

GERALD MICHAEL BACHE

Interviewed by: Theresa Tull

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Q: This is the first tape of an interview with retired Foreign Service Officer G. Michael Bache, October 22, 2004. So, Michael, let's start with a look at your early life. Where were you born? Tell us a little something about your family life.

BACHE: I was born on September 20, 1927, in a hospital in Bronxville, New York, which is in Westchester County, just north of New York City. My family lived in Scarsdale, New York, which is also in Westchester County, and I lived in the same house in Scarsdale, from birth until after I graduated from the public high school there.

My father, Frank Semon Bache, was a building contractor in White Plains, which is the county seat of Westchester County and is just north of Scarsdale. He led family conversations, at the dinner table and on other occasions, which centered heavily on international affairs, including much discussion of world events leading up to and including World War II.

Although my father had his own construction business, the major business interest of the extended Bache family was investment brokerage, which was active in many foreign countries. My grandfather, Leopold Bache, and his older brother, Jules Bache, founded the investment brokerage firm of J.S. Bache & Co. in 1892 and, when Jules died in 1944, my uncle, Harold Bache, took over as senior partner. He had contacts all around the world and he often gave me postage stamps of countries where he did business. My postage stamp collection stimulated my interest in languages, history and international relations from my earliest days.

Through his contacts in the construction business, my father found work for me, during a couple of summers of my high school years, as a rodman with a survey party, preparing for various construction projects, including Stewart Field, which was the wartime airport for West Point. Before and during those war years, my father was also an avid gardener and I helped him in the vegetable garden behind our house and in mowing our extensive lawns (we had an acre of ground). He also took me to football games of Cornell (his alma mater) and to other athletic events.

My father was also an avid sailor. Because of the Depression, we were forced to sell our 35-foot ketch in the fall of 1934. But, just before we did so, I spent the summer of that year (when I was six) aboard that boat, hardly stepping ashore from the Fourth of July until Labor Day. Later (but still during the 1930s), we belonged to a yacht club, where I learned to race 17-foot sloops.

My mother, Helen Elizabeth Rosenbaum Bache, was a stay-at-home mother, who had a strong interest in European languages. Before the First World War, she had traveled extensively in Europe with her parents and had learned to read and speak French, German and Italian quite fluently. My mother was also a singer and sang in those languages. My bedroom was directly above the living room, where we had a grand piano. My earliest memories are of going to sleep at night, listening to my mother singing directly below me, while she accompanied herself on the piano.

I had an older brother, Kenneth, and an older sister, Elizabeth. My sister would have been class of 1940 at Scarsdale High School, but she went away to school for her last two years to the Westtown School, which is a Quaker school outside Philadelphia. My brother would have been class of 1941, but he also went away for his last three years to Westtown.

I graduated from Scarsdale High School in June, 1944, third in a class of 250. At the recommendation of the high school principal, I applied to and was accepted at Yale University. I started right in at Yale in July 1944, because during the war, they had accelerated semesters, three semesters a year, rather than the traditional two.

Q: Michael, were your parents and grandparents both born in the United States? What was their ethnic background?

BACHE: Yes, both of my parents were born in the United States; in fact, both were born in New York City. Three of my four grandparents also were born in the United States, but my mother's father was born in Germany in 1856. Our second Foreign Service post, Munich, was near his birthplace and we went to see it when I was stationed there. Seven-eighths of my family background was German-Jewish and one-eighth was Dutch, from the Netherlands. So that is the ethnic background of my family.

Q: You mentioned that your sister and brother had gone to a Quaker school for a couple of years. Does that suggest there was a Quaker leaning in your family, or were your parents just looking for the best education? Or, were you raised a practicing Jew?

BACHE: I was not raised a practicing Jew; in fact, I went to a Presbyterian Sunday School. My parents did not practice the Jewish religion, either. Their parents, my grandparents, were probably brought up as Jews, but when I knew them, Judaism played no significant role in their lives.

I believe that my parents chose Westtown for my brother and sister, simply because it offered a good education. My parents felt that my sister and brother were not doing as well as they could in high school and might benefit from a private boarding school like that. After Kenneth went to Westtown, however, he became interested in the Quaker religion and its pacifism; in fact, he went on from Westtown to Haverford College, which is also a Quaker institution.

My father had served in the U.S. Army in the First World War; during the Second World War, my father and my brother had serious arguments about pacifism and the rightness or wrongness of military service. My brother became a conscientious objector and went to a Civilian Public Service camp during the Second World War, rather than going into the army. My sister, meanwhile, volunteered for service in the U.S. Navy and became an Aviation Machinist Mate in the WAVES.

Q: Did your brother's conscientious objector decision have a negative impact on his relationship with your father and mother, or was this just an intellectual decision they accepted?

BACHE: For a couple of years, there was strong controversy among them, but, in spite of the arguments, they always remained close. My brother, my father and I all wrote long, argumentative letters to one another on this subject, but I don't think there was ever any real animosity. There was certainly never any interruption of communications.

Q: So, with regards to the political implications of the Second World War, would you say that your family, your parents at least, were supporters of the war, of U.S. involvement in the war? Would you say that they were liberal, conservative or middle of the road?

BACHE: My mother and father were both very supportive of U.S. intervention in World War II and, in fact, urged intervention even before Pearl Harbor. My father and uncle, Harold Bache, had both been U.S. Army officers in the First World War and my uncle had served in France. After the First World War, my uncle was an officer in the New York State Guard and remained so right through the Second World War. My father, my sister and my uncle were all enthusiastic supporters of U.S. participation in the Second World War. It was only my brother who had the objections. My sister argued on the side of my father against my brother.

Q: Within your own home, how were religious values instilled? Were you left on your own? Were you encouraged to read, or was it just a question of following as good an example as you could?

BACHE: My mother primarily was the one who was interested in this, and she did not want us to carry forward any Jewish traditions. She sent me to the Sunday school at the local Presbyterian Church and I went for several years, where I was confirmed and earned a Bible, which I still have. I was, and still am, a believer in the Protestant approach to Christianity.

Later in life, when we were in Munich, we attended the Army Chapel and the Chaplain happened to be a Methodist. We admired his sermons and I sang in his choir. We liked him as a person and kept in touch with him until his death, more than twenty years later. Probably as a result of this experience, we later joined Methodist churches in Maryland and New Jersey and sent our children to Methodist pre-schools and Sunday schools.

Q: Thank you. You started to tell about your education. You went to Yale.

BACHE: Since I did well in math and science in high school, my father recommended that I pursue pre-engineering studies at Yale, so I took calculus and chemistry in my freshman year. But, at the end of that first year (this was still during the Second World War), I felt very strongly that, even if engineers could move mountains and control nature, their work was destroyed in wars, so it was more important to prevent wars.

Q: So then you switched to an international relations focus?

BACHE: Almost. At the end of my freshman year, I decided not to go into engineering and I selected an interdepartmental major in philosophy and government. I took courses in that direction during my sophomore year.

In September 1945, I turned 18, the war was over, but there was still the draft. I found out I could enlist in the army for 18 months and be sure of getting out after 18 months, so that is what I did. I was in the Army from January of 1946 until July of 1947. In September 1947, I returned to Yale and that is when I switched again to the international relations major, which is what I followed for those last two years and was my degree major.

Q: What did you do in the army?

BACHE: In the army, after completing basic training at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, I was selected for Officer Candidate School, but that would have meant extending my enlistment for a longer period of time. Since I did not want to extend my enlistment, I chose not to go to Officer Candidate School (OCS).

In the meantime, however, all those who were candidates for OCS were put into the cadre, training recruits in basic training. As a result, I went through basic training eight times, the last seven times as a trainer. In the training company, I was the squad corporal and my immediate supervisor was the platoon sergeant.

