

Veteran's Name: THOMAS ANTHONY HOMAN

Interview Date: October 4, 2011

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[Tape begins at 5:44 p.m.]

JERRY SANDVICK: This is an oral history interview with Mr. Tom Homan. The date is October 4th, 2011. The site is the Richard I. Bong Veteran's Center, Superior, Wisconsin. It's late afternoon of this date and I am the interviewer. My name is a Jerry Sandvick, S-A-N-D-V-I-C-K, and I am a volunteer here at the Bong Museum.

Tom, thank you for coming and sitting down for an interview with us. Just for the record, again, would you please say your full name and where you live now and give us your birth date, please?

THOMAS HOMAN: I am Thomas Anthony Homan, H-O-M-A-N, and I was born 11/20/42 in Lexington, Nebraska.

Q: Schooling?

A: I attended Benedictine College in Kansas and completed with the University of Maryland in Europe while I was assigned abroad with the Navy.

Q: You got your bachelors through the University of Maryland?

A: Um-hum. And then I did some graduate work at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. And, then, was offered a Foreign Service assignment and in I went to the Foreign Service.

Q: Just, again, for the record, I think we know this, but now, as a Foreign Service officer, you went through a rather rigorous training, I think, didn't you?

A: Yes.

Q: But now a Foreign Service officer is an employee of the State Department?

A: That is correct.

Q: But everybody that works for the State Department is not Foreign Service?

A: That's right.

Q: Okay.

A: It's the officer --

Q: What exactly -- what exactly does the foreign service do? I mean, what's the mission?

A: The Foreign Service is a -- staffs embassies abroad, so the Ambassador and then the -- there's a political section, which does reporting; economic session, which does reporting; public affairs or public diplomacy section, which was what I was involved with --

Q: Because of your journalism?

A: Yes. And an administrative section and those people tended to be Foreign Service officers that direct them, although not in all cases with the administrative area; and, of course, consular affairs which manages visas and passports is always Foreign Service.

Q: And lots of the Ambassadors are political appointees, but are some professional Foreign Service officers?

A: I --

Q: I don't quite understand it.

A: Yeah.

Q: I know a president can make an ambassador as a reward?

A: And they do. And they also put in some extraordinarily fit people from academia or other walks of life. Like when I was in Germany, the ambassador had been on the Counsel of Economic Advisors, Sylvester Byrnes. So it's a mix, but probably maybe 20 percent of the ambassador -- Ambassadors abroad are political and not -- as opposed to career.

Q: Um-hum.

A: And the others have come up one way or another through the ranks.

Q: Okay. So even if an Ambassador -- not necessarily is incompetent, but doesn't have a lot of experience, there are Foreign Service officers there to back him or her up, I suppose?

A: Absolutely.

Q: Where did you serve? What countries, what embassies did you serve in with the Foreign Service?

A: I started in Beirut in 1970 and then I went to Kuwait as the British left the Persian Gulf and I helped open up five embassies in the Persian Gulf; and then to Cairo in the period after the 1973 October war.

Q: Let me back up just a little bit. You went to Kuwait. Was this when the British were pulling out of Adan and that area where they had bases?

A: The British pulled out of what were called the Trucial Oman

States, which is Bahrain and Oman and Abu Dhabi and Dubai and a few other little places. And, in the latter part of 1971 -- I went there in 1972, following my rotational year of training in Beirut, Lebanon. And, then, from there, to Cairo when we renewed diplomatic relations after the hiatus brought about by the 1967 Arab Israeli war.

Q: Um-hum.

A: And so I was there for the Kissinger shuttle diplomacy.

Q: Is that when Sadat was president?

A: Sadat was the president and it was a period when the Russians were essentially asked to leave and the Americans were invited in and established a presence that endures today.

Q: Um-hum. When -- when did you serve the Navy? I know we're going to talk about your career kind of in two parts, your Foreign Service experience.

A: Um-hum.

Q: But you are, of course, a Navy veteran and...

A: I was -- I joined the Navy in September of 1962 and I served until August of 1967.

Q: So you were -- you were in the Navy during the Vietnam period?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you ever get overseas close to Vietnam? Where did you go for basic training, first of all?

A: I went to basic training at the Navy recruit depot in San

Diego.

Q: Hm...

A: And then I was aboard a ship, an aircraft carrier, out of Long Beach, California for several months. It was a new type of training. They were taking you from boot camp, putting you out to sea and then bringing you back to whatever you decided you really wanted to do.

Q: Oh, I was going to ask you what your specialty was, but you didn't have one at that point.

A: I didn't have one at that point.

Q: What carrier were you on?

A: I was on the USS Valley Forge.

Q: That was --

A: A CVS 64.

Q: Yeah, that was a World War II Midway -- Essex class, I think.

A: Yes, it was, and it had been converted -- by the time I got there, it had been converted into a --

Q: Angled deck and all that?

A: It had a straight deck.

Q: It did.

A: And it was used for helicopters and Marines.

Q: Oh, sure.

