, when I lived in Haiti, that Aristide unofficially ran the place, from Tabarre. His palace, his residence. Fabulously wealthy.

How does a guy become fabulously wealthy as an exiled elected president of a poor country? Well, through corruption and through the drug trade. But Préval was permitted

to be president as long as he checked constantly with the real boss, the power behind the throne, which was Aristide. There were jokes about Préval asking permission to go to the bathroom. Sitting in the presidential palace and picking up the phone and anything of any importance had to be approved by Aristide. Préval was a placeholder. Unfortunately, it went to his head. He thought he was doing pretty well. He wasn't. And he got himself reelected at a later time. But in the year 2000, there really was an election. Finally. It was supposed to be in the fall of '99. It finally did happen in the year 2000. It was a terrible mess.

The first round of parliamentary elections went very well. It was like the election in South Africa. Enormous numbers of Haitians saw this as finally their opportunity to have a voice in how their country was run. We have videotapes of the voting boxes being tossed into the bay. We have CBC footage of Haitian government trucks coming and disrupting the tabulation. The votes, when tallied, were phony, phony, phony. And many millions, three or four million—out of a population of Haitians, around eight or nine million at that time—got themselves to that voting place, sat or stood in the sun for hours waiting to vote, and were just *fervently* involved in this process. They did not deserve to be betrayed, as they were when the ballots were just tossed, visibly, in front of television cameras, into the bay.

People won, people lost. That first election had results. The losers, a dozen of them, were arrested and put in disgusting prison conditions. Their only crime was to have lost an election. Using my sort of bully pulpit as the spokesman, I said on the Haitian radio and TV that their detentions were unacceptable, and apparently that got some of them released. But they were held in three-by-four meter cells. There'd be 30 of them. They couldn't all even sit at the same time; they had to take turns sitting. These are candidates for election whose only crime had been to lose.

The Préval people and the Aristide people, mean bullies, rounded them up. They killed a dozen of them, by the way, during the campaign. I mean murdered them. They called them and said, "We're going to kill you," and then they did so. So this is murder of political candidates. Those who survived, not all of them, but some of them, were put in these miserable jails. I felt strongly that the U.S. Embassy should do what it could to shame the Haitian government into releasing these people. And I guess we did that with some success. This is part of the reason that I was threatened later.

Your question was who was running the country. Aristide was running the country. Préval was the president. In Haiti, we lacked the vocabulary to describe what really happens. Do we have proof of a crime? There's never proof. They're different terms that don't exist outside. No crime is ever prosecuted in Haiti. The justice and police system are deeply demobilized. So when everybody knows, quote unquote, when everybody knows that Jacques has killed Tijeau, there's vigilante justice. Everybody knows what's happened. But not in the sense that we would recognize as knowledge, proof, fingerprints, DNA, witnesses.

It's a country that has a completely different reasoning process than any Western country. So I felt increasingly it was my task to stand back and to try to understand this very alien culture and to give it a long leash. Because I didn't know any better. Many had come and gone before me and had failed to do anything of any value. What I tried to do during my two years was strengthen journalists in telling the truth. And they did so, very clearly risking their lives, and many hundreds of them joined in.

Well, there were 200 radio stations, private radio stations. And during the second election of the year 2000, when nobody voted because they had all been disillusioned by the phony process of the first round, nobody showed up for the second round, the government was lying with these ridiculous lies. "We had 63% participation," when in fact, the journalists, having been strengthened I guess by me, were using cell phones to report nationally.

"Well, I don't know, I've been sitting here since six in the morning and I've seen three people. And two of them are playing football. One of them voted." And you had this marvelous proliferation the truth, deeply embarrassing the government.

The government one day, through its spokesman, Yvon Neptune, in the morning said, "We have 63.3 per cent participation." The same afternoon, he had to come clean. There was no choice. He said, "Well actually, we had five per cent." Even that was a gross exaggeration. There was, in fact, two or three per cent participation in that second election. And you know, shame, shame, shame on the government and on any supposedly friendly country that allowed them to get away with it. That would be the United States, Canada, Mexico, Germany, Spain, the EU, the OAS [Organization of American States], CARICOM (Caribbean Community), all of them are guilty of allowing that lousy election to be held up as an example. It was a mockery. And if you want to know more about it read my book, *A Haiti Chronicle*, which covers that period.

I've tantalized with the story of my death threats. When Jean Dominique, Haiti's most famous journalist ever, was assassinated in April of 2000, this was a major, major event in Haiti's history. I knew Jean Dominique a little bit. I didn't know him terribly well. I met him a couple times. I had sparred with him on his radio show, *Face à L'opinion*. Against everybody's advice I accepted his invitation for a one-on-one interview on the air. Jean Dominique was a very pugnacious, difficult character. Very spiny. And he loved to pick fights. And I thought, "What the hell? If he tears me apart, I'll deal with it. But let's give it a try." I went. We had a very wonderful hour live, shortly before he was killed. And he started out quite hostile and quite accusing. The United States has interfered and this and that. I don't know what I said. I have a transcript of it. By the end of the interview, we were best friends. I think at one time he said, live on the radio he said, "But you supported Papa Doc, who was a terrible vicious tyrant!"

I said, "Mea culpa." I don't know if that was U.S. policy, but I said it. And he loved me for saying that live on the radio. We became best friends.

Jean Dominique was Haiti's most famous journalist ever. People compared him to Walter Cronkite fused with John Kennedy. He was a crotchety, contrary old fellow. Very resentful of the United States, even though he had enjoyed exile, and he had twice he had gone to live in the United States.

He interviewed me in March of 2000. And he was murdered on April 4th of that same year. There's very little doubt that the Aristide regime arranged to have him murdered because he had vocally, publically said, quote, "Titid," that was the affectionate name for Aristide, "You know I love you, but you must remove the filth around you." That's a quote. Referring to the drug trade colleagues that Aristide had had. And Dominique was murdered three days after that. Circumstantial, nothing ever proved, but it does appear that the regime wasn't able to tolerate his public criticism.

We'll never know in the Western sense why Jean Dominique was killed or by whom, in April of 2000. But we know. We do know that he denounced Aristide publically for his illegal activities, the enormous growth of the cocaine trade in Haiti supervised, permitted, and directed by Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his cronies.

Now, the Aristide regime thought that, "Well, it's just a murder like any other. Murder is commonplace. We'll just murder and solve the problem of his public criticism." They never factored in that the international community would notice that Jean Dominique would be killed.

But there was an enormous worldwide movement: "We demand justice!" Reporters Without Borders and Human Rights Watch and governments. They just caved in on them, saying, "We need to know who killed Jean."

Everybody knows. We don't know who pulled the trigger, but we know who gave the order.

Well, they needed a scapegoat. And for a brief period, that was me. I'm not saying anything that's classified here. There's a police file, which I have, which names me as a suspect in the Jean Dominique assassination. I will say I did not kill Jean Dominique. I was not anywhere near his office that day. I was shocked and dismayed when the assassination took place. The government, desperately trying to distract the world's attention from themselves, had files on a half a dozen people, maybe a dozen people, including me. And I was questioned. I was threatened. The regime made an extremely amateurish and incompetent ploy trying to link me with someone who might have actually pulled the trigger.

I talked with a lot of people. A lot of crazy people came into my office. I was the public affairs officer, and my policy was that any lunatic gets five minutes with me. Maybe not twice, but anyone gets in once. People advised me not to do it. Maybe unwisely, that was my policy. People wanted to see me with something to say, they always got five minutes.

There was an individual who might have been the one who pulled the trigger, I don't know. I don't want to mention his name because he's escaped from the prison cell where he was tortured for four years. I saw him once during the period of that torture. It was I guess the most ghastly thing in my life was to see this individual and how mangled he was from daily torture. They were trying to use him to get me as some actor in that whole crazy incident of the assassination. And they never succeeded. All they succeeded in doing was torturing this guy in a dungeon for four years, and then he escaped. He's somewhere. He's somewhere. I think he's alive.

Q: Well, what about the U.S. government?

WHITMAN: The U.S. government was asking, as it too often does, from a stance of caution and prudence. I would say, "Why? Are we afraid of a country of eight million impoverished people? What were we afraid of?" Why couldn't we have said, as I was permitted to say on one occasion but it was never true, individuals involved in political violence will have their visa to the United States irrevocably canceled. It was my idea. I asked for permission to say that. There were political killings. All these people had visas. This isn't an intervention in a sovereign country. We're just saying, "It's your country. By the way, you're not coming to our country."

That was my proposal. The higher-ups permitted me to say that on the air. I didn't know it at the time, but they had no intention of ever acting on that. They were afraid. Of what? I don't know! Afraid of what? Afraid of Aristide? Afraid of Préval? Afraid of the incompetent gangsters running the country? I don't get it. I would say the whole thing was quite badly fumbled by two presidents, Clinton and Bush, by a series of assistant secretaries of Western Hemisphere Affairs who by their allies in CARICOM and OAS there was a delicate hand of, "We won't intervene; we won't trouble these people."

I didn't see it that way. I didn't see it as invading the sovereignty of another country. It's also a mistake to accept publically the crimes committed, the torture, the assassinations. In some cases cannibalism would occur where they would drag the victims alive in barbed wire across dusty roads and then burn their bodies and then taste them. Would this not have been an occasion for the U.S. government to say, "This is unacceptable"?

And by the way, the people who did this said, "*Vive Aristide!*"

We were looking to Aristide to say something. Does he accept this type of behavior done in his name?" He never commented. He never accepted to say they shouldn't have done that. I found that unacceptable.

Q: It certainly is.

WHITMAN: I indict the U.S. government, but all others as well.

Q: Well, I mean, OK, but you were a point person in all this. You must have been discussing this with the ambassador, those from Washington. What were you getting?

WHITMAN: Actually I was a cipher, Stu. As a public affairs officer, as I think you know, in those days, political officers ruled the world. Economics officers were respected to some extent. Consular officers were slaves. Admin officers were our servants. And public affairs officers were trivial people doing insignificant things. So no, I was not included in those discussions.

Q: Well, no, but look, in the normal course of events I mean there's --

WHITMAN: Country team [senior members of an embassy staff].

Q: There's a country team, there's the culture and the pecking order and all. But not when you've got a crisis like this where one of your own, an officer, is getting named in a murder. This involves a whole embassy.

WHITMAN: Sort of, yes and no. It had an anticlimactic ending. I went with the DCM to see the minister of justice. We had a little chat. It all became a joke. And the minister admitted in front of us, he said, "OK, all right, you're fine, you're fine." And that matter was settled.

The more significant thing that was going on was that you had at that embassy a deep division between everybody basically at the embassy witness to all this stuff, this horrible stuff, happening. And Washington policy, which was coming down on our heads from Washington dictated by people who didn't know Shinola about Haiti, didn't care about Haiti, but were taking orders from the highest source. Keep it quiet, just keep it quiet.

Q: Well, they wanted to keep boat people away, didn't they?

WHITMAN: They did, they did. And I was involved in that. I would talk to the press. When the boats would be returned by the U.S. Coast Guard and the boat people would get off the boat, the press would interview them, and that was me organizing those things. And then that would be my comment saying, "Those who took these innocent people and led them to believe that they can cross the Caribbean are criminals, so don't trust them. They're in there for their own profit." That was my tiny little role.

But the point I really want to make here, the division between Washington policy and everyone involved inside Haiti was extreme. And while we had different political parties and different types of personalities at the embassy, we all were one in feeling that Washington policy was deeply wrong.

In one case—I want to mention this—you know the dissent channel cable system. I wrote one. The local AID director said to me, "Let's write a dissent channel. We're getting the wrong directions from Washington. We have to at least put down a marker and declare the behavior of this government unacceptable to us. You can't torture people and then taste their flesh. And then we have nothing to say about it -- it's not acceptable."

So I drafted a dissent channel cable. Dissent channel cables allow any officer to send any dissenting opinion under his/her own name, even if the chief of mission is opposed. It's our whistle-blowing mechanism, though few want to blow up dust by using it. You know me well enough to know I'm meek and humble -- if I'm a troublemaker, I'm on the meek side. So I felt it would be a courtesy to the chief of mission, Leslie Alexander, a temporary person brought in from retirement, to show him this cable and say, "I'm going to send this. It's my right. And the AID director and I are going to send it."

After he read it, he said, "Why would this be dissent? I agree with all of this."

And then we did take that up at the next country team and what was drafted, as a dissent channel cable, was unanimously signed by everybody on the country team! Now, that should be proof enough that those senior and midlevel and even junior officers in Haiti were very troubled by what was coming at us in Washington. So much so that they were unanimous in signing this cable. And this chief of mission, it went out under his name, instead of being dissent. It was a cable pointing out the unacceptable behavior of the Haitian government at that time and saying, "Why should we be silent when they're killing people?"

Q: Well, didn't Aristide have a very vocal group of supporters in New York?

WHITMAN: Yes, he did.

Q: Was this basically political à la American politics?

WHITMAN: The Haitian diaspora community in New York tended to be pro-Aristide. The Haitian diaspora in Miami and Montreal tended to be anti-Aristide. Now, did they align themselves there because of genuine belief and observation and following the news? Or were they vying for political influence? I don't know. It's a fascinating question. I think there was combination there. But again, what struck me was that even diaspora communities in extreme disagreement, New York versus Miami versus Montreal, and there was some in Houston, when you put them together they became instantly collaborative. Isn't that fascinating? It's something about that culture.

Q: When you look at this thing, I would have thought that it would have been the equivalent to if you were pro-Aristide, this means you were—in American terms—a black supporter. And if you're anti-Aristide, you were selling your cause down the river, whatever the hell you want to call it.

WHITMAN: Absolutely. And there was the Black Caucus. And while I really respect the existence of the Black Caucus and the individuals who were in it, we know that all but one in that group were receiving money from Aristide. As registered lobbyists. These were senators, congressmen, men and women -- this is really disgraceful. If they believed that Aristide was the cause of black liberation, then why did they take money from him? Big amounts of money. To be his spokesman. African Americans, a large part of the electorate, were being told what to think by their own Black Caucus. You can look this

up on the Justice Department website. They were all, except one, getting money from a drug dealer to say these things. This is pretty shameful.

And it did become a racial matter. In the United States outside of the diaspora community, there were innuendos. If you don't like Aristide, you are against black people. I absolutely disagree. I think that's rubbish. A black person betraying black people -- is that any better than a white person betraying black people?

Q: No.

WHITMAN: Clearly, Aristide was doing that. Fifteen percent of the cocaine in this country went through Haiti. We know that he controlled and benefited from those networks. When he was taken into exile in February 29, 2004, there was so much cash in his house, it was so molded and there were so many mounds of it, that it wasn't even usable. These were American dollars. He was on the take. He was getting hundreds of millions of dollars in the cocaine trade. He was paying out money to the American Black Caucus to sing his praises in this country. There was a quid pro quo. Clinton had helped him get back to Haiti. Clinton also froze Haitian bank accounts in the United States. And the money from those accounts was given, in cash, on 7th Street at the Lansburgh, to Aristide. Hand to hand. He got an average of \$900,000 a month when he was in exile. So Clinton helped him. In return, Aristide helped Clinton.

Let me just say here, I voted for Clinton both times and I would not do otherwise. I think he was a great president. In this matter, he was very ill advised or he really blew it. He really blew an opportunity to improve that country by befriending a demon. I know it sounds overly emotional, but I think this man was a demon. What an irony, that we're now in a regime in Haiti where you have Baby Doc and Aristide both living there as private citizens. How could this have happened? It's really a very unique place.

Q: How did you find social life in Haiti?

WHITMAN: I loved everything about Haiti, except its misfortunes. I didn't love the misfortunes and the occasional dead body in the street. This was sort of shocking. I loved dealing with and knowing Haitians at every social level. Because of my position in the embassy, I knew some elites. But that's your job as a public affairs person. The journalists I adored, all of them. I mean they had their squabbles and their internal disputes, but I was with them a lot, a lot.

I would walk down the street, maybe imprudently. And people would talk to me, they would recognize me. "Ah! *Pot-pawol! Pot-pawol!*" which is Kreyòl for "spokesman." They knew me from television and the radio. We would chat and I would go fill up the car in the gas station. People would gather around me. I'm not trying to be into hero worship. But they would say, "We liked what you said on the radio the other day!" This may not be social interaction, but there was plenty of that too. They were just fascinating.