In such activities as teaching the recruits to march, the platoon sergeant would often yell, scream and swear at the recruits when he was unhappy with their performance. I usually found that quiet, patient explanation - sometimes supplemented by further drill in the evening - was more effective in getting results. I received commendations for things like teaching knot tying and map reading. I did not enjoy my army experience at the time, but afterwards I was very glad that I had had that experience.

Q: After you got your degree from Yale in international relations in 1949, did you then immediately go to Harvard?

BACHE: Immediately after graduation in June 1949, I went to Europe on a concert tour with the Yale Glee Club. We sang in England, France, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Germany. Needless to say, it was a thrilling experience. After reading so much about the historical places in Europe, it was really exciting to see them at first hand.

After the concert tour in June and July, I spent much of August on a bicycle tour of France with the man who had been my roommate during junior and senior years at Yale. Also, later in life, at college reunions, I found that more of the people who really mattered to me were fellow Glee Club members, rather than academic classmates.

In September of 1949, I entered Harvard Law School, where I learned to read all over again. At Yale, I had learned to skim through voluminous texts and get the gist of the contents. At law school, I found out, in the first few days, that, even though I thought I had read the assignment, I had no idea what the professor and the class were talking about, because they were analyzing sentences, word by word and phrase by phrase. So that experience taught me how to read carefully and to deal with new problems, no matter what the subject matter.

In my second year at Harvard Law School, I took the Foreign Service examination, because at that time the State Department told us that you often had to wait a year or two or three after taking the exam before getting into the Service. But after I took the written exam in the fall of 1950, I was given the oral exam in the spring of my second year at law school. I was told then by the State Department that I had to come right away or not at all. So, at the end of my second year of law school, I did go and went right to the Foreign Service Institute in the summer of 1951.

Q: Well, before we move on to your Foreign Service career, let's see if there are any other details of your early life you might want to cover. For example, growing up, what were your hobbies, or sports activities? Did you do any writing? Were there any particular teachers who were influential in steering you in a particular direction?

BACHE: Well, taking the last question first, I was fortunate at Scarsdale High School to have an excellent public school education. One of the outstanding teachers, whom I had for American History in both 7th and 8th grade was William Steele; he gave us the facts of American history in a way that stayed with me for the rest of my life. Also in junior high school, I had an outstanding English teacher, Oliver Melchior, who later became principal of the high school. I also had an extraordinarily talented math teacher, Carroll Ross.

In 11th grade, I was inspired by a European history course with Dorothy Connors and she also taught an advanced section of American history in 12th grade. In the latter class, because we already had command of the basic facts (from Mr. Steele's course), we could analyze trends and issues in a meaningful way.

At Yale, in the international relations major, I took American Diplomatic History with Samuel Bemis, who wrote our textbook, and European Diplomatic History with Harry Rudin, both of whom were memorable. In Comparative Government, we had Cecil Driver, an Englishman who had run for a seat in Parliament himself; when he described the British institutions, he made us feel as if we were sitting right there, watching the parliament in session (which I later did during a visit to London).

For the History of Philosophy, I had Professor Robert Calhoun, whose precision in the language of his lectures was absolutely brilliant. In a course on French Critics, Historians and Political Thinkers, I had Professor Henri Peyre, who had an encyclopedic knowledge of French literature, history, philosophy and science. Every one of his lectures (all in French) was eloquent.

At Harvard Law, I had Austin Scott on trusts and Warren Seavey on torts, both of whom were the top experts in their fields at the time. In my last year at law school, I had a seminar on the Legal Aspects of U.S. Foreign Economic Policy, taught by Kingman Brewster, who later became president of Yale University.

And there were many others at Yale and at Harvard Law. I was very fortunate to have the best education the United States had to offer at the time. All of these high school teachers and college and law school professors inspired me to try to leave the world in a better condition than I had found it.

My main hobby all through school and college was music. I mentioned that my mother was a singer. At age six, I started with piano lessons; at age ten, I started on the cello. I soon found I couldn't keep up with both, so I dropped piano, but continued with the cello and it has brought me great joy throughout my life. Music has played a big role in my Foreign Service life, as well as in retirement.

Q: Did you specifically play any sports during this period?

BACHE: In our neighborhood, I used to play in a pickup softball game or touch football on weekday afternoons. At school, I took the required physical education courses and played some intramural games, but I was never an athlete.

Q: In addition, you went to Yale, which certainly is a fine college. Was this a family decision that your parents encouraged you to make? Did you have a scholarship? Did you have to work to get yourself through Yale? Was it something your family helped you with?

BACHE: My father and uncle were both alumni of Cornell University. I expected to apply to Cornell, knowing very little about other colleges. But the principal of my high school, Lester Nelson, who was an inspiration to many of us, told me that I ought to apply to a school like Yale. I never dreamed that I would get into a place like that. He wrote a glowing letter of recommendation.

I was accepted and I also won a scholarship, which was not based on financial need, but on merit. This scholarship did help me in my first two years at Yale. I also worked sixteen hours a week at the University Library to earn my board.

Q: Michael, how did you first become interested in foreign affairs?

BACHE: As I said earlier, my stamp collection and family conversations got me interested in current events and world history. I enjoyed reading up about the history and events that were portrayed by the stamps. I entered junior high school in September, 1939, which was just the time of the beginning of the Second World War, and a lot of the daily news was about things overseas. We often discussed these events at home with the family.

Also, I did enjoy studying foreign languages, which I first encountered in trying to decipher what was written on the postage stamps. I started with French in 7th grade and Latin in 10th. There was a four-year sequence of Latin courses at our high school, but after 10th grade, I had only two years left in high school. Therefore, I arranged to take second-year Latin (Caesar) in summer school (between 10th and 11th grade), so that I could get into Cicero in 11th grade and Virgil in 12th. I always found Latin very helpful in understanding the structure and learning about the grammar of English and other languages.

When I got to Yale, I took elementary German. It was an intensive spoken German course (ten hours a week). After freshman year in that elementary German course, I went into a 4th-year German class at Yale, where they were reading Lessing, Goethe and Schiller. I was not only able to keep up, but the intensive spoken German course had made me very comfortable with the classical literary elements of the spoken language.

Meanwhile, my high school course in European history had reinforced my interest in foreign affairs and my decision at the end of freshman year at college to jump from engineering to social science was certainly a significant turning point in directing me toward international relations. Such Yale courses as comparative government and diplomatic history, mentioned above, as well as the Yale Glee Club concert tour in Europe, reinforced this interest even further.

Q: Well, that certainly would have given you a leg up in joining the Foreign Service. When did you decide that joining the Foreign Service was of interest to you?

BACHE: I think it was some time in college, after I had decided on a major in international relations. I had always thought that the Foreign Service was a possibility, but I frankly doubted very much that I would ever get into the Service, so I didn't take it too seriously.

As a matter of fact, I have often thought that the reason I passed the written exam was because I didn't expect to pass it. I just took the exam like a puzzle, for the fun of it, like a game. I was relaxed, because I didn't seriously think that I had a chance. I knew that I was interested in international affairs, but I did not seriously think I could get into the Foreign Service until I found out that I had passed the written exam.

Q: This was the first time you took the test?

BACHE: Yes.

Q: You said earlier that you then actually joined the Foreign Service then, in about 1951.

BACHE: Yes, the oral exam was, I think, in March of 1951 and then very shortly after that, I was invited and so I did join. The introductory class, A-100, was from June to August of 1951.

Q: What did you think of that course, the A-100 course?

BACHE: I enjoyed it. I enjoyed getting to know the other members of the class. Mr. Thomasson was the director and Mr. Ralph Miller was his deputy. Mr. Miller and his wife taught us things about protocol, how to conduct ourselves, calling cards, invitations and social functions. Mr. Thomasson supervised the rest of the training, which was given mostly by other individuals, who taught us the basics about consular work, as well as economic, political and administrative activities.

Q: In retrospect, did you find it useful as an introduction to the Foreign Service? Was it boring, or interesting?