A: It had been designed for the small airplanes --

Q: Um-hum.

A: -- towards the end of war, but was never really used very much, because that changed, soon after, to the angled decks, like the Enterprise.

Q: How long were you on this, whatever you call it, orientation training session on the Valley Forge?

A: I was on for six months. And the day --

Q: I haven't heard of that before. So then the purpose is to expose you to different --

A: Specialties.

Q: -- specialties in the Navy?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you finally choose?

A: I ended up choosing -- it was more chosen for me than me choosing it. I ended up in -- to be -- I was supposed to be trained as a sonar man.

Q: Um-hum.

A: And I was going to the fleet on a submarine warfare school and San Diego was my second assignment. And when I was checking in for my -- to begin that training, which was a 37-week course of training, I was pulled out of line and asked -- they asked anyone who knew how to type to raise their hand. And I was pulled out of line by a 2nd Class Yeoman who said, "Come and sit down at the typewriter and type something for me." So I did. And he said, "I have authorization to pull one person for 90 days, so you are now working for me for the next 90 days."

Q: And so you never did go to sonar school?

A: I never went to sonar school, because, by then I had been nine months out of boot camp and I was eligible to take a rating test --

Q: Um-hum.

A: -- and became a 3rd Class Yeoman?

Q: So the cruise was for you to be exposed to different occupational specialities and choose your own, but the Navy really chose it for you anyway?

A: Yes.

Q: My father was a World War II Navy veteran and he always said, "There's the right way, the wrong way and the Navy way of doing things."

A: I hear it.

Q: Well, where did you serve as a yeoman? You were --

A: I stayed there at the school for about --

Q: In San Diego?

A: In San Diego for two years --

Q: Um-hum.

A: -- and then I got assigned to the NATO headquarters in southern Europe, which is located in Naples, Italy --

Q: Um-hum.

A: -- and I was assigned as a courier.

Q: Hm...

A: And so I served the southern tier of NATO, transporting

things that needed to be personally transported from -- I covered Greece, Turkey, Malta, Rome, and we also did a lot with Paris, which was the headquarters, at the time.

Q: Right.

A: Although I was not on that particular beat, unfortunately.

Q: Um-hum.

A: And so I did that for three-and-a-half years.

Q: So this would be, what, personally delivering classified documents --

A: Correct.

Q: -- of various types from one headquarters to another or whatsoever?

A: Yes.

Q: How long were you in the Navy in total? Five years?

A: About five years, maybe five-and-a-half, something like that.

Q: And in Naples, which was not a bad place to be, I don't suppose.

A: Naples was a great place to be and it was my first exposure to a foreign language, except for Latin, which I took five years earlier in school.

Q: Yeah, you would have. Yes.

A: But it was an opportunity to begin to consider -- I met people there that were involved in the Foreign Service.

Q: I was going to ask, since Naples was probably your -- well,

other than San Diego and Nebraska, your first view of the big wide world. Did that have real impact, I suppose, on your later decisions?

A: It did. And meeting -- and I had no idea what an embassy was or a consulate was. So when I met these guys by, you know, just socially, I found out that they were working at the American consulate in Naples and they invited me to come down and spend the morning with them. And that changed my life dramatically.

Q: You thought these guys had an interesting job --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- basically?

A: Basically, exactly.

Q: And then you served your time in the Navy and then --

A: Then I decided --

Q: -- was it to apply for Foreign Service officer?

A: First, I decided I wanted to be an international journalist. I had met some of them, too. And so I thought I would go back -- and I love writing, I always have. So I went back to the University of Missouri and I did -- I did a -- since I hadn't been a journalism major, I had to take some courses and stuff.

But I worked my way through that and was going to finish the following semester and I got a knock on the door from the Navy and they said they were -- they had tracked me down, because they learned that I spoke Italian and that I had been in the Navy and I had turned up in the database in Missouri and somebody from

St. Louis called and asked if he could stop by and see me. And I said, sure. And he said, "We are desperately short of people like you to help out with security background investigations, would you be interested?" So he wasn't sure how long it was going to be. Well, it ended up being a couple years.

So I got shifted to Chicago. I was going to finish -- I had also been accepted into Northwestern. I was going to finish my journalism there. And then I began to discover that, at the time, it was quite difficult to get an overseas assignment as a young reporter -- I wanted to be overseas, unless you were willing to go to Vietnam -- which I wasn't at that time, newly married and a few other things.

So I -- I decided to take the Chicago job and then took the Foreign Service exam, after I had been there several months, and passed it and they offered me an assignment which took me into the Foreign Service in September of 1970.

Q: Tell me about that Foreign Service exam. Because I have -- I have never taken it or been close to it, but I've always understood it's a very rigorous test; is that right? And then an interview process. Could you describe that?

A: I can describe it as --

Q: It's a very rigid selection process.

A: It is. The year that I --

Q: I'm not trying to be flattering --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- but I've always understood they want the cream of the crop in the Foreign Service's sense.