I now know that some of the people I dined with had murdered people with their bare hands. I didn't know that when I dined with them. Everybody in that country is probably guilty of something (*laughs*). I mean some are more guilty than others. But to survive, to even be alive in that country, you can only do that through deceit. Haiti has a many centuries-long tradition that you'll never know the name of a Haitian. He or she can become your best friend and you'll never know that person's legal name, you'll never know where they live, and you'll never meet their children or their wife or their girlfriend, because of their need to deceive. This is *les marrons*, the runaway slaves in the 17th, 18th century who lived in the hills, survived. They survived through deceit. And I admire them. I absolutely have unqualified admiration, they would change their names, they would go into hiding. These are people who decided not to be slaves after 1804. And the only way to do that was to lie, steal, and that's what they had to do.

I think Haitians—a vast majority, almost all Haitians—would never want to impose violence on another person. There were, however, those horrible exceptions. Aristide and his "*Organisations Populaires*," these were the gangs, the thugs. We saw the transactions taking place. It cost Aristide \$8 per person per day for those gangs to run into the streets and to rip buildings apart and to kill people. They told us. They made \$8 a day. When the job was over at 5:00, they no longer belonged to him. The next day, if he wanted them to do it again, he'd have to pay \$8 more. That's an objective fact. So they didn't want to do this.

We had a wonderful political officer who interviewed them. She said, "Why are you doing this stuff?" Somehow she managed to get them to talk to her.

And they said, "We don't want to hurt anybody. But my kid has to go to school. If I don't get my \$8, my kid doesn't go to school! What other choice do I have?" That's a pretty tragic formula. These are people who did tremendous violence and damage. Never wanting to do so.

Q: Well, there was this division between the embassy -- I take it you weren't unique in this reaction.

WHITMAN: That's the point of the dissent channel cable. It turns out, to my astonishment, we were all exactly the same. We were disgusted by what was happening, by what the U.S. government was tolerating and supporting. And by the way, all of us, there were Republicans and Democrats, we all felt that if there's a crime committed in the name of the government, we should denounce it. If crimes are committed by people—political crimes, murder and torture—if these people have visas to the United States, the visas should be canceled. Isn't this a no-brainer? But Washington wouldn't allow it. And I take this opportunity to denounce the people who were giving us these horrible orders all the time.

There was a certain stability after the 1994 Clinton "Intervasion." I'm sure Clinton would not be offended by that term. There was a small unit of American military in Port-au-Prince. They stayed at the airport, they never mingled in the constabulary. They never did

any police work or any pacifying of civil unrest. They were just there. The fact of having 200 uniformed American military had an enormously tranquilizing effect. Haitians felt safe. And there was something irrational about this. And it was, you could say, a needless expense on the part of a well-intentioned DoD. But there was a psychological benefit in a very desperate country there were moments of confidence and peace and tranquility just because there were some soldiers there. They didn't know what the mission was, but they saw these guys in their green uniforms.

One day, they weren't there. I think it was December of 1999, when a certain Secretary of Defense pulled them out. He never told the ambassador, he never told the State Department, he just pulled him out. I was there that day and I remember the desperation of everybody, the government, the people opposed to the government, the U.S. embassy first and foremost, because we didn't have a clue this was going to happen. Those 200 soldiers were just removed! This is an *enormous* public relations statement. But nothing was ever said about it. This was the type of nonsense Washington was giving us, making our jobs not only impossible to do, but as we became more and more fond of Haiti and Haitians, it became very, very personal for all of us. I think we were personally dismayed that our country was failing to do just the slightest little things to make, to make a smaller desperate little country a little bit better. I'm afraid we failed to do that.

Q: All right.

WHITMAN: Yep, there will be brighter notes in --

Q: What happened to you?

WHITMAN: After I came out of the straightjacket, things went fine. (Not!!) And they put me with a nice view of the lake and they said... no, I came back to Washington. Just in time for 9/11.

Some final comments on Haiti. I didn't know if I'd make it through Haiti without getting really emotional, but maybe I didn't. They asked me to stay a third year, and when I saw how deeply AID was involved in the political shenanigans, at that minute when I learned what the USAID mission was doing mucking around in local politics, I said, "I can't do this."

Well, you interpret this. The prosecutor in that Jean Dominique case demanded to meet me. And he said, "You have a diplomatic passport. You probably think you could get to a plane any time you want. Things can happen on the tarmac." That's a death threat, right? On the other hand, I knew that all these people are incompetent idiots, I knew that, so I didn't worry too much.

The thing about the straightjacket, we'll edit it that out, right?

I left Haiti in summer of 2001. That's when 9/11 happened. Everybody knows that nobody knew this would happen until that day. So I moved to Washington a few weeks

before that date. That date of course affected everything everybody did everywhere. I moved from Haiti to Washington. I had been recruited to be something called the PACO, the program and coordination officer, kind of an arcane title, of the office of EUR/PDPA, which is the Bureau of European Affairs, the Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.

Q: But now, we've now moved away from no more USIA --

WHITMAN: Ah, yes.

Q: -- and everything is in State Department terms.

WHITMAN: Good point. October 1st, 1999, no more USIA. So here we are -- and I was in Haiti at that time, I had just arrived. Simultaneously figuring out the administrative things that a public affairs officer has to do, and also learning how to dismantle certain aspects of that because of the assimilation with State, that's what I was doing in '99. Two years later, yes, we're all State Department employees. What had been geographic offices in USIA became public diplomacy/public affairs offices embedded in geographic bureaus at State. We had a parallel double existence. On the one hand, public diplomacy reported to the geographic bureau, which frankly was where the action was mainly, in terms of day-to-day policy issues.

This was like Genesis in the Bible, the molten earth. We did not know exactly what PA was going to turn into, but there was something called the undersecretary for public diplomacy/public affairs. There was a distinction until two weeks ago because of Smith-Mundt. Smith-Mundt is now history. It's been altered or removed. That's another subject. But back then there was a legal distinction between public diplomacy, what we do overseas, and public affairs, what we do domestically and with the international press. So, following this Smith-Mundt division, we had both activities going on in the same office. No need to spend too much time on that, especially now that the legal distinction has been largely removed with the new so-called modernization of Smith-Mundt. I was the program and coordination officer.

Q: Smith-Mundt being the old act, both senators are now long dead. But it's named after two senators who set up the first ground rules for USIA, as I recall.

WHITMAN: Exactly. Came around the time of the creation of USIA. The idea was—this is post World War II—we must never have anything that even looks or smells like Hitler's ministry of information. We must never have that. The idea was, at the beginning of the Cold War, that the U.S. government should be prohibited from propagandizing its own people.

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: Times changed and we all have opinions. Some, maybe a majority of people dealing with this really don't have an opinion. I do, but maybe my opinion is not

relevant. I think that the distinction would still be an important one, but the reality is, the impediment is now gone.

In the year 2001, it was still very much there. And so people were keeping their socks up and making sure that the distinction was being made. Public diplomacy is what we do in the field, public affairs is what we do in the United States. But they were both being done out of parallel offices with individuals actually doing both sides. For example, what they used to call information officers in the USIA geographic bureaus, they were doing the domestic side, but shoulder to shoulder with those working in the field.

The PACO position was created I think with some foresight, to see how this was going to work in the new public diplomacy world with USIA gone. The actual distinction bureaucratically and institutionally was gone, because the Agency no longer existed. So to follow the law, the same spirits, motives, and techniques were assimilated into the State, the same individuals doing the same work. Only now, their bosses were assistant secretaries of the geographic bureaus, and these tended to be political officers. I think we were warmly welcomed. But we had, let's say, different bureaucratic cultures and we were seeking a common language, let's put it that way. Just a common structure of these offices. There was the director, there was a deputy director.

In the case of Europe being the largest geographic bureau, the public diplomacy office had two deputy directors. Most of them had just one. And then next in line came the PACO. Now, in the Europe Office, we had three PACOs. I was sort of the PACO chief. I had been recruited for that position, I did not seek it. I was flattered to be called in Haiti by a person I had never met who said, "We'd like you to consider this position."

I said, "Sure, I'm going back to Washington, thank you very much." I took the position. Again, the bureaucrat structure has some importance. Director, deputy director, PACO. And then the desks were hierarchically underneath that. Why is this important? It's kind of like the succession of power in the executive branch of government, president, vice president, speaker of the house. The PACO supposedly was the number three.

In my stay in EUR/PDPA, first of all, 9/11 happened. And nobody was prepared for this and everybody was traumatized. That day I was actually near the physical place where we are now, at the Foreign Service Institute, and I could see the Pentagon burning. I did not see the plane, but like thousands of others, I watched kind of stupefied as the Pentagon burned. It was a day of training that turned out to be an hour and a half. Then I went back to EUR/PDPA that same day, the next day. And the whole world had changed. Three days later, President Bush in the National Cathedral, he declared war, if I may use that expression. He declared that this situation would be corrected. He talked about enemies and the national interest. The rhetoric of what he said was very much the rhetoric of a declaration of war. Mullahs were not supposed to use mosques to talk about war and hostilities, but we used the National Cathedral.

Things then, understandably, became stressful and there were many curveballs that came along during that period in that bureau. The European Bureau has always been the most

prominent, the most endowed with supplies and material, the most highly noticed geographic bureau. And as the response to 9/11 became an imperative, there were many, many discussions of what does this mean and what do we do about it, and where does public diplomacy fit in this national effort to address the biggest attack we've had since Pearl Harbor.

Something went wrong between my bosses and me. To this day I don't know exactly what it was. There was never an articulated argument of any sort. But during this period, I was intently concentrating on assisting the effort to inform the world. I mean, the world didn't need to know that there had been an attack. Everybody had this, this got to the whole world instantly. Go to the Newseum and you see all the videos and the newspapers in every corner of the earth, reporting every detail and second of this incident.

The question for us was, would there be a military response from the U.S. and its allies, and if so, how could we prepare the publics in foreign countries for this military response? That's where the problem came in. Because at the time, we were told that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction.

First of all, we invaded Afghanistan, which was the logical response, because that's where the Taliban was housed. That was in November 2001. And then, for the following year, I think everybody remembers there was a sense that the Taliban had been not removed, but weakened by the attack on Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, there was an increasing rhetoric about Saddam Hussein in unrelated country, Iraq, having weapons of mass destruction. We now know that he probably didn't have them, or we know there was never any evidence that he had them. If he had them, he exported them to Syria or destroyed them or did whatever he needed to do to conceal what he had. The establishment in Washington was told, and we believed, that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and perhaps this was an existential threat to the United States. There's a lot of falsehood, inaccuracy, and mistakes woven into this. But this is what we were told, and we knew enough to doubt what our highest officials were saying, but we did not know enough to have any contrary information.

So we went forward. As the strident rhetoric increased, especially the messages we were sending to foreign publics, ideas came up. Charlotte Beers, the Undersecretary for Public Affairs at the time, had a very strong urge to make a documentary of the cruelty and the mismanagement and the tyrannical rule of Saddam Hussein. Well, this made sense. There were 20 of us around the table one day, and it all made sense, Hussein was an obnoxious individual. And we knew that some people in the Middle East had sympathetic feelings for him. So to get our version out seemed like a legitimate thing. There was a meeting with 20 people. I'd never met Charlotte Beers. She said, "We're going to make a movie showing how Saddam Hussein starves his own children."

I was honestly trying to be helpful. She was sort of a bully and there were a lot of senior PD officers there. Nobody was questioning anything that she said. Three or four times

she said, “Any comments? Any comments? Any comments?” And nobody had much to say.

So I said, “Do we actually have video footage of Saddam Hussein starving children?” I was imagining, how do you visualize this? I mean, do you get video footage of Saddam Hussein grabbing an egg salad sandwich out of the mouth of a child? How do you show starvation? I really was trying to help.

And her answer? She said, “Of *course* we have video footage of Saddam Hussein starving his children. We have it in the archives.”

Everyone around the table was nodding in agreement. I thought, “Well, if you say so.”

And then she said, “And he gassed the Kurds,” which he did in 1991. And again, she asked everybody three, four, five times, “So what do you think?”

And no one had anything to say. So I said, “Yes, this was a terrible thing Saddam Hussein did. But you know, that was 12, 13 years ago. Do we have anything more recent?”

At that point, she focused on me. Wanted to know who I was, and insinuated that I was trying to block her efforts. This is the type of dialogue that was going on. I wasn’t trying to disagree. I was actually trying to help (*laughs*) in creating a credible argument. But that was not working in my favor in terms of making my way through the bureaucracy. She squinted from across the table and said, “Who ARE you?” and I said, “Dan Whitman, from EUR.” And she wrote it down on a legal pad.

Then I committed another sin. There was a working group on public diplomacy in preparation for the U.S. invasion of Iraq, which we now know was not decided after Colin Powell’s speech at the UN Security Council. The decision was made sometime in the summer of 2002, if not before. The invasion was March of ’03. So a committee was formed, an interagency committee, to deal with the blowback from public opinion overseas. The rationale was, we are hated in the Middle East whatever we do, Asia has its own economic building to do, Latin America doesn’t care, Africa doesn’t matter to us.

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: The only region, we were told, where we should concentrate our efforts was Europe, and I happened to be working in that office. We went to a meeting every week and the meeting began. Every week it began with the person presiding over that meeting turning to me, 30, 40 people in the room, and he would say, “How are we doing in Europe, public opinion?” And with public opinion obviously issues were increasing, not decreasing. And I would report anecdotally the surveys that we didn’t have to conduct because *Der Spiegel* and *Le Monde* and *The Times of London* were doing their own surveys. And their numbers were going against U.S. government consistently.

And every week I said, “Well, we had 54 per cent support in Germany two weeks ago, and last week it seems to have slipped to 48 per cent.”

And every week for a three-month period the administrator, the person running this meeting then would turn to me and say to me, “What do you plan to do about it?”

And for three months my answer was, “Maybe we should listen to Europeans. They’re not idiots.”

Now, this pretty much trashed my career. And I knew this would not work in my favor, but I didn’t know what else to say. I did say in the spirit of cooperation, “I really can help. But I need a statement that I can quote, a statement of policy. I mean, are we saying that there are weapons of mass destruction? If so, may I have a statement that is approved by the White House, which I can distribute to the foreign editors of the newspapers in Europe?” Because I was fully equipped to do that.

“No, we can’t do that,” was the answer.

I said, “Well, do we have any person, any individual who can talk on background to foreign editors of European media? Because I can get them all together on 48 hours’ notice,” which I could. I had worked this out with my colleague in Brussels, Larry Wohlers, wonderful colleague. Recently ambassador to the Central African Republic and evacuated last month. Larry had all the letters written and ready to go, and I could have foreign editors in Brussels in 48 hours at any point for an off-the-record background briefing. But you can’t improvise these things. I needed a senior official to do it.

The room would get very tense as I said these things. Then the chair of the meeting would always say, thinking that I wanted him to go to Brussels, “Are you trying to get me fired?”

So you know, again, in retrospect I really was trying to be very cooperative. I tried to believe in the mission, but the situation was untenable. There was no credible way to deal with the mounting skepticism in Europe without having a statement or a person to deliver it. I would have gone myself to Brussels, but I was not senior enough to be doing that sort of thing. So my own, my own position in the European Bureau declined. Let’s say my star began to fade.

Q: Well, were you irritating because you were pushing this, or were you irritating them because of your attitude? I mean you must have analyzed this backwards and forwards.

WHITMAN: Good point. I have analyzed it (*laughs*), but with no results. I still haven’t figured out what else I could have done. Now, maybe, maybe there’s something about my facial gestures or my body language or the repetition, but I was the bearer of bad news. Don’t shoot the messenger. I was the messenger. I was reporting to these committees, the public opinion in Europe is turning against us. That’s all I was doing. They were asking

me a simple question, I was giving a simple answer, wanting to help in the effort to communicate with, in my case European audiences, because that was my job.

We had speakers, we had WorldNet, we had DVCs, the digital video conferencing. We had all the mechanisms. We had the ability to draft and place op-eds in European newspapers. And the Europeans were very good about publishing these things, even if they disagreed with what was being said. So I was in a pickle. Seen from someone else's view, it might have seemed like I was trying to be a grain of sand in the gears, but I really wasn't.

Q: This is, you might say, a logical step. Weren't there others who were in this field? Or were these essentially newcomers to the field and PR amateurs?

WHITMAN: *Au contraire*. I remember very vividly the day in that room—this would have been October 2002, when the chairman of that group spoke to a group of 40 individuals, and we're talking about an interagency task force—State Department, DoD, intel, and other individuals. People who had lived in the Middle East, some of them spoke perfect Arabic.

