

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

ANN VAN DUSEN

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Interview Dates: October 2017
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This oral history transcription was made possible through support provided by U.S. Agency for International Development, under terms of Cooperative Agreement No. AID-OAA-F-16-00101. The opinions expressed herein are those of the interviewee and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training.

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INTERVIEW

Q: Let's start with your early years. Where were you born and what did your parents do?

Early years

VAN DUSEN: I was born at the end of World War II, just before the baby boom officially began. My father's family were pacifists, and my father and his brothers all did alternative service during World War II. I was born in Philadelphia, where my father did his alternative service at Byberry Mental Hospital while working on his MA in Sociology

at the University of Pennsylvania. We moved to Newark, Delaware before I was two years old; my father taught and worked on his PhD in sociology/criminology and my mother pursued a Masters in Psychology.

Q: What were your parent's names?

VAN DUSEN: My parents were Lincoln and Margaret (Peg) Armstrong. My mother's parents came to the US from England just before World War I. I remember my maternal grandfather saying that he had heard that the streets in the US were paved with gold, and as someone with no prospects in England, that sounded pretty good to him! I was the oldest of 4 children, and since our family moved often from university to university, our family was thrown together a lot and my siblings and I were quite close. We lived for 5 years in Newark, Delaware, one year in Seattle, 5 years in Beirut, Lebanon, 1 year in Princeton, New Jersey – all before I reached 9th grade. Our years in Beirut were some of the happiest, though they were tumultuous in terms of what was happening in the Middle East. But Beirut was “safe” for Americans then, weekends were spent exploring antiquities, skiing in the mountains or swimming at the beach (what's not to like?!) and we children were allowed to wander alone in Beirut wherever the trolley car would take us. Thinking back on it, I wonder what my parents could possibly have been thinking to give us such freedom at such an early age! As the oldest, I know I felt enormous responsibility for my siblings. We learned only pidgin Arabic while in Beirut, but I have been told that my Arabic (which I only studied formally in graduate school) still has a hint of Lebanese in it.

After Princeton, my parents must have realized that there were 4 children who would soon be requiring college tuitions, and my father switched careers to international marketing and my mother to school psychology. We lived in Tarrytown New York (a suburb of NYC) for 3 years, and I became very involved in Quaker work camps and anti-war activism. My grandmother, Eunice Armstrong, was an important force in my life. She had been a suffragette, was a college graduate (class of '08), a lay psychoanalyst and playwright, and had correspondence with everyone from Eleanor Roosevelt to Coretta Scott King. She was deeply involved in anti-war and civil rights activity, and actually offered to cover my costs if I wanted to drop out of high school and go work on voter registration in the south in 1961. My parents were not amused, and I did not go! But I did think of myself as a rebel, though it was all pretty tame stuff – refusing to climb under the desk during nuclear air raid drills or, once or twice, refusing to pledge allegiance to the flag. My reading list included all the progressive classics – The Ugly American, On the Beach, Ionesco's The Rhinoceros – you get the picture.

My parents moved to Akron Ohio in 1962 just before my senior year of high school, and I was given the choice of applying to college after my junior year or moving to Ohio. I chose the latter, and encountered a culture that was every bit as exotic to me as was Beirut Lebanon.

Q: What do you mean about Ohio's culture? And that is a very interesting childhood – it is little wonder that you became involved with the career and issues we know have

dominated your life. Do you think back on your parents' interests and your own experiences before college as having a great impact on your subsequent life choices?

VAN DUSEN: Ohio in 1962 felt like a throw-back to an earlier, simpler time. People didn't talk about disarmament, civil rights or Vietnam. High school girls had bridge parties. The Friday night football games and proms were BIG DEALS. To be clear – I wasn't unhappy about the move and enjoyed a year which was much more focused on social than academic growth. I joined clubs, worked on the yearbook, learned to drive, and studied Russian at Kent State University.

Did my parents' interests influence my own? I suppose the travel, and especially the years overseas, predisposed me to an international career. But I always assumed I would go into the diplomatic service...not that I knew much about it. I know that I resisted studying sociology (my father's field) and psychology (my mother's) until I got fed up with political science and international relations in graduate school. I was fascinated by the Soviet Union, and started studying Russian in 10th grade (in the post-Sputnik era many public high schools began offering Russian). Being able to continue Russian in college was a factor in my college choices.

College and graduate school

I attended Wellesley College (Class of 1967) , majoring in Political Science with a thesis on Soviet policy in the Middle East. I loved languages, and spent two years on the Russian corridor and one year on the French corridor – special dorms where we promised to try to speak only the designated language. I did an honors thesis on President Nasser (Egypt), and independent studies on politics in Indonesia, Sudan and on the Karen tribe of Burma – so I guess I was already showing my interest in the developing world.

Q: What other activities engaged your interest at Wellesley?

VAN DUSEN: I also joined a small group to open the first coffee house on campus, where occasionally we would have music or readings, though it was mainly a place to have bad coffee and enormous pastries. Wellesley was not particularly political in those days, and I think I was the only one from Wellesley who participated in an anti-Vietnam War rally in Washington in 1966. The mid-sixties were an interesting time for women's colleges, many of which decided to go co-ed, which Wellesley did not. My class was definitely transitional – many women went directly on to graduate school or careers and started families much later, and as many married early, had children, and joined the work force only later.

I knew I wanted to continue studying the Middle East, and I went directly to Johns Hopkins SAIS after Wellesley, majoring in Middle East studies. I suppose I still had the intention of joining the US foreign service but (1) I was deeply troubled by US engagement in Vietnam, and (2) the State Department was not hiring. I also met my husband, Mike Van Dusen, who was a year ahead of me in the Middle East studies program, and we married at the beginning of my second year.

Washington was a fascinating place for a political junkie like me, and some of my dearest friends to this day are those I met in graduate school. I studied Arabic for a summer (1968) in Cairo, worked at the Middle East Institute and the American Society for International Law, and raised money for Palestinian refugees. But I also found myself less interested in the way international relations was being taught, which seemed to ignore the social and economic forces shaping political events. When I graduated from SAIS in 1969, I really wasn't thinking about further graduate work.

As I mentioned, my husband and I were part of the SAIS Middle East crowd. While I was finishing my master's he continued on for a PhD at SAIS, and after I graduated (1969) we moved to Lebanon where I had lived and where he had studied Arabic during his college years. He gathered material for his dissertation on the Syrian military while I worked at AUB (the American University of Beirut) on a research project on social change in Lebanese families in a community near Beirut. This was 1969-70, about 4 years before the beginning of the Lebanese civil war, and although the sectarian tensions were evident, Beirut was still a fun and vibrant place to be.

The sociological survey material I was working with was a revelation, and I quickly decided that I wanted to continue my graduate work in sociology, and to study the changing role of women in the Arab world. So after a year in Beirut, we returned to Washington in 1970. I enrolled in a PhD program at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, and my husband wrote and defended his dissertation and then began working on Middle East issues for the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

The Hopkins doctoral program in which I enrolled was called Social Relations (Harvard and Hopkins were the only universities offering such a degree at the time) and it combined sociology, social psychology and social anthropology. I loved it. It was quite quantitative and very analytical, and the godfather of network analysis (Jim Coleman) was on the faculty, as were Peter Rossi, Neville Dyson-Hudson, and a number of other luminaries. I decided I wanted to try to apply some of the techniques that sociologists have used for studying communities in the US – specifically survey research and network analysis, to a foreign setting. I was able to secure research funding from NIMH to return to Beirut in 1972 to work in the same community I had encountered while working at AUB. My research focused on social networks among women in an religiously diverse neighborhood near Beirut. I completed my doctorate in 1973.

