

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

WILLIAM R. CODUS

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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[Note: This interview was not completed or edited by Mr. Codus.]

Q: Today is January 27th, 2012. This is an interview with William Codus. We are doing this on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Do you go by Bill?

CODUS: Yes.

Q: Let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

CODUS: 98 Harris Place in Brooklyn, New York.

Q: When?

CODUS: December 17th, 1927.

Q: You're a year older than I am.

CODUS: I just did 84.

Q: Let's get a little bit of background on your father's side. Where did your father come from and what was his family up to?

CODUS: My father came from Thessaloniki, Greece. My mother came from Ukraine. They met in New York.

Q: We are going to pick up your mother in a minute. Let's stick with your father.

What do you know about the family?

CODUS: Not much. You know, back in those days, going way back, they went through Ellis Island. When you mentioned the name—Cacoudas—how do you spell it? It was C-A-C-O-U-D-A-S.

My father opened up a restaurant. The old story is that two Greeks meet and they open up a restaurant. That's exactly what he did in Brooklyn, New York. It was mainly a steakhouse. I never worked in it, although three of my brothers worked in the restaurant.

I grew up there in Brooklyn. My father continued on in the restaurant. Then he retired.

Q: Let's talk about your mother's side. Where did she come from?

CODUS: From Ukraine.

Q: What do you know about her side of the family.

CODUS: Not much. The language and such.

They raised five children: four boys and one girl. One was a violinist. Another was a chef, and another went into the military. Actually, all of us were in the military. The older brother, George, was in the army. The second one, Christopher, was in the army. My brother Arthur, who is still alive today at 91, was in the coast guard. I was in the navy. I was a V-J Day (Victory in Japan) recruit. They still had the draft on. I didn't want to go into the army, so I enlisted in the navy.

The navy itself was a two-year hitch, which was wonderful for me because I knew Morse Code. After I graduated from boot camp in Norfolk, Virginia, they sent me to Yeoman School in San Diego.

Q: I want to stop here and move back.

You grew up in Brooklyn. Did your mother stay at home?

CODUS: Yes.

Q: What was the neighborhood like?

CODUS: It was very, very nice. It was very international. There was a row of homes, all brick, which was very nice. Every nation was there: Italians, Irish, Syrians, Armenians, you name it. We had a very nice house. They were all connected. It's where I actually grew up.

Q: What was it like being a kid there? Did you get out and play in the street?

CODUS: Yes, we did. We used to play stickball. My older brother George was a musician by then. He decided that I should take violin lessons from him. I was terrible. I started studying the violin. I didn't like it. I got to play, "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" ("America"). I didn't like it because my friends were outside playing stickball on the street, and I could hear them. For one year, I played it. Then I said, "I don't want it any more."

My brother got angry at me and kind of gave me a little... I still love him. I'm sorry that I didn't continue.

Q: How did your mother and father meet?

CODUS: They met in New York City. People introduced them. From there on, I don't know much. We tried to look back into the background of my father and mother, but couldn't get too much. The problem was that they didn't speak English well. The name was Cacoudas. Then with my brother Arthur, they put his name down as Cacouditch. There was a problem with that. Finally, my brother George, who was the eldest, decided to change his name to Codus. But he didn't change it legally, and I thought he did. So I changed mine to Codus. Through grade school, high school and college, it was William Raymond Cacoudas. Then I changed to Codus.

Q: Did you get any stories—you kind of missed it because you were very young—about the Depression?

CODUS: I really didn't know much about it.

Q: I take it your father's restaurant made it through.

CODUS: Yes. During the Depression, I know we had problems at home. I know they didn't have money for the lights in our home. I think my parents paid about \$11,000 for the house. It was beautiful, with three stories. We were able to rent out the top floor. There were times we didn't have money and the lights went out on us.

Q: Where did your family fall politically during this time?

CODUS: They were for President Franklin Roosevelt, like everybody was at that time.

Q: Religion?

CODUS: My father was Greek Orthodox and my mother was Russian Catholic. We were all baptized. My eldest brothers went to high school and college. Religion was more for my sister and myself. They got us into a Catholic Church, and got us christened. I don't know about my brothers, whether they were or not. The older brothers were not much into religion, but my sister and I were.

Q: Is your sister younger or older?

CODUS: Older. I am the youngest of the five.

Q: What was her career like?

CODUS: My sister?

Q: Yes.

CODUS: She went to high school, but she didn't go to college. She worked on Wall Street. She was good. She was intelligent, but our parents didn't have money to send her to college. I was the one that was able to do it at that time.

Q: Where did you go to grammar school?

CODUS: P.S. 154 (The Windsor Terrace School) in Brooklyn, New York.

Q: What was it like?

CODUS: I remember it well, because we walked to the school. I felt I did well in it.

Q: Were you much of a reader as a small boy?

CODUS: No, which I regret.

Q: What were your interests?

CODUS: At that time, it was sports: swimming, ice skating. My older brother was an ice skater. He was a racer, so he got me involved in that. And horseback riding in Prospect Park.

Q: That must have been expensive. How did you work that?

CODUS: I had ice skates. At that time, we could go in the park and ice skate and not have to pay anybody when it was frozen over. One of my brothers would take me out horseback riding. It wasn't every day—maybe once a month. Also, baseball was a thing with the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Q: You must have been a great Dodgers fan.

CODUS: Right.

Q: I have talked to people who grew up in Brooklyn. Depending on their neighborhood, some said they were Jewish and never met a Gentile until they went away to college. Others had the reverse story: they were Gentile and never met a Jew. I take it you were in much more of a mixed area.

CODUS: That's right. We had Jewish people, but not many. In fact, my mother used to help a Jewish couple who were kind of destitute. She would always give some money to them, which was nice. They were very kind and lovely people. I do remember those things. They had a house. The problem was that they didn't have money. My mother used

to cook and bring them food. My father would bring home some of the steaks from the restaurant. We were well fed.

Q: In grammar school, in elementary school, what subjects were your favorites?

CODUS: In grammar school?

Q: Yes.

CODUS: I would say reading.

Q: Were you much of a student?

CODUS: Not really. In a way, I was. When I was taking those violin lessons, there was something in it in school and it built me up. For some reason or another—and I regret not doing more because, when I was playing that one year and when I was in school, it seemed to do something for me. I should have stayed in it.

Q: At your grammar school were the teachers good or tough?

CODUS: I remember they were nice and good. I didn't have any problems. We played sports at the playground, basketball.

Q: Where did you go to high school?

CODUS: In New York. It was called Metropolitan Vocational High School, which is the only high school in New York that provided you with academic studies, as well as a vocation, which I think was very interesting. For vocations, they had photography, music, boat building, and electrical work. It was much of a maritime school tool. There were also other trades.

The way it worked was that in either the morning or the afternoon you would have your academic studies. Then during the other part of the day, you would have a vocation. In the next semester, you could flip flop on it. I took electrical wiring. I took boat building. I took sheet metal work, typewriting, and Morse Code. That helped me later on when I got into the military. Then I graduated.

Q: When you were going to this vocational high school, were you thinking of going to college, or at that time were you thinking of getting a job?

CODUS: I wasn't thinking about college at that time. Being young, I was interested in what I was doing in my high school, the trade work—learning Morse Code, learning typing, learning boat building, and also wiring for radios.

Q: Since I'm just a year younger than you, we're talking about when World War Two was still going.

CODUS: Yes, you're right.

Q: So I am sure since you were in high school, the military was an obvious place you were going to end up for a while.

CODUS: Right; well, my older brother was in the army; the next brother Chris was in the army; my brother Arthur who is still living today at 91 went into the coast guard; and yours truly. I went in, they still had the draft, and I did not want to go into the army, so I enlisted in the navy. It was a two-year enlistment. Having the advantage of the Remington typewriter and the Morse Code, they sent me to boot camp at that point in Norfolk, Virginia, for two months of training. And then they sent me to California to yeoman school for four months. As you know, yeoman is on the clerical side of the military, doing all the paperwork, but I had the aptitude. They were shorthanded, so you contribute. But I wasn't interested in yeomen school. I was interested in radio because I had the radio Morse Code background. So, I wanted to transfer and they said you either stay here or, if you want to transfer, you may be called to go aboard a ship. So I decided to finish the four months. It was actually to my advantage because when I graduated, they sent me aboard a destroyer minesweeper. This is now after the war. But a flag yeoman for the admiral, he had three or four people under him, and I was one. There were four ships in that division, four minesweepers. The one we were on was the USS Quick. There was the captain as well, but the ranking commodore was above him and I answered to him, as opposed to the captain. I didn't have to do any work for the captain. And in itself, it was very interesting because we went abroad to Japan, the islands, and such. It was good duty.