A: Well, it's kind of you to say that. I hope that's the case.

Q: Well, what was the process of weeding out, so to speak?

A: There was a national exam which is given -- at that time, it was once a year, now I think that that pattern has changed somewhat. It used to be a lot more akin to the Graduate Record Exam where you had to take a lot of -- and depending on your specialty -- if, for example, you choose the political specialty, you had to take a particular form of the exam; economic it was another form.

Q: Oh.

A: And it was general background and then things related to what would be your -- you had to choose -- the Foreign Service is decided [sic] -- is divided into cones, which means specialties. So there's the political cone, the economic cone, the public affairs cone, consular cone and the administrative cone. So you have to designate -- at that time, you had to designate ahead of time what you were interested in.

So I chose the -- the public affairs cone and -- which, at that time, was a tangential unit, US Information Agency, part of the Foreign Service, and the same entry process, but when you were in the US, you typically worked at the USIA, US Information Agency headquarters, as opposed to the State Department. Although, in my case, I always ended up working at the State

Department when I was -- almost always when I was back there, until the end. You get too senior at some point.

Q: Did you go through an interview process, as well?

A: Yes. The interview process was a -- an interview. You had to write a biographical statement. I had a panel of five. And so you walk in and there you are. I suppose it's a little bit like defending a thesis or something.

Q: Um-hum.

A: And they -- they began chatting with me in Italian to see whether it was true that I spoke Italian.

Q: Did you pass?

A: I did. And then you go through whatever they want to ask you. It was a fun process, really.

Q: Um-hum.

A: They told me they thought my interview would be over very quickly, because I had been -- I had been -- they said, "You had been a gumshoe in the Navy, we figured you'd be in and out the door in 15 minutes." And they said, "You were the best candidate we had that day."

Q: That was good.

A: And I told them where to go eat lunch in a little Greek restaurant that I knew about that they never would have found and they said they thought that was charming, so they decided to give me a little extra push.

Q: Well, yeah, feed people well.

A: Absolutely. Whatever works, right?

Q: A faculty meetings with doughnuts is always better.

Once you passed then, you are officially now State Department employee?

A: Yes.

Q: What -- I'm a little fuzzy on these GS ranks. But you must have started then as a GS something or other --

A: It was like --

Q: -- because I know there's civil service ranks parallel to the military.

A: I was equivalent to a -- I came in equivalent to a GS-11, but the Foreign Service uses a different rank system.

Q: Oh, they do. Okay.

A: So based upon your experience and your language ability and two or three other things, they would -- you could -- you could join at several different pay grades.

Q: Um-hum.

A: So I joined as a Foreign Service step -- Grade 7, Step 7, which was the top one you could come in at --

Q: Um-hum.

A: -- at the time, which meant that you didn't lose anything in salary.

Q: Um-hum.

A: And then the Foreign Service goes up towards one.

Q: Um-hum.

A: One is --

Q: Oh, it does?

A: Yeah, and then on to titled ranks after that.

Q: What do you mean by "titled ranks"?

A: You become a consular, and then you become a minister consular and you then become an Ambassador.

Q: Now if you have a title rank of minister consular, that's right up there.

A: Yes.

Q: Would that be, in effect, second in command --

A: Yes.

Q: -- in an embassy then --

A: Yes.

Q: -- or executive officer, so to speak?

A: And I was minister consular for public affairs at the American Embassy in New Delhi. That was my final job.

Q: Now when did you actually become a Foreign Service officer State Department employee?

A: In September of 1967 -- no, 1970. September of 1970.

Q: And, then, just -- let's just walk quickly through your assignment. So your first assignment overseas was?

A: Beirut, Lebanon.

Q: Beirut.

A: That was a rotational training assignment.

Q: I'm sorry. I confess my fuzziness here, but when did all

the violence start in Beirut?

A: '75.

Q: '75?

A: '75.

Q: You were there at the time or not?

A: I had -- I was in Cairo, then.

Q: I've always read that Beirut was such a beautiful, cosmopolitan city and all of a sudden...

A: I was there at a very good time, still. I mean, there were -- there were some indications that the poorer Shiite majority was restless. And, then, as a result of the Palestine Liberation Organization having been booted out of Jordan by King Hussein --

Q: Um-hum.

A: -- there were lots of disgruntled Palestinians there in a refugee camp south of Beirut.

Q: Hm...

A: So the fissures were beginning to appear there as I was leaving. And, in fact, a -- friends of mine that were -- stayed on for Arabic training, used to have -- part of our Arabic training was there, part was in the US. They were then evacuated in '76 and the Arabic language school was moved to Tunisia.

Q: Did you go to Arabic language school or did you pick it up on your own or a little of each?

A: I went to the Arabic language school initially before my

assignment to Beirut to learn spoken Arabic. And, then, the full term is meant -- is two years. I did part-time at the American University of Cairo, Center for Arabic Study, and, then, continued it on through my career just -- I picked up a lot just with tutors and so on, and was always meant to do the full thing, but they were so short of Arabic speakers that they -- any -- any -- any young officer with blood flowing through their veins who liked excitement was quickly put on assignment after assignment. So I really spent 15 consecutive years in the Middle East.