Q: Did Mike go back with you? What was the title of your dissertation – and was it published? What were the most significant findings of your research – and have you found them useful in your career's work?

VAN DUSEN: Because my husband was already in a job on the Hill that he loved, working with Congressman Lee Hamilton, whom he greatly admired, he did not accompany me when I went back to Lebanon to undertake my research. The title of my dissertation was Social Change and Decision-Making: Family Planning in Lebanon. It was never published as such, although I drew from it for several articles that were

published subsequently. I wanted to know how women in a small community outside Beirut got information about health and family planning, their attitudes about their lives and life chances, and who influenced their opinions and behaviors both inside and outside their family. It was a community that was equally divided between Maronite Christians and Shi'a Muslims, and one finding from my network analysis was that there was almost no overlap in friendship or even communications between the two groups – even when they lived in the same building. If you wanted to get information to a Muslim woman, you had to do it through her Muslim neighbors. Ditto for the Christians. It seems rather “duh” now, but this was early days for KAP (Knowledge, Attitude, Practice) studies, and the data were good enough to please both my very quantitative sociology advisor (Mark Granovetter) and my social anthropology advisor (Neville Dyson-Hudson). I graduated with a PhD in 1973.

Pre-USAID employment

I had thought about teaching (as does almost everyone who completes a doctorate) but it didn't excite me. I looked at a job at the UN in New York, but was not interested in commuting from DC. The AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science) had just given SSRC (Social Science Research Council) funding to launch a Center in Washington to focus on the study of social indicators, and although it had nothing to do with women, the Middle East or even international relations, I was intrigued and signed on.

The use of social indicator is well understood today, but in the early 1970s it was a new field. Jim Grant, former USAID Mission Director and at the time President of the Overseas Development Council, was promoting the idea of PQLI (Physical Quality of Life Indicators). PQLI was an attempt to assess quickly the quality of life in a country by looking at three indicators: literacy, infant mortality, and life expectancy. Data were often missing and more often suspect, but focusing on social indicators helped fuel policy conversations at a time when there was a great deal of dissatisfaction with the ad hoc nature of US domestic policies on a host of issues ranging from crime to welfare. While the SSRC assignment may seem a bit of a diversion, as I think about my career, the use of social and other indicators to set goals and measure progress has been a theme throughout – whether it is trying to tell the story of child survival or trying to measure the organizational strength of Save the Children. I will come back to that!

Working at SSRC in Washington in the early- to mid-1970s gave me a chance to get involved in a number of other issues. It was a heady time! Following the passage of the Percy (Women in Development) amendment in 1973, there was a great deal of interest in the situation of women around the world and how programming might be better targeted to improve women's lives and life chances. Several colleagues and I thought that there was a need for an organization which could gather and disseminate research on the role of women and together we founded the International Center for Research on Women, which is going strong today. I also joined the Board of Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington, and got my first taste of NGO work (of which, much more came later). I became involved in the Society for International Development and headed,

for a brief time, its working group on women in development. I also wrote and published on a wide range of sometimes esoteric subjects, as was the imperative when working at an organization like SSRC.

Q: Those several years while you were at the SSRC were clearly very busy – and creative. What were some of these esoteric subjects? And were you also producing children at the same time? How did you cope?

VAN DUSEN: I blush when I think of these articles, but they carried such titles as “Problems of Measurement in Areas of Social Concern,” “Basic background Items for US Household Surveys,” and “The Changing Status of American Women: A Life Cycle Perspective.” Our first child was born in 1974, and life became even more interesting and busy! We inherited a babysitter from friends who were moving overseas with the Washington Post, and the babysitter made it possible for me to continue working, as I was determined to do.

Joining USAID: Near East Bureau

In 1976, the wife of a colleague at SSRC mentioned that USAID was looking for social scientists with first-hand experience in areas where USAID was programming, and I was introduced to David Steinberg who, indeed, was recruiting social scientists for the Near East Bureau. Although as I recall we talked almost entirely about Burma (an area he knew well), he did offer me first a short-term assignment (WAE – when actually employed) and then brought me in (along with Peter Benedict and John Blackton) as a Social Science Analyst in the Near East Bureau’s Office of Technical Support.

One comment about USAID at that time. There were very few senior professional women in the Agency and even fewer (I think I could count them on one hand) who had young children. When I was sworn in in 1977, I was 5 months pregnant with my second child. Not only was I told by HR that they were surprised that I returned after my WAE assignment but also that they really didn’t expect me to stay. They thought that childbearing and professional work did not, apparently, mix.

Q: But they did for you, obviously. How did you do it?

VAN DUSEN: We still had our very accommodating babysitter, and a good friend, Anne Tinker, had blazed the trail by getting USAID to accept the idea of a part-time assignment (32-hour/week) for professional women. I started on a part-time basis, which allowed me to work every day, but to leave early so I could get home by 3:30 or 4. I was also fortunate enough to be able to afford leave without pay when I did not have enough accumulated vacation time, but I think I only had to use that 2 or 3 times. I was very focused when I was at the office, and didn’t spend much time on the in-the-office socializing that can be really important for getting things done in an organization like USAID. Some may have thought I was unfriendly or aloof. But I compensated by regularly inviting colleagues and out of town visitors to come to my house for dinner in the evenings, which allowed me time to socialize after the kids were settled, and to press

my husband into service. It worked for me, and I still run into people I may not remember who remember coming to dinner at my house.

I never expected to stay in USAID more than 2-3 years, though not because of my family situation. But I can truly say I never got bored and always remember David Steinberg's role and mentorship with great gratitude. One piece of advice he gave me – perhaps tongue in cheek – was that you should never stay more than 2 years in any job, because after 2 years you will have learned all the ways that something *cannot* be done. You just give up. Well, my 2 years in the Near East social scientist position were fabulous. I got involved in project designs for a vocational training program for girls in Tunisia, feasibility studies for expanded schooling for girls in rural Jordan (the East Ghor project), promoting a project to build a dormitory in Kabul for future women teachers, and advising on a host of issues related to women in the Middle East. I doubt I did much to convince my skeptical colleagues that including women and community considerations would result in more effective projects, but because this analysis was a requirement and Congressional expectation, there was less resistance than you might expect.

Q: It sounds like these efforts naturally flowed from your research work and academic interests more broadly – correct?

VAN DUSEN: Yes, I think so. I was hired because I had done work in this area, and for the first two years I actually performed as a technical social scientist with Middle East expertise!

I also got a first-hand view of relations between USAID and the Hill. A funny story: My husband was staff director for the House subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, and one day we were chatting about the types of questions USAID might be asked at an oversight hearing to give the committee a good sense of how the programs were going. I made some suggestions and sure enough, a few weeks after the hearing some of those questions landed on my desk to answer! I don't think I ever made that mistake again, though, in truth, I think I ended up doing a fair amount of work (explaining programs, arguing against earmarks) on behalf of USAID with Congressional committee staffs. This was perhaps because as a civil servant I stayed in Washington and got to know some of the Hill staff well and was not intimidated by them, and perhaps in part because they might have pulled their punches with me because they knew Mike. I am just speculating!

Q: So the best way for USAID to gain respect and influence on the Hill is to make sure it is populated with spouses of USAID staff?!

VAN DUSEN: It's not a bad strategy, as long as the spouse knows the business; and it certainly beats hiding from Hill staff, which is almost always counterproductive.