Q: I have this image from the movie, The Caine Mutiny. What was life aboard the ship like?

CODUS: I would say we had a 150 crew. It was very interesting, but of course not the first two weeks at sea because I got completely seasick. It was so bad I would sleep the night on the deck. Now the ship was the USS Quick, DMS 32, which was a minesweeper during the war.

[Ed: Wikipedia notes the USS Quick was laid down November 1941, commissioned in July 1942, and named after a Medal of Honor winner during the Spanish-American War. After escort duty in the Atlantic, the USS Quick was converted into a minesweeper in June 1945 and sent to the Pacific theater, but arrived after the war ended. From December 1946 to June 1947, the vessel was based in Japan and performed patrols off the China coast and in the Pacific islands.]

When the war was over, they removed the torpedo tubes between the two stacks and just left it open. Then what they did was put on these big cables on the stern rather,. Do you remember The Caine Mutiny? That's just exactly what they did and we had other ships and airplanes firing at us.

Q: You towed targets.

CODUS: Yes sir; 60 series sleds and 40 series sleds and then planes could come down and shoot at them.

Q: That must have been a little bit hair raising.

CODUS: It certainly was because not everyone was a good shot. In the 60 series, there was a big target with a circle on it. A couple of times, instead of hitting that, they had a bomb explode right in front of the bow. We had one happen like that. It was good duty, but it was for only two years, which allowed me to qualify for the GI Bill (Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944) benefits that got me into college.

Q: What was Japan like?

CODUS: It was devastated, completely devastated. When I got there, it was horrifying. I was 18 years old. To see the destruction that had taken place was just horrible, horrible. We went to Yokohama, Yokosuka, and Saipan. It was an (incredible exposure) to everything that was going on in these islands and with these different people and such. It was quite interesting. I enjoyed the navy very, very much.

Q: After these two years in the navy, 1945 to 1947, when you got out, where did you go?

CODUS: I came back home and I started to work. I worked for an insurance company in the social security department. Then I decided to go to college. I went to Seton Hall. Now Seton Hall is in South Orange, New Jersey, and I was living in Brooklyn. I signed up and then I commuted by car from Brooklyn to South Orange, New Jersey, or by common carrier, subway, what have you. It was tough, because what happened was on Tuesday and Thursday I had religion in the morning—at 8:00 or 8:30 in the morning—and I would drive over for that and we would get into class and the priest wouldn't show up. That happened several times, so you can imagine how frustrating it was. But then I would stick around...

Q: Seton Hall being a Catholic university.

CODUS: Correct. So, I flunked out the first year. They said I didn't do well and they could dismiss me. So then I went down to Norfolk, Virginia, to the Richmond Professional Institute. I went down there and I stayed two weeks in the city and I was looking for something (indistinct words). Then I came back and I went down to see a friend of mine who owned a hotel on the eastern shore of Virginia. In fact, I met him in the navy and his family lived in Cape Charles, Virginia. I don't know if you are familiar with it. It's right on the tip of the peninsula before you go over to Norfolk. In fact, when I was going to boot camp, he took me on the train all the way down to Cape Charles, Virginia. Then we got on a boat to Norfolk that was 21 miles across.

(crosstalk)

Anyway, this friend of mine, Bob Rittenhouse, his family owned a motel right there in Cape Charles. His parents had a piece of property on the highway, so he built a motel in about 12 years. It was a beautiful place. He asked me, "Why don't you come down and open up a restaurant next to the motel?"

So I came down, stayed at his home, not in the motel. It was a beautiful motel. He had a lot of taste. Anyway, I would stay at the parents' house, but then I worked. In the meantime, I was negotiating and buying the property next to his. When I worked, I worked for a farmer who had me cultivating tomatoes. I was in this big tractor, earning \$30 a week, going up and down, up and down, and at the same time trying to negotiate to get the property next to his. After three months, it never came to fruition because the man had decided not to sell the property. I wouldn't say I was a failure, but it never happened. To this very day I still say (indistinct words) with him.

Then I went back up and started looking for a job. I was looking at this place, this person. I really didn't know what I wanted to do. I just needed to start making money, rather than live off my parents. A friend of mine worked selling radio time in New York for radio stations. What happened then was that I stopped looking for a job, and would have lunch with him looking for ideas. Finally, I was offered a job from Liberty Mutual Insurance Company. During the two-week wait to start, my friend Ted said, "The vice president would like to see you. They have an opening in radio selling time."

I didn't know what the job was. So I went to see the vice president and he said, "How much experience do you have in selling radio time?"

I said I didn't have any experience. So, Liberty Mutual Insurance Company hired me and I was to start two weeks later. Before the start of that job, my friend called and said that Mr. Desimons, the vice president, would like to see me again. So now I'm in a dilemma. What do I do? Do I start the insurance job or see the vice president at the same time on Monday? So I went to the vice president and fortunately he hired me. I immediately went over to the insurance company and told them I did get this job as a time salesman.

So I got into radio and television, which is quite interesting. In this company, which is called WEED, they represented radio and television stations all over the country. Being a salesman, my role had two sections or divisions so to speak: the blue list and the gray list. The blue list has the bigger markets, such as Chicago and Los Angeles. The gray list was the Minot, North Dakota, and Casper, Wyoming, radio stations. There wasn't much in the way of television stations. I was strictly radio. My job was to go to the advertising agencies to talk about my station in Minot, North Dakota, and argue that the ratings showed my station was better than other stations. It was tough going around to the advertising agencies and then make a pitch saying my station was better. Why? We have such and such a personality, or better music.

At that time, the radio started coming back and I was doing very, very well. We would get paid and then receive a bonus. I did so well that one day, I forgot which year, I went

out and bought a 98 Oldsmobile convertible. I paid \$5,000 cash. I never forgot that. Then I progressed more and more. Eventually, a radio station called WPAT contacted me and I left the WEED agency and went to WPAT in New York. It was a good music station. They call it a New Jersey station, but it really covered New York City. The secret of that station was that they used to have three commercials every 15 minutes. They had good music, then three commercials, for a total of twelve commercials every hour. That was our selling point.

I did that for three years and then CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System) called me. I was at WCBS radio as a time salesman. I got over there and got busy selling WCBS radio. This was the time when a company or individual could own seven radio stations at that time and maybe five television stations, according to FCC (Federal Communications Commission) regulations. Also, any individual or company who owned a radio station at that time actually had two stations, the FM station and the AM station. Then the FCC said you had to split the programming. You could not have the same programming on your AM and FM stations. So in essence, you had two stations. I got promoted, and they asked me to take over the FM station. So we put in—well, it wasn't my responsibility it was the program director's—a new type of music. We called it the young sound, so that the AM side was more geared to older people, those age 35 or more, and the FM station was more the rock and roll stuff. I did very well on that job move.

Q: Did you get involved in the payola scandal that involved payoffs to disk jockeys to promote specific songs?

CODUS: I wasn't involved in that. My role was quite different, to sell time on that AM or FM station. We used different approaches to attract advertisers. On the AM side, we were a personality station. WCBS had a personality named Jack Sterling who was well known, and David Garraway, who later shifted to television. I was a salesman selling these stations and I had to use personalities. We would go out to lunch with the buyer. Because CBS had a helicopter for surveying the newscasts, I would invite one of the top advertising persons to lunch, and then take them on the helicopter and then fly around New York to show them the range of WCBS and CBS FM. I did a lot of promotional things like that. I used to use Carol Reed, who was a personality up in New York. Then there was... I can't remember some of these names from years ago. Jack Sterling was another radio personality. Pat Summerall was a football player, but he was on the air and I used him as a so-called "tool" to take him out to lunch along with the buyer to try and impress him.

So I was into sales. Let me tell you, these advertising people drink like fishes. I couldn't do that. I would have maybe one drink, but then people would invite you to parties and such. I was single then, so I could do it, but I'm not much of a drinker.

Q: Well, this was the era of the three-martini lunch, which will wear you out.

CODUS: Boy, I'm telling you. We would have people go to one of those three-martini lunches and still be sober in the afternoon. Awesome. Nevertheless, I really enjoyed it. Do you want to get into how I got into government?

Q: Yes, but you were still unmarried during this period?

CODUS: I got married July 9, 1960. I married Rosemary Murphy, of Irish heritage. We are still married 51 years later.

Q: Did she have an extended family in New York?

CODUS: She had a mother, father and three brothers. They had a café business in Croton and an enterprise in the sand and gravel business. And they had trash. Very successful. We went to college at New Rochelle, and I met her at a dance. Eventually we got married.