Q: And after Beirut?

A: After Beirut, I went to Kuwait and worked on the opening of the Persian Gulf embassies as they moved into independence --

Q: Um-hum.

A: -- following the British withdrawal.

Q: And did you go to --

A: Trucial, Oman.

Q: That's the Trucial States?

A: Trucial States. They used to say the Trucial States in Oman.

Q: Hm...

A: And there were, I think, five Emirates. Places like Ras al-Khaimah and Umm al-Quwain and Sharjah and Ajman and Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Qatar was --

Q: And so you were involved in organizing the first US

embassies --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- in that location?

A: Yeah, I got to serve as attaché for a while --

Q: You did.

A: -- in Oman and in Qatar.

Q: What kind of duty was it?

A: It was -- it was an amazingly satisfying thing to do. There was a lot of interests at that time on the part of the Arab states in sort of moving out from the shadow of the British, whom they had sort of a love/hate relationship with.

Q: Hm...

A: And they were hopeful that the United States was going to play a vital role in the Middle East and could help them get on their feet as independent states and -- which we did, in many cases, and with lots of footnotes, but...

Q: I was going to ask you, now that a third of a century has lapsed, do you feel they feel that way now, that the US has helped them?

A: I think you have to go state by state. Kuwait believes that we saved them from the Iraqi invasion.

Q: In 1990?

A: And when -- having served there in Kuwait, it was -- I mean, it was fine when I was there, but it was -- the attitude towards Americans was much more positive when I went back in a senior

capacity after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. They really felt that nobody else would have done it for them.

Q: Um-hum. Now after your duty and the setting up the embassies in the gulf states, you went where in Trucial states, you went where after that?

A: Then I was asked to go to Cairo. I never did get to use my Italian anywhere. I had these dreams of going to Rome as a cultural attache.

Q: Ah-hah.

A: But instead I went to Cairo as the cultural attache and we were a tiny little mission then. I was the 13th member of staff. Today there is something like 3,500.

Q: Oh, my gosh, you are kidding.

A: And it was -- we had just renewed diplomatic relations in February.

Q: Um-hum.

A: I arrived there in May.

Q: Now what year?

A: In 1974.

Q: So is this still a rupture from the Yom Kippur War of '67 that's being healed --

A: Yes.

Q: -- basically?

A: Yes. That's --

Q: I know with our support of Israel, after that war, things

were pretty chilly with US and Egypt.

A: That's right. And Sadat --

Q: So you are there as things are improving?

A: Yes.

Q: All right.

A: Our Ambassador had gone in February and primarily to be present as the -- as support for the -- the Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy.

Q: Yes.

A: And trying to disengage the Arabs and Israelis in the Sinai Peninsula.

Q: Uh-hum.

A: And to get things settled. And Sadat, I think, very much felt that our presence there was his best guarantee that the Israelis would not go too far --

Q: Um-hum.

A: -- in retaliating for the crossing of the Suez, which had occurred.

Q: Did you ever meet Sadat personally?

A: Yes, several times.

Q: Did you go through the Sinai? Did you have ever meet Menachem Begin or anything?

A: Never met Menachem Begin. I was in Israel several times.

Q: I was wondering if you had ever traveled in the Sinai to Israel?

A: Yes. The -- I didn't go into the Sinai, except pretty close to it on the Jordanian side down to Aqaba, but -- and I once rented a sailboat and blew into Israeli territorial waters and was, fortunately, rescued, at the last minute, by a Jordanian patrol boat that spotted me and said, "Would you like a rope?" And I said, "Yes, please."

Q: The Israelis did not have a sense of humor about this --

A: They did not. In fact, one of our --

Q: -- to put it politely.

A: -- of my colleagues, who had been leaving -- leaving Jordan and was transferring to somewhere in the Mediterranean, was -- he had a similar thing where he crossed into Israeli territorial waters and -- with his fancy sailboat from Burma, and he -- he was arrested and spent three weeks in the cooler while they checked out his bona fides and they finally got him out and sent him on his way. But, fortunately, I didn't suffer that fate.

Q: So you did meet Anwar Sadat on perhaps more than one occasion?

A: Yes.

Q: What kind of man was he? Do you have a --

A: Absolutely charming. He was -- he had a great sense of humor and was affable in conversation. He was a master at working with journalists. And there was a group of 14 that used to travel with -- on the Secretary of State's plane. It was a very coveted thing to do to be able to travel if you were a

journalist. And they paid first class fair and then they got to travel in the Secretary's plane. But he was always open to meeting with journalists. So he got lots of -- lots of visitors and I met -- and I met a lot of pretty interesting American veterans. I remember meeting Peter Jennings there for the first time.

Q: Oh, really.

A: And Bernie Kalb and Marvin Kalb, the CBS brothers.

Q: Oh, yeah.

A: And John Chancellor.