The day we were told the following statement, the astonishment was profound because we *did* have a depth of knowledge in the State Department and in DoD and in the intel community. I'm not an expert in the Middle East, but those who were and who were in the room were stupefied when we heard the following sentence. It was October, 2002. And we were told: "Ladies and gentleman, you do understand that this war will take place, don't you?" This was five months before the attack. "And you do know what's going to happen, don't you? We're going to attack Iraq. We will have a military victory within seven days. We will have a fully flourishing democracy within 14 days of that. And then democracy will inevitably and quickly spread through the Middle East."

That's about as close to a word for word quote as you'll ever get.

Q: Who's saying this?

WHITMAN: I don't want to say, because the person who was chairing this committee is a likely a good person. Whether he was relaying this from a higher source and whether he believed in this or not, I don't know. But this was absolute nonsense and everybody in that room knew so. They knew that this is just absolutely crazy. The Middle East specialists, of whom there were a couple dozen in the room, were looking at one another shrugging their shoulders as if to say, "Someone in this room is an idiot. It's either me or him." And this was a very skilled professional saying this.

To this day I don't know whether he believed what he was saying, or whether he did it under orders. I don't know. But this did happen and I heard what he said. I saw the reaction of the Middle East specialists, which I'm not. And they were like shrugging amongst themselves in the back of the room saying, "This is crazy." I do remember that. So again, I don't know. Maybe this came indirectly from the highest source, the president

or Rumsfeld or Cheney. Maybe the individual saying this actually believed what he was saying.

History has shown us that this was completely nuts. And it was badly informed. And it's important for this oral history that people know, we did have experts, we did know have people who knew better. They did voice their concerns. Not me, because I didn't know anything about the Middle East. Others voiced their opposition, their questioning of this logic.

People now sometimes ask, "Didn't anybody know?" Well, yeah, lot of people did know. But it was a very top heavy bureaucratic hierarchical matter. The decision about that war came from a very high source, maybe the three I've just mentioned, and maybe with Powell. We know Powell had questions, but he went along with it as we all know. But there are plenty of people who knew better, plenty of them.

Q: Those of you who are around there who you could talk to, did they see 9/11, the attack on the Twin Towers and Iraq as being --

WHITMAN: Linked?

Q: -- Connected?

WHITMAN: Absolutely not. We were told, as all Americans were told, in the press and in the media from the White House, the Pentagon, the National Security Council -- we were told there was a link, but none of us believed it. None of us.

I remember many conversations in the elevators in Main State, the Harry S. Truman Building. Prior to that time people were very discreet about what they said when they were with strangers in an elevator. They would never voice an opinion. But I remember every elevator ride, people saying to complete strangers in that building with 15,000 people, 12,000, saying, "Isn't this crazy?" This was the general reaction that I heard in the elevators. The elevators are an interesting place, because in the past people were careful what they said, they did not want to be seen as not being team players. But the period of October 2002 up until March of 2003, internally at State I would say the puzzlement, the astonishment, and I think the disgust was universal.

I do remember also that those who were the most astonished and disappointed were Republicans. This is a sweeping generalization, so maybe others have memories of this too. I think that those who believed in the Bush administration were more disappointed than those who didn't. That's the way I remember it from conversations. I think anybody who was in the State Department at that time, and there would have been a few thousand, should be able to remember what they heard. There were a few officials, and my boss was one of them, who believed every word that the White House was saying and were rallying all of their forces to this effort. And I honor those people. Unfortunately, in my effort to help them, they saw me as a troublemaker. That did damage my career.

Q: Well, OK. So you're saying about what, 40 people, 50 people? How many were in this room?

WHITMAN: Yeah, 40 people.

Q: OK, it was 40 people. I mean did they gird their loins and go out and sell the true word, or what?

WHITMAN: You mentioned in an earlier question the people I spoke with. These were public diplomacy folks. And these are the people I worked with, people I was culturally attuned to. There may have been one or two girding their loins. Most of them were, on the contrary, preparing for the worst, preparing to be subjected to a period where their credibility would be stretched to the limit, where their own ethics would be at the verge of being violated. And these are the people I spoke with. They were all most upset. Only three resigned, not more than three. But the rest of us stayed in the effort. In some cases, people thought they could assist in rectifying the course of policy by being present. Others ducked and accepted it, because they were fearful of losing their jobs. This has some overtones of McCarthyism.

Why did people accept to continue being part of it? I did believe that I could, number one, assist in the effort of explaining to the world what was really happening. I knew I had no influence on policy, but I thought maybe my presence could bring some reason and rationale to the table in what we were all about was credibility. And I strongly felt that as soon as we lie, we're finished. Can't, can't lie, can't do that. I would say all of my colleagues would agree with that. Don't. Ever. Lie.

However, it's perfectly legitimate to bring to the attention to the world a point of view they have not considered. So as the IAEA was looking at nukes, and as UN inspectors were looking for chemical weapons, and ultimately after the invasion as U.S. troops were looking for weapons of mass destruction, and nobody ever found anything, it began to look pretty bad. And especially for public diplomacy. We didn't make the policies, but it was our job to make the policies palatable or at least understandable to foreign publics.

Q: Did the focus of the smell become apparent that this was probably at the presidential, vice presidential, and secretary of defense level?

WHITMAN: Absolutely. I mean everybody who read the newspaper knew that.

Q: Yeah. I remember the whole policy at one point seemed to be based on very strong information that there was a possible Iraqi attaché in Prague or something who had contact with al-Qaeda.

WHITMAN: Oh yes, we were told that al-Qaeda and Iraqi operatives were one and the same. It never had any logic to it, but again, we were trying to see if there might be.

Q: It was a secular, which seemed religious.

WHITMAN: Well, exactly. Saddam Hussein was secular and was considered al-Qaeda's enemy. He's sort of dead now, so you can't ask him. I would say that this illogical and unopposable force of policy was being stuffed down the throats of 90% of the people working on the policy. And you say the stench, the putrid smell began to look worse and worse. And as we saw our own boss, Colin Powell, whom we admired, come back looking ragged and stressed and disappointed and his antagonistic relationships with Cheney and Rumsfeld, and then National Security Advisor Rice, he seemed to be pretty angry about all of this. And he had enormous credibility in our eyes, which I would say he completely abandoned the day he went to the Security Council.

I've never been so disappointed in a human being. We know that he knew that he was saying untruths. He knew it. We know that. He said in his autobiographical comments and in his lectures that he was misinformed. But we know the famous incident where he took the mountain of papers at a White House meeting, threw them up in the air, and said, "This is crap." This was supposedly the information showing weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. We know he did that and we also know that three days later he was in the Security Council saying it was all true.

So this is a brilliant man who loved his colleagues and defended us and who must have some deep problems in his conscience. And I don't know how he can get out of it. He has said publicly that he regrets what he did. I would say, can he be forgiven for knowingly misinforming the world about this major question, which led to an invasion? I don't know if there's any forgiveness for such a thing. He got, I don't know, four, 5,000 Americans killed and probably 100,000 Iraqis. And an economy derailed in this country and a whole region exploding with unrest and instability. Very bad effects. I don't know if this is forgivable. Again, I want to stress, at the time there was expertise in the State Department. People did understand what was going on in the Middle East. They did not understand where these orders were coming from or what the rationale was.

We still don't know whether it was a personal vendetta or some nation building sort of quasi-religious mission hastening the second coming of Christ. We just don't know what was behind this rationale. But we do know that misinformation was everywhere and also just genuine mistakes. Can't blame a person for a mistake. But you can and should blame a person for knowingly misinforming. And we had tons of that.

Q: Yeah. Well, there's a phrase that's been extracted from George V, George VI --

WHITMAN: Our George was the Third, but maybe that was another one.

Q: No, no. We're talking about the King of England during World War II.

WHITMAN: Sixth, I think.

Q: In which you see on mugs and all saying, "Keep Calm and Carry On."

WHITMAN: Carry On.

Q: OK. You think this is really wrong, but not just you but others. There's a certain point we take the shilling and we don't have to agree with every policy. And there is no doubt about it that you had as vicious and cruel country under Saddam Hussein as any. So anything that could be done to squelch the bastard would certainly be a step in the right direction no matter what the reason was.

WHITMAN: Absolutely. So why aren't we invading Zimbabwe right now? Zimbabwe, let's invade.

Q: Yeah, but the Middle East is, you might say, special.

WHITMAN: I'm trying not to be flippant when I say Zimbabwe. It's true. We had terrible tyrants mistreating people. We had cruelty all over. Why Iraq, of the dozens of countries being badly run and the cruelty and by the way, the genocide in some parts of the world, where we looked the other way?

I'm not saying we're hypocrites, but our national interests were not easily made uniform in every case. Again, I don't believe these are bad people. Bill Clinton decided *not* to prevent genocide in Rwanda, but he did decide to prevent a one in Bosnia. The same well-motivated individuals can do what history will say are good things and bad things, and using the same moral and ethical apparatus come up with different solutions. The morale was rock bottom. I would say people were really, really feeling pushed around and trivialized. It was clear that the opinions of the experts were being disregarded for sure. We knew that very clearly. And this was demoralizing.

Now, you're going to ask me about my personal trajectory.

Here's what happened. In January of 2003, a highly placed individual approached me and said, "Would you consider being the cultural attaché in Moscow next summer?" And I was absolutely blown away. This was too good to be true, this was a magnificent offer. I couldn't imagine a better assignment in my Foreign Service career than to be the cultural attaché in the largest country in the world with an immense cultural patrimony, which I'd always been fascinated with. I'd learned a little bit of Russian on my own. I loved Russian literature, I loved Shostakovich. I loved the art that came out of the 1920s and '30s. Even the propaganda. And the history of Russia's always been a very tragic one, but I was fascinated with that place, with the people. I thought they were very talented. I thought, how could I be so lucky?

And I was advised by a very nice colleague. He said, "If you know some Russian, get your head in a book and get yourself tested at FSI, just get it on the record that you speak some Russian, just to make sure that this informal offer becomes formalized and that you really do go to Moscow as the cultural attaché." I was just exalted, I was so happy. I did study, and went to FSI and got a 2/2 in Russian, from what I'd learned entirely on my own.

Now, in terms of morale, ethics, cruelty, and managerial peculiarity, here's what happened. The same individual who invited me to take that position a short time later took the telephone, called the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, and told them, "Don't accept Whitman in that position."

Now, I did not know that he had done that. I really don't wake up in the night these days over this one. I don't care about this anymore, it happened long ago. Isn't it odd that the same individual would pick me out, actually approach me and say we need someone in Moscow next summer, you're the right person? And then a few weeks later pick up the phone and call the U.S. embassy of Moscow and say, "Make sure Whitman never makes it to Moscow"? What's that all about?

Q: Well, logic would say that here someone was told, "Whitman's a great cultural officer, let's send him there." And then someone later says, "You know, Whitman is opposed to our policy so we've got to punish him."

WHITMAN: It could well be, Stu. I'll never know and I'll never try to know. I just know that that's what happened. I guess that's possible. Someone might have talked to my boss and said, "Ooh, I think you should reconsider." I don't know what really happened. But something went *way* off.

And so there was a limbo period between January and July of that year when the offer was there in the air; it was not formalized. By the time July came, the arrangement had been sabotaged. I know which individual made the phone call, but I don't know everything behind why. But the arrangement was sabotaged and Moscow, where I had always, always wanted to serve, was taken away. So isn't that a sad story?

Q: Oh, very sad story.

WHITMAN: *(laughs)*

Q: No, but it does show, if you're studying the Byzantine court, during the time of the sultans, you might start with taking a look at the State Department and its personnel department.

WHITMAN: *(laughs)* And I know you're an expert on Byzantine culture --

Q: Yes, absolutely.

WHITMAN: -- because you served in Serbia.

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: And the Balkans.

Q: I served in Greece too, nine years.

WHITMAN: Yeah. And everywhere you went you heard people say, “Oh, the yoke, the Ottoman yoke.”

Q: Oh yeah.

WHITMAN: *(laughs)* Anything that goes wrong could be blamed on the Ottomans. Yeah, you’re right. Although innocent, ingenuous Americans may never be able to understand Byzantine politics. I don’t know if --

Q: Well, they can play ‘em.

WHITMAN: *(laughs)*

Q: Always the upper reaches of government can play these --

WHITMAN: Yes, yes, they can.

Q: This whole Iraqi thing, I’m not sure. You know, I have mixed emotions. I’m not sure that in 20 years from now our going in there might be considered a good thing. But as far as the rationale and how we did it was horrible.

WHITMAN: I would agree with everything you just said. We all know that in foreign policy, unintended consequences often take over for better or worse. Just like the military, the first contact with the enemy in a battle, they say, is the end of the plan. The plan always goes off. So I’m trying not to be too judgmental about those who got us into that situation.

Q: But you can’t --

WHITMAN: I would say the misinformation was not forgivable.

Q: Well, it was not just misinformation; it was misinformation which was manipulated by people sworn to uphold the Constitution. I think we’re talking about treason here frankly.

WHITMAN: Sounds right to me.

Q: I mean it’s on the part of particularly the vice president, secretary of defense, and the president.

WHITMAN: I’m not speaking here as a pacifist; I don’t think you are either. I think that the Constitution was violated and the decency of honest communication was pushed aside. And I’m trying not to be tendentious or partisan in saying this. Again, I would say that the greatest dissatisfaction from what I remember was among Republicans. Because their guy was lying to all of us.

Q: Mm-hmm.

WHITMAN: And so, in this country, in this partisan situation we're in now, it's hard not to bring in party and ideology into these discussions at this time in history. But I try to avoid it. That's just the way I remember it. I remember that the very people who created that administration were the ones who felt the most violated by it.

Q: Well, OK. So now we're carrying on.

WHITMAN: Got to get Whitman on to the next post. So I was not in a good situation in that office. I mean, it wasn't terrible. But there were some differences. I was told, "Hang on, Whitman, hang on. We're going to get you to Moscow," and then that didn't happen. So I was very fortunate to be admitted into the Board of Examiners from that point.

Q: In Italian, this is a place -- we call it a "parcheggia." You park your car. I've also served in the Board of Examiners.

WHITMAN: Isn't it fun?

Q: If you've got somebody, what do you do with them, you put them there and it's a very good experience --

WHITMAN: *(laughs)*

Q: -- and you have a feeling you're doing something by helping picking and choosing Foreign Service people. But it's the kitchen out of the eye of the powers that be.

WHITMAN: What you're saying makes sense. I don't know if the Department had a nervous system to make that type of judgment.

Q: It does.

WHITMAN: It may have been an accident. Did somebody say, Put this guy at BEX? I don't know.

Q: No, no, but you know, if all a sudden they say well, look, I don't think we want to put them here, here, or here, well, there's an opening on the Board of Examiners. Wham, there he goes.

WHITMAN: What happened to me, I sometimes refer to as Stalin without the bullets.

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: However, I don't think it was the personnel system. I think there was an opening and the administrator at BEX was a nice guy, and frankly had a pro-PD bias,

being PD himself. He saw my application and he said, "Fine, we need three people, we'll take him."

Q: Sure, yeah.

WHITMAN: I don't know if there was a rationale to it, but that's --

Q: Yeah, but anyway, I think an awful lot of that is there.

WHITMAN: Could well be. In any case, there's a plus and minus to everything in life. BEX was a very welcoming atmosphere, the colleagues were fantastic and the mutual support, the morale was very high. And it should be mentioned, this was the period of the so-called DRI, the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative of Colin Powell, who did care about his department and who saw a hemorrhaging of personnel and wanted to reverse that. That's the happy side.

The less happy side, because there always is one, this is a department of something like 9,000 diplomats. And the increase under DRI, instead of 150 positions a year, it doubled to 300. Now, does that make a dent in the system? Nine thousand people, where everyone who can do so is retiring? I remember the retirement seminars were with standing room only. And during that period the morale generally was so bad.

Again, I give Powell credit for the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative, which I was part of, where the numbers were doubled. But as I understand it, the increase never matched attrition during that period. That's the story we don't hear much. We think of this as the golden age of recruitment, and it was a wonderful thing to be able to say to an applicant, "You're in, you passed the exam. Welcome, you're one of us." That was a wonderful thing.

On the other hand, we were told that we were nourishing and putting the red blood cells in the department, and I think it was even more anemic. This is not a criticism, it's just the reality. Having to say no to nine out of 10 of these wonderful applicants was frankly quite painful.

Q: Well, there's something about the process. You're told you've got to pass more people, you nod your head and get lectures on this and all. And there's something perverse in the Foreign Service Officer's psyche or something where we pass one out of three.