Q: During this time did you give any consideration to going back for further education?

CODUS: Oh yes. I'm sorry. After that initial exposure, I went back to Seton Hall and graduated in three years. Yes, after going down to Virginia, as I mentioned, when I came back I started working, I went back to Seton Hall to ask if they would take me, and they did. I stayed there on the campus then, or outside the campus, and finished my degree in business administration.

Q: Looking back on those times it was a good era for business, wasn't it?

CODUS: Yes, it was.

Q: Where did you fall politically? First, where did your family fall politically?

CODUS: My family was democrat. Myself? What happened was that I wasn't into politics at all until I married Rosemary Murphy. Now her father was a very close friend of Bill Casey and Leonard Hall. Leonard Hall used to be the national GOP (Grand Old Party, the nickname for the Republican Party) chairman. Bill Casey later became the director of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency).

What happened was that when Richard Nixon was running for president in 1960, one of my brothers-in-law—there were three of them: Jim, Eddy, and Jack—Jim was the older one who worked for the company, and they had a shipyard and dredging company. And Leonard Hall was the GOP chairman for Dwight Eisenhower. When Eisenhower left and Nixon started campaigning, suddenly they were looking for advance men. Bill Casey made a call on my father-in-law and asked him to release Jim, who was a graduate from West Point, to do some advance work for Nixon. So Jim got involved and took six months off from the company, and he escorted Nixon around the United States. Then Nixon lost the election.

In 1964, I was at CBS, and Nixon was thinking of campaigning again, when my brother-in-law called me. Jim called me at CBS and said he needed my help. He said they needed some advance men. I said, “For whom?” He said “Nixon,” and I said, “Nixon who?”

I wasn’t really that interested, but Jim persisted. “Why don’t you try it? They need some advance men. It’s something interesting. You might like it.”

So, Jim took me out on a trip to Pennsylvania or something where they were having a rally in a field. What they had to do was meet the local people who actually do all the work. As an advance man, you had to arrange transportation or housing if there was a need. You had to arrange everything if there was a press conference, for example. So Jim did that and I went along with him. It was interesting,

As I said, this first event was in a field and attracted two or three thousand people. Then there was another event, and they called me directly and said we want you to go to Wilmington, Delaware, and set up. At that time, Nixon had one security guy with him, and he handled our entourage. In Delaware, it was strictly a press conference, but what you had to do was to meet and greet the individual when he came to the airport. You had the motorcade, and maybe go to the hotel. There was all the myriad of details that are involved in things of that nature. So I did the one in Wilmington that was quite interesting. Eventually they called me and asked me to do it full time. I said I couldn’t do it full time. Later, I did it full time for three months. It was interesting work. My wife was Republican and I really wasn’t into politics, but I enjoyed going out and planning these events.

Q: I would think that some people could take their politics really seriously and be very difficult to work with.

CODUS: (laughter) Tell me! I just enjoyed it and CBS gave me the time off to do a couple of trips in that 1964 period. Eventually in 1966, Nixon came back into to picture, and they called me again and asked me to do a couple of things. I was with CBS at the time as a director. I was able to take time off. Actually, many things could be done over the phone at that time, coordinating with the local person for transportation or hotel accommodations. I would have my list of things to do, and the local representative did the work.

One thing led to another, I was still at CBS, and CBS network called me. They were going to have a big event in New York City. They had 300 people from CBS from all over the country for this big meeting, and they asked me if I could get Nixon as the guest speaker. I contacted his secretary—he was living on Fifth Avenue then—and he agreed to do it. I went and picked him up with a car and driver. We went to the place for the luncheon, he talked, and that was it. He was an introvert in the car. The only thing that interested him was government and sports. However, you talk about a gem of a woman, Mrs. Nixon. I worked for her for several years, travelling around the world with her, which was rather interesting.

Q: Was CBS concerned about your growing association with one political party?

CODUS: No, because it was clearly to their advantage, since I could bring Nixon into their meeting. Also, I began to have an association with George Bush. There was a dinner event in Williamsburg and they had Henry Kissinger as a speaker, but he dropped out. So they contacted me and asked if I could get someone. At that time Bush was the CIA Director. I had met him a couple of times. So through his secretary, I asked if he would be available to do this event in Williamsburg. The secretary said when he gets back I will have him call you, and he agreed. That was quite interesting. There were a lot of interesting things I saw happen.

Q: For more background, let me ask how did you like working for CBS?

CODUS: I enjoyed it because it was not just sitting behind a desk. I was a salesman. I like the idea of getting out, talking to people and trying to sell the property; you know, why my property was better than the competitor's. I enjoyed and profited by it.

Q: Your time coincides with the rise of television. How did that impact?

CODUS: Well, I was strictly on the radio side, except for one or two television things, which were fairly nebulous. I made a lot of money in it, and of course, when television came, then it was such a time that I got pulled out. Then I left CBS and got into government.

Q: Did you see television as taking over? At one point, commentators were saying radio was dead.

CODUS: That's right. That was the commentary at the time FM came in. As I mentioned before, stations were simulcasting the same programs over AM and FM frequencies, until the FCC regulations banned that practice. That's when they got into all that rock and roll stuff. At that time, as an individual or a company you couldn't own more than five television stations or seven radio stations. But the radio stations broadcast on both AM and FM, so that was actually 14 stations. So money was being made on the FM side.

Q: My understanding is that an FM signal doesn't have the same range as AM, yet it has better tone qualities.

CODUS: Actually, I think FM has as much range as AM. And yes, FM does have better tone. When we switched from AM on CBS, FM was a so-called "personality" station, WCBS radio. FM was the music station. Rock and roll changed that. Your demographics on the AM station influenced the news station. Your demographics were 35-plus years of age, the older people. Now on the FM side, it was rock and roll and things like that, and it had a longer reach on the perimeter. When we split AM and FM and I took over the FM, we called it the young sound. We gave that name to it, the young sound, because the AM was geared to the 35-plus, and FM was to be youth. With FM, we called it the young sound, and then we sold it to all upper income stations around the country to buy our

young sound. Then eventually the other FM stations would copy it, but they did buy our young sound and then I left.

Q: My son works in the business and he tells me I'm not even on their demographic charts, I'm too old! Now when you got married, where did you live?

CODUS: When I was a bachelor, sometimes I lived at home. I rented an efficiency apartment in New York on 34th street for \$60 per month. The building even had a doorman. We got married in the cathedral at Rockefeller Center. Then we had an apartment in Queens. Then the three children started coming, and we moved to Rockville Centre, out on Long Island next to Carter City. We had an old Dutch colonial house. It was very nice. At that time, I was with WEED and CBS. It was a very homey house.

Q: From your perspective, how would you describe the high command at CBS?

CODUS: Yes, Bill Paley and others, but I wasn't involved with those. Paley was more interested in the television side of CBS, not radio where I was. We had a vice president. As interesting as I found it, they didn't fire me, I left to pursue other interests.

Q: Did you find it was beginning to be too competitive between the television and radio cultures?

CODUS: There was competition, but still we did well on it. I had a good income.

Q: I recall reading about concern that radio was dead and the opposite turned out to be the case.

CODUS: That's right. Radio is still popular, in the car, and in other places. I had great experiences selling radio time.

Q: At your level, did issues of government restrictions or regulations come into play?

CODUS: Yes, on WPAT, which was the good music station I worked at, on the hour, the quarter hour, half hour, and three quarter hour would have three commercials. And each of those times we didn't overdo it. And most of the time it was long music, which most people liked. Instead of these other stations where every so often there was a commercial interrupting the program. That is why WPAT, which they called a New Jersey station, but they had an antenna that covered all of New York City. WCBS AM and FM... It was quite interesting, you know, when you had (indistinct words "to towel slim") to do this and couldn't do that. And then, of course, cigarette smoking. You couldn't, I don't think, on television. You had to keep it separated at some times. With WPAT, you had to have only three commercials on the hour and every quarter hour, and you couldn't do any more. But nowadays, you have commercials coming in every other day, could be any minute; as well as television interrupting. And then there were times when you couldn't advertise liquor. You couldn't advertise a number of things at that time. It became so open, as you know. Today you look at television and you see all these things.

Q: You have already had some experience with being an advance man. How did the transition to government occur?