BACHE: It was not boring. It was definitely very useful. As you will see, my second tour of duty was in consular affairs, although most of my career was in economic affairs. Yes, it was a very good introduction.

Q: How many other people do you recall, roughly, were in this A-100 class with you, and what was your general impression of them? What were they like, a mixture, men, women, ethnic diversity?

BACHE: I think there were about 25 of us, mostly men. Several of them were veterans from the war, who were older than the rest of us, but the others were close to my age. I believe there was only one African-American in the whole class. The group kept in touch and we had several reunions, one of them at my house in Washington, in the early 1980s. Several members were very friendly and supportive over the years, but all of my best friends from the class are now dead.

Q: You mentioned that most of your career you were an economic officer. What prompted you to choose that particular path?

BACHE: I mentioned that my major at Yale was international relations, but I did take courses at Yale in elementary economics and international trade. At law school, after completing the basic elementary courses that were required, I took courses in subjects related to economics as much as I could. I took courses in corporation law, accounting and statistics, all of which I felt were useful background for economics. I also took two years of international law.

During my studies of comparative government at Yale, I got the impression that most of the issues that were discussed by the legislative bodies of the world were economic issues. This impression did not change after I entered the Foreign Service. Also, I guess my interest, because of my family's position in the stock brokerage business, has always been in the economic side of world affairs.

Q: Did you ever work with your family enterprise?

BACHE: Yes. One of the summers when I was at law school, I worked at Bache & Company in Wall Street. I had the basic training course, which meant a week as a messenger, a couple of weeks in the Margin Department and a couple of weeks in the Research Department, being introduced to the different elements of a stock brokerage business. My uncle encouraged me to come to work for the firm, but I wasn't ready to do so at that time.

Q: Looking at your career pattern, I notice there is a break of a few years. We will get into the details of your Foreign Service postings, but I notice there seems to be a three-year period, '58 to '61, when you did work for Bache & Co. Had you left the Foreign Service?

BACHE: Yes, after my second overseas post in the Foreign Service, which was Munich, Germany, I did resign from the Foreign Service and I did go to work for Bache & Co., first in their Legal Department and then in their Foreign Department. I enjoyed those jobs, but I felt, at the end of those three years, that what we were doing to help rich people get richer was less important than what I had been doing in the Foreign Service, serving my country and being present when history was being made.

Q: How were you able to return to the Foreign Service?

BACHE: At that time, there was a provision of law for reappointment of former Foreign Service Officers. I don't know whether it still exists, but, at that time, it was a specific statutory arrangement, so I was able to get back in quite easily.

Q: Now, let's take a more detailed look at the Foreign Service Career itself. Your first posting, 1951 to '53, was as a junior officer in Pusan, Korea. That must have been an interesting time to be there.

BACHE: Yes. As you know, that was during the Korean war and the embassy had been forced to retreat from Seoul to Pusan, because of the military operations. I served under Ambassadors Muccio and Briggs. The Deputy Chiefs of Mission (DCMs) were Alan Lightner and Niles Bond.

As a junior economic officer, I was doing reports on subjects like the Korean government's budget, under the supervision of our financial attache. I also handled east-west trade matters, which included investigations of suspected violations of U.S. export control regulations.

In addition, I helped our agricultural attache do a couple of rice crop surveys; the latter assignment offered an opportunity to travel throughout the country. I remember that, along with the rice crop survey, we would do a livestock census. The Korean government offered us the services of a mid-level official of the Agriculture Ministry as an interpreter; I knew enough of the Korean language at that time to recognize that, for example, every time the village chief would say they had ten goats, this official would say eight goats. I reported these discrepancies to the agricultural attache, who would make appropriate corrections in his numbers. More than a year later, after I got to know this mid-level Korean official quite well, I asked him why he did that and he said, rather apologetically, that he was following orders of the Minister of Agriculture, who wanted to give the Americans the impression that conditions were bad, so we would increase the amount of U.S. economic aid to Korea.

During this first experience for me in East Asia, I quickly learned that Koreans considered it impolite to say "No" in answer to a question, so I learned not to ask a question, which required a "yes or no" answer. Along these same lines, I believe that many current misunderstandings between the U.S. and China, for example, have been caused by this cultural difference. One case in point is the fact that China, in joining the World Trade Organization, has signed many complex agreements, promising many things in areas like intellectual property law, without intending the kind of serious commitment that Americans would consider implicit in the signing of such agreements.

For the first year and a half of that two-year tour of duty in Korea, I got to know the people who worked with the Finance Minister. Then the Finance Minister became the Prime Minister, so, for the last six months of my tour, I was moved over from the Economic Section to the Political Section of the Embassy, because I knew the Prime Minister's entourage and was able to help with that kind of reporting. That experience gave me a brief introduction to the work of an Embassy political section.

Q: Did the war encroach on the mission there physically? Was Pusan, while you were there, a scene of military action?

BACHE: No. The Second Logistical Command of the U.S. Army was at the port of Pusan, where a lot of military freight came in and out of the port, but otherwise, we didn't see much of the military. The primary military activity was up in the north, near the demarcation line between North and South Korea. The really active part of the war was pretty well over before I got there in September 1951. I did take field trips and I would see abandoned American tanks in the middle of rice paddies. I would see what was left over from the war, but the war itself did not interfere much with what we were doing.

Before the Korean War, Pusan had been a city of 300,000 inhabitants. During the war, 900,000 refugees arrived, swelling the population to 1,200,000. The result was conditions of the most abject poverty, with refugees living in the depth of winter in corrugated cardboard boxes. There were open sewers surrounding our house and a smell that was ubiquitous.

Q: Any particular highlight of your Pusan experience that you would like to mention?

BACHE: Yes, there were several things. There was a group of junior officials in the Korean Foreign Ministry, who asked me to teach them some English, at an advanced level. I used some material from my Yale courses in American and European diplomatic history, in order to give them some of the vocabulary they needed. When I was getting ready to leave Korea, they wanted to give me a very generous gift, which, under State Department regulations, I had to refuse. It was a difficult thing to deal with, because I didn't want to hurt their feelings, but eventually we found a token gift that I could accept.

I mentioned that I had always been interested in music, so I took my cello with me when I went to Korea. Many members of the Seoul Symphony Orchestra had joined the Korean Navy and there was a Korean Navy Symphony Orchestra, in which I was invited to play. An example of the war conditions was the fact that, in the cold winter weather, there was often no heat, so we would play with our overcoats on, even in concerts. There was often no electricity, so we used candles, and there were other problems from war conditions, but we persevered with our music.

Later on, during my tour of duty in Korea, there were many Korean music students who came to me, trying to get to the U.S. to study. So I wrote to a professor I knew at the Yale Music School, and asked if he could offer a music scholarship for a Korean student and he said yes. In order to be fair about offering the scholarship, the American cultural attache and I, together with the conductor of the Korean Navy Symphony Orchestra, decided to have a competition for the scholarship and to be the judges of the competition. One contestant, named Nak-ho Paik, whom we had never seen before, was head and shoulders above the rest, so we awarded the scholarship to him. He went to Yale Music School, and then on to Juilliard, and later became a professor of music at Seoul National University.

Nak-ho has kept in touch with me and, over the years, he has given concerts around the world, some of which I have attended. In fact, I played in an informal concert with him in New Jersey just a couple of years ago. So that was a memorable experience with music in Korea.

Q: How were relations within the embassy? Did all the sections get along well? Were the Ambassador and the DCM well regarded?

BACHE: Yes, I would say it was a very close-knit group. You remember, this was during the war and living conditions were harsh. Married officers were not allowed to bring their families. We were mostly bachelors and single women, until - shortly before I left - Ambassador Briggs was allowed to bring his wife, but none of the other members of the Embassy staff had their families with them.