PPC Human Resources Division

As I think about it, most of my moves within USAID were not initiated by me. In 1978, a colleague, Barbara Herz, with whose husband I had worked on Planned Parenthood and

who had a child in my daughter's class at school (that's how Washington works!) urged me to move to PPC (Policy, Planning and Coordination) to help them oversee implementation of a new Congressional directive known opaquely as "104(d)." It was language in the foreign assistance bill which directed USAID to examine the many factors in addition to the availability of contraceptives that help determine couple's family planning behavior – a woman's education, employment and health status, for example. Taking the job would mean a promotion, and she needed someone who could marshal the data to convince reluctant bureaus and missions that it was the right thing to do. I remember being summoned to Alex Shakow's office – he was AA for PPC at the time – to get his approval. I was terrified about being quizzed by this eminence, but he was very kind and the only question I remember him asking was "do you really want to do this?"

Well sure. Why not? I had NO idea how controversial the directive was; how much it was despised by the Office of Population, which saw it as a raid on its resources; and ultimately how little interest and support for it there actually was on the Hill. I hated the adversarial atmosphere surrounding it and kept looking for allies and ways to make it more palatable.

Less than a year after moving to PPC, the Division Chief for the Human Resources Division became seriously ill and needed to take a leave of absence. She asked me to become Acting Division Chief. At this point I had had no experience putting together USAID programs or budgets. I remember long evenings trying to understand how the USAID budget worked, how the Congressional Presentation related to the budget, how we dealt with OMB and with other parts of the Agency. It was truly my trial by fire.

At the same time, it was a heady time intellectually. The Human Resources Division had some of the smartest, most program-savvy health, population, education and nutrition sector specialists in the Agency (Anne Aarnes, Patrick Fleuret, Frank Method, Richard Shortlidge, Abby Bloom, to name a few), and it was fun and exciting to be among them. We were a cohesive group, and everyone on the team was committed to seeing USAID as a leader in his or her sector.

The cohesion was important because the Division faced a number of challenges. First was IDCA (1979), The International Development Cooperation Agency, which was supposed to be part of a larger reorganization and integration of foreign affairs agencies, but which turned out to be simply an additional layer over USAID. As the IDCA staff saw themselves as policy leaders, that meant that they were particularly interested in directing PPC. At one point, IDCA opined that USAID's education programs had little to do with our overall development objectives, and my division needed to challenge that proposal. It was an awkward time at best, especially for me because I knew and was friends with some of the IDCA staff, but hated the additional layers of bureaucracy and make-work. In any case, IDCA was short-lived.

The second challenge was my first Presidential transition, from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan. Any transition is a challenge, but this one was particularly fraught because of the

deep ideological shift that it signaled. Alex Shakow stayed on for a few months of the transition, but when he left we all felt a bit cut adrift. Among the earliest challenges I remember was an attempt by the new administration, led by Under Secretary of State, James Buckley, to zero out all population funding. To push back this effort required coordinating closely with S&T's population leadership and, of course, reams of papers and countless meetings documenting the important role of family planning for women's health and overall development, as well as the strong support the programs had on the Hill and among key interest groups. In the end, I think enough noise was generated to scuttle the proposal.

Another early challenge was an OMB directive to reduce USAID's overall program scope, and there were informal discussions within the Agency about whether it should eliminate entirely either its health or its education portfolio. Again, reams of paper and meetings (most of which I was not privy to, but only contributed talking points for the gladiators) resulted in allowing funding to continue in both sectors, although they experienced a period of reduced funding.

Another early administration effort involved a thorough review and overhaul, under the watchful eye of John Bolton, the AA for PPC, of all Agency policy guidance. During a period of less than 2 years, my division rewrote and cleared policy guidance on domestic water and sanitation, health, nutrition, education and population; and we contributed to new guidance on PVOs (Private Voluntary Organization), women in development, institutional development, and evaluation. It was exhausting, but also gratifying that we were able to marshal solid research and evaluation evidence to allow these critical programs to advance. During this period, as you can imagine, there were as well many inquiries from the Hill (e.g., why was health funding declining), and I often felt on the front line in responding.

Q: It sounds like you felt comfortable with the many policy guidance papers that were issued – is that right? Does that mean that the ideological issues that might have cropped up in a Reagan Administration did not impact the policy work? How much was the USAID Administrator Peter McPherson involved?

VAN DUSEN: I don't remember any new policy paper that was egregiously out of step with mainstream development thinking. I think we were helped by a level of cohesion among the technical offices across the Agency (we weren't fighting among ourselves), as well as by Peter McPherson's openness to learning from career staff, and, frankly, from John Bolton's apparent lack of interest in many of the areas where policy papers were being written. I do know that those working on new policies for private sector development or human rights must have had a much harder time.

Inevitably, this amount of high-level engagement and representation meant that I was often working directly with Kelly Kammerer (LEG), Peter McPherson (A/AID), and the senior leadership of S&T. And inevitably, though I tried to keep them informed, my immediate supervisors felt left out and/or not in "control." It was time to move.

Science and Technology Bureau, Office of Health

By 1983, USAID'S health programs were receiving increasing attention from the Hill and from outside groups such as UNICEF (headed by Jim Grant) and RESULTS (a health advocacy NGO). These were the early days of the Child Survival movement, and USAID was poorly organized and staffed to respond to the demands for more, and more focused, programming. USAID'S health portfolio was quite diffuse, and the Congressional staffers seemed to be increasingly annoyed at our slow and less than enthusiastic responses to requests for greater focus on infant and child health. I was asked by Nyle Brady (AA/S&T) and Franz Herder to become the Deputy Director of the S&T Office of Health, which was then headed by Dr. George Curlin, and I accepted in late 1983.

To be honest, I was a bit apprehensive about this move and felt as if I were moving into enemy territory given the often adversarial relations between PPC and the central technical offices. I did have some friends in the health office, and they did encourage me to join them, but the office felt very male and physician-oriented; I anticipated a fair amount of resistance. And, of course, I was very pregnant with my third child when it came time to move!

My job was day to day management of the Office of Health and assisting the Director in "improving the technical quality of health staff and work," among other things. In retrospect, that job description seems like quite a slap to the office, since it implied that technical quality and management efficiency were not where they needed to be (and that a social scientist was expected to spiff things up). George Curlin was on loan from NIH (National Institutes of Health), and within a year he returned to NIH and I was made Acting Director.

Q: And in those days where did you go to find the quality of staff you needed – outside (where?) or inside?

VAN DUSEN: You ask about staffing. It is always a problem when you are trying to build a program or change direction. The first line of attack was always to try to recruit staff from other parts of the Agency. Luckily, there was beginning to be a buzz about health programs and the Health Office, so we had some success raiding other offices. The second (of which more later) was to exploit all the non-direct-hire mechanisms available (IPAs, RSSAs, PASAs, fellowships), and to invent several new ones. Clearly, the program could not have grown if technical staffing did not expand as well.

This was a heady time for USAID'S health programs. Instead of begging Congress for additional resources, health appropriations were increasing above requested levels. This was driven largely by a coalition of advocacy groups (e.g., the National Council for International Health, RESULTS), NGOs, and UNICEF. The Administrator became personally engaged in the Child Survival program, and he and Jim Grant (UNICEF) became the faces of the "twin engines" of child survival – immunizations and ORT (oral rehydration therapy). In fact, it was one of the few times in my memory that the Agency was able to get out in front of external pressures and help channel them. Peter McPherson

deserves a great deal of credit for this, and also for getting personally involved in a number of health program challenges. I remember a meeting between the CEO of Merck and the Administrator. Merck had been providing ivermectin (used to prevent heartworm disease in dogs) to USAID and CDC to fight river blindness, and Merck wanted to talk about compensation. The Administrator was able to convince Merck that the good will Merck receives from donating the drug (which was in any case very profitable to them as a veterinary medication) would far outweigh the costs of lengthy negotiations with the government over payment. Merck committed to donate the drug for as long as it was needed to combat river blindness, and I believe this donation program continues to this day.