CODUS: So what happened was that I did that advance work and then Nixon became president. Now before he was elected, I was in the Waldorf Astoria for three months. That's when Nixon won [election day was November 5, 1968] and he did his acceptance at that time. So I lived in the Waldorf then because they were going to have this big event, thinking that he was going to win. Of course, they were going to do it whether he won or lost. I had 750 rooms that I rented; I'll never forget that. I was doing things in between, such as advance work in Minor, North Dakota, and Casper, Wyoming. I got the dregs of it. Then President Nixon won. I went back to CBS, and then I got the call from his secretary or Dwight Chapin who was his go-fer, calling me asking me to go to Europe. I'd just gotten back to CBS after three months! He said he would like me to go to advance Europe. I said, "I'm sorry. There is no way I can do it. I just got back to my job."

So, I didn't go. However, in the meantime, I got a call from a friend of mine. He said, "I got a call from three people, Frank Shakespeare, who worked at CBS and I knew of, Maurice Sands. (indistinct words), and I got a call from Emil Mosbacher, who was to be the Chief of Protocol."

They invited me to Washington. Now Cortney did not know each had called me. I didn't tell them I was meeting with someone else. I met with all three and they all offered me a job. One job was for Congress; one was for USIA (United States Information Agency); and the third was in the Office of Protocol. I was interested in USIA, because it was communications and I knew Frank (Shakespeare).

When Mosbacher called, both of us were in New York. I went to see him at the Waldorf Towers. He was looking for an assistant in protocol. There was an assistant chief of protocol for ceremonial affairs, an assistant chief for visits, and an assistant chief for public affairs, media issues.

I was interested in the USIA offer, but Frank made it clear there was a lot of travel involved. I was married and had children by then. What made me take Mosbacher's offer, I don't know. I didn't know anything about protocol. However, I looked into it and got a call from the White House to advance a trip for President Nixon to Indonesia.

[Ed: In his first Asia trip, President Nixon visited the Philippines (July 26-27, 1969), Indonesia (July 27-28, 1969), Thailand (July 28-30, 1969), and Vietnam (July 30, 1969). He went on to India, Pakistan, Romania, and the UK (July 31-August 3, 1969)].

President Suharto invited him over. I went and stayed there three weeks and planned the whole routine, you know, the hotels and whatnot. While I was there, I received a call from Mosbacher and I told him I wanted an FSO-1 in terms of rank and salary. I told him, if he can give me the top grade I would consider it. So he called me in Indonesia and said, "Get your ass back here. You're hired."

Now, what was I going to do? I didn't know anything about protocol. Well, it was the most interesting job I had because when the President invited these visitors, we did all the planning with their ambassador.

Q: Let's talk a little but about Mosbacher. What was your impression?

CODUS: He was good. He would get a little nervous now and then or get angry at people in the office because they weren't doing things right. He had an assistant chief of protocol for ceremonies who gave him a lot of problems.

Q: Before we move into your work at protocol, what were you doing in Indonesia?

CODUS: Advancing for the President, sorting out where he was going to stay, where the strap-hangers were going to stay, although the secret service does most of the work, you know. The advance man does everything that we are told to do; what the President likes; does he have one room, two rooms? Then there is the First Lady: do they want to be together? Minute and personal things. This is a lot of detailed work, but you have a lot of staff, although in the beginning I think there were only four of us; three secret service (agents) and myself. We were there two weeks, that's going way back, you know.

Q: How did you find the Embassy?

CODUS: I can't remember his name, but he was the number two guy in the embassy. He was the greatest guy, the most helpful guy. I tell you, the one that we had, he was such a gem. After I left, we kept in touch. And, of course, he came back to Washington and we got together. What was his name?

[Ed: Jack Lydman, according to the State Department booklet Key Officers of the Foreign Service, May 1969.]

Francis Galbraith was the Ambassador [serving from July 19, 1969 to February 3, 1974]. It was interesting. You have to work with the locals and you had security there. And of course, the whole rest of the entourage, White House communications, come in, and then the press and others.

Q: Now, I've heard that the advance team, particularly early in an administration is pretty new, perhaps inexperienced, and are therefore appear incredibly demanding, wanting things just so. Did you find this the case?

CODUS: I didn't have a problem, honestly, and I had been in on the early days of the campaign when it was just Nixon himself, and you have to count on the local people when you go into a new town and try to ferret out which is the best thing. In other words, I know so much about the foreign service people, they have been good to me and I have been good to them, because I have done this before.

Q: Advance work involves liaison with the local government, but sometimes you have advance people who from ego, personality, or title take on the mantle of “working for the President” and make unrealistic demands of the local authorities.

CODUS: Being an advance person with considerable experience, you learn things. And I knew that the foreign service people were there to help. To my knowledge, I never had any problem with an embassy in any place I went to. You always get more cooperation with a little sugar. But DCM Lydman was a prince; anything you wanted. You have to listen to the embassy, because you are on their territory.

Eventually I handled Mrs. Nixon’s travels. In other words, when she went to these other countries, I advanced her. She was a very lovely woman, and not demanding at all. We advanced Liberia, Ghana and the Ivory Coast. In Liberia, it was also the inauguration of the president [Mrs. Nixon visited Liberia, Ghana, and the Ivory Coast in January of 1972 as Special Ambassador to the Inauguration of President Tolbert of Liberia]. From there, we were to travel to Ghana and the Ivory Coast. We went on the advance. We were twelve people, including secret service and a doctor. We had the old Columbine, the airplane, that took us there. She was such a lady. She didn’t like people pushing her into things, and she didn’t like to be pressured. What she liked to do was visit schools and hospitals, mainly those two things. She was very low key. She said we don’t need a lot of people. She often said to me, “Why do you have to have so many people around you?”

I would point out that twelve is not that much, during the trip there would be more. But anyway, the DCM was very helpful. We would say that Mrs. Nixon would like to visit an orphanage, or that Mrs. Woods would take her to a place she wanted to see. On the advance, we would query the embassy about what they would like Mrs. Nixon to see or do. Most often when we got together back in Washington, she would agree to do it. The only thing she did not like was, when we would go into an orphanage, or even a hospital, with babies. I remember it was pretty bad, we went in and the press comes go right in with the cameras and all that. It is total chaos with the children yelling and screaming. And she said, “If you want me to do more of this, please don’t let the press in.”

I’m just recalling it will be one hundred years this March that she’s dead [The former first lady, Thelma Catherine (Pat) Nixon was born March 16, 1912 and died June 22, 1993]

When I went on that first advance to Liberia, she asked me to do all of her international advances, to advance and accompany.

Q: From time to time presidents use their wives’ travel to advance U.S. interests. Was that the case here? To go to places or events they don’t have the time for?

CODUS: The same thing was true for Mrs. Nixon. In early March 1974, in Latin America there were two inaugurations. One president in Caracas, Venezuela, and the other was in Brasilia, Brazil. The events were three days apart. So, the President sent Mrs. Nixon down to both and he did not come. She did everything they wanted her to do; meet and greet, and see this, and do that.

Then there were other visits. I mentioned that we went to the Ivory Coast. Another time, we went to Indonesia [July 1969]. I'm trying to think of some of the other trips: Russia [May 22-29, 1972], Soviet Ukraine [May 29-30 1972], and Latin America.

Q: Going back to the Office of Protocol in the Department, how did you find the atmosphere?

CODUS: Well, Mosbacher was the Chief of Protocol. There was a deputy chief. Then you had four assistant chiefs of protocol for ceremonial affairs; visits. My position was special protocol services and public affairs. While those positions were primarily non-career appointments, most of the staff of the Office of Protocol were career civil service people on whom you had to rely. At the same time, Mosbacher from time to time would say, "Well we don't do it that way now."

In other words, you have a new president with different ideas of how he wants things done. In some ways it was quite a challenge, but at the same time, you have to remember the deep experience of the career people. They know what's going on, so you get the best of both worlds. If you treat them terribly, you won't get their best performance. I would say we got along with all of them.

Q: Doesn't the White House have its own Chief of Protocol?

CODUS: No, not at all. The Chief of Protocol is housed in the State Department, but works for both the White House and the State Department. The White House has its social secretary, but there is only one Chief of Protocol, who is appointed by the president.

Q: How did Mosbacher get along with the White House, given what we know about Haldeman and these other hard-charging White House staffers? These weren't warm and fuzzy people.

CODUS: I kind of surmised that eventually Mosbacher would get annoyed, not only with them, but the White House would insist on an assistant chief of protocol for ceremonies. The White House told Mosbacher he had to take him. He was a wealthy guy. I won't mention names, but he would not do things that Mosbacher wanted him to do. It was bad, really bad. He was a nice guy, but he would not be kind to Mosbacher. It was I'll-do-my-own-thing type of attitude. It was sad. Mosbacher was good. He was tough. I got along with him fine.