WHITMAN: Well, it may be perverse. It's partly the system but it all has to do with money. I think every one of my colleagues, no exceptions, was filled with joy every time they said yes to an applicant. However, the money was not there to give more than one out of 10, maybe 20. In effect, between the written exam and the orals and the so-called final suitability review, something like 20,000 applicants for 300 positions. That's not enough. Not enough.

Q: Well, it's not enough. I'm stating my prejudice looking at it. But coming from a situation where I was looking for consular people, and we really were passing those we thought would be good officers.

WHITMAN: Yeah.

Q: And it's still coming one out of three, which --

WHITMAN: One out of 10 or 20 in my time.

Q: And of those, of course we'd probably get two, maybe.

WHITMAN: Right, because some would go elsewhere.

Q: They'd go elsewhere.

WHITMAN: There'd be a security issue or a medical issue. I was afflicted by the many times when I had to say face-to-face to a magnificent candidate -- we were not permitted to use the word "sorry." There was text and we would say, "You have not matched the score that is required." It was rather painful. Now, this said, the colleagues were wonderful, the motivation was great. There were 30 of us, I think. Every one of those people wanted a good outcome for every candidate. They really did. And, and so it was a bittersweet experience. I certainly learned a lot.

Q: There were people who came who were some pretty wild-eyed people. There are such creatures as an exam passer. I talked to one man who was a professional, worked for Princeton doing this. And he said, "You know, I can take an exam for real estate. I've never taken a course in real estate. And it's supposed to be relatively hard." And he said, "Well, I can pass it."

WHITMAN: You're right. We used to call it "gaming the system."

Q: And, you know, all of a sudden you realize my God, you didn't even want to be in the room with them.

WHITMAN: Absolutely.

Q: So it was not we were just putting the stamp on very good people. We were duped a number of times.

WHITMAN: Well, there were objective standards, so called. But this is not a science, it's an art. We were told it's a science, but it's not. We're making our best guess. There are objective standards, but then there's a lot of subjectivity in deciding who gets a seven and who gets a six. I remember one day—this may be the last BEX anecdote—where this villainous candidate came in, just a detestable young man. And it was so obvious to me that this guy was one of these testers -- is that what you call him?

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: And he was gaming us and he had figured it out. He'd taken the test a couple times before. And he was very arrogant and he wanted to prove that he could outsmart the Foreign Service, and he did on that day. This was one of the few that I remember that I ever had any negative feelings about. And I said to my colleagues, "Ooh, I think you're going to regret this. This is not a collegial person. He hates us and he just wants to prove that we're stupid. And I really don't think this is going to come out well."

Well, that very same day, I wasn't the one who read him the text, "Congratulations, you passed the exam" -- someone else did that. As they were reading the text, which is two and a half pages long --

Q: Oh, you had a text you had to read.

WHITMAN: There was a text. This was all "scientific."

Q: Oh yes.

WHITMAN: And the young man, two sentences into that text, said, "Put that piece of trash aside. I know that thing by heart; let's just get on with it." And everybody in the room realized they'd made a terrible mistake. This is a villainous, horrible human being. But we passed him over my vote against. I'm not trying to prove that I was more insightful than my colleagues, but I do remember that one day. I don't know if there's a scientific standard for identifying villains, but that guy was a villain.

Q: I have to say, we used to just tell people if they passed the exam or not. In my day, we just said you passed it or not. And often we said sorry.

WHITMAN: Yes, yeah.

Q: The whole process had suit after suit after suit.

WHITMAN: Exactly.

Q: And so the lawyers have gotten to it, which is the kiss of death. But anyway, when I did it, one time a woman came in. And she'd done pretty well but had not quite passed it. And she'd done this before. And you know, I felt sorry for her. And I used the phrase, "You've really come a long way." This was just at the time when there was a cigarette ad --

WHITMAN: *(laughs)*

Q: "You've come a long way, baby." And now you can smoke such and such.

WHITMAN: It was so that women could smoke, yes. So it seemed condescending.

Q: And she looked at me -- oh God.

WHITMAN: So you, Stu Kennedy, are the problem that we were sent to solve.

Q: Probably.

WHITMAN: With all those lawsuits where we weren't allowed to say sorry; we weren't allowed to do this, or that, or the other. We weren't allowed to see the biographies of these candidates before the first part of the exam.

Q: We could see them. And the interesting thing was that if you don't see the biography, you don't realize that this is a superb creation of Harvard Law School and all this. And all the fancy things. Actually for us, we take a look and said, here's this guy who's graduated from West Virginia University. He's excelled in wrestling, which has a first class world-renowned wrestling team and all. But the thing was he wasn't maybe as up-to-date on a lot of things as somebody out of Georgetown or Fletcher would. But very, very good. And obviously, was a learner. And you know, we gave him extra credit. I mean each person mentally was an individual, because we knew he came from a different background than some of these scions of privilege.

WHITMAN: Stu, you embarrass me when you say that. You're so right. Of course we gave extra credit. We weren't allowed to say so and we weren't even allowed to think it.

Q: No.

WHITMAN: But of course we loved the underdog.

Q: Yes.

WHITMAN: And, it was forbidden to do so, but we did.

Q: Well, I think rightly so. Because I think particularly getting up to a place with a little extra in their backpack is sometimes the equivalent, or more, than somebody to whom everything has been given.

WHITMAN: What I thought you were going to say a moment ago was here we have this guy from Harvard, why isn't he sucking in \$300,000 in a firm? Why is he coming to us? I thought you were going to say that.

Q: No, I'm not, because I really think that the Foreign Service recruits people who aren't that interested in money.

WHITMAN: Yes, in general that's right. We had financial advisors and lawyers come in desperately bored with their lives and wanting to put themselves up to something different. We had quite a bit of that. And they were wonderful people wanting to use their skills for something other than as vacuum cleaners of money.

Q: Yeah. I've always felt it, and I think most of my colleagues have felt a certain missionary aspect. I mean the United States had something to impart.

WHITMAN: Yeah.

Q: And we know we don't always do it well and there are problems. But I think even at an early stage, you come to the Foreign Service, you know, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country," à la John F. Kennedy. The United States is a great thing to promote. I still feel that way.

WHITMAN: I remember hearing that speech live. I think I was 15 years old. And I remember thinking, "Whoa, that line..." Live, not recorded. I remember thinking and saying to my parents, "That line will be around forever." And indeed, this is America's strong suit. We're not good Byzantines. We're not good strategists, sometimes. We believe that we're good. And people like us for it. They forgive our awkwardness and our arrogance because we believe we're good.

Q: Well, we also believe that we can pass this on to make other people better. You know, normal Foreign Service people arrive in Zimbabwe and say, "What can we do to help?"

WHITMAN: Yes.

Q: I don't think the basic European or other diplomat who comes to place such as that has quite the same feeling. I mean they may have it from family experience or something. But, but basically they report on how awful it is.

WHITMAN: No.

Q: Whereas we sort of pick up the torch and try to get them --

WHITMAN: *(laughs)* You know, this is marvelous, what you're saying. I do agree. We're talking in generalizations, obviously. And we've fallen on marvelous French diplomats and British diplomats. Generally the work of a diplomat is to support the interests of their country. Generally American diplomats try to do that while at the same time trying to make the human condition a little better. Very naïve, very striving, but I think that's how the world sees us and they give us a pass on a lot of our deficiencies.

Q: And the thing is that some of the things work. Human rights would not be around if it hadn't been for basically Congress saying this. And Foreign Service protested, but we've grasped that.

WHITMAN: Let's give Jimmy Carter some credit here.

Q: Yes. But it initiated really in Congress.

WHITMAN: And also in the bribery laws to try to make better business conditions.

Q: The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

WHITMAN: Right. It was a self-mutilating act, which was extremely altruistic and which the American business community thought would put a dead weight around the neck of the American investor. Tactically that's what it did. Strategically, though, it made conditions much better for the American investor. Because the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act spread. The EU took it on and other major investing countries took it on, and it became --

Q: The standard.

WHITMAN: It's kind of the standard. And it actually did help things strategically.

Q: Well, you can look at lots of failures, but basically we have something. And the world is a better place because we're around. And I can't think if we weren't an active player, I think the world would be quite different today.

WHITMAN: May I ask you, are we the Indispensable Nation?

Q: Yes we are. So, you're with the Board of Examiners. Did I ask you what your impression was of the candidates you were seeing?

WHITMAN: I thought the candidates were spectacular. I mean two-thirds of them were people you or I would be honored to work with. And I was very proud and honored to be with the Board of Examiners. At the same time, because of the budgetary limits, we just weren't permitted to hire the many wonderful people who came to us. I would say two-thirds of them were committed to the idea of the Foreign Service, were absolutely prepared in many senses to be part of it. And honestly, this is not a criticism. It has to do with the circumstances of budget. But budget permitted us to accept only about one out of 20. So I think we were able to capture some great individuals, but our net of capture did not include the many who were very disappointed, and so was I, that they were not among the chosen.

So, my colleagues, wonderful. The procedure, very thoughtfully developed. Lots of real brain power going into the making the process a level playing field and a fair procedure. But in judging another person there will always be an element of subjectivity regardless of how "scientific" the process is. And this was a good try. It was a good try on the part of everybody involved. It certainly was not perfect and we lost many hundreds of wonderful candidates. If the budget had permitted, we would have had them as well.

Q: We're always looking for the magical quality, but did you see a particular quality that you want to see shine out for somebody who's a candidate for public diplomacy?

WHITMAN: Well, the cones existed, but the exam was identical for all cones. So I was not recruited for public diplomacy. I was part of a team looking for all applicants to be generalists. There weren't one or two criteria. There were 13 called "the 13 dimensions." They're still there. You can find them on the Internet. And these are thoughtfully—I won't say scientifically, but thoughtfully—developed criteria that have to do with cultural adaptability, quantitative ability, performance in a crisis situation, and so forth. Trying to reveal the qualities of an applicant who would likely be a good Foreign Service Officer. Again, that was a good attempt and an honest one. Certainly not perfect.

Q: OK, Board of Examiners and then what?

WHITMAN: And it became, it became early 2004. And again, I was forced to be invited to go over to the Africa Bureau when it was time to move.

But this would be the time to tell my Vodou story. I preface it by saying I don't believe in Vodou, I don't practice Vodou, I wouldn't know how to practice Vodou. And by the way, the Associated Press stylebook spells it capital V-O-D-O-U. This is a significant change in the AP stylebook, because it recognizes voodoo not as a superstition but as a religion after 10 years of internal debate in the Associated Press. So let's call it Vodou, by its proper name.

I'll just tell the chronology of what happened, and I won't try to interpret it. February 29th, 2004, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was taken by American military, removed from Haiti in order to save his life because rebels had advanced from the Dominican Republic along the north of the Haitian territory, advancing toward Port-au-Prince intending to kill him. Now, as we see in the chronology, this was three years after I left Haiti. So I didn't have any particular stake in this. The day that Bertrand was removed by aircraft, the airplane was to go to Colombia and then to Morocco. The Colombians didn't want him, the Moroccans didn't want him. He ended up in the Central African Republic. And as I've said earlier, I did have issues with the Aristide regime. They did threaten to kill me at one point. I mean that that's not a hyperbole. I've never met Aristide. I have never met him. But here's the chronology of what happened.

The day he left, February 29th, 2004, I went to a gathering in Bethesda of Haitian expatriates and some American diplomats, including Terence Todman, to observe, and, frankly, to celebrate this event. The Aristide regime had been troublesome and we all saw that without it, there could be a possibility for Haiti to advance. On that same day, which was a weekend day, I came down with a little headache, I guess you would call it and a little bit of fever. I think it was a Saturday, maybe Sunday. It happened to coincide with the day Aristide left. I did go to work on Monday at the Board of Examiners, but could not continue past noon. I was getting more and more sick, I had a flu of some sort. I went home. The flu became worse. I had a fever, I don't know, 101, 102. The fever would not go away, I had it for five days.

On the fifth day of the fever, my eyes began to stop functioning. I couldn't see. And this happened gradually over the course of a couple days. But after about one week after February 29th, I was 100 per cent blind. So my very nice boss at the Board of Examiners called me at home and said, "I understand you're ill. We're coming to pick you up and take you to the emergency room at George Washington Hospital."

I said, "No, no, that's OK." -- I thought I could just sit it out, as one does with the flu.

My brotherly boss, a very wonderful man, said, "No, no, no."

Q: Who was he?

WHITMAN: Steve Nolan, later Ambassador to Botswana. Wonderful mentor. He said, "We're coming to get you."

I said, "No, no, no. Steve, Steve, thank you, I appreciate it."

Well, I couldn't see anything, but I dialed 411 on my princess phone, got a taxi and made my way to the emergency room at George Washington. The ophthalmologist said that I was blind. I knew that. And when he looked into my eyes in the emergency room, he said, "In your left eye, I see zero percent chance of having any eyesight ever again. In your right eye, I see a 15 per cent chance."

I was in extreme pain and I asked the ophthalmologist if he would consider removing my eyes, because if they weren't going to work for me, I thought maybe getting rid of them might reduce the physical pain. I'll spare you the details. It was a pretty unpleasant experience. I was blind and in extreme physical pain for three months. That would be March, April, May of 2004. People phoned me. I wasn't able to make phone calls because I was blind, after all. People phoned me from different continents and expressed concern, including my Haitian friends, who phoned me and said, "This appears to be Vodou."

I said, "Well, that's ridiculous."

And they said, "Can we get your permission to look into this? We'd like to take your photo to one of our friends in Haiti and ask for a diagnosis and see if anything can be done about this."

I said, "Fine."

I was getting laser treatments. I was getting advice from Russian friends who said, "Eat blueberries." I was getting advice from an alternate healer who said, "Eat cabbage and carrots."

You know, when you're in pain and blind and you've been told by an ophthalmologist that you will be permanently blind, you try most anything. The laser treatments probably were effective. Puncturing the lens of the eye allowed the fluids of the eye to regain their previous balance. This was a condition called angle collapse, which is a physical deterioration of the eye, I guess caused by the fever. Nobody knows. So I allowed these people to look into this back in Haiti. After studying the matter, they told me that the person trying to kill me was an American, not a Haitian, and someone who had knowledge of Vodou and had some grudge against me. I believe I know the person this might have been. Again, I repeat. I don't believe in Vodou. I'm just telling you what happened.

So, three months of blindness. Quite extreme pain. And an adjustment, realizing if I was to be blind, I would have to change my life. I would not be able to work in the State Department. I would have to maybe find an apartment where I didn't have a three-floor walkup. These were matters I had to deal with. I had very expensive medical tests, the oncologist, the rheumatologist, the generalist, the—I'm leaving some out, the ophthalmologist of course—there was a team of specialists on K Street working very hard trying to diagnose what I had, but they were never able to do so. And at the end of a long and very expensive series of MRIs and all sorts of analysis, this rheumatologist asked me into his office. I couldn't see him. But he said, "We don't know what this is. Do you have any idea yourself?"

And I said, I was joking, I said, "Vodou?"

And the doctor said, "Well, it's better than any theory we've come up with."

This was a group of four or five specialists working together to try and figure out what the problem was. They never did identify the problem (*laughs*). And this was a moment of levity where the rheumatologist said, "Well, you say Vodou, it's better than any theory we have." So my Haitian friends told me that their contact in Haiti was exercising, employing the so-called right-hand, the healing hand of Vodou and was working on making me better. Whatever did make me better, I was dramatically given my sight back one day in early May, late April. In the National Cathedral, I went in during a sunny afternoon and I was alone in the back of the Cathedral. Suddenly I could see the beautiful, beautiful colors of the stained glass windows coming in, and I knew that I would be OK.

I just wanted to mention that anecdote because I certainly don't understand it and I certainly don't have any belief one way or the other, but again, this illness occurred the same day, February 29th, 2004, as Aristide left Haiti, and my sight was restored three months later. I think that's all I need to stay about that.

Q: Well, just a question too. You say it was not a Haitian, I assume an American sort of on whom suspicion falls.

WHITMAN: Well, according to the Haitians whose names I do not know, those who did the diagnosis, yes, that's the case. They said it was an American working in tandem with the Aristide regime.

Q: Were you able to do anymore sort of analysis to find out why you were singled out? Was this organized by some government entity or planned out, or not?