Q: All the old great newsmen.

A: Yes, many of the old great newsmen came through with that group. And the negotiations became so intense, because of the way the shuttle diplomacy was managed, the feeling was that you had to -- that the secretary had to be physically present --

Q: Um-hum.

A: -- to get movement.

Q: What kind of support was -- was the embassy in Egypt providing for the Secretary when this was going on? I mean --

A: We had the valiant 13. We each had a handheld radio. We got special permission from the Egyptian intelligence service to use handheld radios. So the -- the 9th floor of the Hilton Hotel became practically the American -- the American State Department.

Q: Were you -- is it fair to characterize it as a security detail for the Secretary or were you --

A: I managed the media.

Q: Okay.

A: So anything that went -- that happened --

Q: By "media," I mean, of all countries, not just the US media?

A: Just the -- the traveling 14 were my primary responsibility.

Q: Oh, okay. Hm-hm.

A: But the -- there were always maybe 25 American journalists, at the time, amazingly, that were based in Cairo.

Q: Yeah.

A: All the networks had people there and so on.

Q: What about --

A: There was [inaudible].

Q: -- the tension between someone in your position and the journalists? Because their orientation is that you probably not telling the whole truth, you are hiding something. I mean, there's an inherent skepticism there, I suppose?

A: Ah...

Q: But yet you liked these guys on a personal level, apparently?

A: Sure, yeah.

Q: Could you describe that seemingly dichotomous relationship?

A: It's an interesting dynamic. You travel on the buses with them and everything else --

Q: You get to be friends as men.

A: -- you go out to dinner and you are waiting in the halls for

five hours while negotiations are taking place. So they soon realize that you are an access key for them. So they tend to treat you pretty well.

Q: Um-hum.

A: And at the same time, you know, since my area was public diplomacy, the more I could help them to generate and flesh out a story through putting them in touch with the right people --

Q: Um-hum.

A: -- the better it was for the reporting that they would carry back to their networks. And, of course, then it wasn't broadcast around the world, except we always had somebody there from BBC and we always had somebody there from the Voice of America.

Q: Um-hum.

A: So radio was --

Q: Yeah.

A: And then we had the wire services, of course.

Q: What was your relationship with USIA and the Voice of America, those agencies?

A: Well, USIA I was part of.

Q: Okay.

A: The Voice of America was tangential.

Q: Right.

A: There was sort of a low firewall that separated the Voice of America from the US Information Agency. In the sense of day-to-day operations, they had their own people.

Q: Um-hum.

A: But they did -- they did report to the director of the US Information Agency.

Q: Um-hum.

A: Who, at one time, was Edward R. Morrow.

Q: I had forgotten that.

A: Yeah, back in the early '60s.

Q: Where did you go after Egypt?

A: After Egypt, I was transferred to Jordan and --

Q: Amman?

A: Amman, Jordan and worked there as the Public Affairs Officer -- excuse me, Cultural Affairs Officer, American Center Director and Assistant Public Affairs Officer.

Q: How long were you in Jordan?

A: I was there for -- I went there initially for three. At the end of two years, I got a telephone call from Washington to say that they had just decided to send a Public Affairs Officer -- a Public Affairs Officer either to -- or both to Oman, Muscat, Oman and to -- to Baghdad and would I be interested? I said, "I would be very interested in going to Baghdad."

Q: And, then, what years were you in Baghdad?

A: I went to Baghdad in 1979, the summer of 1979. And I was there -- meant to be there for 18 months to finish up the tour that I hadn't completed in Jordan, but then there was -- as a result the -- and we didn't have a full embassy there. We were

under the Belgians. We had what was called the US -- United States Intersection of the embassy of Belgium.

Q: Um-hum.

A: So when we --

Q: Because we did not have full diplomatic relations?

A: Right. They had been severed in 1967 by the Iraqis.

Q: Oh, sure. Yeah, the war.

A: In fact, our embassy had been converted into the foreign ministry of the government of Iraq.

Q: This is a trivial question, but an embassy is legally US turf?

A: The embassy has what's called extraterritoriality.

Q: Yeah, so they take it over, do they have to pay us for the building or do they just --

A: Yes.

Q: I mean, seriously, is there compensation from Government A to Government B if such things happen?

A: Yes. In fact, we had -- we've had some stark examples of that when -- and we do the same. We -- if we -- either by inadvertence or intention, if we mess with somebody else's embassy, which we did --

Q: So it would be impolite if we boot them out of Washington, so we basically buy their building?

A: There are -- yeah, I suppose. Although we -- what we tend to do is mothball buildings.

Q: Yeah.

A: Like the Iranians have a mothball embassy on Embassy Row in Washington DC.

Q: Oh, sure.

A: And we do allow them to keep an eye on it and stuff.

Q: Yeah. So you did work, actually, within the Belgium embassy?

A: We had our only building, but we flew the Belgian and American flags.

Q: Oh.

A: Side by side.

Q: Um-hum.