In fact, when there is a state dinner or an official dinner, there is a procedure involved in terms of who comes and how it is handled by our office, as well as the White House, whereby the chief of state would stay at the Blair House. And now they are invited to go over to the state dinner. Now there is a lot of planning that has to be done when you have an official party of twelve, with the president or foreign minister or prime minister. So I would escort the official party in advance. This would be with their ambassador or

foreign minister. I would take them over in advance to the White House. Then I would take the foreign minister up to the private quarters, while the rest of the official party would be down mingling with the guests. Then at a certain time, Mosbacher would pick up the chief of state and bring him over to the front portico, and then President and Mrs. Nixon, or whomever it was, would meet and greet them right at the front entrance and take them upstairs for a private conversation. When they went upstairs, I would then come down and go to the ceremonial room where all the guests were meeting.

At a certain time, there would be a receiving line. The president and his wife and the chief of state standing there in the room and the people would be coming around greeting them. Mosbacher was notable in his own right, so people knew him. So it got a little iffy, because as you went through the line and shook hands, his hand first, and Nixon is standing next to him, and Nixon used to get annoyed. Finally, Nixon just wanted people just to go through and shake hands. So, a letter was sent to Mosbacher by Goldman, asking Mosbacher to meet and greet the official party and take them inside and circulate and have his deputy Bill Codus do the introductions (at the head of the receiving line). When Mosbacher was there, people would shake his hand and talk for a while. So, when I would come back down from the upstairs, I would get in line with the president, his wife, and the other couple, and I would stand shoulder to shoulder with Nixon, with my hands behind my back. I would instruct the aide to tell the person in line to give his name to Bill Codus. Some people would still stick their hand out, and I wouldn't cut them off. So, from then on I had the majordomo duty and I would get an interesting list ahead of time, a confidential list of what to say, people's birthdays, or something like this.

Q: The reception line is so common to the practice of diplomacy, but hard on the support staff. Once, I was stationed in Germany and we had to get our introductions perfect, which was challenging because many of the Germans who came to these events still had these long noble titles. That was tough.

CODUS: I have to tell you stories, two in particular. I would get a confidential list from Rose Mary Woods, the president's secretary, and the list would have personalized comments. She gave the President the same list and I could remind him of what was on the list – perhaps someone had just had a wedding, or whatever the event was.

Now, what I wanted to tell you was that faux pas happen all the time when the aide introduces the guests as they come into the reception area, before the president arrives. The announcement is made as each guest comes in: Ambassador and Mrs. So-in-so, or Mr. and Mrs. So-in-so. In this one case, it was

On another occasion, President and Mrs. Ford were entertaining the cousin of (Egyptian president) Anwar Sadat. The event was not held in the White House. The first night, President Ford had the White House dinner for Sadat. And the next night, Sadat was Ford's guest, in the Society of Cincinnati, the building that is right here on Massachusetts Avenue.

[Ed: The Society's national headquarters, containing a museum and research library, is also known as Larz Anderson House. It is located at 2118 Massachusetts Avenue, NW in the Dupont Circle-Embassy Row neighborhood of Washington, D.C.]

It's a nice building. There was dinner with music and such, and then it was time for toasts. So President Sadat gets up makes a few comments, etcetera, etcetera, and then introduces President Ford, "Would you please stand up and raise your glasses" and so on.

So everyone gets up. And now President Ford gets up, I love him dearly, but he is kind of clumsy at times. So he starts his toast, etcetera, and he finishes it by saying, "Now ladies and gentlemen would you please join me in a toast to the president of Israel."

I'll never forget that!

Q: Did you find that you had to mollify the people at the White House from time to time? I don't mean the President, but staffers who maybe think they qualified to attend a White House dinner?

CODUS: I don't recall having any problems. When the guest list was developed, it was generally the principal and his wife and then the so-called official party, which may be twelve people. But then, I didn't get into that. It was the people at the White House who handle that. If their president or the guest wants to have one or two more people, they would take care of that. Like I remember we had President (Giovanni) Leone of Italy and Nelson Rockefeller and Happy were entertaining up there in (words indistinct) or wherever it was. And it was a luncheon for President Leone that Rockefeller was hosting, and the ambassador insisted all the children that came with him be seated at the table. There may have been three children; they were young. So we went through the charade of telling the Rockefellers you have to do more. Of course, you do it, and the next thing you know, the children don't show up. They asked me "Why didn't you at least tell us, because everything was all set?"

But things do fall apart, but in this case it was not our fault.

Q: You were doing this for how long?

CODUS: Well, I was doing Nixon [January 20, 1969-August 9, 1974], Ford [August 9, 1974-January 20, 1977], (George H.W.) Bush I [January 20, 1989-January 20, 1993]. In addition to doing that, I was doing more stuff than I was doing for Ford (words indistinct), then of course Bush. I was involved when he was CIA director. And then when Clinton came in [January 20, 1993], I stayed on for about a month more. They asked me to stay. I was at Protocol then and of course I had to leave.

Q: This looks like a good place to stop. We can pick it up and talk more about the Nixon period and also the resignation, and how that affected people, and then we can talk about...

Today is February 22, 2012, Washington's birthday, with Bill Codus. We were just talking off line about the visit of the cosmonauts. Why don't we start there?

CODUS: What happened was Frank Borman, the astronaut, was invited to Russia by the cosmonauts. He spent two weeks traveling around with his wife [July 1969]. This was at a time, 1971, when the first launch was Apollo 10 [launched May 18, 1969; returned May 26, 1969] and then Apollo 11 [launched July 16, 1969; landed on the moon July 20, 1969]. He came back and he came to the Office of Protocol and met with Ambassador Mosbacher and myself, and he said he invited the cosmonauts in reciprocity and we had to have you people to plan this. So, Ambassador Mosbacher turned to me and said, "Codus, you plan the visit, a two-week visit."

This two-week visit [in October 1969] would be around the United States. Of course we had a presidential plane to take us. The interesting thing was, when we first met them, they came in at New York, and we had quite an array and Frank Borman met them there. We stayed at the Waldorf Towers. We spent two days in New York and then toured around the United States. The people we met started with Georgy Beregovoy and his wife was Lidya Beregovoy-Huff. And he had a son named Victor Beregovoy, who came. There was another cosmonaut named Mister (Konstantin) Feoktistov and another man Colonel Ivan Sklar. To this day, I will always remember those names and I will tell you why.

Mosbacher and I stayed back after Borman left and he said, "You plan this trip."

At that time, my family was living in Long Island and I was back down in Washington, because I had just started with the State Department. Rosemary and I sat down and sketched a plan. We knew we had to go to the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. We planned this, knowing that we had an entourage of about 20, which included the five of them, the photographers, a doctor, security, etcetera. Fortunately, we were given a plane. Now going to these cities, the issue was who would play host. Space exploration was so popular at the time that probably the mayor or the governor would host.

At the same time, I had to ferret out something to do besides who was going to entertain us. Fortunately, I knew some people of means, so from Washington, we went to Williamsburg (Virginia). It's a nice place to take people to see the age of the United States. The people there were very kind in taking them around, putting them in horse drawn carriages and taking them to the historical shops, etcetera, etcetera. And they fired off the guns and things like that, and they really enjoyed it. From there, we went to another area that had to do with astronauts. It was somewhere in the immediate area, which I don't recall just now.

After that, we flew down to Florida to the Space Center. At that time my wife was still back home, but I asked her to come with us. So her mother arranged to stay with the babies and Rosemary flew down with us to the Space Center. She thought this was going to be so nice since we were going to meet all the astronauts, as well as the cosmonauts.

When we went into the dining room where all of them were, all the astronauts had their names in Russian. So she didn't know one from the other.

I'm going to have to digress a bit. Before we went down there, I got a call from the White House to say that the President wanted to see them. So we had to cancel everything the next day. I then called Ambassador Mosbacher to say that we will be coming up and we will be up at such and such a time and the President will receive them. I asked if he would be there to greet them. He said no, you take care of it, because you are with them.

So I had taken a three by five-inch card on which I had written their names: General Beregovoy; Madame Beregovoy; Colonel Ivan Sklar; Mister Feoktistov. I had this in my hand because I knew when I got in the Oval Office I would have to introduce them to the President. At the same time we had Ambassador Dobrynin and Frank Borman. We are escorted in, and I'm walking in, and I got up to the President and I couldn't get the card out of my pocket! But Ambassador Dobrynin stepped up and introduced everyone.

At the same time I was contemplating, what are we going to do with these people? We planned to go to Detroit. Detroit wanted to see us, to see new cars, which we did. We went to the Space Center, which was interesting. We then flew from Detroit to California.