Back to child survival: USAID had always funded health programs, but the strategy, if there was one, was a bit diffuse. Field programs often focused on system strengthening, water and sanitation, training, support for NGO programming, disease control – all important investments, but not always coherent. The central bureau funded research on a number of issues, including malaria vaccine, river blindness and other communicable diseases. There were elements of what became child survival, to be sure, but nothing that could be considered an Agency-wide strategy. In 1977, an international conference on health promotion in Alma Ata (USSR) had attempted to shift the international focus from medical models and vertical programs to integrated primary health care. USAID was enthusiastic about this new focus, but it is very difficult to change decades of diffuse programming.

The first major opportunity to make some significant changes in the USAID health focus came about when Congress appropriated an additional \$25 million for child survival programming. I was Deputy Director of the Child Survival Task Force (Brad Langmaid was the Director), which was tasked with pulling together a coordinated USAID response. Whenever someone throws “free money” on the table, things can get ugly, but I think the health sector leaders across the Agency recognized this as a once in a lifetime opportunity. We may also have worried that if we did not step up, Congress would be happy to send the money to UNICEF, headed by Jim Grant, or WHO (World Health Organization).

The Task Force (which was essentially the leaders of the health office in the central and regional bureaus) developed an Action Plan to focus on four measurable interventions which were already part of USAID’s portfolio, but to give them greater visibility and funding: ORT, immunizations, breastfeeding promotion and child spacing. The strategy targeted 20 or so countries, and baseline information on infant and child mortality, use of ORT and immunization coverage was collected to form core child survival indicators. USAID was asked to submit a report to Congress, and when we discussed what we should call the report, Pamela Johnson, who I had recruited as the Child Survival Coordinator, answered “let’s call it “The First” USAID report on Child Survival, of course!” I don’t know if Congress really wanted to get annual reports, but I know that having that annual deadline in front of us year after year kept the Agency focused on child survival in a way it might not otherwise have been.

So much has been written about the child survival program that I don't need to spend much time on the details. When I moved to the Office of Health in late 1983, the budget was about \$20 million (it grew to over \$100 million in six years). In 1985, the budget for the office doubled, and continued to increase year after year (as did the health portfolio in all regions), and we in the Office of Health focused on building programs that could support that expansion. That included such things as major "buy-in" contracts to assist the field in implementation (PRICOR, PRITECH, HealthCom, an immunization project – can't remember the acronym - with JSI and more). I also shamelessly copied from the Office of Population, which had been supporting large field programs for decades. We convinced the Population Office to add health questions to the Demographic Surveys (now DHS); we created a child survival fellows program to build links with universities and augment technical staff. And, in a stroke of good luck for which no one stepped up to take credit, but which I strenuously advocated for year after year, we got permission to use some program funds to hire technical advisors for child survival (TAACS) and later HIV/AIDS who could be assigned overseas and work in Washington.

By including child spacing as a child survival intervention, I think we were able to provide a bit of protection for population programs, which were still having a rough time. In 1985, for example, at or following the once-a-decade international population conference, the US announced that it would not fund NGOs which use their own funds to provide or promote abortion as a method of family planning. Every subsequent Republican administration has invoked this ban; every Democratic administration has rescinded it. Never mind that no country outside the former communist bloc actually uses abortion as a method of family planning. It may be an emergency procedure when contraception fails or is not available, but not the first choice for family planning. While the Mexico City policy did not directly affect health programs, it was a cloud hanging over programs, especially integrated health and population programs in the field

Q: I gather under Trump that is no longer true, right?

VAN DUSEN: Yes, I gather the Trump administration has extended the ban to cover all health funded programs as well. The combination of this restriction and the proposed major cuts in funding is very worrisome, and we will need to see what Congress does to mitigate the damage.

During the six to seven years I was in the Office of Health, many things happened in my career in addition to the rapid expansion of the health portfolio, the staffing and visibility of the program. One of the most gratifying and useful was being invited to participate in one of the first two-week management training courses offered by USAID and presented by TRG [The Training Resources Group]. The training was a revelation to me, affirming some of the tricks I had discovered to build morale and motivate performance (frequent informal events for staff and visiting experts, a hands-off approach to day-to-day management), but also confronting me with some things about myself about which I was blissfully unaware (in Meyer-Briggs terms, I am a closet introvert, an off-the-charts "J," for example). Because this same training was offered to successive cohorts of managers for a number of years, USAID built up a cadre of senior officers who had the same

management vocabulary and the same understandings of management red flags. I personally think it was one of the best investments USAID ever made.

Second, after about a year as Acting Director, I became the Office Deputy again when Ken Bart, an epidemiologist from CDC came in as the new Director of the Office. This assignment was unlike any he had had before and as a practical matter, many of the challenges which the office, and indeed the entire Agency health program, faced were not medical in nature or even technical, but structural and managerial. I imagine Ken was frustrated by his inability to connect, but unaware that he was not highly regarded as a leader. In any case, after a couple of years he was reassigned by the Public Health Service and I once again became the Acting Director and finally (officially) the Director in 1990.

Third, during the time I was Acting Director I was confronted with criminal fraud. The Office of Health had long supported a research program to develop a malaria vaccine, and the individual who headed this program was an entomologist who was both glib and wildly optimistic about his program. He was able to convince key people, including Nyle Brady, AA/S&T, that USAID was on the verge of a major breakthrough in the malaria program and that either because of jealousy or ignorance, USAID managers did not appreciate his work. AA/S&T made sure that the budget for the malaria program was robust and one year even directed that the entomologist receive an outstanding rating – an evaluation I refused to write. I didn't pretend to understand malaria research, and the scientist made sure to make it sound as complicated as possible. He avoided using outside technical review panels, citing the need for secrecy and the highly competitive nature of the vaccine race. There were many absences, and sudden crises (e.g., 1200 monkeys arriving in the US without proper documentation), and I had the sense that something wasn't right. But I couldn't figure it out and no one in his Division or outside wanted to tell me what was going on...or perhaps they didn't know. Finally – ironically – a contractor with whom I had worked told me that the scientist was harassing a female employee on one of his contracts. I took this information to Dennis Brennan, DAA/S&T, and he agreed to bring in the IG. As it turned out, sexual harassment was only one of the charges. Jim Erickson was eventually convicted of fraud and admitted to various kick-back schemes. Several scientists in his network were also indicted. I believe Jim spent several years in jail, and I'm not sure that Nyle Brady ever came to terms with how he had been deceived.

What lessons did I draw from that sorry experience? First, If it is so complicated that no one can explain it to you, and especially if you are encouraged not to worry about it, you should be worried. Second, never underestimate how brazen a good con man can be. For years while Jim was on administrative leave and the IG was investigating, he continued not only to maintain his martyred innocence, but also to charge others with fraud and malfeasance. Until he confessed to everything. And third, it is important to find ways to make it safe for whistleblowers to speak up. I never understood why members of Erickson's staff protected him the way they did, and I don't think Nyle Brady ever realized how his support for Erickson made it very difficult for managers to hold Erickson to account. I am happy to say that this was the only IG fraud investigation I ever was directly involved in.

During my time at the Office of Health, HIV/AIDS became a major international epidemic and preoccupation of the Agency. I recall the transition from viewing it as an obscure epidemic about which WHO was overly exercised to the realization that this was a pandemic that would change everything. We recruited AIDS experts from CDC (including Helene Gayle), built program support vehicles (AIDSCOM, AIDSTECH) to try to support field programs, all the while dealing with a somewhat skeptical Congress, where many in the leadership saw this as a disease associated with sex and drugs and were, at best, uncomfortable. And, unlike child survival where the needed interventions were known and it was a question of building the capacity to deliver them, in the case of AIDS, especially in the early days, it was a mystery disease. There was also, I am sad to say, an unproductive rivalry between WHO's HIV/AIDS effort and USAID's.