There were very warm feelings among all of us and we had quite a few social activities together. I shared a house with two bachelors, who worked in the political section; one was a Chinese language officer and the other was a Japanese language officer. The Chinese language officer was Philip Manhard, who later on was captured in Vietnam and spent many years as a prisoner of war.

One other social and recreational comment: I mentioned earlier that I had learned to sail various sizes of boats under various conditions. Vincent Brandt, another embassy officer in Korea, and I jointly purchased a sailboat and sailed it along the Korean coast. Frankly, we enjoyed being out on the water, having some fresh air and getting away from the smells of Pusan for a brief period. We had to navigate difficult current conditions at the mouth of the Nakdong River, but we succeeded in sailing as far as the island of Koje-do, which some people will remember was the site of the main camp for Chinese prisoners-of-war.

Q: It sounds like it was a good experience, despite the hardships that the embassy experienced for a long while. You were all working for a good effort, a good cause. After that, what was your next post?

BACHE: After I left Pusan in September 1953, I had to take nine months' leave without pay, in order to go back and finish my third and final year at Harvard Law School.

My next Foreign Service post, beginning in the summer of 1954, was Munich, Germany, where I was a visa officer. As you may recall, after the Second World War, there were many refugees in West Germany from Eastern Europe, living either in refugee camps or on their own. During my first two years in Munich, my job was to examine applicants for immigrant visas to the United States and decide whether or not to issue visas to them. Many of the applicants were refugees, who were helped by voluntary agencies, which I will mention in a few minutes. Virtually all of the interviews were conducted in German.

By the way, the Consul General, when we arrived in Munich, was Alan Lightner, who you remember had been DCM in Pusan; his successor as Consul General was Edward Page. The deputy principal officer throughout my four years in Munich was Raymond Ylitalo.

After those first two years, I was promoted to chief of the visa section in Munich, which was one of the largest U.S. visa operations in the world. It meant that I had ten Americans and 27 Germans working under me. At the time, I was an FSO-6 and the job was supposed to be filled by an FSO-4. I had to deal with all the refusals and other difficult cases. I decided to have a panel of three visa officers review those cases before we made a decision. When I was reviewing those difficult visa cases, I often had to read the court records in German of criminal cases, where the applicant had been convicted. We had to decide whether or not this was a "crime involving moral turpitude," as defined in U.S. immigration law. Obviously, my experience in law school was very useful for that purpose and was probably one of the reasons I was promoted to chief of section. Another advantage was my fluency in the German language.

When I had to inform an applicant that he had been refused a visa, I prided myself on handling the discussion in a patient way that usually ended with the applicant thanking me for my careful consideration of his case, rather than going away angry. These were some of the same tactics I had used in the Army.

I also spent a lot of time on Congressional correspondence; I remember I once calculated that we wrote an average of 30 letters a month - more than one per working day - responding to Congressional inquiries about visa cases. We also had occasional Congressional visits; one memorable occasion was when Representative Emmanuel Celler, then Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, came to visit. My wife and I went to the opera with the Cellers - at his expense - and then he came to our house and accompanied me on the piano as I sang and played the cello.

As chief of the visa section, I had to deal with the representatives of a large number of voluntary agencies, such as Catholic Relief Services, Church World Services, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, and other religious organizations, as well as ethnic organizations, such as the American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees and the Tolstoy Foundation, which represented Russian refugees. I found it was a nuisance for me to have to keep repeating myself in talking to each of these representatives separately, so I started bringing in all of them once a month. I would report to them on the news from Washington, the new directives and instructions about procedures for visas and the like. They would bring up their problems and questions and complaints. It was a help to me to do it all at once, instead of separately with each of them. But they said they were very grateful and kept thanking me for initiating the practice of the monthly meetings. I believe that practice, which I started, continued after I left the post.

When I became chief of section, I was also aware that the local employees, over the years, had developed a great number of form letters in German that they would send to applicants to inform them of the status of their cases. I thought it was inefficient to have so many different form letters (there were more than 100 of them) and I felt that there should be an official record in English of all communications with applicants. I also found, sometimes, that applicants who knew English, but not German, would receive these form letters in German from a U.S. government office.

Therefore, I reviewed all of these form letters, removed duplications, simplified the language and reduced the number of different forms to about twenty. I also translated all the texts into English and had the English text printed on the back of the German letter. This was an example of the kind of streamlining that I introduced to the visa operation. Another was rearranging the location of some offices, so that both applicants and paperwork flowed through the office like a production line.

I mentioned earlier that I did music. In Munich, there was an amateur orchestra that had been going for almost a hundred years before I arrived. I was invited to join that orchestra, whose members were German doctors, businessmen, travel agents, retired postmen and all kinds of people who enjoyed music. Again, it was a chance to meet people and to get a better understanding of the culture and society in which we were living.

I also mentioned that I was interested in improving my knowledge of the German language. Munich University was quite near the Consulate General, so I started attending lectures on international law, being given in German, to get used to the terminology. Then the professor invited me to participate in his seminar, which I did, and had another academic year with a small group of students studying law at Munich University.

Q: This is while you were still fully employed heading the visa section?

BACHE: That is correct, but I was able to do this in the evening or in off hours, one way or another, that didn't interfere with my work.

Q: I believe you mentioned earlier in our interview that, when you were in Munich, you looked up family places?

BACHE: Yes, I mentioned that three of my four grandparents were born in the United States, but my mother's father was born in a little village called Unsleben. The family joke was that it really must have been 'Hundsleben,' which means 'a dog's life.' Until my grandfather was six years old, he lived in Unsleben, which is a village in Oberfranken (Upper Franconia) that is now part of Bavaria in Germany. While I was stationed in Munich, we visited there and it probably looked about the same as it had one hundred years earlier, with ducks waddling in mud puddles in the middle of the main street of the village. On the advice of the Gemeindeschreiber (village clerk) of Unsleben, we visited the Catholic Church in a nearby village, which had the records of all the births and deaths before the unification of Germany in 1870. There I found out more about my mother's family and ancestors than she had ever known, by getting birth certificates and other documents from that church office in Upper Franconia.

When my grandfather was six, his family moved to a bigger town nearby, called Bad Neustadt an der Saale, where he went to school. When he was sixteen, he emigrated to the United States, to avoid being drafted into the Prussian army at the time of the Franco-Prussian War. On the same trip that took us to Unsleben, we also visited Bad Neustadt an der Saale, which was a typical German small city or large town, where much of the architecture dated from the 18th and 19th centuries.

Q: Are there any other particular incidents that stand out with regard to your service in Munich?

BACHE: Yes, shortly after my arrival in Munich, I noted the effect of the German tradition of the Beamte, or government official, from the Nazi time and before then. The Beamter would order people around and tell them what to do in a peremptory manner. I felt strongly that U.S. government officials are public servants, who are paid to serve the public and be helpful to people, not to bark orders at them. Therefore, when I became chief of the visa section, I tried to instill this attitude into our German employees in the Consulate General and I saw a noticeable improvement in their behavior as a result.

Q: The way that they would treat the public, the visa applicants?

BACHE: Yes, and there were hundreds of them coming through the visa section every day.

Speaking of incidents in Munich that stand out and recalling my sailing experience, I also wanted to mention that we had purchased a little sailboat on the Starnberger See, which is a small lake not too far from Munich. On at least one - maybe two - summer weekends while I was chief of section, we invited the whole visa section to a picnic on the Starnberger See; I took several of them on short sailing trips on the lake. This is one example of the way we helped morale and got people to work together.

Q: This is the second tape of the interview with Michael Bache on October 22, 2004, conducted by Theresa Tull. Michael, after Munich, that is when you went back and tried the family business for a few years. We have covered that. After that, you returned to the Foreign Service, the next posting was Africa. That is a change!