I was looking for someone to entertain them, since we were going to go to San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco. We also went to the Grand Canyon. We stopped on the way. That was really nice. We actually rode on the donkeys. Half way down, it was rather frightening. Someone said, "Why don't you ask Kirk Douglas?"

I said I knew Kirk Douglas from the movies, but that was all. Well, the person who said that went on to say that he thought Kirk Douglas' father was a Russian Jew. So through the White House, I called and introduced myself, and I said I am escorting the Russian astronauts, we are coming to Los Angeles, and would you be interested in entertaining them?

He said he certainly would. Well, I tell you to this day I still stay in touch with him, he's 94, I believe.

We then went to San Diego. We did various things: the Zoo, Mission Bay, things of that nature, and also had the mayor greet them. Then when we got to Los Angeles, we were then invited to Kirk Douglas' home. And I am telling you he had an array of celebrities who don't usually go to these things. They'd go to award ceremonies and things like that, but not go to someone's private home. You name it and that person was there: Clint Eastwood, Goldie Hawn, and Edward G. Robinson. All the big wigs were there. From there we went to the home of a producer to see a film, which was a film on astronauts, I don't remember the name, in which they got lost in space.

We then went to San Francisco and did the whole tour of Golden Gate Bridge, various other spots, and met with the mayor, Joseph Alioto at that time. We went to Muir Woods and places like that, and then flew back to New York. We said farewell there. It was

interesting that at every stop and after each event, as we parted company, General Beregovoy and our group, we would take them to where they were staying and General Beregovoy would turn around and say “veal.”

Q: Doesn't that mean “well done?”

CODUS: When we got to New York and they got up to the plane, and there are all these people around, he yelled out “veal.” Thumbs up. I did see him again when I went to Russia with President Nixon. To this very day too, I am still in touch with Kirk Douglas. He said to me as we were leaving, “Bill, if there is anything that I can do for your visitors, don't hesitate to call.” That was just their mistake.

Q: Did you find introducing Hollywood to foreign visitors impressed the foreign visitor?

CODUS: Yes. Definitely. When I introduced Kirk Douglas and President and Mrs. Sadat, they came to the hotel. Sadat invited Kirk and Anne to see Egypt. He had a good time. He was interested into looking into Arabian stallions and such. Then I had President (Josip Broz) Tito of Yugoslavia, who came on a state visit [October 27-November 2, 1971] and we ended up in Palm Springs.

This is a story in itself, if I may. President Tito and Madame Broz did the usual in Washington and then we went to some other sites. I don't remember them right now, but we did go out west. And the ambassador said to me that they would like to go to some place where there are mountains and lakes and such. Well, we ended up in Palm Springs. At the same time in planning this visit, we tried to ferret out from our guests what they would like to see. Movies were raised, and President Tito said yes. Yes, he would like to see True Grit.

They had the ability to show movies on the aircraft. But it wasn't until we got to Palm Springs that President Tito said he wanted to see a cowboy movie. I said that if we had known ahead of time, we would have had it right on the plane. So, here we are calling around – I even called Frank Sinatra's home, but I didn't talk to him – to see if we could borrow a studio. I never got an answer on that. Then I called Kirk Douglas. Again, I used the White House switchboard to call Kirk Douglas in California. I got him on the phone, I said “Hi, Kirk, this is Bill, I'm here in Palm Springs with President Tito.”

He said, “Where are you?”

I said, “Palm Springs.”

He said, “I'm right down the road.”

He had a home in Palm Springs. “Well,” he said, “Sinatra has a studio.”

I said, “We tried that; it didn't happen.”

We had even checked the movie theaters in town. Lo and beyond, we turned on television in our rooms and there was the movie True Grit! Do you remember that movie? [Released in 1969] Starring John Wayne?

Q: How did you find Tito to work with? I was stationed in Yugoslavia for five years.

CODUS: He was very pleasant, but some visitors you know are much more enlightening and do things, and others are very serious about it, meet somebody, but they don't want to do anything outside (the schedule). I know with [Former Romanian President Nicolae] Ceausescu, we took them to Hollywood to Universal Studios. That was kind of a come on. There is a story in that too.

The arrangement was that when a ranking visitor, such as a head of state, or a prime minister, or king, or reigning monarch would come, there were various specific protocols involved. At that time, it was seven days for a state visit. Usually two days in Washington and the rest around the country. When President Ceausescu came on a state visit, we did all the planning. Of course, they themselves chimed in, the ambassador tells us that they want to go to Cleveland. Cleveland has a large Romanian community.

I'm just trying to remember one thing about what he did. Oh yes, we took him to Williamsburg. Now what happens is they come in, we bring them into the air force base [Langley Air Force Base] and then from there we try to take them somewhere else in the peripheral area to catch up on jetlag. The next day, they come to Washington for the start of their schedule. Williamsburg was used this way.

Well, Ceausescu came, landed, and we took him to Williamsburg. Of course, he could not speak any English. Carl Humelsine, does that name ring a bell? Humelsine used to be at the State Department and was the president of Colonial Williamsburg. They had put Tito in a special house, which was the Williamsburg house; it has some other name, I can't remember which one it was now. It's the one right by the inn. So, Humelsine hosted a luncheon for President Ceausescu and his party, maybe 15 or 20. We were at the inn and we had an oval table. I'll never forget that. Ceausescu didn't speak any English, wore a scarf, and looked cold.

Sitting next to Ceausescu, Carl Humelsine asks him, "Do you like sports?"

He says, "Ahh, volleyball."

So Carl says something to his aide. So, lunch ends without much exchange, except the comment that Ceausescu likes volleyball. We leave there and we start walking down, passing the historic houses. So, as we are walking down, I said to the (security) agent that we didn't want to take him around back, we wanted to take him around front as though we were going in. Remember we have a whole entourage.

So we walked around and take President Ceausescu around the back. There is a volleyball net set up. Well, he just grinned at that. We took off our jackets, and with five

on his side and five on my side, we played volleyball. He had President Ceausescu, his wife, Ambassador Bongon and his wife, and Mr. Cella, the interpreter. On our side, it was Carl Humelsine, Mary Humelsine, yours truly, Dick Sessions and one other person. We are playing volleyball, back and forth, and Ceausescu cheated. You know, he would get close to the net and kind of pull it down to hit the ball. So, back and forth we went. Ceausescu hit the ball and I am back there and I go to hit it and my pants, ripped right open, right down the center. It's in Sports Illustrated. I think I have a picture. I'm protocol. I did that purposely (laughter).

Q: While you were organizing these visits, did you have points to make diplomatically?

CODUS: Do you mean using the opportunity to talk seriously? There were several of us sitting around, but with Ceausescu, of course, he didn't speak any English and we didn't speak Romanian, so you go through an interpreter. We would also have a State Department person from the area. At the same time on that trip, every stop we made, we had an astronaut and his wife meet and greet at that place.

When the Emperor (Hirohito) of Japan came [September 30-October 13, 1975], he came in, landed at the air force base, but stayed at Williamsburg two nights. This was during the Ford Administration. That was quite an interesting visit too.

Q: How did that work out?

CODUS: It worked out very well, but I was a little surprised. In all our planning, they go like we do, three months to six months in advance, to ferret out what has to be done. The (Japanese) advance team came in and we actually went to the places where the Emperor and Empress were going to be. They came into Williamsburg. Henry Kissinger met them there and then took them to the house, the Allen Bird House. And then the next day, he stayed two days there to catch up on the jet lag. The next day, we flew by helicopter to the White House. Not to the White House grounds, but outside the gate where the Christmas tree is. At that time it wasn't there. We would land right there and cut the motorcade right around to the White House. The President who would greet them there and then they would have the official ceremony.

The story that I heard, I don't know how true it is, but maybe you might know. Back in the day, going back to the Johnson era now, when French President Charles de Gaulle invited the President and Lady Bird Johnson to France, the motorcade went up the Champs Élysées. Thousands of people were there. Then President Ford invited de Gaulle to the United States. At that time they did not do the arrival ceremonies at the White House. They would land at National Airport and motorcade through town. There were people on the streets, but not to the extent as in France. That was quite embarrassing. From then on, they switched the arrival ceremony to the White House. It was President Ford who did it and they issued tickets to people in the various government agencies to take two or three hours off and attend the ceremony. And that's how that all started.

This made it easier. They come into Andrews Air Force Base and then we, by helicopter most of the time, flying, I think it took 52 minutes or something like that, and we would land where the Christmas tree was to be and then the motorcade would come around. Then they changed that and they put the Christmas tree there. Then they would go by motorcade rather than by chopper. You had to have three helicopters; one for the luggage and two for the entourage. That's quite expensive.