A: And if there was an official communication, which is handled through a diplomatic note between the foreign ministry and the embassy, then those always had to go out under the signature of the Ambassador of Belgium.

Q: I see.

A: And if there were to be an official meeting or something, then, like the far -- the principal officer, since we didn't have an Ambassador, because we hadn't renewed diplomatic relations.

Q: Yes.

A: If our principal officer was called in the -- to meet with a very senior Iraqi official or even Saddam Hussein, then somebody from Belgian --

Q: Okay.

A: -- the Belgian embassy would typically go along.

Q: Because the legality is the Belgians are doing business on behalf of the United States?

A: We have contracted with the Belgians --

Q: Okay, yeah.

A: -- to be our -- our responsible agency in the -- in the absence of the embassy.

Q: When did the US restart full diplomatic relations with Iraq?

A: I believe the diplomatic relations were renewed in 1982.

Q: So there was a period 14 or 15 odd years?

A: Yes.

Q: Where there was not --

A: We had no one there until 1977, I believe, is when we reopened the --

Q: Um-hum.

A: Maybe '76, but right in there, we reopened an intersection there.

Q: Did you ever run across Mr. Saddam himself?

A: I did not.

Q: Are you glad or sad --

A: Ah...

Q: -- in retrospect?

A: I have -- I have no burning desire that I should have met him.

Q: You didn't see it as an opportunity missed?

A: I do not. It was a difficult place to work. It was --

Q: I'm sure.

A: Yeah, we were restricted to the city of Baghdad.

Q: I was just going to ask, were you followed -- I mean, restricted?

A: All diplomats, including all the Arab diplomats.

Q: Really?

A: Were restricted to the city of Baghdad.

Q: Very suspicious.

A: You could put in for special permission to get out.

Q: Um-hum.

A: But the only place they would typically let you go was some dusty little diplomatic beach.

Q: Sounds like an analogy with the East Germans during World War -- during the Cold War, that they were suspicious of anyone coming in?

A: That's right, and with good reason.

Q: Yeah.

A: And we them.

Q: Where did you go -- Tom, where did you go after your service in Iraq?

A: Then in the -- my wife was pregnant at the time and we decided -- the State Department -- although, we were prepared to stay in Baghdad for the birth of the baby, which was now about seven months along, and they thanked us very kindly for the offer

and told us to --

Q: Hm...

A: -- get ourselves out of Baghdad. I mean, the city was out under blackout and it was being bombed and they said --

Q: Not a good place for medical care?

A: -- this is not a good place for a new baby. So we went back to Washington.

Q: Um-hum.

A: And I went to work as a Deputy Director for Middle East Public Affairs in the State Department.

Q: And were there for how long?

A: I was there for three years.

Q: Now jumping ahead a bit, because we're -- I want to wind up in a few minutes, ten or 15, but when did you leave government service entirely? The State Department service?

A: In the middle of '95.

Q: And then -- at the time you left, you were in Washington?

A: At the time I left I was in -- I had been back in Washington as the Deputy Director for the Middle East and South Asia and then I was -- which gave us, as we used to say, everything from Marrakech to Bangladesh?

Q: Yeah. That's a -- that's a big area.

A: Yes. I think we covered 31 countries, my boss and I. And, then, I was a Deputy Assistant Secretary level and then I decided for some -- a variety of reasons to retire. I had 32 years of

government service.

Q: Hm... So with your Navy service and all of that would that be --

A: All added together.

Q: -- 30-plus years?

A: Yep. And because I was sort of interested in doing something else, I wasn't quite sure what that something would be, but I thought that if I was going to do it, it was better to do it then than ten years later.

Q: How -- now how did that something else wind up at St. Scholastica?

A: Therein lies an interesting story. So I spent a period of time teaching at an International School of the Himalaya in India and I went to Kazakhstan to help -- to teach the first course of American history that had been taught at the National Languages University, which is part of their national university system.

Q: And you were teaching in the English language?

A: Yes. They had -- there were five languages they had and the way they did it is they had to study English, plus one other language. Then they had to choose one of five languages for their final two years and focus on that. So I had -- I had about 150 English language students and got to taught (sic) them -- got to teach them there -- I also taught them a lot of Russian history, which they had gotten a very skewed version of.

Q: I would say, I can imagine in Kazakhstan the slant they had

on Russian history was not entirely positive.

A: And a lot of it -- a lot of what happened in Kazakhstan where a difficult period of transition following the Bolshevik Revolution, they simply didn't know about.

Q: Didn't they?

A: They didn't know about it at all.

Q: Hm... How long did you work in Kazakhstan?

A: I taught there for about a year and a half and I also taught at a new international high school that had just opened. And I had two seniors in a little class and then I taught some other courses, but one of my two got into Stanford. So I said 50 percent of my class got into Stanford.

Q: And that is the truth?

A: Absolutely true. And the first graduating class.

Q: Um-hum. Wow.