BACHE: Yes, I went to Abidjan, Ivory Coast, West Africa, in the summer of 1961. I remember, when I got the assignment, I had never heard of Abidjan and I thought they had made a mistake and were talking about Abadan in Saudi Arabia. But, in fact, they meant Abidjan, Ivory Coast. I served under Ambassadors Borden Reams and James Wine.

My job there was as commercial attache, the first American commercial attache after Ivory Coast got its independence from France in 1960. I found that my principal job was to help American businessmen to get around the French stranglehold on trade with their former colony. I was helping American businessmen who either wanted to export to Ivory Coast, or more often, wanted to invest there. I felt it was my job to get to know the right people, so that when an American businessman came to Abidjan, I could introduce him or direct him to someone who could be helpful to him, either in government or in business.

When I arrived in Abidjan, I had just come back from three years in Wall Street, so the Chamber of Commerce of Ivory Coast invited me to give a few lectures in French on the workings of the U.S. stock exchanges. That was fun to do, but also a way to meet some of these people and get to know them, so I could call on them for help when I needed it in introducing American businessmen to their local counterparts.

Naturally, it took some time for me to get to know the right people and some of the French businessmen in Abidjan were resentful of my efforts. Thus, after my first 18 months there, I realized that I had only just begun to carry out effectively the duties of an American commercial attache in a former French colony that was newly independent. That is why I volunteered for a second 18-month tour of duty in Abidjan, because I really did not feel I was earning my pay until I got to know who was who and what was going on. Also, I really enjoyed the job very much.

An example of how I got to know who was who and what was going on in the commercial world happened on a pineapple plantation. Pineapples were one of Ivory Coast's major exports. When I met the French manager of the plantation, he was complaining that he wanted to buy an Italian machine for processing pineapples that was better and substantially cheaper than the available French machine. He mentioned that the French machine cost about \$150,000 and the Italian about \$100,000. When the plantation manager applied for the required import license, however, the Ivoirian official in charge of licenses notified the French manufacturer's association (the 'Patronat'), which, in turn, prevailed upon the French manufacturer to offer the machine at \$99,990. The result was that the plantation manager was forced to buy the inferior French machine, although he would have much preferred the Italian one. This episode helped me to understand how the French government maintained its stranglehold on trade with its former colonies and was very useful in later discussions with American businessmen seeking to export to, and invest in, the Ivory Coast. Such insights do not come in the first days of a tour of duty.

My musical activities continued there. I did not bring my good 19th century European cello, because I was afraid that the tropical heat and humidity would damage it. Instead, I got one of my friends in Germany from the Munich days, who had been president of our orchestra society and was also an importer of cocoa and coffee from Ivory Coast, to buy me a cheap cello in Germany and ship it to Abidjan. The USAID planning officer in Abidjan was a flutist and there was a Frenchman, who worked in the Ivory Coast Ministry of Agriculture, who played the viola. There were others and, in this way, we formed a chamber music group and we performed at the U.S. Cultural Center (USIS) and the French Cultural Center. Once again, I found that music is an international language, which helped me to get to know people other than the government officials, with whom I had to deal officially, and thus get to know the culture of the country where I was stationed.

In Abidjan, we had three small children at that point, at kindergarten and first grade level. When they arrived, they did not know any French. We enrolled them at a daytime school, run by the Catholic Church, called Externat St. Paul, where the language of instruction was French. Fortunately, one of the priests there was from Canada and spoke both French and English. When our children really needed help, they could go to the Canadian father and make their needs known.

Q: You mentioned children and we didn't even mention the fact that you had gotten married. Tell us a little something about your wife and family.

BACHE: Yes. You will recall that, after returning from Korea and before going to Germany, I took nine months' leave without pay to complete my third academic year at Harvard Law School. There was a long weekend in January between the fall and spring semesters. I was married on January 28, 1954 to Eleanor Krout, who had been a classmate of mine at Scarsdale High School. Eleanor's father was a professor of American history at Columbia University, who later became Dean of the Graduate School, then Provost of the University. Eleanor and I had been friends ever since high school and, during the autumn after I came back from Korea, I persuaded her to marry me.

Our first child, Marion, was born in a military hospital in Munich, in May of 1955. She, unfortunately, is severely mentally retarded and, even now, lives in a group home. After Munich, when I was working in Wall Street and we were living in northern New Jersey, we enrolled her in a special school for the mentally retarded, but when we moved to Abidjan, we had to keep her at home. When we returned to Washington, we again found a special school for her, as we did when we got to Stockholm.

Our second child, Stephen, was born in September 1957, also in a military hospital in Munich. Our third child, Nicholas, was born in October 1958 in New Jersey. Thus, we had three small children during most of the time - from 1958 until 1961 - when we were living in Westfield, New Jersey.

Later on, when we were living in Abidjan, we decided that we had better sell our house in Westfield. Therefore, while on home leave from Abidjan, we had some work done on the house to get it fixed up and ready to sell. Some of the construction workmen who came to the house were African-American. When the workmen came to the house, the children immediately started speaking French to them. They had seen in Abidjan that, whenever you saw someone who was black, you had to speak French, so they did.

Our fourth child, Vivian, was born in Washington, DC in April of 1965, after we had returned from Africa. That completed our family of two boys and two girls.

Q: How did they like the Foreign Service life?

BACHE: I think they enjoyed it; I know they enjoyed it. I always felt that any disruption of their education - from having to move from one place to another and one school to another and one set of friends to another - was more than offset by the experience, the tolerance of other cultures and the breadth of view that comes from that kind of a life. I have felt that way and they have said that they also felt that way.

Q: You have a publication in your hand. I think we ought to hear about that.

BACHE: When I left Abidjan, I had a two-year tour of duty in the U.S. Department of Commerce; the first of those two years was spent in the Africa Division of the Bureau of International Commerce. For some years, the Commerce Department had been issuing a series of publications called "..., a Market for U.S. Products." During my time at Commerce, I wrote an 84-page booklet entitled "Ivory Coast: A Market for U.S. Products." The material in the booklet was based on my observations during my three years in Ivory Coast, plus my readings in French.

At that time, there was absolutely nothing on Ivory Coast written in English. This was in the mid-1960s and, as I mentioned above, there were a number of American businessmen interested in investing there, because Ivory Coast was one of the few African countries with a reasonably prosperous economy. Therefore, when my booklet was published, many English-speaking businessmen from around the world went to the U.S. Department of Commerce, wishing to buy copies of the booklet. The Ivory Coast Embassy in Washington also wished to buy hundreds of copies, but the Commerce Department didn't have hundreds of copies, so they did a second printing. As a result, I feel that I earned some money for U.S. taxpayers.

Q: Fabulous. What else were you doing? You worked for the Department of Commerce. Is this before commercial officers were separated out from the State Department?

BACHE: Yes, as commercial attaches in the field or as individuals on loan to Commerce, we were still State Department employees at that time. The first year of my two-year of duty at Commerce was spent in the Africa Division of Commerce's Bureau of International Commerce, where I worked on the booklet I just described, evaluated the performance of commercial officers stationed at the larger posts in Africa and dealt with various trade problems as they arose.

My second year at Commerce was spent on the India-Pakistan desk in the Near East South Asia Division of the Bureau of International Commerce. In addition to duties similar to those just described in the Africa Division, I represented the Commerce Department at the weekly interdepartmental meetings, chaired by the Director (Carol Laise or Bruce Laingen) of South Asian Affairs at the State Department. These meetings were instructive in helping me understand the roles of the various U.S. government agencies represented at the meetings, such as Treasury, Agriculture, ExImBank, Central Intelligence Agency, etc.

For a couple of months at the end of my stint at Commerce, I was loaned to an ad hoc organization, called (rather misleadingly) 'the Balance of Payments Program,' where I reviewed applications by American corporations for direct investments (i.e., American ownership of factories and the like) in developing countries. This was a short-lived program of the Johnson administration, ostensibly to reduce the deficit in our balance of payments. In connection with that program, I worked closely with other government agencies, especially the Treasury Department.