Q: How about the visit of the Queen of England [July 6-11, 1976]? I imagine it would be quite a...?

CODUS: It was great. The Queen of England was very, very lovely. The advance team came in. So, Sir Philip Moore [the Queen's Private Secretary], I remember him, used to be number two, not the Queen's chief of protocol, but Phil Moore. He came and he met us, our group in protocol, after the talks about what they were going to. This is 1976, you know, when she came, during the American bicentennial. This time, she did not go to the west coast. She was mostly on the east coast. After we did the whole thing and they were ready to leave for England, Philip Moore said to me, "Bill, I would like you to walk ten paces in front of Her Majesty."

In other words, we would plan the whole route, where the crowds were. We would try to locate someone who was holding a baby. It was all planned in a sense. She was very nice though.

She arrived in New York. Her husband, Prince Philip, was really a tee. Terrible, Terrible. You know, she walking in front and he's behind her and he gets annoyed. He is not very pleasant, I'm sorry to say. Nice, but not pleasant. The stories I could tell. Anyway, the visit was very lovely. She was very special. In fact I have books, pictures of it. At the events she had, she invited Rosemary and myself.

She came on the royal yacht Britannia, and she stayed at Blair House. When we then went to New York, they brought the boat to New York. I think they flew up to New York and they stayed at the Waldorf Towers. There was planned a big luncheon for about 3,000 people in the grand ballroom. When the luncheon was over, we toured up to Harlem. When we came in at the area where the Twin Towers were later built. She was very special, not demanding in any way, but I liked what Sir Philip said to me, "Bill, walk ten paces ahead."

We would try to pick out spots where there could be a photo opportunity. He said what the Queen liked to do is go for a walkabout. There were a couple of incidents. They brought the Britannia up to New York City...

(crosstalk)

(looking at a picture) .. and there is [Chief of Protocol, 1974-1976] Henry Catto and that is me. You can see I'm walking ten paces ahead? We got to the Battery and—this is not in

order—this is Arlington Cemetery. These invitations were given to either Rosemary or myself, which is quite nice.

Q: I'm looking at these pictures of the Queen of course. This is 1976, and she looks much younger. You know all of us have somehow gotten a little bit older in the meantime.

CODUS: Well, sure, look at this.

Q: You look twelve (years old).

CODUS: Here is [Massachusetts Governor Michael] Dukakis [1975-1979, 1983-1987] in Boston, and Henry Catto. The Queen had her yacht, the Britannia, up to Boston and they gave us one room on the yacht. So Henry Catto and his wife took that. But we had to make plans how to get to Boston ahead of time. I knew Malcolm Forbes, because when we went to New York I called some other man I knew who had a yacht, but his yacht was somewhere else, and he said that I should call Malcolm Forbes. I didn't know Malcolm Forbes, but I introduced myself and I said to him, "We are coming up with the Queen of England. She has the royal yacht and then we have to go up the river. Would you be interested in escorting Her Majesty?"

He said. "I will check my schedule" and "Yes, coincidentally the boat is yours."

So here is her big yacht and we had the frigate, which is their police boat. Then we had our security fireboat, and then the little Malcolm Forbes job, which is 142 feet and it looks like a canoe!

She was very nice. They had a big reception. This is the Malcolm Forbes' yacht and this gentleman is British. They didn't have any room for him on the yacht, so we gave him... They were very nice. At the very end, they had a dinner party and it was only for 19, with President Ford and Mrs. Ford. People have taken this (a photo album) and taken it apart. I'm sorry it is in such bad shape, because it really captures...in New York. She (the Queen) is right there. They wouldn't do that anymore.

Q: Was there any, I don't know how to ask this, was there a trip from hell that you can think of any one of your...?

CODUS: I would say when Italian President Giovanni Leone came, it wasn't hell, but we made preparations for meeting people, and having luncheons and dinners. Nelson and Happy Rockefeller invited President Leone and his wife up to Pocantico, their estate up there.

[Ed: Kykuit also known as John D. Rockefeller Estate, is now a 40-room National Trust house in Westchester County, New York].

In our entourage were [Chief of Protocol] Henry Cabot and his wife, and a few other people. Then there was the entourage of President Leone and his wife. This was to be a

small lunch at Pocantico. A member of his staff said they had three children and that they wanted the children included. So we said we would take care of it. But the children didn't want to go. We didn't know about it until the end. We had all the place settings done. And the party came up, but they wanted to ride around in the scooters up there. It was very last minute.

Q: How did the Watergate affair with the ultimate resignation of President Nixon, how did that affect your work?

CODUS: Not really. The visits still came in. Let me move all this stuff aside (rustling of paper).

Q: Some visits might be complicated by protests. Emperor Hirohito's visit, for example, and his role in World War II.

CODUS: We were very concerned about demonstrations throughout. The first one was in New York. I know one was in San Diego, California. It was nothing about the war; it was save the whales. We didn't see anything like "Remember Pearl Harbor." There were 50 to 75 demonstrators at the save the whale protests. That was quite interesting, because the Emperor is so revered, you know. I remember when we stayed at the Waldorf Towers, they must have had 3,000 people in the grand ballroom. When we brought him down, and even before he and the Empress got up on the dais, they had it set like...

They came in and then they had a carpet like this (noise) and the people were (noise) all free (noise) staged here (noise) and walked down this carpet (noise) and people were like this (noise). They were very easy to work with really. Here is the (noise), yes, here it is (noise), see at this time why I had my hand like that because press and people tried to come running up. And that is why. And then you will see Henry Kissinger...(noise). Very nice; they were very pleasant people.

There again is Williamsburg. They toured Williamsburg. Here's the arrival ceremony. They hosted a dinner for the President and Mrs. Ford.

Q: Did they look at the cherry trees, which I think were donated to Washington in 1912?

CODUS: Yes, here it is right here. They took us right here, to this. They donated that thing. Then we took them to Mount Vernon, George Washington's house and burial place. You might know some of these people. We flew with them in an airplane to Chicago. The Chief of Protocol at that time was Mrs. Robin Duke, Ambassador, wife of A. Biddle Duke, right here.

[The State Department website notes that Mrs. Robin Duke was a recess appointment as Ambassador to Norway from September 2000 to March 2001. In October 1975, Henry Catto was Chief of Protocol.]

This was in New York. This man right here was Jerry Parr, does that name ring a bell? He is the secret service agent that saved President Reagan.

They were very nice people to work with. Here is one of their people, with a distinguished title, Chamberlain. Now here he is at the Rockefellers, hosting. Here are Nelson and Happy. Here is Mayor of Chicago Richard Daley. I always liked Mayor Daley. Every time we brought a dignitary, there he would put on a show with an Irish theme. The water of the Chicago River was green. There would be a motorcade. Now here is the second bus that we took them to a farm. That's the bus right there. Then we took them to Los Angeles. That's the greeting at the hotel. Then we visited San Diego and then the San Diego Zoo. That's when we had some demonstrators outside. Here we went to Hawaii. He passed away. (Los Angeles Mayor Thomas) Bradley. He was very nice. We took them to Disneyland. In San Francisco, we had one demonstration about save the whales. Now this is Hawaii. Now they are bidding farewell. This is the ambassador. It was easy to work with them, very easy.

(Noise)

Q: How about President Sadat?

CODUS: President Sadat. I went to Egypt with Mrs. Nixon and Nancy Kissinger. My job was to handle Mrs. Nixon [presidential visit 1974]. We tried to have the First Lady do something with Mrs. Sadat. Mrs. Sadat and President Sadat were very nice, very cordial. And then they came to the United States, when Ford was president [Oct-Nov, 1975]. To this day, I think I told you I still represent Mrs. Sadat. In fact, she is coming in tomorrow and she will have an event in Amarillo, Texas, at the end of the month at a college. Three weeks later, we have another event on Kent Island (MD). So I have been doing this for 25 years for her. I first met her when the Nixons went on a trip to Egypt.

Later, I met them when I was working with a PR (Public Relations) firm, Doremus & Company, and Coca Cola was having a problem with Egypt. The company had a plot of land that it rented. On one side was a military area where they did a lot of firing and such. Coca Cola was growing something that would help with the byproduct of Coca Cola. This was causing mayhem, because of these bombs that were going off and some of the people in this area near Coca Cola were being killed. So, there was a gentleman by the name of Sam Ayoub, who used to be president of Coca Cola for the Middle East. I went with him to Egypt to meet Sadat and also to plan the visit of the president of Coca Cola to meet Sadat to try to rectify this problem. Unfortunately Sam Ayoub just passed away. He was a very nice. I had already mentioned the Sadats when they came here to the United States and we took them around. They went down to Florida, etcetera, etcetera, and a few other places. So, I got to know President and Mrs. Sadat at that time. They came to the United States and I travelled with them. Then Sadat was assassinated [October 6, 1981]. At the same time, Mrs. Sadat, before her husband was assassinated, came to the United States and I was escorting her around. We offered protocol and security.