WHITMAN: It would be reckless of me to draw any conclusions from this. I do know an American who was committed to removing the work that I had done in Haiti. I'm trying to say this accurately and prudently. An American did threaten the journalists I had befriended, and made one thing clear to them. While the U.S. Embassy supported them while I was there, the U.S. Embassy was now no longer in support of these journalists. As a result, I think, 10 of them were tortured and killed. I think this is a pretty serious breach of what diplomats are supposed to do. But I'm not going to mention the name of the person because this is all hearsay. I have pretty good information in my files, but I have no proof and I don't ever intend to prove what happened. So there was an odd connection. The person who I do know was practicing Vodou with Vodou practitioners, an American, this we know for sure. I also know that this person was resentful of what I had done in encouraging journalists, and determined to undo it, for reasons I will never know. Let me add, this person is now in comfortable retirement in Southern France.

Q: Have you ever thought about making the retirement uncomfortable?

WHITMAN: As I said earlier, I don't believe in Vodou, and I don't practice it. I have no interest in evening the score on this or any other matter.

Q. So back to the future. Where did you go in 2004?

WHITMAN: There I get to the fortunate moment where I was invited from BEX to come over to the Africa Bureau, which in a sense was my home because my whole interest in overseas living started in 1980 when I was a Fulbright professor in Brazzaville, of all places, teaching English. And Africa had always been fascinating to me. And so, terrific. I was invited to be the Deputy Director of the Public Diplomacy Office in the Africa Bureau. By this time, of course, merged with the State Department, so there was no USIA. The area offices were still the places where decisions were made. This would be the Africa Bureau and hierarchically underneath, the Office of Public Diplomacy.

I applied for two positions, the Deputy Director and then as a backup I said, "Well, I'd also consider the Central Africa Desk," which was a rather lowly but honorable nice position. I think the position was below my personal rank. Anyway, I was taken in not as Deputy Director but as Central Africa Desk.

The Central Africa Desk was the least prominent of the desks. That didn't bother me at all. I had lived in Central Africa, I was fascinated with the region, and I was very pleased and honored to get this invitation. So my job was to be the liaison with the State Department Africa Bureau Central Africa Desk, which is different from the Public

Diplomacy Bureau. Honored to do so. Meanwhile, Bob Dance, DCM in tiny Swaziland, was not able to get to Washington in time to take up his duties as deputy director. So de facto, I became the acting deputy director for the office. In fact, I had two jobs. I was the Central Africa Desk and the acting deputy.

The deputy director traditionally is the one who does the personnel assignments in the field. I found this fascinating, challenging, and rewarding. I was working very hard to field the inquiries as people were working off the bid list and bidding on African posts. People bid on five or six or seven posts at a time. Usually—they won't say so—but they'd rather go to Rome or Paris, but they'll put various posts on their lists. If someone bids on Rome, Berlin, London, Paris, and Ouagadougou, as we all know, personnel system will probably send them to Ouagadougou saying, Well, it *was* on your list.

I found a very high morale level in the Africa Bureau. I found a real intellectual home. I think the bureau was supportive of its people. The EX Office was most cooperative. And I found this a very collaborative, enlightening activity. I was basically the deputy director for six months. Poor Bob Dance as delayed by six or eight months and a couple of years later passed away. He was a wonderful man. In his absence, I covered his desk. So most of my time in that office was in that capacity as the backup for Bob.

Q: When you say Central Africa, we're not talking about the Central African Republic.

WHITMAN: No. The Area, yes.

Q: Which included?

WHITMAN: Well, as we know, PD has always had fewer resources than the rest of the system, so where there could be a desk for the Central Africa Republic in the Africa Bureau, in my office we had fewer resources and greater areas to cover. So Central Africa meant Chad, Cameroon, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, DRC, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, and I'm probably forgetting one or two. So it was seven or eight countries. I would say politically, the lowest priority for the U.S. government. But that didn't bother me; this was an area I was really into. It lasted a year and a half.

Q: What year and a half?

WHITMAN: It would be early '04 to mid '05. And I was really given much freedom of action. I actually traveled to Bamako, which was out of my geographic area, to run some media training, which was a marvelous experience. That one week of training coincided with a visit by Bob Zoellick, U.S. Trade Representative before he became the Deputy Director of State, then went to the World Bank. I was able to arrange a press event as he visited a cotton factory in Bamako. It happened to coincide with this week that I was there with my Malian journalists. And I prepared them for the press coverage. I said, "Here's how you interview a VIP. You don't call out, 15 people at a time. You decide amongst yourselves which one or two will ask a question. Think of it as a press pool." We took it as a learning opportunity. "You should plan your question as a group and you

should agree on which questions you should ask and designate one or two people to ask them.”

Well, this group was made up of quick studies. They asked Zoellick something about cotton subsidies in the United States and how could they expect Malians to enter the American market with their cotton if the American industry was subsidized. They also asked about the declining value of the dollar and how this would affect imports from the CFA franc zone of West Africa.

I was told later by Zoellick’s people, he was *delighted* to get these real questions. They were somewhat challenging. And he *loved it*. And he apparently went back to Washington and said, “Those journalists are fantastic.” And so Bob Zoellick actually cared about Malian cotton exports. He later committed a certain amount of money to them before becoming deputy secretary of state, and later World Bank President.

Later, as deputy secretary, ironically he committed some money from ESF, from Economic Support Funds given by AID, entrusted over to State. He used some of that money to back a prior commitment to the President of Mali saying, “I will help you in sustaining your cotton production.” This actually removed some money that I could have used otherwise, from ESF. But it’s OK. It was a double-edged sword, because I actually wanted that money for a different purpose. But that was the U.S. policy, to enable Malians to export cotton.

Later in my capacity in the Africa PD Office, I applied for ESF funds myself for Women’s Empowerment -- Modernization of the Legal Code. I spent 12 months preparing a proposal for a \$200,000 grant and after 12 months learned that the \$200,000 was no longer available because it had been given to the Malian government for cotton exports. Well, mixed feelings. I would have loved to have done that project after all that labor and all those months preparing an ESF proposal.

I did get the other of my two proposals, which was the media training. And that \$200,000 did permit me to do this marvelous training in two cities, Conakry and Bamako, using that modest amount of money and gathering a regional collection of Francophone African journalists. And I’ll tell you, this was one of the most marvelous investments I’ve ever seen, emboldening and giving greater skills and empowerment to a few dozen Francophone African journalists. And off they went. A most wonderful project. That was the kind of thing I was permitted to do in the Africa Bureau as a kind of a loose molecule, because I was not embedded in the Africa Bureau. I was at the PD Office across the street. I was not officially the liaison to the front office of AF, but I was the liaison to the Central Africa office in the Bureau. There’s a peculiar but wonderful status and I was very pleased with the things I was permitted to do.

The main task, again, was placing American FSOs in PD posts in Africa. This had to do with recruiting, and convincing people that Africa was a rewarding place to be. It had to do with being fair in selecting where there were multiple bidders. Africa has always been the region least bid upon. Many FSOs want to either go to the glamorous places, Western

Europe, or to the career-building places, that would be Bogotá, at that time, Baghdad, Kabul, Seoul, Beijing. Places that would accelerate their professional advancement. Africa was seen as a backwater. By others. I didn't have to fake it when I explained to people, "This is really a good geographic area to be." And my recruiting slogan was, "We are 'greater hardship,' but we're not Iraq."

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: And that, that actually did attract a number of bids. We had very few bidders, but we had more than one or two for each post, and it was a good process of vetting their bios and with the DCMs in the field and doing everything very transparently, we managed to get people who really wanted to be in these posts in them. I think the outcome was a very good one in general.

Q: Well, you were in an area essentially of Francophonism.

WHITMAN: In Central Africa, yes. However, however, as the de facto acting deputy director, this was the whole continent. In the personnel area, I was doing the whole continent.

Q: Well, did you find the French equivalent of USIA? Did the French have a program of supporting journalists at all?

WHITMAN: Well, there's *RFI*, *Radio France Internationale*. It's funny you mention it, because there was possibility for collaboration. The French tended to be—how do I say this delicately—a little bit suspicious about the American embassies in the French backyard, which would be the former French colonies. They were always curious, why would American diplomats be interested in this and are they trying to trump our efforts? The narrow-minded French diplomats saw it that way. The enlightened ones were delightfully collaborative and we had marvelous cooperation with some French press attachés in the field, and with *Radio France Internationale*. Reporters Without Borders preferred not to deal with us at all.

Q: What's our relationship like with Reporters Without Borders?

WHITMAN: Well, Reporters Sans Frontières, based in Paris, is a watchdog organization that looks at press freedom. I think it's a very good organization, quite parallel to CPJ in New York, the Committee to Protect Journalists. I think they're both very good organizations, but they don't tend to work together. In my experience, the French organization frankly is not welcoming at all to even communicate with U.S. Embassies. I honor what they do. I think they identify instances of abuse, oppressed freedom, exactly as CPJ does. I know that two organizations are aware of each other. They work in parallel fashion. I think it's always good to have more than one organization looking at abuses of freedom. It all works for the good of everybody.

During that period I also visited UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization] in Paris, which had a wonderful Danish employee responsible for development of media in Africa. And Mogens Schmidt, a wonderful Danish UNESCO official. We were able to do some things together. Mogens, based in Paris, was personally more interested in Francophone Africa. Anyway, in a very modest way, in a very low cost, UNESCO did work with us. I took the trouble to go and visit him a few times. And he was a wonderful partner.

It in my capacity as deputy in this little office, media was not the only agenda. I did develop a project for modernization of legal structures that would protect women's inheritance rights. Many countries with the British common law background have statutes protecting the widows of men who die and having the inheritance go to the widow. However, in the culture, in practice it never happens. It goes to the deceased husband's brother. The culture and the statute seem to conflict. We have that agenda to try to assist African community organizations and NGOs in getting this right, getting some coherence in their legal systems where they differed from actual practice. Where they are, let's say, in advance of the cultural traditions. We did not go in trying to bully anybody or question their sovereignty or the culture. But where the laws were on the books and where women's groups locally were very determined to see that this was actually implemented, we did a system with advisors from the U.S. who could say, "We've done this in Louisiana, here's how you can do it here." So we had many different agenda things. Unfortunately, that was the money that went to cotton exports from Mali, so the women will have to wait.

Q: Well then, you were doing this how long?

WHITMAN: I was in the PD Office of the Africa Bureau for a year and a half. Until I became burnt out (*laughs*). I went to my boss and said, "Could I please go overseas? I'm just sort of burnt out." And very graciously, she agreed to send me to Yaoundé, Cameroon, to be the public affairs officer. What a marvelous opportunity.

Q: All right, but during the time you were in the African Bureau, were there any raging issues?

WHITMAN: (*Laughs.*) Let me mention Darfur, because, when I first went to that office from the Board of Examiners, I was just recovering from my illness. When I was first able after three months to go back to an office, this time at Main State, I believe it was the first day on the job—kind of a pattern on my career, first day, something dramatic—it was a Friday in I think April of 2004. My boss said, "You're going to Khartoum tomorrow."

I said, "Really? I -- really? I..." It was 4:00 in the afternoon on a Friday. I said, "I mean delighted to -- but I need travel orders, don't I?"

And she said, "The Executive Office is working right now to get the travel orders. This is a last-minute thing. Colin Powell is going to Sudan and you're going to take care of the

press while he's there." So it was a Friday and I was to depart the next day from Dulles airport.

I'm laughing because what happened? I did get the travel orders. I was told, "Here's your airplane reservation and here is your U.S. State Department American Express card. Go to the Dulles United counter and they will give you your ticket to Frankfurt to Khartoum to assist in the Colin Powell visit to Sudan," which by the way, I think was his first visit to Darfur. With press, eleven U.S. and international journalists following him in the same plane.

I went to Dulles, I presented the U.S. State Department-issued American Express credit card. I remember the ticket agent was trying to find something in the computer and handed the card back to me and said—this is a quote, Stu—"I don't know who pays the bills for this thing, but the bills have not been paid. We can't accept this card." I wanted that on the record; that's a quote. United Airlines said to me that the office that issued this card—that would be the U.S. State Department—was in arrears on its payments and the card could not be accepted. So that's pretty funny, I think.

I pulled out my personal Visa card, figuring, well, the State Department will pay me back eventually. And it's important that somebody be there in Khartoum to take care of the press following Colin Powell's visit. So I used my visa card, made my way to Khartoum. I was in Khartoum preparing the filing center at the Khartoum Airport so that the press could file their stories after the two-hour flight from Khartoum to Darfur, then two hours back. Colin Powell went there, there was an enormous crowd of people, ululating and cheering and feeling that the Messiah had come in the form of Colin Powell. Very dramatic. I was not there. I was back in the filing center that I was in a panic trying to set up. And the plane came up with Powell to Khartoum.

I don't know if the reader can even imagine how unlikely it would be to set up eleven telephone lines overnight in the Khartoum Airport in a country that had telephones that looked as if they were out of the film *Casablanca*. These were these clunky old phones. It looked pretty rickety. And it was the best I could do.

Powell came back. I believe this was the day that he used the word "genocide" for the first time. And it was time to file. The journalists came in. They were on a one-hour stopover. They were going on to the Maldives. And the plane had to leave, very dramatic.

Well, the system collapsed, of course. Because of the capacity, the infrastructure at the airport just didn't support eleven phone lines (*laughs*). So the big issue, to answer your question, was Darfur and was this genocide? If so, what was the U.S. government going to do about President Bashir, who seemed to be guilty of crimes against humanity? I never had private moments with Powell, but I believe that he was very disturbed by what was going on in Darfur.

Q: Can you explain what was going on? What is this about?

WHITMAN: Well, anyone knows who read a newspaper at that time. Darfur is a terrible desert area of Western Sudan, with ethnic groups out there that were not friendly with those in charge of the country in Khartoum. And these groups were trying to assert some sort of autonomy or independence. And the central government in Darfur was using antiquated Soviet aircraft and bombing the villages indiscriminately and just basically murdering many thousands of people. Most of them noncombatants. Just ghastly. These people are living in probably in the worst, poorest place in the world. It's bad enough to be living in a desert with no shelter and no agriculture. And then in addition, to be exterminated by the central authority.

The Khartoum regime was claiming that these were insurgents who were trying to undermine the integrity of the country. It was terrible, terrible for everybody. I never physically went to Darfur. I did spend a week in Khartoum. And I must say, I was astonished. I'd read the articles and I knew that some really terrible things were happening and it was a racial thing. We had light-skinned Arabs from the north of the country exterminating dark-skinned people in what is now South Sudan and in Darfur, just exterminating them. And I expected this to be an extremely nasty place to be.

In fact, Khartoum, which was enjoying, probably illegally and immorally, huge oil revenues basically stolen from the south, was a boom town on the one hand. On the other hand, many, many people—I would call them Arabs, the light-skinned people from the north—many people came up to me and said, “Why don't you love us? We love you.”

I didn't know much about Sudan and I tried to be kind of neutral about this. I said, “I don't dislike you.”

They said, “Why, why are you imposing sanctions on us? We're such nice people and we love you.”

I tried to avoid that conversation, because I didn't know the particulars. I thought, if genocide's being committed, it would be good to have sanctions against the regime perpetrating the genocide. But indeed, I was struck by the individual friendliness of people in Khartoum. The bell hops, the taxi drivers, the cooks. All of these questions of genocide and sanctions and U.S. policy went way over their heads. They understood it, but they were not involved. They did not see themselves as involved in any extermination or genocide or anything. They just saw these things being done in the name of their government. Many of them hated their government, I believe, and sought to be friendly with the Americans who were swarming because of the Powell that week. Most fascinating. I must say, people were extraordinarily hospitable and friendly. Were they guilty of the genocide being committed by their government? I'll leave that to someone else to judge. But often individuals are lost in these cataclysmic events that they did not cause. Maybe they benefited, I don't know. The question of guilt comes up, but I can't settle that.

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: So that was one major issue when I was in AF. There were negotiations in Abuja and in Khartoum. The marvelous and much regretted Bruce Ehrnman, who was a deputy assistant secretary, was adored, *adored*, by North Sudanese *and* South Sudanese when they had negotiations. At that time I knew Bruce, we all loved him very much. When he went to Abuja, I know that the negotiating parties at that time would say, "We will go into the room and meet the other side only if Bruce Ehrnman is in the room. If Mr. Bruce is not there, we're not going in." This was a marvelous, marvelous diplomat. Succumbed to cancer a year later in New Haven. And it's worth mentioning him. He was just everything a diplomat should be.