A: I don't think they've ever had anyone get into Stanford since. She was a British gal. She was very sharp. And I sensed that. And I said -- her parents were both teachers at the school. And I said, "Look, you just focus on preparing yourself in whatever way you want for your SAT's" and -- which she did -- "and take the exams, I know you'll have no problem with them." And she didn't. And then she was a superb student and is now a graduate of Columbia University masters program.

Q: What were living conditions like when you were teaching there? Was it -- what city were you in?

A: I was in Almaty, the -- which means the father of the apples. And Almaty is -- was a scrubby little town with -- nestled in a spectacular set of mountains, the Tian Shan Mountains --

Q: Um-hum.

A: -- where I used to do a lot of bicycle riding. And the population, quite generally, was very poor. Teachers weren't paid for months at a time and, when they were, it was 70 bucks a month. So it was sort of a hard-scrabble life for them. People tended to live in little hobbles on -- in compounds.

And then there were the super rich that were affiliated with the regime, who is still there, the president, who had been the first secretary of the Communist party and had all sorts of Communist credentials, but just changed the sign outside of his door to make himself a Democrat.

Q: If it were only that easy all the time.

A: Democratic Republic of Kazakhstan.

Yeah, it was pretty harsh. It's developed and changed a lot. I have a student that just arrived from Kazakhstan at the College of St. Scholastica. He and his brother came in to talk to me and when I was talking about Almaty, they had no idea what I was talking about, because the Almaty they know was --

Q: Oh.

A: -- had been remade with oil money.

Q: Oh, sure. So you still maintain some contact with folks

there?

A: I do, a bit of contact. I have some former students that I'm in touch with. A couple are now working for the American embassy there. I got a couple of them over here on scholarship programs to spend some university time in the US.

Q: Well, I'm more than a little curious how you wound up in Duluth and St. Scholastica. We have not addressed that yet, if you would?

A: Well, I -- I was in Kazakhstan and invited to go back and do a little more teaching at the Woodstock School and while I was at the Woodstock School I made the acquaintance of a woman to whom I am now married, who happened to be from Minnesota.

Q: I see.

A: For any Minnesotan, it's a really short story, because Minnesota women always bring their husbands back to Minnesota.

Q: Where was she from in Minnesota?

A: She grew up in Buffalo.

Q: Oh, yeah, sure.

A: Her family were farmers --

Q: Um-hum.

A: -- in Kettle River, at one point. She has deep roots in Minnesota.

Q: She wanted to come back to Minnesota --

A: And so I said --

Q: -- and said why don't you come along?

A: -- I wasn't very interested in that and we weren't married or anything, we just knew each other.

Q: Yes.

A: But, then, I ended up coming back for some -- for my parents' -- my parents' funeral and I had some layover time in Minnesota and so at the airport on the way to Omaha.

Q: Your parents were in Nebraska?

A: Yeah. And so I found myself having lunch with her and one thing led to another.

Q: Hm...

A: I had a house in Washington, but I sold it and decided after -- I met a couple Foreign Service officers, in fact, literally two, in Minneapolis.

Q: Oh, you did.

A: And they said, you know, there's a -- there are too many Foreign Service officers in Washington and they are not many of us here, so come out and niche market yourself.

Q: Um-hum.

A: So I ended up coming to Duluth because we liked it a lot, we used to vacation up here.

Q: Sure.

A: And then I got -- I happened to, through an acquaintance, meet the president of St. Scholastica who said we're looking for somebody to help us globalize the campus.

Q: Who was the president?

A: Larry Goodwin, still is.

Q: Yeah, right. Um-hum.

A: And are you interested?

Q: Oh.

A: I raised my hand and there I am.

Q: So you really came into the college for a new position --

A: New position.

Q: -- in a sense?

A: And so it's -- it's gone -- it's gone well.

Q: How long have you been at St. Scholastica?

A: Ten years.

Q: And you are the director now of international education, I know, but do you teach any classes along the way?

A: I started out --

Q: What sort of responsibilities do you have there? If you'd talk about that.

A: I started out doing -- doing some teaching. I taught a course on India and I taught a course on diplomatic history, and, then, you know, colleges like to do that to take a look at you before they give the nod for a different kind of job. But then once I got the international job, it was so -- it involved so much outreach abroad that it was no longer possible to maintain good relations with your colleagues and have them teach your courses while you travel. So I tried it for one semester. I said "This isn't working." So I now manage the study abroad

program. I find students from abroad. We have --

Q: I was going to ask you that. Now as part of your -- is part of your job description recruiting students?

A: Yes, we have a very --

Q: Qualified students from other countries, cultures?

A: Yes. I work with international schools abroad, where English is the typically the medium of instruction, and I identify students who I think would be a good fit, based upon personal interviews, and I bring in about 30 a year, which is our target.

Q: I was going to ask how many international students we have at the -- or you have at the college?

A: When I arrived there were two: One was a nun from Tanzania and one was a young lady from Calcutta, who liked -- who saw a picture of Tower Hall and thought it was beautiful and it was the only place she applied.

Q: Well, the girl was focused.