Just a couple of other points about the health program in the 1980s. There have always been health earmarks of one sort or another, but there were a few more in the 1980s that took a certain amount of my attention. A powerful Senator on the Appropriations Committee wanted the Agency to direct some attention to the nascent problem of aging in the developing world. Another wanted the agency to provide prosthetics to children damaged by landmines, and later, more generally, to help orphans and children made vulnerable by war and conflict. There were Congressional directives on breastfeeding and environmental health, and, of course, the IG and GAO (General Accounting Office) inquiries on the malaria vaccine program. And in the early 1990s, there were increasing efforts to deal with the press, US universities, HHS, CDC, WHO, UNICEF and UNDP, where I was often the point-person for the agency on health issues.

In the Office of Health, the program was growing exponentially. We sought and received hesitant approval to experiment with new forms of staffing, including piloting a program-funded contract mechanism to provide secretarial and other office support (which I believe is now the norm throughout USAID). We also undertook our own orientation and training for all non-direct-hire staff, and I remember distinctly my 2-hour presentation on "AID 101," in which I attempted to explain USAID's budget cycle, and how it linked to the Congressional Presentation, submissions to OMB, and the Congressional oversight process. Whew!

Q: As you look back on the burgeoning programs in the health sector or your key role in it, how were you able to build up strong links between your central office and the field missions? Are there lessons in that area that you think have wider application?

VAN DUSEN: I think a number of things contributed to the close relations between the central health office and the field. The first was that several foreign service health officers chose to serve in the Office of Health (and later, to lead it, including David Oot and Joy Riggs-Perla), which gave the field confidence that they had allies in the office. The second was that we built central contracts specifically to make it easier for field missions to implement child survival, health and later HIV/AIDS programs. Instead of having to start from scratch, they could "buy-in" to an existing contract and get the program up and running faster. A third was probably the expansion of non direct-hire

mechanisms to bring on technical staff (Child Survival Fellows, TAACS), which the field was encouraged to use, and did. A fourth was the reporting we did to Congress on the programs, where the mission programs were always given top billing. And finally, everything goes better when funding is increasing! That's not always true, but in the first decade of the child survival program, the field was seeing budgets increase and saw the central office as a place to go to help them spend it effectively.

Between Peter McPherson's departure (1987) and Ronald Roskens' arrival (1990), there were a series of interim Administrators, and it seemed as if we were preparing briefing materials and answering sometimes hostile questions all the time! This prompts a word about leadership transitions at USAID, of which I have seen quite a few, and, being Washington-based, was deeply involved in many of them. It is natural and correct that incoming leaders should want a thorough briefing on the programs, both for confirmation hearings and to think about their own agendas. There were, however, a couple of times when the incoming leaders expressed little interest in the briefings we prepared or the programs they were inheriting, and that indifference was almost always a bad sign. But in almost all transitions I have witnessed, the incoming team approaches the Agency and career staff as if, if not the enemy then at least potentially hostile workers. That's not to say that staff are always enthusiastic about a new leadership team, but they are for the most part committed to the programs and to helping the new team understand the portfolio and how it will affect and can help them achieve their objectives. In my experience, the most effective administrators and senior leaders have been those who engaged (even co-opted) the career professionals, rather than those who distrusted and avoided them.

Between 1987 and 1993, there were major efforts at Agency reorganization, driven in part by pressures from Congress and increasing constraints on direct-hire staffing, and in part, I believe, on efforts by successive interim leaders to plant a flag. One such effort was a Management Reform Council, which was charged with finding and eliminating program and operational redundancies. Any global organization like USAID is likely to have rivalries between regional and central offices, between headquarters and the field, and between regional and technical perspectives, and this was certainly true of USAID at this time. The regional bureaus saw central bureau offices as prime candidates for redundancy, and I spent a lot of time pointing out the value and efficiency of having a strong central technical health office that regional and country offices could draw upon. It was a very busy time. But we had a strong and cohesive team in the Office of Health, the program and staffing were growing and I had no thought of moving on. I had been promoted to the Senior Executive Service, received a Superior Achievement Award from USAID and an Executive Achievement Award from the SES Association. Life was good.

Acting AA, S&T Bureau, Global Bureau

During the interim period after the election of 1992, I was asked by AA/S&T Rich Bissell to become Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator of the S&T Bureau to oversee the daily operations of the Bureau and its 14 offices. I think Rich Bissell may have expected to stay through an orderly transition, and I certainly expected him to, but in fact he

resigned the day after the inauguration, and there I was as Acting Assistant Administrator for S&T.

There was a delay in appointing the new Administrator (Brian Atwood), and therefore a series of transition leadership teams but finally a completely new cast of characters new to USAID arrived, and this again required numerous technical and managerial briefings, as well as jousting with a wide range of outside groups – private and governmental – which had ideas about how USAID should be run, what it should do and where it should reside in the government org chart. During this transition, it was really important to maintain morale across the Bureau, given the uncertainty about the new directions the new administration would pursue and the continued tendency to see the central bureaus as overstaffed. It was clear that we needed forceful representation on the importance of strong central technical offices for continued USAID credibility and leadership. I asked Duff Gillespie, the Director of the Population Office, the largest office in the bureau, to join me as Acting Deputy AA/S&T, and together we worked to maintain morale among the technical staff, argue for continued strong technical leadership, and keep the trains running on time!

Q: Who was the Acting Administrator at that time? And did he/she have any role in Duff's appointment?

VAN DUSEN: Jim Michel was Acting Administrator at the time, but I do not recall him having any role in Duff's appointment. I think this was left to me to effect.

When Brian Atwood and Carol Lancaster came in to lead the Agency, one of the first management decisions they made was to create a new Global Bureau, combining the S&T Bureau and PRE (the Private Enterprise Bureau, which was not particularly happy about losing its separate status). The name of the bureau was actually Global Programs, Field Support and Research – which was a heavy lift! It grew out of the realization that many of the development challenges the world was facing were not confined to one country or region (think communicable diseases or environmental pollution, for example), and that USAID could better direct its efforts and share lessons across regions if there were a strong global focus. The State Department set up a similar Bureau under the leadership of former Senator, Tim Wirth. Initially, the Administrator's idea was that all technical staff would move to the Global Bureau (that was not going to happen!), and that field programs would increasingly get technical support from a central technical office, which would be more efficient and would also bring some uniformity to USAID's technical programs (that actually did happen over time).

The Administrator asked me to head the bureau and offered to put my name forward to the White House. At the time, I still had two children at home and did not want to take on the additional travel and representation work that becoming the AA would have entailed; but I told Brian that I would serve as acting AA until an AA was found. That turned out to be almost 18 months!

The new Bureau was organized around five technical centers and three independent offices: Health and Population (and Nutrition); Democracy and Governance; Economic Growth (Agriculture, Rural Development, Private Enterprise); Environment (and Energy); and Education. Most of the programs already existed, but one, the Democracy Center, was new. I was involved in recruiting leaders for each of these centers (most of them senior career officers; two were outside political appointments). During this time I learned a great deal about these other programs – their particular issues, staffing constraints, relations with the field, with the Hill, with outside interest groups. And, of course, because I was Acting AA of a Bureau that the Administrator specifically wanted, there was a lot of direct interaction with the front office.