The Great Lakes are also a problem. The Rwanda, Eastern Congo, Burundi, Uganda area. Don Yamamoto, the deputy assistant secretary for PD and for Central Africa was very active trying to get people to talk to one another in the Great Lakes region. He was actually a great hero because he was ridiculed at the time for even trying to have talks over there. I was not involved in them, but I knew Ambassador Yamamoto. And he was kind of quixotic in trying to get people to talk and to resolve some of these issues. And against everybody's advice. Actually, he made considerable progress. As we know, Eastern Congo is a mess right now. But, but I believe the region is better than it would have been, thanks to Yamamoto's efforts. He went over there quite a lot. He engaged with political governments, with U.S. embassies. And he became a sort of Great Lakes unofficial envoy.

Q: Well back when independence was coming about, Sudan was kind of the jewel in the crown of the British colonial service.

WHITMAN: Well, sort of. Sudan was never a colony; it was a protectorate. That may seem like a bit of sophistry there. But Sudan supposedly was co-governed by Egypt and by the British Empire. It was not exactly a colony. You know, this term the Jewel of Africa was applied to Uganda, which is a very beautiful country. It was applied to Kenya. The British Empire had a lot of attractive real estate over there. They never officially made Sudan into a colony, but it was *de facto* a colony.

Sudan, when the British ran it, didn't have much to offer the British. It was the upper Nile. And there wasn't much there. Decades later, when oil was discovered along the border of what is now the border of North and South Sudan, in the Abyei region, suddenly this was after independence. Sudan became a very viable economic unit as long as you were among the elites in the north. And it also apparently was temporarily the safe haven of the Taliban, as we remember when Clinton misguidedly bombed what he thought was a munitions factory in Khartoum. Actually it was a dairy production plant.

But Sudan was a vast country, the largest country in Africa before it split. It was in communication with groups that the American government considered terrorists. What we know is that we had a very ambiguous relationship. We had ambassadors that at some point were removed from the country, but had to serve out of Nairobi. And one of them admitted in a press conference in 2007, he was asked, "Do we deal with the Sudan

government charitably? They are committing genocide? Are we nice to them because they give us good intelligence about terrorist groups?"

And I remember the former U.S. chargé exploding in rage saying, "Well, it's true. They give us intelligence." This was at a public meeting. Nothing classified. So apparently, there was a quid pro quo. The Sudanese government was giving intelligence to the U.S. government on the movement of terrorist groups. In exchange, they got a pass for committing genocide. Let that be on the record too.

Q: So, your next move?

WHITMAN: As I say, I went to my compassionate boss and I said, "You know, can you send me to Cameroon?" And she did, she sent me to be to the PAO in Cameroon.

In summer of '05, I set up shop in a rickety old building. It was a series of buildings on a hill. Somebody counted the steps from the public affairs section to the front office in an old commercial building in downtown Yaoundé, something like 108 steps. It was kind of a crazy mishmash of buildings.

What a marvelous country, Cameroon. The ambassador was Niels Marquardt. I had the most wonderful Foreign Service Nationals, LES (locally-employed staff). We did fantastic things. This country was under extreme misrule by President Paul Biya, one of the most corrupt countries on earth according to the Transparency International. I would say, without any exception, every member of that government was pocketing, stealing money from their people. You know, mismanaging, really not managing, just not doing anything except taking money. On the one hand.

On the other hand, what a rich and beautiful country. What a rich culture. They call it "Africa in miniature." because it goes from the Sahel, Sahara region in the north, which is Muslim, down to the coastal region, the forest, the savannah. It's an officially bilingual country, English and French. There were some tensions between the two Anglophone provinces and the seven Francophone provinces that got most of the attention of the regime, to the neglect perhaps of the Anglophone, the northwest and the southwest provinces. Cameroon had only two presidents since independence, Ahidjo, from Garoua in the north, and Biya, from the south. Biya was Ahidjo's protégé, later overthrew him. It's pretty sad that since the early 1960s, only two presidents in 60 years. It's pretty bad. Ahidjo and Biya.

So I was there in Biya's time, of course. Niels Marquardt, an extremely skilled, clever and charming American, was always pushing the envelope to see where there could be some give in this intransigent corruption on the part of the Cameroonian government. That was more his concern. I supported him completely in that, and I wrote some texts for some of his speeches, which raised the corruption issue to a higher level. I think this made him something of a national hero. People were just absolutely marvelous. They were smart, they were entrepreneurial. They were funny. And I really, I really loved the country. I went back and forth to Douala, the port city, Douala-Yaoundé, kind of like

New York-Washington, I guess. With the assistance of my able local employees I saw things I would not have noticed otherwise. I saw beautiful green hills that seemed to be fertile. And then my driver would say, “What you don’t see is that the forests have been chopped down and have been sold illegally as contraband.”

I said, “But there are trees.”

And the driver would say, “Yes, there are trees. But you don’t see that the big mature trees are all gone. The only trees left are the young saplings.” Entire forests from a region maybe comparable to the Amazon, I mean this wealth of timber, all of it stolen by graft. Still a gorgeous green and fertile country. But much of its wealth being hemorrhaged by corrupt officials and their friends in western countries.

So I did public affairs. I did everything, everything. We worked with youth groups, we worked with the media of course. I took what I had learned in Haiti. I was stunned at the relative wealth and dynamism of Cameroon compared to what I had seen in Haiti. I remember the day I landed in Yaoundé for the first time. It looked to me like Switzerland. There were forests and there were lights. I arrived at dusk and the lights of Yaoundé were shining brightly. Something you would never see in Haiti. And I remember thinking, Oh, how provincial I am. This is, this is a very viable country. There’s no comparison between this country and a very poor one like Haiti.

So I worked I think very harmoniously with Niels Marquardt. He was a little fearful of mentioning corruption in public. I encouraged him to do so. I wrote a text, which he very bravely used, talking about how American senior officials have to make declarations of their income and that the same should be true in Cameroon. I think the Cameroonian people just adored hearing a U.S. Ambassador say this. He was concerned about reprisals or consequences. But there were none. He was simply a national hero. I was very proud of him.

We assisted in little community endeavors like a creation of a small community library in a poor section of Yaoundé. There were no libraries, none. But there was an individual who, using no resources at all, just, just cleverness, created a community library. Which became kind of a community cultural center. And the Marquardts—both Marquardts, Judy and Niels—and I went out there all the time. We donated a fan which would give some air circulation. We donated some books. The library director later had a baby girl and named her, he said, after me: Danielle.

Niels Marquardt was frenetically busy. He saw every square inch of that country, I think. With press in tow. I accompanied him on some of his visits, but you couldn’t keep up with this guy. He was always out traveling. And we took turns assisting with press coverage. In one case, he dragged the minister of environment out to the forest in the east where the minister had never been (*laughs*). And the minister, wearing his tight fitting Italian suit and his uncomfortable leather shoes, sprained his ankle. The minister had to be taken out by helicopter. Marquardt boldly leading him to these backwater areas where

the minister had never been. Absolutely marvelous. Challenging Cameroonian officials to see their own country. I tell you, it was a great period.

This was also the period of HIPC [Heavily Indebted Poor Countries] relief. The UN had designated some countries, if they satisfied the requirements, for debt relief. And Cameroon barely slipped through the noose. Despite its very bad corruption, it was given a pass on debt relief by the UN, and this was a great political victory by the regime. This was a very happy thing and I think the embassy was on board with wanting to deliver debt relief to this country. Actually I'm not sure it was the right thing to do, since much of the debt existed because of personal corruption on the part of some officials. But it was great encouragement for the country.

But then, my office had to explain, now that there's debt relief (*laughs*), why is there no activity in building the infrastructure of the country? The Cameroonians understood this major event to be an action that would assist their country in becoming a dynamic economic power. It did not happen. All it did was remove debt. It did not create economic activity. Well, they caught on. Cameroonians are very fatalistic. They've been through very bad things. They have endured kleptocracies and regimes that are indifferent to their needs. They tried rebelling in 1982 and they were slaughtered and were not inclined to get into that sort of thing again. Cameroonians, always seeking the peaceful solution, were inclined to have a pessimistic view about their own possibilities. They knew they were being misruled and that the western governments were supporting politically and economically the regime that was robbing them. But they held no grudges against Americans.

I think they did hold grudges against the French, but that's just anecdotal. The French perhaps were benefiting from the illegal removal of the forests and sacking of the resources of the country. That said, there was a certain degree of good planning. Biya, who is no genius and who is almost never in his own country—usually in France and Switzerland—did figure out that the thing to do with petroleum is to gradually exploit it, not all at once, in order to have it in the future as a source of income. This was a very good thing; he did delay the extraction of petroleum so that the country would have this in the future. Cameroon has a very diversified economy. They have agriculture and petroleum and minerals and human resources. And the Port of Douala is a major hub for the region.

Q: How do they eat?

WHITMAN: They eat fine! People don't starve in Cameroon. The poorest people have dinner. It's remarkable. This is not a desperately poor Sahel country. It's a country that has rich agriculture, and I must say, I saw starvation in Haiti and Mali, but not in Cameroon. There was certainly extreme poverty. But it seemed to me as if people were eating. Local produce in Cameroon was actually being exported to neighboring countries. Remarkable. A third world country exporting food! The potential there is tremendous. What else about Cameroon? A group of young civic leaders came into my office in late

'05 and they had a proposal to present to me. I was the public affairs officer. And they said, "We want to have a seminar on democracy, and you're going to pay for it."

And I said, "Well, explain to me why I should."

And they said, "Well, you believe in democracy."

And I said, "Well, so do you. So what is it that you're asking me to do?"

"Well, we need some funding for a gathering so that we can discuss democracy." And there was something about the proposal that didn't seem right.

And I said, "I don't think I do conferences. You know, we agree that democracy is good. I'm not sure what the value added is in having people be given per diems to come in and talk about this. You can talk a lot, and I'm not sure it helps the country."

They were very perplexed. They said, "We thought you were the public affairs officer."

I said, "Yes." I said, "I need to see a more concrete proposal." I wasn't trying to be contrarian. And they looked very astonished. They, they thought that they would just walk in and get \$3,000-4,000 dollars. I said, "Actually," I said, "can you tell me what your problem is?"

They said, "We need democracy."

I said, "Well, that's kind of abstract. Can you tell me how your lives demonstrate to you that you don't have democracy?"

Finally they said, "We live in a poor neighborhood. The water pipes were installed 50 years ago. They're encrusted with mud and the water doesn't flow."

I said, "Now you're talking about something I can work with you on. Why don't we go out with shovels and remove the mud from those entrapments?"

And they looked at one another assuming that I was crazy, I was nuts. I said, "When you say that you're going out there with shovels to remove the mud and clear the drainpipes of your neighborhood, I will be there, and I will bring the DCM with me and we will shovel with you."

They didn't believe it. But three weeks later, it happened on a Saturday. It was the most marvelous thing. And from that collaborative activity, it was fantastic. You know, we shoveled shit for a whole day. And we had fun and the group was enthralled. The diplomats would get out there with shovels and shovel shit with them. And this created a camaraderie and a basis for other activities, which they did do.

After that, I still wasn't trying to be contrary. I said, "Maybe you'd like to distribute copies of the Cameroonian Constitution at your meetings. Because most Cameroonians have never seen their constitution." They said that's great. I paid tiny amounts of money to actually just print copies of the constitution. Cameroonians had never seen it before. And this was how I thought at the time with my extremely modest funding that I could best advance Cameroonian democracy. That was the task that was described as what I was supposed to do. Advance democracy in a free economy and free flow of information. Those were my tasks. So I had a hell of a lot of fun doing that to some modest degree, and getting to know this marvelous country and the marvelous people.

I brought an American Corner to Garoua, a little region in the north. The U.S. government was obsessed at the time with interaction with Muslim communities. An American corner is sort of a library where there's no American official present, remote from the embassy, where we give small amounts of money to establish an American book collection. Not in our library, but in a library belonging to a local institution that was the municipal library in Garoua. The Mayor of Garoua, whose name was Ahidjo, I think he was of the Ahidjo family, was thrilled to have this. We provided a few computers and a bit of training. And so we had a little bit of a presence in the northern part of the country. Tiny, tiny gesture. But I think it had some resonance. Also, during my period in Yaoundé, we moved from that miserable old building downtown to a New Embassy Compound, an NEC. Once it was built, it was probably the most elegant building in the whole country.

As we all know, fortress U.S. Embassies are sadly inaccessible to the public and they're built in remote areas. We were moved away from the center of the city out to a frankly gorgeous place called "the Golf," which is a golf course at the edge of a hill becoming sort of a mountain, Mont Fébé was the area. Absolutely gorgeous site. Very sadly, this new embassy compound, as with all others, was impenetrable to most Cameroonians. In the Public Affairs Section we made great efforts to get out of the embassy into the community, into the universities, the local bootstrap little libraries, the youth groups. We went to every little village we could get to in order to bring books and ideas and speakers and activities. We welcomed anybody who wanted to come into our information resource center inside the bastion and the many hard doors and hard walls of the embassy. We did have a small but loyal group that kept coming in to our IRC.

Then a marvelous event was held in the new embassy compound. Niels Marquardt got a suggestion from one of his junior officers. What about International Women's Day? Why don't we have a fashion show inside the embassy? My God, what a sensational event. And the cross-section of population that was able to get into the embassy that day. We had little orphans who were proudly showing their handmade dresses and suits. We had the ambassador himself strutting out on state with an orange mop on his head, sort of disguised as a punk. Just an immense positive reaction. Covered by television and radio.

I had some differences with Niels Marquardt. But on the whole, he was just absolutely a star in that country for the period he was there, and a very positive projection of American values. I was proud and delighted to work at his right hand.

So I spent half my time in the dumpy old building where people came all the time, into the beautiful modern building where dramatically fewer people actually came. We did try to welcome them. We tried to deal with the reality of U.S. embassies now with very high security standards removed from the population, removed from easy access. But Marquardt did everything he could. He created something called Rosa Parks Boulevard. That was the name of our IRC, the Rosa Parks, to commemorate that great American hero. And the Cameroonians changed the name of the street in front of the embassy to the Boulevard Rosa Parks. And so there was an injection of a sense of what America was. I remember the Cameroon experience was very largely positive.

Q: Well, how bad was corruption there?

WHITMAN: Corruption was very, very bad. The year I arrived, in '05, Cameroon was number one on the list. Transparency International, as you know, is based in Berlin. And they rank countries I think on mainly phony baloney criteria. It's hit or miss, but they get some accuracy. Cameroon was the most corrupt country in the world in the late '90s according to Transparency. Year after year after year. This meant that approximately one quarter of the GNP (gross national product) was being stolen and one-half of the national budget was being stolen. That's pretty dire.

When a group of American and Canadian investors came, I was chargé in the summer of '06. So investors came with 100 million dollars, offering to take the bankrupt local airline, CamAir. CamAir had been a standard-bearing forward-looking airline in the '70s and '80s, but now was a complete ruin. I think their entire holdings was one Rolls Royce engine of one airplane. Everything else was leased and owned by someone else and the airline was run on two million a month, something like that. The budget that went into that—maintaining that airline that worked so badly—75 per cent was stolen by ministers and government officials. That's pretty bad.

Q: Yeah. But I would think this would have dragged the country down.

WHITMAN: It absolutely did, Stu. And Douala, which is the natural port of that whole sub-region of that continent, Douala is the major portal towards trade and tourism and investment of the two Congos and Chad and Central African Republic and Equatorial Guinea. Douala should be and could be as important as Lagos as a portal.

These investors understood that, and the ministers—a couple of them now in prison—warmly received them and encouraged them. This was all phony. There was never any intention of allowing foreigners to actually see what was going on. The investors offered to assist CamAir to maintain the name of the country to maintain all of the staff, even the incompetent ones, or the unproductive ones. They promised to keep on the local staff, the labor situation intact, the name intact, and to assist with a 100 million dollar injection of funds.

In return, all they asked was to see the books. They weren't accusing anybody. They said, "We're not here to prosecute, but we need to know how the money has been

disappearing.” That was the end of the project. There were too many ministers with their hands in the cookie jar. And this marvelous deal would have opened up a daily nonstop flight from Atlanta to Douala. Imagine. Imagine what that would have meant for Central Africa. Never happened. The ministers, with their Cheshire cat smiles and their charms and their welcoming embrace, managed to conceal the facts. And these investors are not stupid, so the deal never happened. Tremendous tragedy for central Africa.

Q: Well, was the problem there tribalism, in other words? As I understand it, awful lot of making sure each tribe gets paid off or something? Or was this just individual people with their hands in the cookie jar?