From January to June 1967, I was sent to a six-month economics course at the Foreign Service Institute, which was supposedly the equivalent of an undergraduate major plus some graduate courses in economics. I doubt if the course accomplished that much, but it did acquaint me with the terminology and some of the methods of reasoning in economics, which were very useful in later jobs that I held.

From July 1967 until July 1969, I was assigned to the Bureau of European Affairs at the State Department, in what was called EUR/RPE, which stands for 'Europe, regional political/economic.' Under Dean Hinton and Tom Fina, I was dealing with internal developments in the European Community in the late 1960s. At that time, the EC was in its early development stages and it was a very interesting time to observe those developments. For example, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission sent some commissioners over to Brussels to discuss securities regulation. As you can imagine, the work involved coordination with many other U.S. government agencies.

During the period (1965-69) that I was in Washington, both at Commerce and at State, my family and I were able to spend some spring, summer and fall weekends at our place here in New Jersey at the Atlantic Ocean shore. We had a sailboat (an O'Day Daysailer) on Barnegat Bay. In the winter in Washington, I was able to continue my musical activities by playing in an orchestra and a chamber music group.

Q: While you were in the Department, working on these economic issues in European affairs, how did you perceive the relationships between the Department, in formulating policies with regard to Europe, and other government agencies, such as the Commerce or the Treasury Departments? Was there any conflict over things of that nature?

BACHE: As I mentioned, I regularly represented the Commerce Department in 1966 at weekly interdepartmental meetings on India and Pakistan. When I was in State's Bureau of European Affairs from 1967 until 1969, we again had frequent interdepartmental meetings.

But the primary contact with other agencies came when I had to 'clear' numerous outgoing messages with officers representing various other bureaus of the State Department, as well as other agencies of the government; this meant visiting or telephoning individual officers in those organizations and either persuading them to accept our draft message or negotiating with them to reach agreement on some new language that would satisfy their bureaucratic requirements, as well as ours. In general, I would say that most of these negotiations went smoothly, partly because I took the same patient stance that I mentioned above in dealing with army recruits and with visa applicants who had been refused a visa.

Q: But, by and large, did you feel there was pretty good coordination among the various departments of government formulating policy? You mentioned Congress, for example. Did you have contacts with Congress in this position?

BACHE: Unlike my experience in Munich, where Congressional correspondence and visits were heavy, I didn't have much personal contact with Congress in EUR/RPE, but my bosses did. As I mentioned above, at the end of 1967, during Lyndon Johnson's term as president, I worked on a special program in direct investment, which involved close coordination with the Treasury Department and some contact with Congress.

Q: You worked there compatibly, no real hassles?

BACHE: I wasn't aware of any friction; there may have been some I didn't see. But, as I mentioned above in connection with visa refusals and cable clearances, my approach has always been patience and an effort to understand the other side's point of view.

Q: So, you finished the tour in RPE in '69. What was next on the agenda?

BACHE: At this point, I was assigned to Stockholm, Sweden. The whole family moved, but I went ahead in July and the rest of the family came along in August. I remember watching the moon landing when I was alone there in Sweden; then the family came a month later, after I found a house in a Stockholm suburb.

My job in Stockholm made use of my experience with interdepartmental coordination, especially because Sweden, even though it is a small country, is big in the multilateral area. For example, at that time, Sweden was a member of the Group of Ten in the International Monetary Fund, so I sometimes had to deliver messages to the Governor of the Bank of Sweden on monetary questions. Sweden was also very active in multilateral aid to developing countries and I worked closely with the head of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), on multilateral aid. Also, in civil aviation, there was a Swede who was head of the European Association of Civil Aviation Chiefs, so I often delivered messages to him and from him about civil aviation questions for all of Europe.

Q: What was the specific position?

BACHE: I was the number two economic officer; there were only three of us. I served there under Ambassador Jerome Holland. As you know, the State Department defines economics really broadly, so I was dealing with trade policy (including export controls), monetary policy, aid to developing countries, aviation policy, intellectual property issues, regional planning and just about any other issue that could conceivably be called 'economics.' My main job was reporting and representation, which, as we all know, means delivering messages to the host country, getting their reaction, reporting their reply; and making recommendations of our own on U.S. policy in the area. It was mostly a matter of coordination; we worked closely with the Swedes, as I say, on a lot of multilateral issues, so it was a busy office.

Then, in addition to all the rest, I wrote the semi-annual economic trends report, which was published by the U.S. Department of Commerce. It told about opening markets for U.S. products in Sweden. Of course, the work I had done in Ivory Coast and the Commerce Department was a helpful background for that. We had very able local employees, including some who could write first drafts of some of these reports, but I had to review them carefully and put them in final shape. As I say, we did the overview of the whole Swedish economy twice a year, but in between we prepared separate reports on numerous products in more depth. It was a demanding assignment, consisting mostly of economic reporting, representation and market research.

I was also the Embassy escort officer for several Congressional and other visitors, who were interested in Swedish urban and regional planning and other economic issues mentioned above. Eleanor and I would occasionally give dinner parties for these visitors and the Swedish officials with whom they had met. As you know, the escort officer and dinner routine is something that happened at every post, but we did it in Stockholm (and, later, in Bonn) more than at most other posts.

Q: Now, I noticed the years you were there were 1969 to 1973, the peak period of our involvement in Vietnam. My recollection is that Sweden was not exactly supportive of U.S. efforts there. Did that impact on your work?

BACHE: It was very interesting. They made a very strong separation between political and economic issues. They made their statements on Vietnam and other political issues, but they said that shouldn't interfere with our good, close relations on economic issues. Of course, it was in their interest to treat it that way, and they did, and I think pretty successfully. We let them get away with it, I suppose, but that was it. I had close relations with all the ministries and the banks and the Swedes who were involved with these economic issues. I just didn't talk much about the political questions.

Q: Were there any anti-Vietnam demonstrations?

BACHE: Yes, there were lots of them. The prime minister, Olaf Palme, was even leading the marchers sometimes. So, yes, there was a very noticeable dichotomy there.

Q: So, as good diplomats on both sides?

BACHE: I just pretended that I didn't hear it. I mentioned Jerome Holland; I think he was an ideal non-career diplomat. He trusted his professional staff and consulted us a lot. Every time he was going to give a speech or go before the press, or whatever he was going to do, he would call together the senior officers of the embassy and ask us to give him a dry run on the questions he was going to get and give him recommendations on how to treat those issues. He then followed our advice. That made us feel as though we were wanted and respected. It helped a lot in the morale of the whole Embassy staff.

Q: Your children, who were living with you at the time, were they impacted by the anti-Vietnam sentiment? Did they ever complain to you that they were being taunted about it?

BACHE: I don't think so. The three of them (other than the eldest) went to the Anglo-American School in Stockholm, where they had a good educational experience. The lower grades were taught mostly by British teachers, while the junior high school was taught mostly by Americans, so it was a mixture of British and American curriculum. Most of the other students were children from other embassies, children of businessmen from other countries and relatively few Swedish children.

Unfortunately, the Anglo-American School only went to the ninth grade, so we had to send our older son, Stephen, to boarding school in the United States for his senior high school years, but that actually turned out to be a good experience for him. Our oldest child, Marion, who is mentally retarded, went to a special school in Stockholm for the retarded, where much of the educational program was non-verbal, so that language was not as much of an obstacle as you might expect. She was even sent to a summer camp for the retarded in Norway. Thus, we had a good situation for all of our children when we were in Stockholm.

Again, I was able to do some water sports. There are 28,000 islands in the Stockholm archipelago. We had a 17-foot sloop and sailed among those islands, part way out into the Baltic Sea. Some of the islands are bird sanctuaries, where you are not allowed to land, but you can get quite close with a sailboat and observe the birds without disturbing them.