I participated every morning in the Administrator's 8:15 staff meeting and because I didn't know how else to share the highlights efficiently with a bureau that was spread over several buildings in Rosslyn and DC, I sent the Center and Office Directors summary notes by email of each meeting. At one point the Administrator became aware of the notes and worried that they might inadvertently contain classified or sensitive information; he asked that they be stopped. When I stopped sending the notes, there ensued a tsunami of protest from around the world. I had no idea at the time that the Office Directors were sharing the notes with their colleagues in the field. The field argued that this was the only way they knew what was happening in Washington and that the notes helped them feel a part of the larger enterprise. Carol Lancaster (DAA) told me to resume sending my notes, but be careful. The notes continued through 1994 and 1995, first by Duff or me (whoever attended the meeting) and then by Sally Shelton-Colby when she became AA/Global, and they continued until one of her emails with less guarded language than it should have had got to the Hill and created an embarrassing kerfuffle. The notes stopped. But it taught me a lesson on the importance of communication and keeping staff in the loop – even giving them the sense that they are on the inside track – both for maintaining morale and for keeping everyone on the same page.

This was the era of “reinventing government,” and for USAID that meant extensive portfolio reviews, a new budgeting process, a search for a better management information system, and ultimately and sadly, a disastrous and perhaps unnecessary RIF (reduction in force). These efforts were led by an Assistant Administrator for Management (Larry Byrne) who did not have an international development background and who did not appear particularly interested in USAID. The combination of his somewhat brash personality and his focus on the numbers (positions and programs cut, for example) with little attention apparent to programmatic impact made him perhaps the most unpopular senior leader in USAID's entire history, and certainly in my time at USAID. During the “downsizing,” the Global Bureau had to eliminate the University Center, an independent office that was a focal point for USAID's relations with the several associations of US universities and colleges (e.g., American Council on Education). This was a pretty powerful group with easy access to their Congressional representatives, so handling this organizational change so that the existing grants were not disrupted was sensitive, to say the least. I remember standing on stage at the University of Wyoming in Laramie and

trying to project a hopeful message when, in fact, I had no idea that we would be able to continue to work with them long term.

I mentioned earmarks earlier. They ranged from earmarks for specific organizations (MEDEX, Appropriate Technology International, GORGAS Labs, etc.) to program areas (songbirds) to broad funding levels (not less than X for work on maternal health, orphans, child survival, etc.). People always pointed out that most of these were not technically earmarks, but since we never dared ignore them entirely, we would try to work with Congressional staff to get as broad a definition and scope for the directives as possible. Sometime we would acquiesce to the directives, sometime we would ignore them until a Congressional inquiry forced our hand. But until the mid 1990s, USAID's budget process involved sending bureaus budget numbers, having them develop budgets, and then later telling them to redo them to cover specific earmarks and directives. In short, doing the budget twice. In the mid 1990s, I worked with LPA (Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs) and the budget office to devise a different approach – namely, when each bureau was given its target budget, it was told which earmarks it would be expected to cover. While this was hardly the strategy-driven budgeting process that USAID was championing, and there certainly were negotiations – especially about how much health or population money the regional bureaus could absorb - it did eliminate the need to redo totally the budgets to take into account the earmarks.

These years in the Global Bureau involved a great deal of representational work – especially with other donors (Japan, the EU), with outside constituencies (the university community, the NGOs), and other parts of the US government. It was a time, prompted in part by the reinventing government and the “whole of government” strategies and falling Operational Expense budgets, when other, ostensibly domestic agencies and departments were becoming increasingly engaged in international programming. The Vice President (Gore) led an effort called the National Performance Review, which later became the National Partnership for Reinventing Government, with the goal of reducing the size of government and increasing its efficiency. I cannot overstate how much staff effort went into these efforts. Another government-wide effort involved the creation and staffing of several binational commissions. The Vice President led high level delegations to several key counterparts – Russia, South Africa, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Ukraine. While the regional bureaus handled most of the work, the central bureaus were expected to help and, occasionally, to come up with a new program as an incentive to help the conversation along. Preparatory meetings involved representatives from a wide range of departments and, I think, gave these other departments and agencies a taste for working at the international level. In any case, the requests for USAID to fund the international activities of other government departments really took off during these years.

I was involved in two issues involving USIA (United States Information Agency), an agency that I admired and absolutely regretted its demise. The first was a GAO investigation of potential redundancies between the training programs of USIA and USAID's participant training program, during which time Congress put a hold on USAID's participant training programs. We were able to convince the GAO that USAID's training program was for a fundamentally different purpose from USIA's and

the hold was lifted. The second effort was higher visibility and much higher stakes. There had been growing calls from Congress for all international affairs agencies (USIA, ACDA, USAID) to be absorbed into the Department of State, and task forces (negotiating teams, really) led by State were set up to examine different program areas and areas of potential overlap. I represented USAID on the task force examining potential overlap among education and training programs, and the State Department concluded, ultimately, that USAID's programs were important and unique, and did not duplicate work at State or USIA. Ultimately, USAID was left intact, though not because of anything I did. I believe the White House, perhaps at the behest of the First Lady who had become very interested in USAID's work, intervened, and USAID was exempted from the consolidation that brought ACDA (Arms Control and Disarmament Agency) and USIA into State.

Q: Were there particular State officers with whom you worked and were instrumental in gaining the understanding you describe?

VAN DUSEN: I had many friends and colleagues in State with whom I worked over the years, but during this period I recall a number of conversations with Melinda Kimble, both when she was in IO (International Organizations Affairs) and OES (Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs), though she was not involved in the consolidation discussions.

In sum, the Global Bureau assignment was my second major build-from-scratch or almost from scratch management role, and it was all-consuming. I personally think the structuring and expansion of the Global Bureau required the leadership of a Washington-based officer (not necessarily me), both because of the time it took to get it done (longer than a normal foreign service rotation) and because of the contacts and trust needed both within and outside the Agency to create a Bureau that would survive after the Administrator, whose initiative it was, left. It required knowledge of the Hill, the inter-Agency process, the culture of AID/W, and a good amount of luck to pull it off.

Q: This was quite an accomplishment for any one – but doing all this in an Acting capacity is a particularly impressive achievement, and yet you managed to continue to raise a family, too. Obviously, you discovered you had a knack for management of your time and that of others. What else did you do that made it possible to juggle all these balls at once?

VAN DUSEN: I don't want to minimize the amount of good luck that was involved! I also tried to stay out of the weeds, and allow the Center Directors to run their operations without heavy oversight (that was just common sense; the bureau was too large and complex to micromanage!) I met weekly with each Center Director; the meetings focused mainly on issues that might come up or where I might be helpful. I basically tried to run interference.

Once again, I was completely consumed by the job. I enjoyed working with Sally Shelton-Colby and the Center Directors, and had no plans to leave but....

DAA/Asia and Near East Bureau

... a colleague, Kelly Kammerer, with whom I worked for many years, and who I hold in high esteem, became Acting AA of the ANE (Asia and Near East) Bureau, and almost simultaneously, his Deputy was reassigned. Kelly and the Administrator asked that I move to ANE as Deputy; this was a large bureau with many politically sensitive programs. Sally Shelton-Colby agreed to let me go, and I went.

Initially in 1997, my assignment was to focus on Asia, with a second deputy focusing on the Middle East. But Kelly and I decided to try a different approach – one where I would focus on day to day management across the entire region, and the second Deputy (a “political” appointment) would focus on policy issues, donor coordination and emergency response. This re-division of responsibilities was helpful in bringing some standardization of management matters across the Bureau. There was a backlog of unanswered Congressional letters and late personnel evaluations, and a number of the ANE offices had little day-to-day contact with the front office. Perhaps they liked it that way, but it was a problem whenever an issue or crisis arose. I remember instituting weekly meetings with all Office Directors and sending weekly notes to the field to keep them apprised of what was happening in Washington. These were both techniques that had worked for me in the past, and they seemed to help build cohesion in the monster (from Morocco to the Philippines) ANE bureau. I made a special effort to entertain mission directors and field staff when they came to town, which gave ANE and other staff a chance to speak with them in more informal settings. I was responsible for writing review statements for all ANE Mission Directors, a task I found daunting (especially at such a distance) and I used 360 reviews (basically gathering information from people who work for and with the mission director) to help fill in the picture.