WHITMAN: Well, you know, it’s a little of both. Patronism, absolutely. Now, the Bété tribe is Biya’s origin. There are paradoxes here. One reason Cameroon is potentially such a viable country, is that there are so many ethnic groups that no group gets a majority. Therefore, there can be no dominance as there is in Sudan with one group over the other. They’re so dispersed. And this is a very good thing in terms of a pluralistic society.

That said, ethnic groups were certainly at the table in the sense that their big men, like Biya, were robbing money. But in most cases paradoxically the money did not go to the ethnic group, it went to Biya’s friends. These were Bété but also other ethnic groups. So I would say it was patronism, big time, but ethnic rivalries not so much.

Marvelously and miraculously, Christianity, animism, and Islam in Cameroon up to this day have produced no conflict, zero conflict. Many families in Cameroon have various religions represented in the nuclear family without any friction. This is a marvelous culture. So ethnically, yes, but we must be cautious not to think of this as something like Nigeria, which sadly is not such a good story. There we have Muslims and Christians actively killing one another, attacking one another’s mosques and churches. None of this in Cameroon next door. I don’t know how to explain it. I have a feeling that this culture is collaborative. But I can’t prove it and I’m not a sociologist.

Q: Well then, probably a good place to stop. Where did you go afterwards?

WHITMAN: After Cameroon, here to the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, then back to the Africa Bureau for a final glimpse of the State Department before my retirement.

Q: OK, and that was when?

WHITMAN: Back to Washington in late ’06 after being chargé in Yaoundé for two months. First, my good fortune in joining the staff of ADST where we now sit. I was honored to come to these very walls, invited by Ambassador Ken Brown. I’m embarrassed to even say I was the executive director, it sounds so fancy, it sounds so exalted.

Q: Well --

WHITMAN: -- this was a great experience being, being here.

Q: Well, tell me Dan, the thing is we do have this job which is open for a year. Normally it's two years, but a Foreign Service Officer can actually bid on the job by being essentially seconded to the Association of Diplomatic Studies and Training, of which this oral history is part of its program. What attracted you to it?

WHITMAN: Before I bid on this position I have to admit I'd never heard of ADST. I was not familiar with FSI, I hadn't been here much. Once I saw the description of what happened here I was just thrilled. I had no idea that there was an organization and a private organization—at least legally private—to be preserving the memories of people.

You're going to try to interrupt me, but I'm going to insist on pointing out the magnitude of your work, Stu. You started in 1985. And of the 1,600 plus interviews now on the website of the Library of Congress, you've done about half of them. This is a major, major accomplishment. For those who have been through this process, all of them, through your work and the technique you've developed, they go through self-discovery, they remember things that they thought were forgotten, maybe thought were insignificant. This treasure trove, I figure it's about a quarter of a million pages, maybe more. It's an enormous resource. What attracted me? Well, the description of the job just seemed impossibly wonderful. But then it was even better than the description.

Q: Well, did you see other than the self-enlightenment that it gave to a person being interviewed, but what this could do for the Foreign Service?

WHITMAN: The Foreign Service. That's a question that should be asked of many people. I think lessons learned. Maybe this is a way of summarizing this, the value of it. When a person is going to a country to serve and has not previously been there, nowadays you have a routine of giving them a country reader, observations by predecessors. *Enormously* valuable. I never had that benefit because the country readers came later than I did to other posts. The interviews are a gold mine, in both senses. It's gold, but it's also to be mined. I know that this will be primary source material for years into the future. It's started a little bit. We have two books of recent history that acknowledge ADST very highly. The MacMillan book on Nixon and Mao, and Tim Weiner's *Legacy of Ashes*, which specifically mentions you, Charles Stuart Kennedy, in the acknowledgments.

These are enormously valuable books. Their credibility is heightened because they come from primary sources. A person cannot go around as a researcher interviewing dead people. They also cannot go around rounding up 1,600 individuals. But the printed sources make up primary material. It's magnificent. This was one part of ADST. I think this happens to everybody who comes here. I feel this is sort of a family because we're a small staff, we work collaboratively, we enjoy one another. Here I am, five years later, I feel I'm stepping into my home when I come and talk to you.

The book publishing and previously, the contracts that ADST got in order to do oral histories, the Sudan peace process, the PRTs in Iraq and Afghanistan, these contracts have pretty much dried up, I know, because of budget cuts at the U.S. Institute of Peace. I am sorry about that. The economy is what it is. The Congress had second thoughts after creating USIP. They built that beautiful building and then I think some of those who voted for it regretted it and considered zeroing it out. But you cannot zero out a building, a dazzling new building that's constructed already and across the street from the State Department. So luckily, USIP still exists, but with a truncated budget. This affects ADST, because ADST was in the good graces of USIP, I think it still is. But USIP is not flush. And neither is ADST. I ardently hope that this place has a long, long future. Whether it does or not, your collection is forever.

Q: Well, I feel that we've now got a significant, a really significant collection, so that it will be around.

WHITMAN: Absolutely. I hate to even contemplate that the economy would affect the future here. I will say that I hope the Board of Trustees begins to understand what "fundraising" is. When they use that word, they do not use it in the same way that the real world uses it. I don't know what they have in mind, but it certainly has no relation to the industry of fundraising, which is an established and accredited industry with CFREs, certified fundraising executives. CFREs have professional training, a code of ethics, and track records of success. As far as I know, no CFRE has ever been here even to visit, except one individual whom I brought and who came pro bono, offering advice. The advice was ignored.

That's my little shaming moment. Now let me also say that the books edited by Margery Thompson are a magnificent collection and I think she has some 30 titles at this point. It's incredible with so few resources what she's able to do. And there's yet another gold mine of books that have been printed with the help of this place. And finally, one of my greatest pleasures here was working with interns. Every intern I ever worked with here was inspired by being here, and in some cases had an afternoon at your daughter's farm in Virginia on a sunny spring day or fall day. And this is just a magnificent place. It should admit to the world that it has needs, financial needs, that nobody is paying attention to. I hope this will become more known. Because this place deserves to be here forever.

Now, the studies for USIP, that's what I was involved with mostly when I was working here.

Q: You might explain what USIP is and what the studies were.

WHITMAN: Sure. The U.S. Institute of Peace, created by the Congress, is one of the few think tanks—I can think of one other—funded by the U.S. Congress. As its name implies, it seeks ways of maintaining or establishing peace in troubled areas in the world. It's a great organization. Now that I teach, and I take my students there all the time. We hear

discussions about Afghanistan and Syria and the Arab Spring. These are very enlightening programs. Their publications, likewise.

Some have argued that USIP should not exist because this town is full of think tanks. And why should there be yet another funded by the taxpayer? That question has come up. The great Colman McCarthy, once Sargent Shriver's deputy, wrote an op-ed to that effect. I don't have any dispute with Colman McCarthy, but I see there's some institutional frailty. What if the Congress were ever to stop funding USIP? USIP is a gathering point for civilians, military, people from other countries, and people from the U.S. of course, from academia, from the State Department, from the whole foreign affairs community, looking at how to approach in a systematic way peacemaking. And they have a magnificent series called *The Peacemaker's Toolkit*. This is a series of short books on the tools a person needs in order to mediate or be the arbiter in a conflict. So this is conflict resolution. I don't know if conflict resolution is possible. I've seen it fail in various places. I don't know if a methodology can really exist. But this is state of the art in that field.

Now, USIP had the money some years ago to have ADST do oral histories for it, for USIP, so as to learn from direct observers, from witnesses to these things. The Comprehensive Peace Accords in Sudan in 2004, that's the one that I worked on. ADST has also done an analysis of provincial reconstruction team structures in Iraq and Afghanistan, which merged civilian and military under military rule, but using civilians. A kind of adventurous new model of how to deal with a post-conflict situation. Sure, it's worth looking backwards to see what happened, how it happened, how it could have been done more effectively, and where it did not work to find out where it did not. These are valuable lessons. I don't know if anybody reads this material, but there it is. It's like your Oral History collection. It's there, and it's for those who have the time and the interest in looking at these things. There it is.

Now, these \$100,000 grants were coming from USIP to ADST. And frankly, helping ADST to survive. There was almost no overhead, maybe none, in those grants. But it kept ADST in a relatively secure situation for four or five years. Well, those days are over. USIP loves us, but they don't have money. These remain very valuable studies.

For what it's worth in my own personal learning, I did many of the interviews for the Sudan CPA. And my gosh, I met the Sudanese diaspora in this area, I spoke to Norwegian diplomats on the phone. I really got a sense of that remarkable achievement. This was perhaps the greatest Bush Junior achievement in foreign policy, the CPA. This was brought to him by the Christian right in the United States, because of their concern of victimized Christians in the southern part of Sudan. So there was a reason why George Bush was taken into this endeavor. That said, once he decided to get into it, it worked. It wasn't perfect because there were spoilers, there were people not in the negotiations who should have been. The signers of that CPA, February 2004 were not all people who had authority in the conflict. But anyway, the thing was signed. And, by the way, it was implemented.

The CPA called for elections in Sudan; the elections took place. Called for a referendum in the southern part of the country, so that the population in the south could make their own decision about whether to stay in the country or not. They voted two summers ago unequivocally, something like 95% voted to separate. We have a new country, South Sudan. This is a fascinating history. Of the many horrible, destructive wars, the North-South Sudan war had an intolerable number of victims. It lasted 30 years. There were flare-ups last summer, summer of 2012, on the border. And yet, there they are. They're not an enormously happy country, but it does have some potential. And the fighting is mainly over. It's a marvelous story of how an intractable conflict can be at least halted. Not reconciled, but halted.

I personally feel very grounded in the history of that 2004 period, because I was assigned to organize the oral histories. This was very enriching to me. I hope that this collection gets a lot of notice. The interviews are posted on the USIP website, but they're posted anonymously for legal reasons. I think that's unfortunate, but I understand why it has to be without names, for legal reasons.

Speaking of legal issues, when I was executive director here I approached C-SPAN and the public radio in New York City. Both of them were enormously eager to have the audio material from our vast archives. Unfortunately, imagined legal issues came up having to do with inadvertent libel and defamation and what somebody could have said, versus what they might have more correctly put in their edited transcript of what they had said.

Again, I hope these legal questions about use of audio can be put to rest, because your audio recordings are very much in demand by radio, topnotch professional radio organizations. If they can play, as they do every week, tapes of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon saying things in their office, these are fascinating things for the public to hear. Surely there must be a way of splicing the audios that you have and making available for broadcast these fascinating moments. There's nothing like an audio. It's one thing to read a written document, but the sense of having a person present, that you get with audio, will create an enormous audience. I know it will. I really hope that the lawyer is working on this.

Q: It's something we should keep pushing on to bring up. Well --

WHITMAN: I'll take credit for one achievement --

Q: All right.

WHITMAN: -- in my stay at ADST. I believe I ruined your 80th birthday, sir. I gave you a digital recorder.

Q: Absolutely.

WHITMAN: And you did not appreciate it. And you called me the next Monday and you said I had ruined your weekend. And I know that you said this with loving irony, because from that moment on, ADST went digital. It never would've done so, Stu --

Q: It wouldn't have.

WHITMAN: -- if you had not taken it on yourself.

Q: You have full credit for this.

WHITMAN: Well no, you did it. All I did was ruin your weekend.

Q: No, I just got an email from my colleague, Malcolm McBain, who has been running the British Diplomatic Oral History Program. And he's complaining about the shortage of tapes.

WHITMAN: *(laughs)*

Q: I wrote him. I emailed him a long time ago about digital, and I'm getting ready to do it again. Because the digital recorder is, one, easier to transport. And, two, it can plug directly into a computer so you can send the sound of our dulcet voices to Indonesia where --

WHITMAN: Or somebody who has time to listen.

Q: -- where somebody has time to listen, yes.

WHITMAN: As with all major innovations, one must go for the lowest common denominator, that would be me. When I got a digital recorder, and I am the dumbest person on earth, when I figured out that I could use it, then I thought maybe anybody could.

Q: Well, it --

WHITMAN: So you're agreeing that I am the dumbest person.

Q: Well, yeah, that goes without saying.

WHITMAN: That goes without saying, OK.

Q: OK. You were here what, two years?

WHITMAN: I was here less than two years. It would have been '06, '07, something like that. And what more can I say? Obviously I'm very fond of this place. The books, the opportunities for interns, which by the way was key in my later work. The interns collate

the data in the oral histories, and make them into country readers and thematic cross referencing.

Now I teach. Students are a whole other part of experience. To be passing on what you and I have learned to people who want to know it. Those would be undergraduates. I work with undergraduates now and it's, *oof*, a huge discovery. That was directly derived from my work with these wonderful interns in this place. They loved it here, and I did too. We discovered some good Korean restaurants, I believe. We had an older friend who showed us the way through this labyrinth of magnificent restaurants in Northern Virginia.

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: We knew where the good places were. I believe that was you, actually.

Q: OK. Let's move on.

WHITMAN: From there, now we get to the Africa Bureau, the final chapter of what I did at State. As you say, I was seconded here. I think it's the only thing I ever did that was seconded. And we all dream of these kinds of sabbatical assignments. This was not a sabbatical; it was great, intense work.

Then I moved to be the deputy director--this time in name—of the Africa Bureau's Office of Public Diplomacy. I had done that work before, but only as a fill-in for the late Bob Dance. Now, I was Claudia Anyaso's deputy. Claudia had been PAO in Nigeria, in Abuja. I had met her, didn't know her all that well until we worked together. We arrived at about the same time. I guess it was summer of '07. And you know, it was almost scary. Claudia and I, thinking independently and mulling through administrative and policy issues and then comparing notes as we had to do, during busy days, working in our own little corner and then conferring, we almost never found any disagreement between us. It was almost scary. We were sort of clones. It was a marvelous relationship.

This may seem arcane, but Claudia and I agreed that it would be counterproductive for desk officers in our office to be actually physically placed, merged in the bureau across the street. And this became sort of an issue. It became an IG (inspector general) issue actually. I still believe that desk officers who tend to be junior or mid-level officers are best served by being physically in the office that they report to. The idea of having them removed physically from the PD office and put in the geographic office across the street, I understand that it's good for communication in that sense. However, Claudia and I agreed very much that this does not serve for the training and the experiential advancement of people who may have never had a tour in PD.

Q: PD being public diplomacy.

WHITMAN: Public diplomacy. A candidate comes in as a PD officer, but 100 per cent of the time now, as not before, they all go out to do consular tours for one, two, or even three initial tours. Now, nothing wrong with consular, but this is a holding pattern for

someone who has declared and been accepted to be an officer in a different cone. So if they've been out for, let's say two tours as a consular officer, come back to Washington, they've had zero, *zero* experience in their own field. So it would be logical to have them mentored by people more senior, people who've had some experience in public diplomacy, rather than being submerged in these geographic offices.

Every geographic bureau except AF had done that merging. Claudia and I agreed to resist. We knew that history was going to make this happen. And it has happened since. And occasionally you get the junior midlevel officer who thrives—I can think of a few examples—who do very well by being physically away from their office and in the other. However, we decided that structurally we would resist as long as possible and keep the office intact. Every other geographic office had changed that procedure. So we were the holdouts. Well, we had a marvelously harmonious relationship. We agreed on that. We agreed on a lot of things. AFRICOM (United States Africa Command) had just been set up dearlier the same year. But AFRICOM had had growing pains --

Q: AFRICOM being --

WHITMAN: The Africa Command of DoD. The African continent had been administratively part of EUCOM (United States European Command) prior to the creation of this office. Now, again, this is arcane. You've got the same people in the same place, Stuttgart, looking at the same issues, Africa. All you're doing is changing the name of that structure and now calling it AFRICOM. Well, the fatal mistake AFRICOM made was never to explain to the world what they were doing. Paranoia set in immediately in Africa. The universal reaction was, "This is bad. The Americans are going to colonize us. They're going to militarize their policy. We're going to see soldiers instead of AID officials." There as a very negative reaction.

AFRICOM was a group of dedicated, very effective military officials mixed with some civilians. But the very creation of that name really gave the jitters to heads of state in Africa. I think in one case the four-star actually flew to one major country in Africa and was not invited to meet any officials. He was allowed off the plane, but he was given the cold shoulder by all officials from this major country. So the PD people were there to help.

We understood that AFRICOM had made a mistake in failing to explain what they were about. So simply a change of name, nothing much else. But we tried to assist them in making the publics and the foreign governments understand that this, this was not a hostile thing, it was not a takeover. I'm afraid the distrust remains. And a lot of people say, "Why should it have been Stuttgart? Is that a place in Africa?" The reason it's not in Africa is that no country has been willing to have it, with the single exception of Liberia. I believe the only DoD command center which is actually physically in the area that it works with, is EUCOM, which is in Stuttgart. Now, that makes sense. But the Western Hemisphere Office is in Miami, and so forth. Why should AFRICOM be in a place called Stuttgart?