In connection with my interest in languages, I should mention that the winter was severe; after it snowed in November, we usually didn't see the ground again until April. To get away from that winter, we decided to take the two boys to the Canary Islands, which is Spanish territory. I wanted to know what was going on around me, so I went to adult education night school to learn some Spanish. We had a textbook in Swedish and a Swedish-speaking teacher, who was teaching us Spanish in Swedish! So I knew a few words of Spanish before I got to the Canaries.

Q: Did you speak Swedish too before you went to Stockholm?

BACHE: No, but I obtained a few phonograph records from the Foreign Service Institute before I arrived in Sweden. Upon arrival, however, I found that I had to read the newspapers and economic reports in Swedish right away. I found that all the complex words in Swedish were either like French or German or English. It was only the simple connecting words that were Scandinavian and that you had to learn and understand. So it wasn't really hard to read and understand Swedish. To speak it is a little harder, but I learned to make myself understood.

Q: Your next assignment was to New York to the UN Mission.

BACHE: Exactly. That was from August 1973 to June 1976, so I was there under Ambassadors Scali, Moynihan and Scranton. I was assigned to the Fifth Committee, which was the committee on administrative and budgetary questions. I worked mostly with the representatives of the finance ministries of the other countries. In many ways, I think that committee is the most interesting place at the UN. Each of the other committees (political, economic, social, etc.) dealt with their own issues, but everything costs money, so when we were reviewing the budget, we were dealing with every issue that came before the United Nations.

We lived in Maplewood in northern New Jersey and I commuted into New York. Since I had grown up in the New York area, I could easily find my way around. Those were enjoyable years; I was able to spend weekends at our place at the beach in New Jersey and to play in an orchestra and a chamber music group in the neighborhood.

Q: Were there any particular budget issues that were highlighted during the time you were there? I know that sometimes the argument is made that the U.S. pays too large a percentage of the cost of the UN. Did that come up at that time?

BACHE: When I was at USUN - in the mid-'70s - there was a formula, based on gross national product (GNP), which would have required the U.S. to pay more than 25% of the UN budget. But the other UN member states had pretty well accepted by that time the U.S. insistence that we were not going to pay more than 25% of the principal elements of the UN budget. I think that the fight about what was our share was over.

In the meantime, however, while that fight had been going on, there had been several occasions when the U.S. Congress had insisted on withholding some part of our agreed contribution to the UN budget as the result of various disagreements that had come up between the U.S. and the UN. In other words, the U.S. was in arrears in making its contributions. We were committed to making certain payments and we did not pay them on time. A big part of our job at USUN in the mid-'70s, therefore, was to push Washington to get the money delivered, because the UN was often hamstrung in its operations by the lack of cash that had been promised and committed by the U.S., but not paid.

In addition to the arrears problem, we were drafting resolutions all the time for the General Assembly on a great variety of issues related to the budget and UN administration. We would negotiate in the following manner: We had a little caucus first among the Europeans, the Canadians, the Australians and the Japanese, i.e., the major contributors.

I always used to describe this method of negotiation, in Stockholm and again in New York, on these multilateral issues, as concentric circles. You would go first to Japan, Britain, Germany and France, i.e., those who contributed the money and had to be on board if you wanted to get something done. After that, you drew your circle of the more influential and friendly developing countries and then, finally, the total circle of everybody. Just as I had seen this negotiation method in Stockholm, it was the same in New York at the UN, only there were many more such negotiations. We had a group called WEO (Western Europe and Others), who caucused first and figured out what we wanted to accomplish and how we could get agreement on that, and then we went to the smaller circles and the bigger circles.

Q: What would you say was the most interesting thing you dealt with at the UN? Do any particular issues stand out, or any particular triumph or disappointment? For the U.S., not just from your personal view.

BACHE: At one time, the issues of evaluation, auditing and inspections came up and a sub-committee was formed, of which I was co-chairman; the other co-chairman was a young man named Sethi from India. We worked well together and produced a report, which was published by the UN Secretariat. The subject was not very controversial, but I have a sense that I contributed, in a small way, to the history of the UN and its administrative structure. That is an example of a triumph, if you will.

The following comment may be very political, but it was a fact. As I said, Pat Moynihan was our ambassador for part of the time I was at USUN. Those of us on the staff had spent months - and sometimes years - trying to develop good relations with other delegations at the UN and then, in one wisecrack or one ten-minute story, Moynihan would insult other delegations and destroy what we had been building up for years. That was frustrating at times. He was, of course, trying to get into a position to get elected as U.S. Senator from New York, which he later did. He felt, just as human beings have since the days of the Greeks and the Romans, that the way to get political support is to bash the foreigners. So he practiced that and it was one of the disappointments.

Q: Okay, moving along then, after the UN, where you were for almost four years, you went off to Germany?

BACHE: Yes, I went to Bonn, Germany in the summer of '76 and stayed until the summer of 1980. For the first few months, I was civil air attache, working with French and British officials on the special air regime governing air travel between Berlin and West Germany. That regime was one of the last remaining vestiges of the old occupation of Germany after World War II, but that assignment was only a temporary one.

After a couple of months as civil air attache, I became Counselor of Embassy for Economic Affairs in our Embassy in Bonn, which, as you know, is one of our bigger embassies. We have a very large economic section there and I was the number two man in that section, under a Minister for Economic Affairs and under Ambassador Walter Stoessel.

Q: Did you know, when you were assigned to Bonn, that you could become the economic counselor, or did this just evolve?

BACHE: My recollection is that I didn't know and it evolved. I am glad it happened, frankly, because it was a much more responsible position. I mean the civil aviation job was interesting, but it was pretty narrow, whereas the overall economic job I felt was much more important, because there you were dealing with one of the 'big boys' in the world. It was reporting and representation again, but on a more decisive level, because we were talking to a key ally. Our policies on many of the issues were formulated only after we had talked to the Germans, the Brits and the Japanese on these big economic issues.

As I mentioned before, the State Department defines economics broadly. A lot of my time was spent on multilateral aid, with the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation. At other times, it might be patents and copyrights or anti-trust questions, where again my legal training was useful. It might be obvious economic issues, like trade and energy policies. It was simply all the broad issues with which the U.S. and the major powers in the world have to cope. So I felt very satisfied, from a career point of view, with that job.

We were located right in the birthplace of the composer Beethoven and I played in a string quartet there; the other three players were German. I could practice my German language and get to know non-official German people. The first violinist was a retired official of the German Economics Ministry, who had been a prisoner of war in Russia after the Second World War; the second violinist was the wife of a professor of Greek at Bonn University; and the violist was an engineer at Siemens. Again, they invited me to play in their orchestra. Thus, in Bonn, I again found a combination of cultural and professional interests; it was one of the most enjoyable posts I had.

Our daughter Vivian, our youngest child, started in sixth grade at the Bonn American School, which was run by the U.S. military school system. Between sixth and seventh grades, at her choice, we sent her to a summer camp, where she could learn some German. For seventh and eighth grades, she attended the Nicolas Cusanus Gymnasium, which was part of the local German public school system.

The gymnasium, i.e., secondary school, had a foreigners' division (Auslaenderabteilung), which she attended in the autumn of her first year. There she was given some of the terminology in math and history, so she could understand what was going on. After Christmas vacation, she was in regular classes with the German and other students and had a good experience there of the other cultures. For example, one of her best friends at Nicolas Cusanus was the daughter of a Turkish diplomat assigned to Bonn.

Q: You mentioned that the ambassador at that time was Walter Stoessel.

BACHE: Yes, Walter Stoessel was a very good leader and a generous man. He, like Holland, did 'dry runs' with the country team before press conferences to help him prepare. We helped him with a lot of his entertaining of officials and visitors. Ambassador Stoessel and his wife were delightful people to work with.

Q: As economic counselor, then, you would have been a key element of the ambassador's country team?