In the first year I was able to travel, including to Egypt as part of the Gore-Mubarak initiative (one of the binational commissions headed by Vice President Gore), and to India, Vietnam and the West Bank and Gaza. On Vietnam, I remember we did an assessment of USAID activities in Vietnam and got permission to place a PSC in Hanoi to provide oversight for USAID’s limited programming. I remember setting up meetings with many ANE partner organizations to get a better understanding of the portfolio, and got to know our counterparts in State. In that first year, the Bureau dealt with the Asian financial crisis, the breaking of the long-standing earmark for Egypt and Israel, and Pakistan’s nuclear tests, which provoked additional US sanctions. I chaired budget and strategy reviews for all mission and central ANE programs (except those few that the A/AA/ANE wanted to chair!), a necessary and time consuming, and not very fun activity. I also continued to work with Hill staff who took an active interest in ANE programs.

I was also involved in a number of agency-wide activities. It is hard to remember all the details, but there was a Quality Council, an Administrator’s Management Council, the Senior Management Group (which determined senior assignments), an Acquisitions Task Force to assess USAID’s incredibly cumbersome procurement system, an IG assessment working group, and much more. The late 1990s was a time of great management

introspection not just in USAID but throughout the US government. And, of course, there was another transition in 1999, from Brian Atwood to J. Brady Anderson, that required considerable attention from senior staff in Washington.

A word about donor coordination, which took on new significance in the 1990s. Most USAID negotiations with other bilateral and multilateral aid donors concerned policy and program alignment. Since earliest days of USAID, the US had been the largest bilateral aid donor and, in many areas, the technical leaders as well. This was a source of great pride (and perhaps a bit of competitive zeal) on the part of USAID staff; but it was a red flag for those voices on the Hill especially who felt the US was doing too much and others should shoulder their “fair share.” In the 1990s, Japan started increasing its bilateral aid – though much of it was still closely tied to Japanese economic interests – and in the late 1990s Japan actually surpassed the US as the largest bilateral donor. Much of Japanese aid focused on infrastructure, and there were unfortunate white elephants (hospitals without doctors or nurses; school buildings without teachers) which were an embarrassment to Japan. The US and Japan launched talks (called The Common Agenda) on shared development strategies; Japan asked for help in developing and working with the NGO sector, for example; and USAID and JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) agreed to collaborate closely in a few Asian countries. At that time we also became aware that there were a number of “emerging” bilateral donors (Korea, Thailand, China, among others), and we were eager to help engage with these donors as well. I remember a trip to Korea to discuss development coordination, and I believe we invited two staff from KOICA (Korean International Cooperation Agency) to come spend a year at USAID to observe our practices.

Well, back to ANE. I was enjoying the wide variety of activities that came my way as DAA/ANE, and I was looking forward to continuing the partnership with Kelly Kammerer. Instead, Kelly was assigned to represent the USAID at the DAC (OECD’s Development Assistance Committee) in Paris, and I was assigned to prepare the briefing material, chair the murder boards and write the Senate testimony for a new Schedule C AA for ANE. The new AA was not comfortable with the role I had played with Kelly Kammerer and the Bureau reverted to the traditional division of labor, with one Deputy covering the Middle East and the other Asia. Sadly, the new AA/ANE and I never established a good working relationship and, frustrated, I accepted an invitation from AA/PPC, Tom Fox, to move to PPC as the senior deputy in 1999.

SDAA/PPC

Returning to PPC after almost 16 years was like coming home, but to a very different home. The budget function was no longer in PPC, so we had to work very closely with the Management Bureau to coordinate policy and budget. Technical staff over the years had increasingly been concentrated in the central Global Bureau, and I don’t think the Sector Councils still existed by then. The Agency had gone through innumerable iterations of strategic planning and goal setting procedures and there was a weariness about a major new effort to codify all Agency policies and procedures in a massive ADS (Agency Directives System).

I remember using some of the tricks that had served me well in the past – setting up weekly meetings with each office director, volunteering for writing assignments to help crystallize issues, finding opportunities for staff to gain visibility with other parts of the Agency and the front office, among others. But in addition to my usual role as “day to day management of the Bureau,” there were a number of special assignments which added spice to the day.

One was a new Congressional Directive to develop a program and fund activities to help victims of torture – something that was not included in either the OTI (Office of Transition Initiatives) or OFDA (Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance) program or in the activities of individual missions. In the late 1990s, legislation was introduced with \$400,000 in funding to support work with victims of torture. I remember numerous meetings with Hill staff, testifying before Congress, briefing senior staff, and finally agreeing on a strategy that committed USAID to spend at least \$400K on programs that offered psycho-social and other rehabilitation services for torture victims, with a commitment to report how the funds were used. Everyone was satisfied...or at least mollified!

Another activity involved a State-USAID task force to examine how US humanitarian aid was organized. This was a slightly veiled effort to revisit the issue of State-USAID integration, with the idea that there might be redundancy between USAID/OFDA and State/PRM, and/or that OFDA might be more effective if it were integrated with State. I represented USAID’s Counselor in countless uncomfortable inter-Agency meetings, and helped rewrite the initial report that was unsatisfactory to USAID, and luckily the matter subsided. In a parallel effort, I remember working with OFDA, the front office and representatives of OTI and the regional bureaus to hammer out an agreement on how responsibility for humanitarian response could be more broadly shared across the Agency.

A third activity, and the highlight (for me) of my last year at USAID was an interagency effort to examine US overseas presence, following the bombings of our Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salam. Traditionally, the US “presence” overseas was led by the State Department (Ambassador) and included USAID, USIA, and perhaps representatives of Agriculture, Commerce, the CIA and, of course, Defense. But with the growing international programming of ostensibly domestic agencies, some countries had representatives of more than 30 government departments (HHS, FAA, Energy, Justice, etc.), with inadequate coordination with the Embassy, serious communications and security gaps, and sometimes embarrassing gaffes. An inter-Agency task force was pulled together to examine the issue and to visit a number of countries to discuss the problem with the Ambassador and other senior staff. We visited Mexico, Jordan, Thailand, India, Georgia and France, and prepared a report which confirmed the problem and made recommendations for improving coordination (which I doubt were ever seriously implemented). What was fascinating to me was the inside look I had at other government agencies – e.g., how the CIA decides to deploy personnel, how other Departments largely

evaded Embassy oversight. Later, when Carol Lancaster and I wrote a small book on reorganizing foreign aid, I drew heavily on the results of this exercise.

There were many other “special” activities which I got involved in in part because PPC was seen as ostensibly neutral and above the fray. There was the issue of “non-presence” countries, an oxymoron, but which referred to the growing number of countries where USAID was continuing to fund programs but without any staff on the ground. These were largely global (and Global Bureau) programs, but occasionally involved residual programs in countries where the USAID mission had closed down. Some saw these as an audit disaster waiting to happen, but we worked to show how the programs could still be monitored effectively and, moreover, that it was in USAID’s interest to be able to maintain programs even in places without direct-hire staff. I believe the Administrator ultimately accepted our arguments, and some of these “non-presence” programs were allowed to continue.