I was sent by my boss to a meeting, a very friendly discussion between AFRICOM officials and public affairs officers, my colleagues from the Sahel countries in Africa. We were very graciously welcomed and there was a nice dialogue. I had thought gee, is there something we can do to come to a mutual understanding internally, bureaucratically? Because to the outside world we are just the U.S. government. On the inside, the military vocabulary and procedures were quite different from what we had in the State Department and especially in public diplomacy. And there was an awkward overlap between open transparent public diplomacy, which is what we were doing, and psychological operations. They call it now MISO, Military Information Support Operations. Whatever you call it, there is a clandestine side to the military in trying to change, shift public opinion. They have websites that are not openly attributed to them. The agenda is not clear.

Well, the public diplomacy people that week in Stuttgart were very warmly welcomed. We were listened to. We listened to them. These were meetings conducted in great, good spirit. Unfortunately, there was a moment towards the end of that conference when there was an issue having to do with PsyOps (psychological operations) where we were asked our opinion of this. As a group we were uncomfortable with the U.S. government using public diplomacy as a way to convey non-transparent efforts to sway the public. We were not comfortable with this. And we nicely and cordially said so, and that was the end of the meeting. The DOD contractor said, "Why are you dragging us down in this trivia?" And that was that.

There really was no possibility of working together. We had nice meals. On a one-to-one basis we were all very friendly. But we really did come to an impasse. And I wish AFRICOM well, I think they're great people. I was Kip Ward's host when he came to Yaoundé, because I was chargé there at that time. He's a wonderful person; he's been replaced by Carter Ham, whom I've never met. He's a great public servant, great military people.

Their approach to dealing with public attitudes about us is really very different from ours. And it would be good if these could somehow merge somehow. Nobody's trying to be obstructionist, neither them nor us. But there is a different way of doing things. And there really should be some way of overcoming these differences. Many have tried. It's the bureaucracy I think. I think it's not individuals, but AFRICOM has been overwhelmed bureaucratically by staffing its positions in Stuttgart, in absorbing civilians and making the best use of them. This has not been a great success. I'm sure that they will do better. And they have to. Because Africa likes us. They tend to be skeptical of anybody's military. Ours is there to assist them in combating terrorism and strengthening regional instability. To us, it makes perfect sense. But this needs to be explained to Africans better. So that was one thing during my tour.

Claudia Anyaso has a much more thorough grounding than I do in the military side. She was great and very effective. She went to DoD all the time. I had different tasks. And I think Claudia did make some progress, at least on the Washington level. She certainly

established a presence. And I think she had the ears and the respect of her counterparts at DoD.

My main task was staffing. I wanted to mention something called corridor reputation, which I see as an extremely negative part of our culture. It's basically rumors and gossip about people behind their back. Once a person has the negative corridor reputation it's as if they had committed a felony, or primal sin of some sort. And they become tagged for life, for their careers. When something malicious has been said about one of our colleagues, it's impossible to unsay what has been said. I have very strong feelings that this, this is unethical. It's wrong. It's counterproductive. And by the way, about half the time or more, it's completely incorrect, inaccurate. What people say about their colleagues behind their backs too many times is absolutely false. And by the way, malicious, puerile, and really obstructs the mission of the State Department. I wish it would stop. In my office I received people who carried around this sort of target on their backs and who knew it. They had suffered from people gossiping about them.

I'm thinking of one case where a fellow came in, I'd never met him. He said, "I'm looking for a position in Africa."

I said, "Let's talk. Give me your CV. I'll send it to the DCM in the country you want to go to." And the individual was stunned because no one else would talk to him. He'd been to the other geographic areas and they wouldn't even converse with him. And I thought, "What is this about?"

I asked, "Are you an eligible bidder and is this post of interest? That's all I need to know. I don't need to know what's been said about you and why you left your previous post. If you want to tell me, that's fine. But I want to know what's on the record. Did you perform your duties? I don't need to see your evaluations, but does the personnel system define you as an eligible bidder? If so, let's talk."

And I remember the individual became kind of emotional. He felt I was doing him a great favor. What does this say about our system? No one else would talk to this person?

I remember being ridiculed about this by my colleagues in other geographic areas. "You're taking so and so?" They found this very funny. I did not. At one of our weekly brown bag lunches, I said to them, "Look, there's some good ones and bad ones in our system. We all have to share them. I think this individual seems to be just fine. But if he's not, the next time a turkey comes along, it will be your turn, because I took this one."

Now, a deputy director doesn't have the authority to hire someone. He just has the authority to pass the message on to higher officials. That would be the DCM at post, that would be HR. It would be the Bureau. In this case, the individual went to the post, was extremely successful, loved the country. The ambassador and the DCM loved him. And I submit this as an exhibit of why corridor reputation should be disdained, eliminated really. There have been some issues in the past. I mean, who doesn't have a past? I think people are very, very unfairly judged and never have a chance to defend themselves. This

is like a court trial with no habeas corpus and no possibility of submitting a defense. I think our system needs to have a hard look at that.

I found the placement of individuals in Africa an extremely gratifying activity. I think maybe with one or two exceptions, almost everybody that I assisted in going to post in PD positions flourished, they had a great time, they were appreciated by their colleagues. They grew professionally, they went on to bigger things. Because many of our posts are small posts. I almost never had a case where I thought someone was treated unfairly or not utilized to their full potential. And I had the full backing of Claudia Anyaso, my boss.

Q: How did you find—because it was still early days—the integration of the former USIA into the State Department as it pertained to Africa?

WHITMAN: Well, integration was 1999, October 1st. So that was eight years earlier. And even in a slow bureaucracy, the thing is pretty much settled by that time. There have been losses to our mission in Africa because our resources don't come to us, they go to an entity known as R, which is not a bureau, it's not an office, it's just R, named after the good Rick Ruth. Again, fine people. But the flow of money does not come through the PD area office, nor does the evaluation of officers in the field. So those are two major changes. It's been pretty collegial. There's never been a severe test of whether the PD Office would get its way in distributing resources to the field, because R has been quite cooperative. But conceivably, some day could come when R had some policy changes that would go contrary to the beliefs and wishes of the PD office. And in that case, the authority is very clear. PD loses and R is the source of funding. That hasn't been an issue, but it could be at some point.

Losing the direct chain of command also means we have no way of weighing in on the evaluation so officers in the field. Those are done by their good colleagues who are ConGens or DCMs or what have you, locally. Nothing wrong with that. But it does sever the link between the officer in the field and the PD Office in Washington. If we are not the source of money and if we are not the source of evaluations, why should they listen to us? Again, cordiality, collegiality has prevailed. It's not as if the work has been taken away, but the authority has been, to some extent. It's a bit unfortunate. But we've survived and I think we've reinvented the whole thing as the system has dictated. We've gotten through I think quite well actually. And our relations with the front office in AF have been good, very good. It's just that we're across the street. So the contact is not as much as it could be.

Bruce Wharton, when he replaced Claudia Anyaso, took that on as his first objective, to make that relationship closer. He did so, he did it very ably, and now he's ambassador in Zimbabwe. He's a great friend and a great officer.

Q: Well then, you left that when?

WHITMAN: Well, I left in summer of '09. And here, let me just mention how that happened. I reached a TIC, I was an OC with seven years, whatever the circumstances were. But HR gave me the formal notice that I was TIC-ed out as of the summer.

Q: TIC means "time in class."

WHITMAN: Time in class. And this happens to people. It's not a judgment of a person. It's just the way things happen.

It happened to Jack Zetkusic before me (*laughs*), because he was promoted too quickly and reached the senior level earlier than he meant to and the math of it is kind of a shell game. You could say that people in their prime should be permitted to stay. But I'm not going to take on that issue.

However, the letter came. I said OK, well, fair enough. I've had 25, 26 wonderful years. I'm still eager to get out there and do things. Life will go on. And then, during that summer, President Obama decided to visit Accra. Well, that visit took place in August of '09. Normally I would have been in the retirement center learning how to live after retirement. This is a nice thing the State Department does for its employees. Those who've had that course say it's the best thing they ever did. I didn't get it for the following reason. Summertime, changeover, vacations, people moving.

We found that there had been a hemorrhage of PD officers in the field and that we weren't really ready to properly cover the presidential visit to Ghana without some shuffling around of people coming from neighboring countries, even geographic areas in some cases. This is Obama's only POTUS visit to Africa to date. Everyone says the president may go in 2013, but 2009 was his one and only visit to Sub-Saharan Africa to date. He made a speech in Accra praising the country for having three peaceful changes and succession of presidents. And he wanted to make that point. It's a powerful point.

Now, a high-ranking person in my bureau called me and said, "Dan, would you be willing to stay on the job to make sure this happens properly?" I did not like this individual. He actually had trashed us in an OIG [Office of the Inspector General] report, and I didn't appreciate it because I think most of his judgments were inaccurate, were basically libelous. I mean the claims made by a very hostile IG report were very damaging to that office, and this individual had been the source of it.

Well, I thought about it and then the answer came to me very clearly, "For my president and for my area, I will do this. I will stay on the job. Certainly not for the front office of my bureau that has directed the IG to trash us in its report of that year." And this was not the assistant secretary, it was someone else. I decided to do it, I stayed on the job.

I think the POTUS was received marvelously well in Accra. It wasn't my doing, but at least I helped organize the proper staffing of that visit. Again, I did it for my president and for Africa. And I was happy to do it. I did, however, never get the opportunity to take the retirement course. Apparently I have survived even so.

Q: And so you retired when?

WHITMAN: Summer of '09.

Q: And then?

WHITMAN: And then seamlessly, *seamlessly* I went over to American University to teach. Again, this was a direct link from having dealt with interns in this office, in ADST, many of the interns came from American University. To me, AU was an unknown entity down the street from where I live, one mile from my house. I didn't know anything about the place. I had called them a few times, but I found them unapproachable.

Well, some of them called me and said, "You're retiring? We need someone to teach freshman in something called the mentorship program, which is a way station for freshman who come to AU on a provisional basis, just to try things out."

The mentorship program involves an internship, I was familiar with that. It involves a course on cross-cultural communications. I guess I'd been doing that for 40 years. So I was honored to be involved in that. This was a whole discovery, dealing with young people. I'm thinking now, the ones I run into now. It's now 2013, and I occasionally see those who were freshman that year, 2009. And they've gone on to do great things. One of them is going to take care of orphans in Nicaragua. Another one is running his father's tequila business in Mexico. These are really remarkable young people.

I want to give some comments about academia. There are some ominous things happening in academia. But the opportunity. You know, people languish when they retire or they say if you become inactive, that's a bad thing. I never had the opportunity even to know what that's like to be inactive, because I went directly, with less than a week of interim from State to AU. It was a marvelous experience, with great students. That was a one semester experience.

The spring semester left me free, but with the financial help of this association, I went to South Africa. I conducted interviews with South African recipients of U.S. government grants during the apartheid period.

This is now a book. I was pretty busy that spring working on that. So again there wasn't much leisure time. And marvelous: a book! A book! Based on the techniques that I've learned from Stu Kennedy on how to interview. These were shorter interviews, because I was focusing only on one aspect, which was the effect that exchange visits to the U.S. had on South Africans. Included on these interviews are American diplomats who were there during those times and South African locally-employed staff. When you put the whole picture together, it's an enormous success. This quiet development of people excluded from a society, who later, a *short* time later, were the *leaders* of the society and were strengthened by their experiences in the U.S., whether International Visitors program, Fulbright, Humphrey, AFGrad grants.

There were many programs that were below the radar. The apartheid regime didn't like this one bit. But they stopped short of complete break. There was brinkmanship. And the marvels done by the people in the U.S. embassy and in their consulates, it's incredible that they were able to get thousands of people exit visas. Because in the '60s and '70s South Africa and the Soviet Union had some similarities. The regime watching very closely, sometimes sitting on the park bench across listening, overhearing conversations. They were very reluctant to let majority population citizens leave the country. Because God forbid, they might learn something and they might gain some confidence in themselves. Which they did, when they came to the U.S. So it's a wonderful story called "Outsmarting Apartheid," coming to a theater near you by this summer I hope.

The past six semesters I've been teaching something called "foreign policy" to juniors, also at American University. Also a marvelous experience. These motivated young people come from Korea and Norway and Colombia and Honduras and France and Germany and Sweden. A slight majority of them are Americans. And oh, we have fun. Last week we met John Kerry, who stopped in on a session that we were attending at Main State. We were not prepared for this. He just walked in and spent 15 minutes with us.

The previous week, John McCain. I'm not trying to drop names here, because we don't go for the famous people. The idea is to give a broad background to anyone who has some interest in foreign affairs. That does not mean that they're grooming themselves to be diplomats. They could be private sector or NGOs or humanitarian aid organizations. So this is a very, very satisfying activity. As we get to the end of this discussion I have to put in a negative note. I'll try to think of a positive one later.

The pricing of undergraduate experiences in the United States is out of control. We know that. There's nothing original in what I'm saying, it's in the newspaper every day. As the purchasing power of the American middle class goes down in real terms, the private colleges *and the public* universities go up in price much faster than inflation. This is a perilous path. And it will lead without any doubt to extreme dislocation on the part of tertiary institutions. They tend to raise money. Instead of using that money to bring the tuition to reasonable amounts, they take more money and build needless buildings. This is not a commentary on AU in particular. I just see it happening everywhere.

Q: The "Edifice Complex."

WHITMAN: Right. Hunger Walls. We have 3,000 tertiary institutions in the U.S. If they do not wake up and see that they're pricing themselves out of the business, especially with the alternative, which is now fully here—MOOCs, massive open online courses—which cost a few hundred dollars as opposed to 50 or 60,000 dollars. This is a no brainer for a lower middle class American family with several children who want to have educations. They cannot pay \$60,000. Universities are in a pinch. When they have endowments—and many of them do not have them—they use the endowment in some cases to help students pay those huge fees. But in too many other cases, they use the

endowments for other purposes, for prestigious big buildings, where the university did just fine thank you with the previous already very impressive physical plant they have. I don't have to say this. It's all over the newspapers. It's all over the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. The American Council of Education has now, last week, officially recommended that MOOCs be considered for academic credit in credit-giving institutions. I hope that the administrators of universities wake up to this and see. It's just so clear. They must bring tuition into reasonable amounts or they will be abandoned.

Q: Well, they've got a problem in that they are turning out graduates, a significant number of them need jobs within the universities. It's the self-creation of a problem.

WHITMAN: Absolutely. And we all know that there's one trillion dollars of debt among students who've graduated. They take this debt with them their whole lives. You and I did not have this issue. We were lucky in that sense. The world was crazy in the '40s, '50s, and '60s, but at least it wasn't crazy in this manner.

Q: I took my GI insurance on getting out of the military, cashed it in, and I paid for my debt.

WHITMAN: Well, you see. You see.

Q: No big deal.

WHITMAN: And I came out of my BA with no debt, and I broke even on my graduate studies. It wasn't much, but I didn't have to pay tuition. I got tuition plus a trifle, and that's all I needed. With my taxi driving it was fine. This is no longer possible. I'm very concerned about people I know. A 36-year-old lawyer who cannot go into the Peace Corps because her debt will never cease. And she cannot afford the change. The debt keeps going whether you're employed or not.

Q: Yeah.

WHITMAN: You must pay. And this is a brilliant lawyer who wants to do something outside of her field, wants to go into the Peace Corps. Big uphill battle because of the debt that's around her neck. This has to be corrected. There are other Anglophone countries, you know. There's Australia, South Africa, UK, Canada. If a student from overseas wants a good education in an Anglophone country, it need not be the U.S.

That said, what a discovery to work with these young people, to understand their vast potential. Boy, are they smart. They know things that I certainly didn't have a clue of at their age. I try not to discuss this, because I think students should be given an experience, period. But I think that the only advantage I have over them is my 40 years in this business. I don't think I'm a better analyst, a better learner, a better listener than my students are. The only difference is that I've been doing it longer. I don't do the fake humility thing with them, but I truly don't have to fake it when I say I respect them. They just have to fill in a few gaps. I try to provide that with our many visits in the different

branches of government and the NGOs and the think tanks and the embassies. We read some theory. I hope this goes on forever. I don't know if the prices are sustainable, but we live in the present and I'm having a great time.

Q: OK, well I thank you.

WHITMAN: Thank *you*, sir.

End of interview