A: She told me that story, so I always carry a picture of Tower Hall with me, but -- and it works magic?

Q: It's an impressive building.

A: It is. It's very, very nice. Thank you.

Q: And now you have how many -- is your office in Tower Hall, by the way?

A: Yes. Right across from President Goodwin's office, so that's nice.

We have about 120, up from two, so about five percent of our population is international.

Q: Is one particular country more represented? Or what would the top one be in terms of numbers of students?

A: The top one would be India.

Q: It would.

A: And then -- then, we have 42 countries represented.

Q: You do.

A: And so those are -- I do quite a bit of recruiting in Latin and Central America.

Q: You do.

A: We have them from Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Q: How many Indian students do you have?

A: I think our largest group from any one country is about maybe 12 or so.

Q: Now do you --

A: We like to keep it mixed.

Q: Do you try to get these international kids -- I don't know, do they live with American families? Do they live in dorms?

A: They live in dorms.

Q: Do you try to prevent them from forming too much of a national group and get them out among --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- other international students as well as Americans?

A: Yes, you put your finger on it.

Q: I mean, is that a concern?

A: In order to avoid that, we --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- we try not to take more than three or four from one country at a time and so that pretty much precludes that. We find American roommates for them.

Q: Um-hum.

A: And we --

Q: I mean, that's sort of a natural thing, it's sort of a safety, a security thing?

A: Yeah.

Q: If you and I are in a difficult culture, we're Americans, we're going to tend to team up, but that's not always desirable for students.

A: That's right.

Q: So you are aware of that and try to alleviate it?

A: Absolutely. And we -- they used to be required to live all four years on campus --

Q: I see.

A: -- based on a scholarship, but now, because we're short of residential space, we let them -- if they choose to move off after their second year.

Q: Yeah.

A: They may. Only a handful do. They like being in the activities that the campus offers.

Q: You mentioned scholarship. I was going to ask that too, because I've seen the tuition schedule. St. Scholastica is not inexpensive.

A: Right.

Q: Are most of these students on some sort of financial aid package?

A: Yes. Both American --

Q: I know the college offers a lot of financial aid?

A: Yes. American students have a very good package, called the Benedictine Scholarship. International students have a special international scholarship which can save them about 50 percent of tuition.

Q: Hm...

A: Which is roughly what an American can save through the Benedictine Scholarship. So we try to make it kind of a level playing field. The one exception is we do have ten full-tuition scholarships for internationals.

Q: How do you qualify for those?

A: You have to be very poor. Like we have students from Zimbabwe and Nigeria and so on, that have, literally -- you know, their family income might be 1,500 bucks a year for a family of five.

Q: Um-hum.

A: So they are desperately poor. So they come and we help them out.

Q: The kids coming from a culture like that, do you assign them American students as mentors in any way? I mean, it must be a real cultural shock for them.

A: As -- surprisingly, the -- even in place like Zimbabwe, there are -- English, of course, is still strong, because it was formally Rhodesia, a British colony. But it -- we tend -- we only bring in students who have a -- who achieve, you know, the right test scores on the English exams. And when we recruit from international schools -- we also recruit from some national schools, but internationals are used to living with many different nationalities and so they -- many of them speak two or three or four languages.

Q: Um-hum.

A: And so that -- that helps a lot in the settling-in process. But we meet every international student on arrival on the airport and we assign a student Ambassador, who is sort of their companion for the first --

Q: This is a full-time student at Scholastica?

A: Yes.

Q: Who is their --

A: An international student.

Q: Yep.

A: So they can help them learn the ropes and settle in.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I think most of them feel that that goes pretty

smoothly.

Q: Hm...

A: There's always some homesickness, obviously, but by Christmas they are fine.

Q: Well, actually, kids are pretty adaptable. But I know in my university days we had something like that for international students, too, and just simple things, like, if you come from Hong Kong, how do you check out an American checking account at the bank? It's not entirely obvious. Just little things like that.

A: We have a full-time advisor.

Q: Yeah.

A: They get them social security numbers, they tour them around town, they take them shopping, they set up their banking system.

Q: Um-hum.

A: And they work through all of that and they come in a week ahead of the American students. So by the time the Americans get there, why they -- as I tell them, "You'll have the first choice of the bed in the room you are going to be in."

Q: Well, Tom, thank you. We've talked for a better part of an hour, a little over 50 minutes, so that's kind of our time I like to do. But do you have any last comments or anything? You had a fascinating career, very varied, obviously.

A: I --

Q: I'm really interested in how you wound up in Duluth, and so

I thank you for describing that.

A: Yes. And I wouldn't -- I would have never ended up in Duluth if I hadn't joined the Navy. So the time in the Navy was -- I remember when I went aboard ship, there were 54. I was assigned to the deck force, which does the painting and chipping, and there were 54 in the unit. I was the only one that hadn't been in the brig at least once. So you learn a lot about your fellow man.

Q: Yes, and not all positive.

A: Not all positive. Thank you, Tom.

[End of tape at 6:35 p.m.]