She had a project called Wafa' wal Amal [Mrs. Sadat established the Wafa' wal Amal (Faith and Hope) Society in Egypt in 1972] that had to do with the soldiers. It was a hospital or a hospice. She had a project that a woman was running in the United States. Mrs. Sadat asked if I would help take it over, because she was supposed to raise money and also to try to get things like wheelchairs and medical equipment for this project in Egypt. She asked me to take it over, which I did. Months later, Sadat was assassinated. She was no longer first lady of Egypt. One thing led to another and after he was assassinated, she stayed home for a year then she started to come out. And I started booking her. People were interested in her, even to this very day. Last year was kind of (indistinct word). The year before I had six bookings here in the U.S. I also travelled with her to Europe, in Paris and in Germany, I think, or London.

Q: Did you similarly get involved with Israeli officials?

CODUS: Not really. I did go to Israel with President and Mrs. Nixon [June 16-17, 1974], handling Mrs. Nixon's role in the visit, to the Kibbutz, or whatever it was, just to do an outside thing. Do you remember Golda Meir? She came to the United States several times. She came on kind of a private visit, and we provided her with an aircraft. I travelled with her. It was a fundraiser thing she was having in Florida. The funny thing was that she asked if we could call someone here in the United States while we were in the plane. She said she would like to talk to her daughter who was in Milwaukee. She gave me the number and we got her daughter on the telephone. Here we are at 30,000 feet up in the air and she is talking on the phone, blah, blah, blah. When she hangs up on her daughter, she said, "Do you know what my daughter said? She said why are you calling me from a plane? Why didn't you wait until you get on the ground to talk to me?"

But it was such a nice connection, she was trying to say how nice, we are flying at 30,000 feet. It's a little (words indistinct).

The thing that was so nice about her was that she reminded me of a Jewish mother. Rosemary and I escorted her to the Kennedy Center where the Israeli government presented a picture, or something, to the Kennedy Center. Golda Meir was staying at the Shoreham Hotel—she was not at Blair House, because it was a private visit. In fact, at that time, my wife was smoking and Golda smoked, ten packs a day. And Golda Meir said to Rosemary, "Would you like a cigarette?"

She said, "No, I shouldn't be smoking."

Anyway, to make a long story short, we got to the Kennedy Center, she made the presentation, and we left and came back to the hotel. Mrs. Meir says, "Come and join me for a bit of dinner."

She had a whole smorgasbord in her suite. I said to Rosemarie, "We ought not to stay."

But, she invited us in. So we sat down and she served us. It was very, very nice. I liked her.

Q: Did you find a difference between the Nixon and Ford Administrations, protocol-wise?

CODUS: Not really, because Mrs. Ford was very nice, and President Ford was very nice. He had been in Congress for years. They were really nice people. They were only in the White House two years. I'm trying to think who came in during the time the Fords were entertaining. I know President Sadat came on a state visit and the Fords were there.

Q: At the end of the Ford Administration [January 20, 1977,] did you move out of Protocol?

CODUS: Yes, when the Carter Administration came in. I was asked to stay on a couple of months. Gretchen Poston, the social secretary to Mrs. Carter, was a wonderful gal. She asked me to stay on, but that's when I joined the PR firm. I was a political appointee.

Q: Did you find your work with the PR firm provided much contact with the protocol office?

CODUS: Well, the company was called Doremus. It had big offices in New York, here in Washington, and a couple of other places. They hired me for the purpose of trying to get foreign governments to retain us. Lo and behold, the first clients I had were Imelda Marcos and the Philippine government. That is a story in and of itself.

Let me just finish this thought. When Carter came in, Gretchen Poston was the social secretary. She had been working as a party planner. There were three women: one was a former senator's wife, Ellen Proxmire, who was a very lovely lady; Harriet Swartz; and one other woman—yes, Barbara Boggs. They had a company called Washington Whirl Around. [The company is now known as Washington, Inc.] One of their purposes was to do parties. They started out doing weddings and then it expanded to catering events.

Gretchen had asked my help on certain things. She was very nice and invited Rosemary and me to the White House when the Pope came [Pope John Paul II came to Washington on October 6, 1979 and was received in the White House by President Carter]].

I wanted to show you something. Do you remember when we were talking about the astronauts and cosmonauts? This is when they first came into New York. I'm there and there is General Beregovoy. We would go inside and greet the people. Now there are Frank Borman, General Beregovoy, Mister Feoktistov, the Colonel right here, Sklar, and then there was the son. In this picture you see Frank Borman and another astronaut. I took them to a very famous restaurant in New York, Chez Vito. There are (Ambassador) Dobrynin and Lydia (Beregovoy). Pearl Bailey. Mohammed Ali. They were up on stage. It looks like she kissed him. There's my wife Rosemary, Lydia, and the General. He was a character. There are Frank Borman and Susan, and Rosemary and myself at the Waldorf Towers having breakfast. Then we took them on a tour.

This is in the Soviet Embassy. We toured Washington and took them on a horse-drawn carriage in Williamsburg. More Williamsburg. We were in the States several days. That's the general right there. They were very, very nice. And this is the plane we had. At every stop, we would have another astronaut and his wife. Langley Air Force Base. And Detroit.

This is Houston. That is the space center. We went to the Grand Canyon. There they are, the general, the astronaut, cosmonaut, cosmonaut, my nephew, Beregovoy and myself, my wife Rosemary. We took a mule ride at the Grand Canyon. It was frightening.

Just a second, I have a good picture to show you. San Diego is where I... This is (indistinct words-rustling) Torrey Pines. Now here is Kirk Douglas. This is his house. Now you will see Frank Sinatra. Yul Brynner was over there. The old-timers, an astronaut, and a security guy are over there. Cesar Romero. Louis Jourdan. And there is Milton Berle. There is my nephew who I had on the trip with me. Goldie Hawn. There is Natalie Wood. She's dead now. She fell off a boat. It was interesting in fact, because they didn't realize she was Russian and she was able to speak to... This is Anne Douglas. And Kirk. And then we went to Mike Frankovich's house. That is Charlton Heston. Then Disneyland. And there is San Francisco.

Do you know, to this very day, we correspond with Kirk and Anne Douglas? Every year, there are the Christmas ornaments that you get to buy at the White House. I buy a number of them and send them to my family and to friends. Every year, I send them to both Anne and Kirk, and to Shirley Temple. She was my boss and we still stay in touch. About three months ago, the telephone rang when I was at home. There is a young lady on the line said, "Is Mrs. Codus there?"

I said, "May I ask who is calling?"

She said, "Who are you?"

I said, "This is Bill Codus."

She said, "Just a moment. Just a moment."

A second later, who is on the phone but Anne. Anne said, "Ha, thank God you are alive!"

She said they got a message that someone died and it sounded like Codus. She was calling Rosemary to express her condolences. Then Anne said, "Oh, I can still count on my Christmas ornaments." I tell you.

Q: Let's break off for this session. What would you like to talk about next time?

CODUS: How I got on with a PR firm and was able to get countries to hire us, and as I mentioned, about the Philippines and Mrs. Marcos.

Q: Yes, Mrs. Marcos, she was quite a character.

CODUS: Yes, yes indeed. In fact, I will bring the book. She made me an album. When we got there, they took pictures. When we were leaving, they gave us this album. We didn't even know in some cases that our pictures were being taken.

Q: Okay, we will pick up that and also your work with the public relations firm.

CODUS: Okay, that's great.

Q: Well, I thank you very much.

CODUS: I hoped you enjoyed it.

-----Supplemental Material-----

Nixon Presidential Library and Museum
William R. Codus Exit Interview

William R. Codus was the Assistant Chief of Protocol for Visits at the Department of State and came to the White House on July 9, 1972 to manage scheduling for Mrs. Nixon, Julie Eisenhower, and Tricia and Edward Cox. His discussion of his duties in the interview included a description of his planning Mrs. Nixon's 1972 trip to Africa. A transcript of the exit interview conducted on November 29, 1972 is available at <http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/exitinterviews/codus.php>. A scan of the original typed transcript in pdf format is also at the above web site.

Mr. Codus was also a consultant for the movie Thirteen Days (released 2000), which was a dramatization of President Kennedy's administration's struggle to contain the Cuban Missile Crisis in October of 1962.

End of interview