BACHE: Absolutely, although there was also an economic minister. The country team included, of course, the DCM, the CIA station chief, the political counselor, the public affairs counselor, etc. We also had a so-called 'legal attache' who dealt with drug enforcement questions. It was a big embassy, as you would expect in a country like Germany.

Q: How did the ambassador meet with the country team? Was it a daily thing, a couple of times a week, or once a week?

BACHE: It was usually once a week, early in the morning and it took place in a special room that was soundproofed. But, if there was some special occasion, the country team might meet more often. Most of the time, however I think it was once a week.

Q: And you felt like your contacts with him were adequate, the ambassador and DCM, that you had all the contact you needed for your work?

BACHE: Oh, yes, good strong support. I also felt that way in Abidjan and Stockholm, but both of those posts were so much smaller, while Bonn was really a big operation.

Q: Well, moving on then, your next assignment was in Washington.

BACHE: Yes. After Bonn, I became the sole economic officer in the Human Rights Bureau. People might wonder, what is an economic officer doing in the Human Rights Bureau? There, I was chairman of the interagency Working Group on Human Rights and Foreign Assistance. This working group evolved from the Christopher Committee, which was established when Warren Christopher was Under Secretary of State; he started this interagency committee and then it was continued at a lower level.

We had people from Treasury, Agriculture, AID (the Agency for International Development), Commerce, the Export-Import Bank, and any other relevant agencies of the government. Every time we had to vote in the World Bank or one of the regional development banks or some other place like that, on a loan to a country with a poor human rights record, we had to decide how the U.S. would vote. We also had to decide on the U.S. government action on a proposed bilateral U.S. loan or grant to such a country.

We had to do our analysis and make our recommendations, based on a combination of political and economic factors. When we met, I was chairman, so I was able to set the agenda. The members of the Working Group usually took turns drafting the reports. That was also a good interagency experience for me.

Another activity of the Bureau, in which I participated, was preparation of the annual country reports on human rights practices. Along with others in the Bureau, I reviewed the drafts prepared on each individual country's record for the previous year and made recommendations for revisions. I concentrated, of course, on the descriptions of economic activities of those governments, but I also made other recommendations on other aspects of those governments' policies and activities. My recollection is that my recommendations were always received with good grace and I was aware of no significant friction resulting from those recommendations.

Q: My recollection of that time, when I also worked in the Human Rights Bureau, was that having human rights as an element of foreign policy was not universally a thrilling situation for a lot of our colleagues, not only in State, but in other branches of government. How did you feel about that? Did you feel you had to be in a combative mode, pushing ideas or pushing views?

BACHE: I guess I came to the Human Rights Bureau with the same prejudices as some others, i.e., that this really is a side issue for foreign policy. In the past, my experience was that the way to be successful in talking about human rights and other domestic issues with other countries was to do it privately and quietly and out of the public eye. Other countries often were willing to listen if we kept it away from the public. I really was in disagreement with the policy at the tail end of the Carter administration, where there was an effort by Pat Derian, who was then head of the Bureau, and other political people to push this as a public policy, to speak loudly about it.

On the contrary, I have found it always to be more effective to keep it quiet and let other countries' leaders know how we feel about human rights, but not have to argue with us in public. That approach ties in with my attitude, ever since my days in the Army, as described above. Thus, I was uncomfortable with those activities of the Human Rights Bureau and I tried to push them in the direction of keeping our actions quieter and less confrontational, because I thought that would be the more effective way of dealing with these issues.

Q: You started off there for a few months when Pat Derian was still Assistant Secretary.

BACHE: Yes

Q: You joined the Bureau, what was it, June of '80?

BACHE: I guess it was July 1980. Yes, Pat Derian was there when I first started.

Q: Then, when the administration changed, you worked there during that period?

BACHE: Yes. And, frankly, I was quite sympathetic. While I didn't agree with everything Reagan said by any means, on that aspect of the Reagan administration policies, I was more sympathetic to their approach than to the Carter approach.

Q: The Assistant Secretary who ultimately came in was Elliott Abrams.

BACHE: That is right. Before that it was Steve Palmer.

Q: Steve was an acting deputy assistant secretary during that period in 1981. What was your opinion of Elliot Abrams and how he conducted the Bureau?

BACHE: It must have been a very short period that I was with him, because I retired in February of 1982. I don't have a very strong impression of Elliot Abrams. He seemed to have an axe to grind, too, but I honestly don't remember clearly. I didn't have any problems working with him, but I haven't any clear recollection of how I felt about those issues with him.

Q: You did mention you preferred the Reagan administration approach, the quieter approach.

BACHE: Yes, absolutely.

Q: When Abrams was Assistant Secretary, he pursued the quieter approach.

BACHE: Yes.

Q: That was an interesting time.

BACHE: It is sort of ironic, because most of my life I have been more sympathetic to Democrats than to Republicans. On the issue of human rights in foreign policy, however, I felt that Carter had it wrong.

Q: Quiet diplomacy rather than public, journalistic diplomacy. You retired then in February of '82?

BACHE: Yes.

Q: After what, 30 years in the Foreign Service?

BACHE: Yes. Because of that interregnum from '58 to '61, it was not a full 30 years, but almost. My first post in Korea was a hardship post. In those days, instead of getting hardship pay, we got credit towards retirement. So I retired as if I had had 30 years, although it was really 29 plus.

Q: Michael, would you recommend the Foreign Service as a career to young people coming along, to your grandchildren, perhaps?

BACHE: Very definitely, yes. You always have ups and downs and maybe problems with current foreign policy, but the relationship between the United States and the rest of the world is an exciting area to work in. The opportunities, even for beginners and people quite young and inexperienced, are very worthwhile and, of course, if you do well, you can advance and can influence policy. More important, even at the working level, interacting with representatives of other governments and understanding how the U.S. fits in the world is as exciting a career as I can imagine.

So, I certainly would recommend the Foreign Service to anyone who is so inclined. Don't think it is just parties and games. There is a lot of hard work; it isn't nine to five. You also have to learn some languages, you have to get some expertise in some areas, but you can have an exciting life in the Foreign Service.

Q: Thank you, Michael.

EPILOGUE

[The following is a brief review of the highlights of my life after I retired from the Foreign Service:]

From 1982 until 1989, I worked in the Washington, D.C. office of Prudential-Bache Securities, as a registered representative. Many of my clients were State Department employees. Since I had managed my assets when I was overseas, I knew what they needed in managing their assets while they were overseas. During that time, I took a correspondence course and became a Certified Financial Planner.

Then, in 1989, I left Prudential-Bache, but continued to work at home part-time as a financial planner. In the meantime, my son Stephen had established his own business - first as Yosemite Asset Management, then as Hamilton & Bache and later as Bache Capital Management - and I became a vice president of his company. My business was quite separate from his, but I used the umbrella of his registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and various state regulators, rather than having to register myself separately.

While in Washington, I continued to play cello in orchestras and chamber music groups and we spent many weekends at our summer house in Lavallette at the Jersey Shore. In 1991, we winterized the Lavallette house, i.e., we put in insulation and heating. Then in September 1992, after shipping some furniture to our children in South Dakota and California, we simplified our lives by selling the house in Washington, D.C. and moving full-time to Lavallette.

Since then, we have enjoyed a quieter life here in New Jersey, receiving the visits of children and grandchildren here at the beach, usually in the summer, and visiting them in the winter. We have also participated in a few local civic activities, such as the local Democratic club and the local chapter of the National Association of Retired Federal Employees. I have continued playing cello, first in an orchestra and later in chamber music groups.

My open heart surgery in 1997 led to an effort on my part to take care of my health by carrying out a daily exercise program at a local gym. The result was a substantial improvement in my health. Then, in May 2004, I was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Since then, I have been limited in my activities to seeing doctors, playing the cello in quartets and quintets and editing this autobiographical 'oral history.' By and large, however, I have enjoyed good health for most of my life and had a very satisfying retirement.

End of interview