Q: You had an extraordinary career at USAID, serving in both central and regional bureaus in very senior positions. I doubt there is anyone who can match the diversity of assignments and responsibilities. As you look back on those experiences and the great sweep of AID history you covered, what were the most telling moments for you? What gave you the greatest sense of accomplishment? What was the most disappointing? What lessons are there for current and future leaders of USAID?

VAN DUSEN: Oh gosh. I think strengthening of the Office of Health and the structuring of USAID’s Child Survival strategy was one of the highlights of my career at USAID; and the building of a new Global Bureau and strengthening the role of the central technical offices was another. I worked with so many talented, dedicated and courageous people over my 25 years at USAID, both career and “political,” and many of them remain friends to this day. I do regret the time wasted in exercises that turned out to be make-work – endless reorganization discussions, strategic planning extravaganzas, bickering within USAID and with other government agencies and international organizations. And I absolutely regret that we, me included, could not stop the RIF and management information system wastefulness of the mid-1990s. I am also very disappointed that USAID has never been able to “fix” the procurement system – at least to make it work on behalf of the Agency’s development objectives instead of (it seems) against them.

Life after USAID

Following the election of 2000, career staff began preparing once again for a transition – briefing books, shadow senior staff to guide the transition, etc. At that point I was not sure I had the energy or patience for another transition, and when I was offered the position of Executive Vice President and COO for Save the Children, an organization I had admired for its work in the health sector, I took it. I was honored, in leaving USAID, to be awarded both the Distinguished Career Achievement Award and the Meritorious Presidential Rank Award, though, to be honest, I was at that point so focused on SAVE that I didn’t even attend the award ceremonies.

Save the Children was a huge learning experience for me. Some aspects of the organization were familiar – a central office and many regional and country field offices, a split between program and technical offices, a focus on mainly traditional development sectors and humanitarian response, and even quite a few staff who had been at USAID at one time or another. But a lot was very different, including: a domestic US program, a celebrity Board of Directors, a budgeting process that is based in part of funds not yet received, and a culture where program directors worked much more autonomously, raising much of their own money, and determining their own program directions. My assignment was day to day management of this large and growing operation and building an integrated program strategy to help streamline decision making. I was the inside manager, the CEO was the outside face of Save the Children. Even though this job required me to move to Connecticut where I bought a house (my husband remained in Washington) and was in many ways quite lonely, I loved the job and the people I met, some of whom are still good friends. I learned a great deal about private fundraising, grant-writing, advocacy, recruiting, and working outside the rules and norms of the US Government. I was able to recruit some extremely talented staff, including Mark Shriver, Chloe O’Gara, Nancy ely-Raphel and Stacy Rhodes, among others. But many of the techniques that had served me well in USAID did not translate to SAVE, I missed my family, and my mother was failing, and after three years I returned to Washington having learned a great deal about NGOs and life outside the Beltway.

Q: Please explain what “did not translate”. And what were the most important lessons you learned?

VAN DUSEN: I erroneously thought that working with a Board of Directors was like working with Congressional committees and staff. If you could explain what you were doing and why you were doing it, if you could establish a level of trust, all would be well. I didn’t realize that not everyone on an NGO Board is particularly interested in the work of the organization, and some only serve as a favor to the Chairman, the CEO or another powerful member, or for their own personal reasons. I also realized that budgeting in an NGO involves guessing about funding that will (or will not) come in during the year, which makes longer-term planning more difficult. Also, technical offices were expected (and did) chase down their own funding, and thus were able to operate somewhat autonomously from the front office. They weren’t particularly interested in an integrated program strategy, and I couldn’t blame them. I found that continuing to invite staff (especially overseas staff visiting HQ) to my home for informal gatherings was truly welcome but somewhat unusual in a suburban setting like Westport, Connecticut. These evenings gatherings were actually a challenge for many HQ staff, some of whom commuted 60-90 minutes a day and therefore were understandably unenthusiastic about evening commitments.

Q: I find it very interesting that you found working with the Hill easier than with an NGO Board!

VAN DUSEN: Well, I think it is all a matter of the learning curve. I had 25 years of working with Hill staff on a range of issues; other than a brief stint on the Board of

Planned Parenthood Metropolitan Washington, I had had no Board experience when I came to Save the Children. In later years I like to think I got better, and served on a large number of NGO Boards after returning to Washington.

After returning to Washington, I helped my mother in her last year and was involved in a variety of consulting activities, including helping a start-up philanthropy management company called Arabella Advisors (which is going strong today), undertaking several strategic reviews for the Gates Foundation, getting involved in a number of NGO Boards -- Liberty's Promise, USAID Alumni Association, CEDPA (Centre for Development and Population Activities), Institute for Sustainable Communities, the Alcatel-Lucent Foundation, ANERA (American Near East Refugee Agency), EnterpriseWorks/VITA and, as mentioned, coauthoring a book with Carol Lancaster.

In 2006 I began teaching, first as an adjunct associate professor at SAIS and at Georgetown's School of Foreign Service, and then as an Associate Professor at the latter. In 2010, I began my last major build-from-scratch effort. Carol Lancaster, then Dean of Georgetown's School of Foreign Service, had spoken to me over a number of years about the need for a practice-focused International Development Masters program for students who want to work in the field. In 2010 she got the go-ahead for a new Masters program and recruited – even strong-armed – me into coming to Georgetown to design it and get it going.

There was a great deal I did not understand about working in a university setting, and a great deal I don't understand to this day. But this was another case (like the creation of the Global Bureau) where because it was something the “boss” had demanded, opposition was more passive aggressive than open. I talked with hundreds of development professionals and potential employers about the skills that were needed, and convened an informal working group to think through a core curriculum that would give students the skills and experiences they needed. Finding money to cover the costs of an overseas internship for all students, and networking with Washington-based development organizations that might provide internships gave me the confidence that we could offer a unique program tailored to the real-life work that development professionals do. In 2011 we began advertising the program and were thrilled that over 100 people applied, from which we selected our first class of 18 (the class of 2014)

I also taught two core courses – one on program design and one on organization management - and an elective course on education and development -- which helped me stay close to the students going through the program. I am thrilled to say that the program is still going strong in 2018, and virtually all students graduating from the program are working in the development field – in international organizations, NGOs, think tanks, USAID and, increasingly, the private sector. In 2015, I turned over management of the program – the Masters in Global Human Development – to Steve Radelet, and I am happy and gratified to say that the program continues to do very well.

Q: Once again you took on a new and major responsibility and pulled it off successfully – again a remarkable achievement. As you designed the curriculum was your experience at USAID a dominant influence? If so, how?

VAN DUSEN: In designing the program, I think I drew on all my professional experiences, but certainly key among them my work at USAID. I thought about what skills made the difference between a competent and an excellent development professional at USAID, what challenges (technical, managerial, moral) young professionals are likely to face in the 21st century, how the world of development is changing, and who are the new development actors. I used to emphasize to the students the importance of writing quickly and well; being able to articulate ideas clearly and as simply as possible; knowing how to run a meeting and negotiate a compromise; understanding their role as leaders *and* followers, as managers *and* do-ers. During their two years in the program, I tried to help them build their networks in Washington and told them never, ever, to burn their bridges. I also told them (and I really believe this) that the skills and knowledge they acquired in the GHD program have MANY applications, and that it was a great time to be a development expert. In addition to the traditional employers, an increasing number of corporations, think tanks, foundations and international organizations were looking for new talent. All this, and more, I learned at USAID and after.

Q: What a remarkable career! As you look back on it, I hope you recognize that you made an enormous contribution in each of your roles, and that your combination of substantive skills and management ability was a source of great strength for USAID, Save the Children, and Georgetown. You have every reason to feel a great sense of accomplishment. Congratulations!

End of interview